URBANISM AND DICTATORSHIP: PERSPECTIVES OF THE FIELD OF URBAN STUDIES
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> Politics is an art, perhaps the highest and most all-encompassing there is, and we, we who are now shaping modern German politics, feel like artistic people, entrusted with the important task of shaping the People as a firm and contoured form out of the raw material of the masses. (Goebbels, 1933)[1]

In this passage from his 1933 public letter to Wilhelm Furtwängler, Joseph Goebbels synthesized the official understanding of the link between politics, art and society in the early steps of the Third Reich. By assuming the *ethos* of art, politics acquired a plastic agency to mold its objects —population and the state— as a unified entity in the form of a 'national-popular community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*); in turn, by infusing art with a political valence, it became part of a wider governmental apparatus that reshaped aesthetic discourses and practices. Similar remarks could be made about the ordering of cities and territories in this period. Dictatorial imaginations mobilized urbanism — including urban theory, urban design and planning— as a fundamental tool for social organization. Under their aegis the production of space became a moment in a wider production of society.

Many authors[2] suggest that this political-spatial nexus is intrinsic to modernity itself, beyond dictatorial regimes. In this light, I propose to use dictatorial urbanisms as an analytical opportunity to delve into some concealed features of modern urban design and planning.[3] This chapter explores some of these aspects from a theoretical standpoint, focusing on the development of dictatorial planning mentalities and spatial rationalities and drawing links to other historical episodes in order to inscribe the former in a broader genealogy of urbanism. Needless to say, I don't suggest that we use dictatorships as mere templates to understand modern productions of space. Instead, these cases provide a crude version of some fundamental drives in the operationalization of urbanism as an instrument of social regulation, showing how far the modern imagination of sociospatial orderings can go. Dictatorial urbanisms constituted a set of experiences where many dreams and aspirations of modern planning went to die. But not, as the conventional account would have it, because the former were the antithesis of the latter, but rather because they worked as the *excess* of a particular orientation of modern spatial governmentalities — namely, their focus on calculation, social engineering and disciplinary spatialities, and their attempt to subsume a wide range of everyday practices under institutional structuration by means of spatial mediations. In my opinion the interest of dictatorial urbanisms lies in their role as key regulatory episodes in a longer history of our urban present. They stand as a threshold between the advent of planning in the late 19th and early 20th century, and its final consolidation as a

crucial state instrument after World War II. We need, therefore, to pay attention to these experiences vis-à-vis the alleged 'normal' development of the field in contemporary democratic countries in order to develop a full comprehension thereof.

Dictatorial urbanisms: calculation, discipline and the partition of the perceptible

I will focus on three aspects to survey the common ground of dictatorial and modern urbanism.

Emphasis on calculation and the expanded extent of spatial strategies. Stuart Elden has provided a recent account of the politics of calculation and their central role in the governmentalities of the Third Reich.[4] Calculation refers here to a particular approach to government that renders beings the objects of specific apparatuses of quantitative analysis. The inscription of such logic of rational calculus in the routine of an expanding state bureaucracy provided the conditions of possibility for the Holocaust.[5] On a less terrifying but still dramatic manner, this trend served as a basis for more ambitious territorial and urban schemes when applied to space, as epitomized in the comprehensive sociospatial restructuration of Polish regions in the Generalplan Ost or the attempt to 'germanize' the landscape of occupied countries.[6] This calculative territoriality turned populations into a mere dependent variable of abstract spatial strategies and ideologies. The tendency was also present elsewhere, of course. Let us think, for instance, of the mass displacement of entire population groups or whole settlements as part of endeavors to control territory, impose a particular social order or as a prerequisite for the development of new energy and resource extraction infrastructures in the USSR and Spain, or the regional-scale grid for the regeneration of the Italian Agro Pontino.[7] Yet, for all their ambition and capacity to jump scale in the design conception, these experiences were just illustrations of a dynamic already under way *before* the coming of dictatorships. Moreover, the scope and managerial attitude of this approach was also evident in contemporary experiences in democratic countries, with initiatives of massive territorial reorganization such as the New Deal's Tennessee Valley Authority. The expansionist determination of dictatorial states provided an opportunity to articulate new survey techniques with a reinvigorated territorial ambition. However, the spatial abstraction and homogenization of these approaches were already key features of a rationality that predated and went beyond dictatorships.

Preeminence of disciplinary governmentalities and social engineering. In his analyses of modern political rationalities Michel Foucault suggests two approaches based respectively on 'disciplinary' and 'liberal' means of government.[8] While the former is initially identified with the emergence of *Polizeiwissenschaft* in the early modern era, Foucault is explicit about the presence of this model in later periods. Police is understood here as the set of practices that preserve social order and enhance the state's forces by overseeing and nourishing the population, both promoting happiness and punishing those who jeopardize the system's stability.[9] While the identification of dictatorships with the repressive side of police states is commonplace,[10] it is also

important to highlight the positive, productive aspects of police under dictatorial rules, i.e. how their police regimes tried to enforce a particular type of citizenship through proactive discourses and practices.[11] This strategy was manifest, for example, in the way that access to a number of public services —especially housing programs— was contingent on a series of prerequisites related to political attitude, class, race, ethnic group, ideology, and so forth in countries like Spain, Germany or Italy; additionally, the mode of access itself was strategically configured in order to achieve a desired social outcome, for instance —to keep the focus on housing policy— through the active promotion of home ownership vis-à-vis renting, a path especially evident in Spain from the very beginning of Franco's rule. This regime of conditional citizenship was not only regulated and enforced at the level of access but had to be permanently verified through iterative practices of belonging embodied in everyday spaces: the workplace, community centers, churches and religious institutions, union houses, schools and youth associations, leisure locales, etc. The disciplining of the popular community was performative. The stages —monitored public facilities and public spaces— were subjected to a particularly intense representational regime. Different modes of formal and informal surveillance shaped the public realm on an everyday basis, sanctioning particular behaviors and uses of the city as correct.[12]

Attempt to 'totalize' social life by plastic means and built forms. The previous features were indeed contained within a wider logic which placed the nexus between politics and aesthetics at the center of the governmental *problematique*. The ideological significance of the built environment for dictatorial regimes was obvious in their fondness for monumental landmarks and axial schemes, which as key consensual fetishes were pervasive in different urban design initiatives, especially in the interwar period: from Speer's Germania Plan, to Iofan's Palace of the Soviets, to the attempt to restructure Madrid as an Imperial City in the early 1940s, or Mussolini's Via dell'Impero.[13] However, in an age when the habitat at large was substituting the monument as the quintessential spatial instrument of power,[14] we should look beyond these spectacular but obvious displays of the will to form social space. It is helpful, in this sense, to understand how dictatorships articulated the built form with everyday spatialities and institutional agency. They were a radical example of the modern state inclination to multiply institutions and ideologies in order to interpellate every potential facet of life, to submit the greatest possible number of aspects of social interaction to institutional regulation.[15] Let us think, for instance, of the governmental arrangements of the Italian, German, and Spanish regimes, and their dense —though usually contradictory— networks of institutions and administrative bodies aimed at organizing the individual's life in the largest possible depth: institutions for youngsters, for workers, for mothers, for the elderly, for leisure, and so forth.[16] This project was epitomized by the NSDAP's early notion of *Gleichschaltung* — the attempt to coordinate, to make commensurable and bring into line all aspects of sociality.[17] Throughout their lives, *gleichgeschalteten Staatsbürger* (disciplined citizens) should traverse a path defined by successive institutional belongings. More importantly for our interests here, all these institutions were increasingly associated to particular spaces and spatialities, to particular

architectural styles and so forth. This allocation of the population in terms of the perceived social role constituted an unprecedented extension of what philosopher Jacques Rancière calls the 'partition of the perceptible' (*le partage du sensible*), i.e. a spatial distribution of bodies, modes of doing and modes of being that becomes a "symbolic enrollment in the city", infusing places with certain meanings.[18] Each individual is assigned a position, a spatiality — *'Jedem das Seine'*. The allocation of bodies, tasks, social and symbolic practices in particular spaces blends a political and an aesthetic moment — in this context, planning and urban design become fundamental governmental instruments. The particular *raison d'État* and the institutional structure of dictatorial regimes enabled an intense progress along this line, even if more often than not the development remained in the realm of intellectual activity and propaganda.

Dictatorships and the genealogy of planning

Were the disciplinary partition of the perceptible and the associated apparatus of spatial calculation a governmental cul-de-sac, abandoned in the postwar era? Or, on the contrary, did they feature in later experiences, haunting the subsequent consolidation of planning? In pursuing these questions I don't pretend to resuscitate the debates about the continuity of dictatorships and their urbanisms with previous and later stages in their respective countries, but rather to inscribe them in a longer genealogical thread. From the point of view of governmentality and its framing of sociospatial formations, dictatorships intensified a trend that had been central to the evolution of planning and urban policy since their hatching in the context of nineteenth century social reform, both in Europe and North America.[19] In its early steps urban reform developed a series of different approaches, some of which were aimed at understanding, controlling and disciplining the rowdy, actually-existing popular community of working-class districts.[20] However, these attempts were usually contested with an insistent return of the repressed as social conflict reappeared in the riotous geography of the industrial city following the suppression of a particular aspect thereof. This perspective led to more proactive, positive interventions in the early 20th century. In the field of planning and urban design this shift took place not only with the proliferation of model settlements but also with a whole new approach to urban policy that mobilized public services and facilities in the attempt to produce *Qualitätsmenschen* (quality people).[21] It was this biopolitical endeavor to shape citizens and communities through a combination of negative and positive disciplinary regimes that totalitarian experiences tried to exacerbate. Yet, despite the apparent strength and solidity of their institutional architecture, dictatorships didn't really get to develop their most ambitious schemes in most cases, usually adopting looser, more open or even improvised approaches after a radically ideological beginning. In a way, the failure of this late disciplinary approach can be interpreted as a final station for the most severe aspects of sociospatial reform. In the aftermath of World War II, we identify a general turn towards more liberal spatial rationalities.

The creation of national communities was another central project for most of the experiences described in this book. It could be argued, however, that the dictatorial 'production of community' — especially in the Italian, German and Spanish cases— was in fact underpinned by a process of 'immunization', in the sense Roberto Esposito gives to this term.[22] States actively promoted a gradual detachment of the individual from the bonds, obligations and everyday mutual aid characteristic of the traditional community. This process, considered by Esposito an inherent aspect of modernity, was articulated by right-wing totalitarianisms in the paradoxical form of an integration of the individual in the chimeric national community. National comrades were encouraged to enclose themselves in the solipsistic sphere of private property and the family; at the same time, they were required to join the simulacrum of a cohesive, undifferentiated People in which affect and responsibilities were not owed to the neighbor but to an abstract idea of the nation and its guiding leader. This contradictory form of assimilation in the immunitarian project would be abandoned in the aftermath of World War II. The postwar *neue Heimat* [23] would be an aseptic space, seemingly void of ideology. Again, the procedures were liberalized in the postwar period. Immunized citizens were no longer guided —at least apparently— by state apparatuses but by a booming consumerist capitalism that proved much more powerful in its capacity to restructure social order.

In brief, dictatorial urbanisms were clearly integrated within the framework of certain quintessentially modern social projects, but they also showed an anachronistic revival of instruments from previous periods in this strategy. In devising their own respective ideal social orders, they used and improved the techniques for the analysis and control of cities and territories, developing them in a way that would remain as a legacy for subsequent phases. Yet, at the same time these urbanisms often adopted approaches characteristic of early, rudimentary stages of urban reform, making them coextensive to the whole citizenry and recasting them in extreme and sometimes brutal ways. As was the case with previous historic episodes, this disciplinary endeavor was only partially successful; significantly, it was everyday spatializations at the street level and not planning itself that achieved a deeper influence in the attempt to shape social order. The grand scheme of a comprehensive, fissure-less partition of the perceptible, embodied in a cohesive national community of disciplined subjects usually failed, paving the ground for subtler, more fragmented but still pervasive forms of sociospatial control and normalization in the second half of the 20th century.

Endnotes

[1] Quoted in Barck and Faber, *Ästhetik des Politischen*, 107.
[2] See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.
[3] There is a vast literature discussing the connections between dictatorships, modernity and modernization. For a reflection focusing on urban design and architecture in the German case see Harlander, *Heimstätte und Wohnmaschine*, 15–26.
[4] Elden, "National Socialism and calculation."
[5] Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 28.

[6] Wasser, *Himmlers Raumplanung im Osten*.

[7] E.g. see Polian, *Against their will*; Swyngedouw, "Technonatural revolutions"; Spiegel, *Agro Pontino*.

[8] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

[9] For a discussion see Elden, "Governmentality, calculation, territory."

[10] Bramsted, *Dictatorship and political police*.

[11] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 136–7.

[12] Jerram, *Streetlife*.

[13] Larsson, *Albert Speer*; Lizon, *Palace of the Soviets*; Sambricio, "Madrid, 1941"; Bodenschatz, *Städtebau für Mussolini*.

[14] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 232.

[15] Althusser, *Sur la reproduction*.

[16] De Grand, *Fascist Italy Nazi Germany*.

[17] See Elden, "National Socialism and calculation."

[18] Rancière, *Disagreement*, 23.

[19] See Boyer, *Urban Masses, Moral Order*; Ladd, *Urban Planning, Civic Order*; Lees, *Cities, Sin, Social Reform*.

[20] Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City*; Sevilla Buitrago, "Urbanismo y reproducción social."

[21] Ludwing Landmann's term in his defense of Frankfurt's program for the creation of public facilities during the Weimar Republic, quoted in Liebermann, "Luxury or Public Investment?," 209.

[22] Esposito, *Communitas*.

[23] The term, of course, takes the German case as an example, particularly the joint experience of Ernst May and ex-NSDAP official Hans Bernhard Reichow leading several interventions for the homonymous housing organization.

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