

# Nature of Cities: Ontological Dimension of the Urban

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**Abstract**—This document seeks to reflect on the urban project from its conceptual identity root. In the first instance, a proposal is made on how the city project is sustained from the conceptual root, from the logos: it opens a way to assimilate the imagination; what we imagine becomes a reality. In this way, firstly, the need to use language as a vehicle for transmitting the stories that sustain us as humanity can be deemed as an important social factor that enables us to social behavior. Secondly, the need to attend to the written language as a mechanism of power, as a means to consolidate a dominant ideology or a political position, is raised; as it served to carry out the modernization project, it is therefore addressed differences between the real and the literate city. Thus, the consolidated urban-architectural project is based on logos, the project, and planning. Considering the importance of materiality and its relation to subjective well-being contextualized from a socio-urban approach, we question ourselves into how we can look at something that is doubtful. From a philosophy perspective, the truth is considered to be nothing more than a matter of correspondence between the observer and the observed. To understand beyond the relative of the gaze, it is necessary to expose different perspectives since it depends on the understanding of what is observed and how it is critically analyzed. Therefore, the analysis of materiality, as a political field, takes a proposal based on this research in the principles in transgenesis: principle of communication, representativeness, security, health, malleability, availability of potentiality or development, conservation, sustainability, economy, harmony, stability, accessibility, justice, legibility, significance, consistency, joint responsibility, connectivity, beauty, among others. The (urban) human being acts because he wants to live in a certain way: in a community, in a fair way, with opportunity for development, with the possibility of managing the environment according to their needs, etc. In order to comply with this principle, it is necessary to design strategies from the principles in transgenesis, which must be named, defined, understood, and socialized by the urban being, the companies, and from themselves. In this way, the technical status of the city in the neoliberal present determines extraordinary conditions for reflecting on an almost emergency scenario created by the impact of cities that, far from being limited to resilient proposals, must aim at the reflection of the urban process that the present social model has generated. Therefore, can we rethink the paradigm of the perception of life quality in the current neoliberal model in the production of the character of public space related to the practices of being urban. What we are trying to do within this document is to build a framework to study under what logic the practices of the social system that make sense of the public space are developed, what the implications of the phenomena of the inscription of action and materialization (and its results over political action between the social and the technical system) are and finally, how we can improve the quality of life of individuals from the urban space.

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IN order to improve people's lives, first and foremost we should start analyzing and studying the problem at hand while taking into consideration the importance that the materiality of objects and their relation to our well-being holds, thus tackling it from a socio-urban perspective; hence, the purpose of this document is to build a theoretical framework of reference for the study of urban quality of life from a dimension that corresponds to the internal qualities of the physical environment from the analysis of the correlation between society/nature to analyze the principles of existential instrumental materiality of an urban life project.

We suppose that for the urban being in the production of space, according to Lefebvrian theory, it is not only necessary to perceive and act, but to do it consciously and reflecting on the basis of a certain social life project [7].

Most actions that are carried out are mediated by materiality and reflect on the urban settings; in this sense, when studying the social and urban factor in contrast to their purpose and repercussion, it is possible to deduce the project of life or intent petrified in it, from which one can also understand the (urban) being that it proposes. In this way, the specialized status of the city within the neoliberal display decides extraordinary conditions that can end up reflecting to a great extent by the effect of cities that, distant from being constrained to strong recommendations and approaches, point at the reflection of the urban handle that the present social model show has generated. Therefore, we are looking to reexamine the worldview of the perception of life quality within the current neoliberal model in the production of the character of public space related to the practices of being urban.

## II. IDENTITY REFLECTIONS OF THE URBAN BEING IN THE TERRITORY

In *Reading the mind: The brain and the art of fiction* [2], one can find that it makes a defense of the humanities, of art as a humanist primary purpose since it offers the only direct link with creativity and the activation of our creative mind through memory, understanding by memory the reconstruction of events, that is, similar to fictional processes, that this is literature. In this sense, a deep panorama is offered of how what we imagine becomes real or, in other words, reality was first a mental representation, an assimilation from our imagination, the recreation of as if, mimesis. The need for a language to transmit the dynamics that sustain us as humanity can be altered by perception. In this way, a theoretical possibility of great interest for this research opens up; the idea of fiction in front of reality is understood, from where the as if arises, which prevents stumbling, or maintains balance and

helps the urban being tolerate the imaginary universe of a novel, because it is the as if it leads us to assume that reality is as solid and vigorous as we witness it [2]. Therefore, fiction must be seen, from this perspective, as an extreme extension of evolution. In any case, we recognize two different moments of genesis: first, its appearance as a form of knowledge; and, then, from the moment of its deliberate recognition and use. Fiction thus happens at the mercy of the signification act, that is, when the urban being manages to name his world as a creative action and the result of linguistic behavior.

Based on the above, art does have a purpose of being and this is not merely aesthetic. Art can play an extremely beneficial role in society as it can strongly foster humans' efforts to attain a deeper and broader comprehension of reality [5]. Art detonates the brain scaffolding of our creativity, imagination, memory, representation and from there develops cognitive and executive skills to respond to the stimuli of reality in a perennial dialectic of which we often do not even notice. Consequently, art helps us survive and makes us truly human, so that the value of a creative society is recognized from the analyzed approach in the corresponding chapter in this research. From this perspective, Volpi presents fiction as a resource that helps understand the behavior of others and that allows the urban being to know himself because the practical sense of the urban being naturally indicates that it must make as if the reality of his mind, in fact, corresponded with that ungraspable reality is taken from us at every moment [2]. However, there is a latent tendency to repeat, learn, recreate, usually automatically, but fortunately, our brain is also thirsty for newness. From this, two evolutionary adaptations govern what has been witnessed: imitation and cooperation. Both factors are indispensable for the recreation and assimilation of reality through fiction. Therefore, the urban being invents his self, as well as the selves of others, that is, they are all fictions; literary fiction must be considered an evolutionary adaptation that, animated by a cooperative game, allows us to evaluate our behavior in future situations, preserve individual and collective memory, understand and order the facts through narrative sequences and, ultimately, introduce ourselves into the lives of others, anticipate their reactions and decipher their will and desires [2].

Volpi, to all of the above, maintains that as an evolutionary tool, art cannot but pursue a more ambitious goal. The obvious one: helping us survive and, even more, become truly human. So, all fiction is history, and vice versa; therefore, when the past is relived, the being is moved by a present reason or impulse and, therefore, do not privilege fidelity to the facts but to personal interest [2]. Therefore, there is the expressive need for creativity, linked to the demand associated with creativity societies and, therefore, creative cities connected to the humanist universes of artistic fiction that triggers brain and behavioral responses in the urban being and that it allows or has allowed it to survive any contingency throughout history as humanity.

Yehya notes that since the human being invented the technique, his vision of the world ceased to reside exclusively in his brain [3]. It ceased to be a direct coupling relationship

between itself and nature to be mediated (distanced) by it, as Fig. 1 represents. Taking Fig. 1 into consideration, it follows that the existential instrumental materiality not only facilitates the coupling but also limits or conditions it.

With each new utensil or tool, the original flexible relationship with the natural environment gradually disappears. With each new object the artificial world or techno sphere increases, making our relationship with nature more rigid; more controllable but with action alternatives subject to the means used to carry it out.

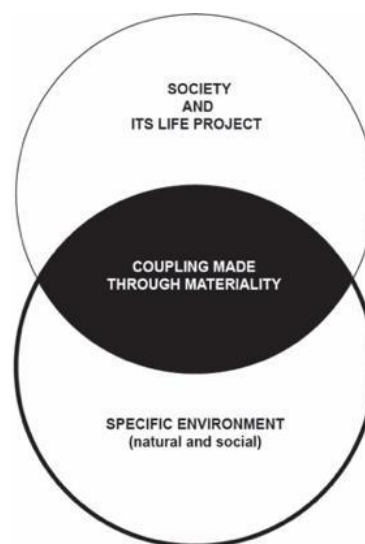


Fig. 1 Materiality as mediator

For better or worse, human beings have become increasingly dependent on their waxes, especially in the current time of complex technological development. Thus, practically every action is inscribed and written within this materiality that as a social frame of reference establishes what is significant and what is not, hence the interest in analyzing and understanding the principles of existential instrumental materiality of a life project.

The elaboration of the great stories that sustain as humanity are the explanation available to assimilate reality and to give coherence to the urban being. In the stories creative and mnemonic skills are put into play, elements that save humanity, because without these stories there would be no way of being in the world, in society.

### III. FROM THE WRITTEN CITY TO THE IMAGINED CITY

For the above, an analogy is made to consider the city as a text written in a language that, at present, is not readable for all, even so, it says things; some good and some not so good. However, from this research the ideology of the urban is stimulated from the reflection-meaning-action of the urban being, which constitutes the fundamental elements of meaning, otherwise, it would fall into a way of being/belonging behaviorist or actions unconscious, routine, executed as responses to stimuli or intentions alien to said urban being.

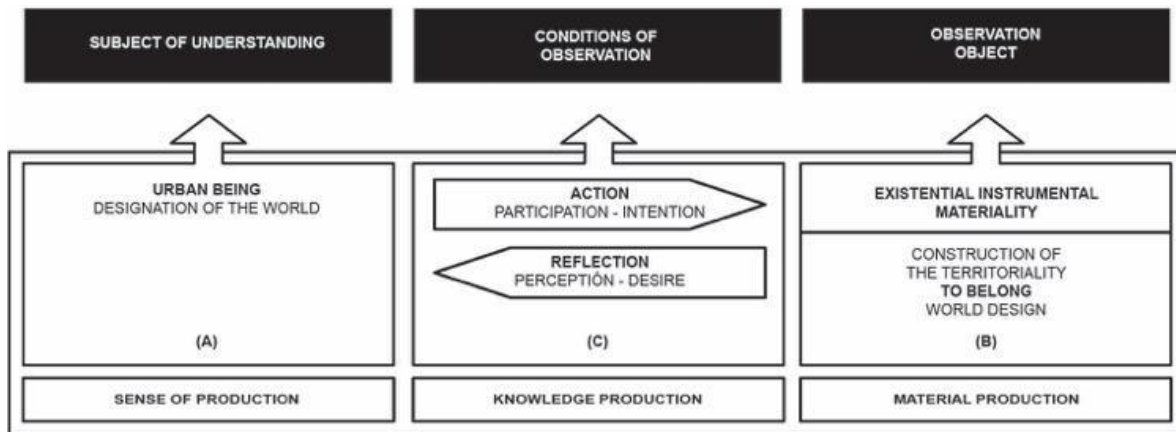


Fig. 2 Process of being/material production

Fig. 2 becomes relevant for the analysis of materiality since it shows the elements or factors that intervene in the process of being/belonging. As presented, Fig. 2 shows three instances: the observation object (B), which is nothing other than materiality (city from its ideological conception); the conditions of observation (C), that is, the principles in transgenesis on which the analysis is based and the subject of understanding (A), that is, the urban being (characterized by being a social being with an identity).

From the above, the need to attend to the process and communication system of the language (in all its forms of expression, meaning, resignification and even materialization) as a mechanism of power, as a means to consolidate a dominant ideology or a political position, or a project from the analyzed connotation of a life project. From this perspective, the city is conceived and interpreted as the axis of power in society and is treated in *the literate city* [1] as a central theme, which allows broadening the theoretical approach of this research from the understanding of the technique through the existential instrumental materialization processes, that is, as a project of urban life. To build this idea, the configuration of the American city must be analyzed from the interest of the colonizers and then how structures in the service of power were created to build the nucleus of the dominant order, and from this point the use of the word, both oral and written, but especially the written one.

The word as exclusive use of the ruling class and its means of dissemination and affirmation among the rest of the population; whoever mastered language and writing had power over those who could not afford to have an education. Then, later, the awareness is invited that throughout the history of the configuration of America language was important and has not ceased to be so, because through this medium identities are strengthened, even when the status crisis has found the social revolts, the language was used to make revolution, for example, and to work on a project of modernity, simulating social welfare before the world. Thus, city and language are two almost dichotomous elements in the sense that both are necessary for the maintenance and elevation of power structures and, therefore, the need to approach their analysis from an approach associated with the

internal quality of urban being and, consequently, to the quality of urban life. On the other hand, it is questioned whether the city is the center of power of a society and the use of the word is the means to configure and give power structures sacredness; the words must correspond to being the signs that document the only means of communication and registration of what is really important in a life project, that is, of social construction. From this perspective, all those who are literate (socio-urban phenomena are remembered as an interest in this research, apart from which it is assumed that not all urban beings are/will be literate) can and only if they are part of the ruling class or they work for her and her permanence; in this way it contributes to the theoretical understanding of the processes of materialization from a perspective of social and technical value in global settings. Likewise, although the word is used to create revolutions, it will always be at the center of political power, which means that it will be used to record the dominant culture; therefore, it is understood that this is a primary tool through which we can get to know a society, however, it must be questioned, at present, what to do socio-urban hegemonic societies. From this position, it is envisioned as an area of opportunity for all societies towards the future, which is approached from Freire's [4] concept of literacy, in this same chapter of the investigation.

Based on the above, it is understood that, of course, the historical cities of the conquest would not function from a total vacuum, that is, they would take advantage of the pre-existing indigenous networks, their cultivation areas, markets and, mainly, human capital that was translated into labor power. Therefore, cities became a space/time to stay and, thus, foci of progressive colonization.

Although isolated within the spatial and cultural immensity, foreign and hostile, cities competed to dominate and civilize their surroundings, what was called first evangelize and then educate [1]. In this way, what Freire understands like all those literate people, capable of naming their reality and what results in a social construction by being urban solidifies that having a basic education alters perspective. From this perspective, the concept of a literate city is understood because its action was carried out in the priority order of the signs and because its implicit priestly quality contributed to

endowing them with a sacred aspect [1]. Furthermore, from this perspective, it is questioned: what was the supremacy of the literate city due to? In the first place, its members formed a strictly urban group, which is only possible within a citizen structure, [1] which leads us to the topics associated with the domain groups previously mentioned.

A reflection from an analogy associated with the urban image there is a labyrinth of the streets that only personal adventure can penetrate and a labyrinth of signs that only reasoning intelligence can decipher, finding their order, [1] this is the work of the literate city, only it is capable of conceiving, as pure speculation, the ideal city, projecting it before its existence. The theoretical contribution from this perspective is achieved by understanding that the city seeks, from this perspective, to be fixed and timeless like signs and that it only exists in history and folds into the transformations of society. Thus, we will have to ask ourselves about the possible implications that these transformations may bring about its function in a period of social change, about its survival when revolutionary mutations, about its ability to reconstitute itself and reinstate its bases when they have been disrupted [1].

It is concluded that the idea of the city as a construction thanks to the exclusive language has the problems that, from a current perspective, this concept can only be understood from a perspective of discrimination and unfair, where powers are poorly distributed and where there are no development opportunities for all members of a society. However, the idea of an urban configuration through the exclusive use of certain signs is also a concept that cannot be avoided because it is real in the sense that today's cities have their own languages of communication and order, with the difference of that now any individual in society (or the majority) has the skills to interpret and establish a dialogue based on these signs, and on said language, which invites reading, that is, current cities are all the time communicating and all the time they are receiving answers and interpretations; all the time there is interaction to a greater or lesser extent by the citizens who inhabit them. So, the metaphor of the city as a book, or, according to Rama, as a palimpsest, is very beautiful because it puts on the table the image of the urban being exercising the action of reading, interpreting and understanding words, or in this sense, of the signs that the city tries to communicate [6].

For the purposes of this research, the idea of the literate city is recovered, but attending to this concept with the current nuance, that is, without the exclusionary and discriminatory distinction can prove to be a difficult task. Although perhaps there is still a certain level of discrimination in the event that someone does not possess the elements to be able to read it, according to Freire's interpretation, however at present one must start from a general idea of dialogue possibilities between the urban being and its various urban environments. Whatever this may be, whatever very deep or very superficial, but dialogue at the end

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