

The Urban Imagery as a Starting Point for Citizenship

On this 35th issue of the journal *Anagramas Rumbos y Sentidos de la Comunicación* we consider the citizen and its points of view from the interaction, networks, and daily connections. We hope this is an opportunity for opening a debate about citizenship, the urban and the intertwined axis through imaginaries.

To advance in the recognition of the importance of the urban, beyond the preoccupations for the sectoral elements that compose it, it is important to understand that cities are social and historical phenomena particularly related to human beings and with a particularly important spatial component. Indeed, the building, modification and restructuring processes of the urban space are the instance that serves as a bridge between the global functioning of the city and the particular operation of each of its components. The analysis and the definitions of solutions for cities' problems are not achieved satisfactorily through the sum of specialized knowledge. For the design of strategies and programs, a relation of the interdependent multi-causality between 4 groups of elements is necessary: 1) the soil, public services, homes, equipment, transportation, and public space; 2) the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions; 3) the instances of the linkages and regulations between the State, territorial entities and civilian society; y 4) the urban space that is expressible in its social and historical manifestation for providing an easier pedagogical understanding in physic and collective terms.

Talking about the city as an institution filled with imagery implies its conception as a cultural creation within a universe of meanings that establishes society in general and specific societies in particular. The truly interesting goal is being able to show how this universe of meanings and imagery is heading slowly but certainly heading, in a given moment, towards building a city.

For a deep understanding of what city is and is not, it is necessary to show in what sense it is a social expression. A city is what we all are and what nobody is, what is never absent and almost never there as it is, a not-being more real than any other being, that in which we are submerged but that we can never apprehend directly. It is an indefinite dimension, even if it is closed instant after instant; a definite structure and at the same time changing; and objectifiable articulation in individuals categories. Is that which articulates a unit beyond all differences. The city can not present itself as an institution and in an institution.

A city is a very particular formation: it is a creation that configures a worked spatial form, built and rebuilt through time. It is not visible as a finished or complete creation, but as we know in a fragmented way. The city is never fully encompassed as meaningful imagery. All the contrary, it emerges from the dueling of mankind in a historical moment of its development, in the deepest and most hidden of its being. It manifests always in a semi-hidden fashion, submerged. It only comes up to the surface through the fragmentation of existence: houses, streets, service networks, infrastructure, architecture, the building of physical and spiritual spaces.

There is no need to say that the main interest of our contemporary world is appearances. Fashion, movies, advertising and the body itself are interested in appearances. While the platonic philosophy seemed to state that we must not trust the apparent because it is the source of deceit, the actual world seemed to be fully committed to the appearances «hoax». Our world is a superficial one and the media, accordingly to a commonly spread idea, are there for ratifying that in those appearances are the closest we could ever be to a renaissance of the world. If modernity disenchanted the world by explaining the world via the techno-scientific rationality and turning the most poetic mysteries from the beginnings of time and pulsion of the instant in a way of being our lives in which in every one of those moments our lives went away. Our times are characterized by constant pressure for living new things, experimenting them, jumping into the void in an attempt to entrance the modern self, a self cloistered in the routine of working day to day life.

Thus, filled with experiences, this world is not the same after the existence of Coco Chanel, who thought the modern women apparel, John Cage who stated the role of silence in contemporary music or Maurits Cornelis Escher who, by painting a hand drawing another, recoded the relationship between the spectator and the oeuvre. All of them creators of the apparent that from the surfaces and the substracts have widened the frontiers that contain the human experience.

The structures built by the citizen are there to explain the human dimension that reason is not able to dominate, this is, the scenarios for its participation in the city. In this sense, what we live today with the explosion of the image is also related to the explosion of the citizen inside a city that re-invents significant surfaces that lead, through screens and data electronic networks, new movie myths with the appearance of cinema heroes or

brands. The images, then give existence to these new myths that are stars or celebrities. But on occasions, these are only mediatic myths and do not answer with the same deepness that the classic myths to the fundamental matters of human life.

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