CONURBATION AND ONTOLOGICAL SUPERPOSITION: Social Inclusion and Urbanization in Brasília

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Abstract: Present essay introduces the concept of ontological field in an attempt to create a solid theoretical basis for analysis and understanding of the urban social reasons that lead to exclusion. The study area chosen was the city of Brasilia and its surroundings, covering a radius of 80km from the Esplanade of Ministries. Although the work is essentially theoretical, most of the thoughts originated in daily observations made in and around Brasilia. It is intended that the arguments presented could guide educational actions for the urgent revision of Brazil's secondary and fundamental teaching.

Key words: social inclusion, urbanization, ontology, ontological field, education

Resumo: O presente ensaio introduz o conceito de campo ontológico na tentativa de criar uma sólida base teórica para análise e compreensão das razões sociais urbanas que levam à exclusão. A área de estudo escolhida foi a cidade de Brasília e seus arredores, cobrindo um raio de 80 km a partir da Esplanada dos Ministérios. Embora o trabalho seja essencialmente teórico, a maioria das reflexões teve origem nas observações diárias feitas em Brasília e no entorno delimitado. Pretende-se que os argumentos apresentados possam orientar ações educativas para a urgente revisão dos ensinos médio e fundamental brasileiros.

Palavras-chave: inclusão social, urbanização, ontologia, campo ontológico, educação

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Introduction

> « To understand history it is not enough to know how things are, but how they have become what they are ».
> Franz Boas

Many social problems are largely influenced, if not even created, by the urban environment. Cities whose origins refer to the confluence of different people tend to exacerbate conflicts, exposing more sharply the problems of social inclusion. Although such questions

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seem to refer more immediately to sociology, I believe that a panoptic view initiated by structural anthropology (social structure in terms of complexity and semiotic styles) applied to urbanism will shed new light on the subject in order to motivate an approach more appropriate to the reality of the 21st century. While it is sometimes claimed that Lévi-Straus started from the study of kinship to constitute his structuralism, I think that in a certain neo-structuralist sense, adopting a broader conception of kinship, we can find arguments to support a concrete study of urban relations related to the most obvious aspects of social exclusion.

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Honestly, the choice of this starting point stems from my early scientific initiation at the end of the sixties and early seventies, when I then dedicated myself, along with my father, to indigenous anthropology and linguistics. At the same time, together with my mother, I studied human geography, which greatly facilitated my understanding of the influence of space on human behavior. Therefore, I am very grateful to both for the scientific legacy that I now seek to honor and expand both in physics and in urbanism. In fact, it is no wonder that I will use a physical concept to explain some of my ideas in urbanism.

Assuming the Straussian adage that « all human thought operates through oppositional pairs », let us think of « inclusion X exclusion » and try to understand both while opposites starting from the social ontology which I intend to apply in the brief study I am going to make on the occupation of urban spaces. Lastly, the purpose of this essay is not to suggest the obvious conclusion that education is the key to solving social problems. I want to show what education needs to take into account in order to act effectively in favor of the aesthetic balance between the different worldviews that coexist in an urban region similar to Brasilia, convinced that this discussion shall contribute to the development of social inclusion policies.

Ontological thoughts: the Brazilian central plateau in focus

Before talking about ontology, it is interesting to gather some definitions offered by renowned authors. Lalande (1956) defines ontology as

> Étude ou connaissance de ce que sont les choses em elles-mêmes, em tant que substances, au sens cartésien et leibnizien de ce mot, par opposition à l'étude de leurs apparences ou de leurs attributs[2]. (LALANDE, 1956).

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[2] Study or knowledge of what things are in themselves as substances, in the Cartesian and Leibnizian sense of this word, as opposed to the study of their appearances or attributes (free translation of the author).

Japiassu and Marcondes (1991) note that ontology is the « theory of being in general, of the essence of the real » (JAPIASSU and MARCONDES, 1991). Inscribed in this essential approach of the being, there appear universal aspects that really matter to ontology, such as duration, potentiality and existence.

According to my viewpoint, I would like to note that:

a) there is no cardinality for ontology as a philosophical category, nor is there any justification to applying the indefinite article; that is, expressions as « an ontology » make no sense in philosophy; it is clear that there are distinct ontological approaches, but the ontology itself is singular and precise in its object (the transcendental essence of the spiritual or material being); there are no one, two or three ontologies, only ontology; to want to refer to « an ontology », or is it a case of ignorance, or mere Gallicism; b) ontology is not properly a systematic explanation of existence, but rather a transcendental reflection on the reason of existence based on the investigation of the ultimate essence of being; to affirm that « an ontology is a systematic account of existence » is not only an act of simplicity (mistaken in cardinality, as I have pointed out), but a demonstration of ignorance of the subject; c) It is precisely what cannot be represented that is more relevant to contemporary ontological reflection, such as the concepts connected with theology, and even those related to the physics of fields and particles, concerning speculation about the unsustainable essence, so to speak, of the quarks and Higgs bosons (it is clear that for disinterested physicists equations are enough).

Briefly, I can say that I adopted the concept of ontology defended by Wolff, for whom this discipline proposes to investigate the most general predicates of all entities (WOLFF, 1730, § 8, apud FERRATER MORA, 1994, p. 527), in present study, the individuals belonging to a certain social stratum also seen, by the modes of occupation of the soil, under the prism of structural anthropology. But it is necessary to determine how those predicates (the most general of all individuals) shall be treated. I do not wish to use a cruel logic at the moment, but perhaps it would be worthwhile in the future to paraphrase Wittgenstein (1984) and assert that « *es gibt zwar nicht Ontologie, wohl aber ontologische Probleme* »[3].

A brief clarification

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[3][…] there is really no ontology, but rather ontological problems (author's free translation).

It is understood that urbanism is the natural extension of architecture on the functional and aesthetic occupation of geographical space. In recent decades, the crude conception of architecture as simply art has been disseminated in Brazilian public universities. This postmodern nonsense had already been swept away by Lukács in his « Aesthetics », and it is appropriate to return briefly to his criticism of Hegel (LUKÁCS, 2002).

Although Lukács recognizes as correct Hegel's claim that architecture is both a mean to achieve extra-artistic goals and an art in itself, he is attentive to the fact that Hegel underestimates the social mission that determines the form and content (LUKÁCS, 2002). Thus, once the social function is understood, the architecture will add an aesthetic value to the projected object in a complex socio-environmental context. Castro illustrated this context in his « Ensaios de Geografia Humana », which can be summarized as follows:

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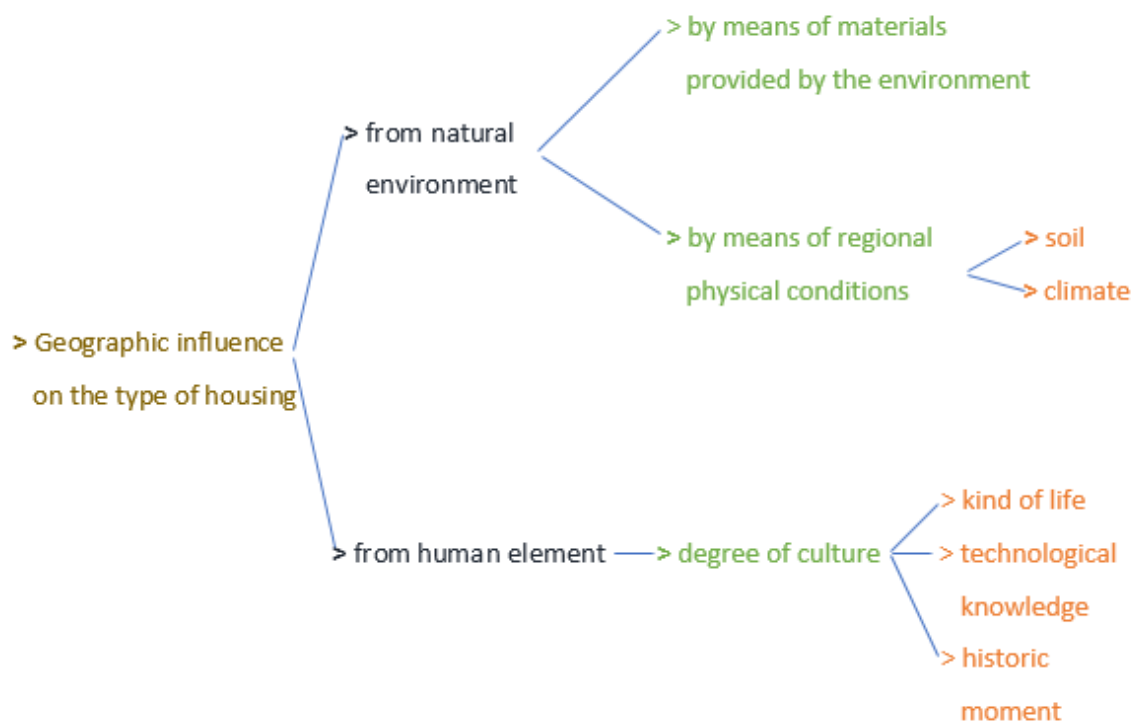
And he concludes that « [...] housing always reflects in broad outline the various conditions of the natural environment and the human group living there » (CASTRO, 1957).

On the subject of professionalism in our sad tropics, it must be remembered that, because of the functional illiteracy that prevails in decision-making spheres, our universities have prepared unskilled urban planners. The requirements of the program have diminished

considerably, and the academic exercise has been lost in ideologies and superficialities. Humanistic learning was compromised by lack of reading and reflection, while technical training was almost completely lost. This is easy to verify by the inability of students to manage the properties of projective spaces. To cite just one example presented by Vincent (1987), which should be part of the repertoire of all architects, we have the Hausdorf axiom, according to which an (n-1)-dimensional manifold plunging into a n-dimensional space divides this space in two regions; the (n-1)-dimensional manifold then becomes orientable. This seemingly sophisticated knowledge makes all the difference for designing flat structures that act aesthetically in a three-dimensional space. The main technical skill of the architect should be the domain of space, topologies and metric relations. Unfortunately, this concern no longer exists; we are confronted with the exclusion of the architect from the world of knowledge; he becomes more and more a simple repeater of clichés.

The idea of social inclusion

The concept of social inclusion in Brazil has been hotly debated for its formulation, which seems incomprehensible to me, since the state of inclusion makes an objective reference to the widespread accessibility to places, goods and services, without physical or economic restrictions. I would like to remind that « having access to something » does not mean «having to access it». Generalized accessibility is a characteristic of socially developed countries. The confusion in Brazil is due to differences, illiteracy, ignorance, low quality education, lack of effective health policies and social welfare populism that disseminates misguided ideologies on inclusion, suggesting, for example, that each individual must have university degree; as I noted above, having guaranteed access to a university course does not mean that one has to do it, because not everyone wants to pursue higher education; it's a question of free will. The result of this error is personal frustration and saturation of the job market by incompetent professionals. If there were a serious social development policy, we would invest in a strong secondary school and a high-quality basic education.

The notion of ontological field

The human organization in large agglomerations tends to polarize the interest of the masses for security, comfort and access to goods and services. In large countries with great

extension and stark social differences, this polarization creates a real entanglement of classes and habits, the overlap of which entails both conflict and unity.

From the point of view of social inclusion, well before reaching unity, that overlap produces antagonistic psychosocial forces insofar as the conflicts among different perceptions of the urban space feed preconceptions and separatist feelings among what I call « exclusion arenas ». Exclusion arenas are not necessarily bounded areas where certain behaviors are prohibited, but regions of imprecise boundaries in which those behaviors sound inadequate, leaving citizens uncomfortable. At this point, my approach seems very Cartesian for such an abstract phenomenon, so I must borrow from physics a perfect concept for my purposes: the concept of field.

In physics, a classical or quantum field is a region of space within which certain rules operate; these rules are not valid outside the region. These fields can interact in intersecting areas, just as the gravitational fields of earth and moon. The limits between field zones of influence lie in imprecise boundaries. By analogy, we can imagine an ontological field created by a more or less homogeneous group of citizens who share similar worldviews, positioning themselves as individuals who hold approximately the same consciousness of themselves. Obviously, this is a rather simplifying view, since I am abstracting individual subjective aspects to which one would not have access, restricting myself to general characteristics such as aesthetic taste. In fact, the absence of aesthetic taste, as well as indifference to it, are obstacles to social inclusion, insofar as there is no understanding of aesthetics as a socializing element (on the contrary, the absence of aesthetic values deteriorates behavior and social institutions themselves). If, as Stevens rightly remarked, « the central function of the discipline of architecture is to produce instruments of aesthetic taste » (STEVENS, 2003), it seems to me that my approach is reasonable for an urbanistic look at the barriers imposed on inclusion; also, it seems to me that the architect has a *sui generis* social role as educator and former of the aesthetic taste that shall be part of a society.

Unlike physical fields, ontological fields cannot be measured. They are only abstractions about collective psychosocial manifestations from which we can understand the typical behavioral profile of a given social organization. We can say that, in the context of sign systems, such interacting fields are « crossing semantic fields », as Paul Ricoeur tells us (RICOEUR; CASTORIADIS, 2016).

The geographical break

The region of Brazilian Central Plateau inscribed in the perimeter of the agricultural frontier denominated, for the sake of brevity, « surroundings of Brasilia », shows a socio-cultural scenario marked by strong urban contrasts. Conurbations are forming from the great center — the city of Brasilia —, as in all large cities of the planet, causing superposition of behaviors and traditions, creating conflicting landscapes, sometimes even bizarre scenarios. If there is a place that well exemplifies the influence of a social context in the determination of an architectural-urban paradigm, this place is the Brazilian capital and its old satellite cities, nowadays almost all incorporated as neighborhoods, except near cities of Goiás State. Emerging urban corridors are being formed along the roads named BR 020 and BR 070, the first connecting the old satellites Sobradinho and Planaltina, with the gradual formation of clustered intermediate settlements such as Taquari and Colorado, the second linking Ceilândia and Águas Lindas with intermediate settlement in Sol Nascente, and more ahead in Girassol. The formation of these corridors has great demographic importance, since they grow as dormitory options for a lot of workers employed in Brasilia and are formed mainly by invasions, without any urban-environmental planning. Also, they connect peri-urban and rural areas, stimulating trade and agricultural production.

A bit of aesthetics and culture

It may be that aesthetic sense is the sieve of perception that best reflects the ultimate nature of the universe. In fact, the aesthetic perception is as it is because things and facts are arranged and configured according to certain norms that we call « natural laws ». The violation of these laws, whenever it is contemplated, causes us discomfort; it is disturbing that a law is in real circumstances where it can be violated. But, like all skill, the aesthetic perception must be developed, educated, trained and preserved; there is an innate potential to awaken it and to become it active. I call « culture » all the institutions which promote that awakening at all levels of human activity, preserving a healthy mind capable of adding value to society. Now, with regard to this health of mind, we can say that ethics is nothing more than the aesthetics of morality with its rules of well-being in society.

One can clearly perceive how negligently the word « culture » is applied. What is commonly called « culture » is actually « anti-culture » or « not-culture », that is, any effort contrary to the development and introduction of aesthetic values. Thanks to socially

irresponsible media and the lack of legal austerity, Brasilia urban apparatus is full of anti-culture. Conflicting ontological fields, coming from situations devastated by poverty, exert the deleterious effects of non-education and illiteracy. There is a vision of the world whose authenticity has long been tarnished by the disfiguring action of globalization. Saving and preserving the authenticity of worldviews within each human group is a duty of the educational system. Ignoring this truth, we assume all the projected mental disorganization on the occupation of space.

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Correlating all this

Let us see how all this is correlated. In underdeveloped countries, the degradation of urban environments is particularly acute because of the virtual absence of serious urban projects and the great lack of architects and planners in the few initiatives under way. Considering the scarce erudition of the masses coupled with the absence of public policies of land occupation, the ontological fields from different strands will interact on a geographic background without laws, creating random urban artifacts without standardization. An important example in Brasilia is the placement of floor stops on the sidewalks, illegally delimiting parts of the public pedestrian way as if they belonged to the land lots. This typical attitude of squatters seems a remnant of the era of the Land Law, Law number 601 of August 18, 1850, Brazil's first agrarian legislation and the first intervention of the government in the process of territorial appropriation, whose objective of curbing the occupation was not reached insofar as the demarcations were made by the occupants of the land, and the law was not sufficiently clear with respect to the prohibition of possession, serving more to regularize it than to repress it. In fact, land laws in Brazil have never been clear, or never been properly enforced.

Informality in occupation of space is a common practice in Latin America. Fernandes states that « more than half of the urban population of large cities lives informally in favelas, illegal and irregular settlements, and other forms of precarious occupation » (FERNANDES, 2008). Given this generalized social panorama, it must be added that public management of housing demand in Brazil is guided by the practice of pushing the less favored towards the peripheries. Doyle emphasizes that « public power has always been worried to put an end to the favelas, not to solve the problem, but especially to remove it » (DOYLE, 1997), and recalls how favelas located close to Núcleo Bandeirantes were transferred to Ceilândia, reproducing the exclusionary attitude of giving to the poor remote areas with no infrastructure (DOYLE,

1997). Ferreira and Pena emphasize that settlement policies in Brasilia consider « only the availability of housing space », leaving aside without discussion « the process of internal mobility, job creation and improvement of incomes, and life conditions in the places » (FERREIRA, PENNA, 1996). All those irregular settlements characterize interacting ontological fields along corridors linking towns and villages.

Socio-environmental effects of the ontological fields in interaction in Brasilia and in its surroundings are expressed by the irregular configuration of the urban landscape, often characterizing great ecosystem deterioration. Irregularities, from the aesthetic point of view, refer not only to the architectural quality but also to the quality of the treatment given to the urban environment, either by the citizens themselves or by the public apparatus providing basic sanitation and road maintenance services. In Planaltina de Goiás, for instance, this is an accomplished fact. The lack of competent professionals allied to a partially autochthonous ontological field of low intellectuality and not very interactive shaped the general abandonment of the city.

Brasília and its surroundings, as a polarizing zone, served as geographical base for the meeting of different ontological fields from all regions of Brazil, in particular from North-East and South. Linguistic and signic regionalization represent interactions between ontological fields configured in mixtures of traditions and tastes. All this new context produced an urban-architectural shock with the original Brasília, considered an icon of modernist architecture. On one hand, the architectural design conception, nothing inclusive, with all its contempt for pedestrians; on the other hand, small urban nuclei in growth trying to imitate Brasília's model of residential blocks, but at the same time revealing multiple ontological fields in a not always harmonious coexistence. Urban tensions arising from the lack of planning led to systemic failure of the regional infrastructure of services and access.

I still believe, as Boas said, that « the problem is to determine the relations between the objective world and the subjective world of man, according to the form he adopts in different societies » (BOAS, 1953). Now these relations are given by the system of human activities, by the work of man. In Cassirer's words, « […] if there is any definition of the nature or "essence" of man, such a definition can only be understood as being functional rather than substantial » (CASSIRER, 2005). It is precisely this "essence" defined by the work of mankind (the functional definition) that shall give form to the more general predicates of all entities which I spoke earlier, according to the concept of ontology I adopted.

What is observed here is that this meeting of so diverse ontological fields leads to a kind of mutual destructive interference, producing an absence of symbolic representations that can give a clear characterization of aesthetic values, including architectural values.

The interaction of ontological fields synthesizes and extends the experience reported by Lévi-Strauss; He stressed, in a socio-ethnographic approach, how distinct social models at opposite territory ends interfered in medium geographic areas subject to the influences of both:

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> « [...] dans les tribus de l'Alaska et de la Colombie-Britannique, on constate que l'organisation sociale prend des formes extrêmes et opposées aux deux extrémités du territoire considéré et que les régions intermédiaires présentent une série de types de transition »[4]. (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1974).

It is assumed that many interacting ontological fields can produce mixtures so disturbed that a chaotic behavior is established over a long period of time if there are no governance parameters guiding and legitimizing the results of the interactions.

It seems clear that such an approach calls for an ontological oversight if we desire to systematically understand how it came to what we observe in the social context of Brasilia. Taking into account the epigraphy of Boas, I propose the concept of ontological field as a construction through which we can reach a theory of social interactions and their consequences for the urban structure.

Urban social inclusion starts from the moment the diversity of ontological fields is recognized and we sought to understand them in their human fullness, bringing to the schools and academies the educational discussions in this scope, seeking to sow in society the desire for policies and public actions that embrace the prospects of all people, harmonizing the coexistence through the true culture and putting aside its deleterious caricatures. What we have today, in most cases, is an outdated teaching in disarray with the imperatives of scientific and humanistic innovation. The stubbornness of remaining on this path without future shall lead to an irreversible anachronism, further accentuating differences and therefore social exclusion. Let the functional illiterate rulers definitively depart; come to the tables the men of vision!

Conclusion

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[4] [...] in the tribes of Alaska and British Columbia, social organization takes extreme and opposite forms at both ends of the territory, and intermediate regions present a series of transition types (author's free translation).

Brazilian society remains fundamentally colonial, as noted by Terry-Ann Jones's beautiful work in an approach to « internal colonialism » (JONES, 2017). We are still a coastal nation, a fact that characterizes the interior as a great invasion under the prism of the laws of land occupation. Land grabbing is a constant reality and lack of law enforcement is a chronic problem. Within this colonial scenario, there are clearly two countries, since there was never any real interest in integrating the north and the south; political-partisan interests are the eternal targets of this division (the northeastern region kept in misery to guarantee electoral maneuvers).

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The consequences of low education and unrestricted speculation trigger disruptive and clearly discriminatory urban processes, with arbitrary boundaries of public spaces favoring holders of self-declared rights in delimited areas. The individualistic behavior and the indifference to the laws and rights of all people make us not very different from the African kleptocracies except for the fact that we are a nation difficult to go into complete bankruptcy due to our vast riches, notwithstanding the fact that such riches never favor the population.

Recently, Brazilian people supported a series of pseudo-democratic populist measures that ended up constituting a great deception; *mundus vult decipi*! Ontological fields contain mutually influencing worldviews. To understand these views and how they interact in space and time is the first step in preparing, by education, the true urbanity of the Brazilian citizen in a society less unequal and committed to its role in the world.

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