The urban section, the situated ambiances, and the "evidential paradigm": Tools for fabricating a shared view on the city[1]

O corte urbano, as ambiências situadas e o "paradigma indiciário": Ferramentas para a fabricação de um olhar compartilhado sobre a cidade

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Abstract: This article presents a theoretical discussion about the heuristic value of the descriptive instruments of the city in the research on situated ambiances, which is based on a reflection on the urban section and the epistemological model that Carlo Ginzburg named "evidential". This reflection was carried out in the context of an interdisciplinary field research on the issue of domestic waste collection in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. First, we characterize the disperse and heterogeneous elements – related to *subjects* and the built *space* – that the section permits gathering as "clues", which allows the visualization of an ambiance, conceived as a *unity*. Following that, we discuss the theoretical status of that unity, conceived as a *structure*. For this purpose, we introduce the distinction between *real object* and *object of knowledge*, as proposed in the beginning of the 20th century by the founder of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure. Through such a distinction, we seek to avoid a conception of space that is founded on a substantialist idea of "totality". Based on such considerations, the urban section will not be defined as a "representation of the space" (a *real object*), but rather as a "registry of a view" on it (a *theoretical object*). Lastly, as a writing technology, the urban section will be characterized as a tool for *fabricating a shared view on the city*. In this sense, it could contribute to establish a *common ground* of debate for the various and heterogeneous disciplinary fields and registries of knowledge about the sensory experience summoned by the notion of ambiance.
Keywords: urban section, ambiance, evidential paradigm, structure, totality, city, writing technologies, discourse analysis, phenomenology.

*Resumo***:** Este artigo apresenta uma discussão teórica sobre o valor heurístico dos instrumentos descritivos da cidade nas pesquisas sobre as ambiências situadas, a partir de uma reflexão sobre o corte urbano e o modelo epistemológico que Carlo Ginzburg chamou de "indiciário". Essa reflexão foi realizada no âmbito de uma pesquisa de campo interdisciplinar sobre o problema da coleta de lixo doméstico na cidade de São Paulo, Brasil. Primeiramente, buscamos caracterizar os elementos dispersos e heterogêneos – relativos aos *sujeitos* e ao *espaço* construído – que o corte permite reunir enquanto "pistas" que permitem visualizar uma ambiência, concebida enquanto *unidade*. Em seguida, discutimos o estatuto teórico dessa unidade, pensada como *estrutura*. Introduzimos, para tanto, a distinção entre *objeto real* e *objeto de conhecimento*, formulada em inícios do século XX pelo fundador da linguística moderna, Ferdinand de Saussure. Nosso intuito é com isso evitar uma concepção de espaço baseada em uma ideia substancialista de "totalidade". A partir dessas considerações, definiremos o corte não como uma "representação do espaço" (um *objeto real*), mas como o "registro de um olhar" sobre ele (um *objeto teórico*). Por último, enquanto tecnologia de escrita, o corte será caracterizado como uma *ferramenta para a fabricação de um olhar compartilhado sobre a cidade*. Nesse sentido, ele pode contribuir para estabelecer um *terreno comum* de debate entre os diversos e heterogêneos campos disciplinares e registros de saber sobre a experiência sensível convocados pela noção de ambiência.
*Palavras-chave***:** corte urbano, ambiência, paradigma indiciário, estrutura, totalidade, cidade, tecnologias da escrita, análise do discurso, fenomenologia.

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1. Introduction: the technical instruments and the constitution of scientific disciplines

The exploration of new writing technologies, as a support for the research on urban ambiances, leads us to a broader reflection in the history of science about the role of technical instruments in the constitution of scientific disciplines. Paul Henry – in his discussion on the Discourse Analysis founded by Michel Pêcheux in France at the end of the 1960's – states that the establishment of a science requires instruments (which can be either "material" or "abstract") that are sought for in already established scientific or technical practices (cf. HENRY, 1997, p. 16-17). The author offers the example of the weighing scale. First used as a technical tool in commerce, it became, with Galileo's work, the object of the scaling theory, which composes the physics theory. This transformation, according to Henry, represents an example of the production of a "homogeneity" or adequacy between the object and the methods of a discipline. With basis on the work of Thomas Herbert (Pêcheux's pseudonym) ([1966] 2011), the author also states that this "loan" of instruments always requires a work of adapting, reinventing, and re-elaborating:

> […] each time that an instrument or experiment is transferred from one scientific area to another, or a *fortiori* from one science to another, this instrument or experiment is to some degree reinvented, and thus becoming specific to this science, or to this particular area of science. […] adjusting a scientific discourse to itself consists of, ultimately, an appropriation of the instrument by the theory. This is what makes the scientific activity a *practice* (*ibid.*, p. 17, *our translation*).

Scientific practices, at the same time, are not developed outside a philosophical practice (*ibid.*). Therefore, the (re)elaboration of the instruments on which a discipline bases itself, always presupposes a reflection – more or less conscious – on the nature of its object, as well as a stance on knowledge, in a general manner.

Based on such considerations, the following question arises: what is the object of the urban ambiance research, and how does it direct the (re)elaboration of instruments towards the production of a "homogeneity" with its method?

Defined as "space-time qualified from a sensory point of view" (cf. THIBAUD, 2004; 2011), the notion of ambiance summons perceptible phenomena that relate *subjects*, the *sensitive space*, and the *signification*, in a more complex manner than their simple sum. An ambiance is a *sensory unity*, in the sense that it conceives the space of human life not as the physical space in itself, but as the space as apprehended by the

subject, through the "concreteness" of his body and his sensorial faculty. The concept calls into question the classic positivist dualism between subject/object, along with others that are correlated – such as body/spirit and object/quality (cf. THIBAUD, *ibid*.; DEWEY, 1980, p. 210). An ambiance is also a *symbolic unity* (RODRÍGUEZ-ALCALÁ, 2013a, 2013b, 2014), given that, as affirmed by Dewey, the sensory apprehension of objects and events in a given situation is inseparable from the previous significations attributed to them in a particular social and historical context (cf. DEWEY *apud* THIBAUD, 2004, p. 242)[3].

It is the complexity of this new intrinsically heterogeneous object that orientates the re-appropriation of traditional tools for the notation of spaces available in the field of urban architectural research. This work is done through the incorporation of new technologies of graphic registering (photography, audio, and video) and of narratives around the place and the urban everyday life. We can mention numerous exploratory methods, such as first-person accounts, commented city-walks, recurrent observation, sound reactivation, sensory ethnography, and, more recently, the urban section[4]. Their elaboration is a result of a methodological effort to deal with the juxtaposition of static and dynamic elements, which are, simultaneously, technical and sensitive, and of different scales and dimensions that constitute an ambiance (built spaces, sensory impressions, body movement, affection, discourses…).

The aim of the present article is to present a theoretical discussion on the heuristic dimension of these descriptive devices – understood as knowledge devices –, based on the reflection around the urban section and the epistemological paradigm that Carlo

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[3] The definition of the relation between signification and linguistic form will define the status of language in the dynamic of ambiances. This is a point in which phenomenology and Discourse Analysis diverge. As we discuss in other works (RODRÍGUEZ-ALCALÁ, 2013a, 2013b, 2014), phenomenology assumes a dualist stance on this relation, as it considers signification – which is inseparable from perception – as a *prior*, thus, *separated* phenomenon from language; therefore, language would not intervene in the constitution of perceptive processes. Discourse Analysis, of materialist filiation, does not separate form and signification, as it conceives the linguistic form as the *sensitive materiality*, as the *support*, as the *body* of signification. Consequently, if there is no perception without signification, neither can there be signification without language – which makes language a condition for the possibility of sensitive perception, and of the universe of human experience, in general (*ibid*.).

[4] These various methods have been in development since the 1970's by researchers linked to the Centre for Research on Sound Space and Urban Environment (CRESSON), of the Grenoble National School of Architecture (ENSAG), in France. For a detailed description of these methods, cf. AUGOYARD, 1979; GROSJEAN & THIBAUD, 2001; THIBAUD, 2003; THIBAUD & SIRET, 2012; TIXIER, 2016; TIXIER & DOUSSON, 2016; AMPHOUX, 2011; AMPHOUX & TIXIER, 2017; POUSIN, 2011, 2012, 2014; POUSIN *et al*. 2016, among others.

Ginzburg named "evidential" (cf. RODRÍGUEZ-ALCALÁ, 2011)[5]. This discussion was carried out in the context of an interdisciplinary field research on the issue of domestic waste collection in the city of São Paulo, Brazil[6].

We seek to answer the following questions: what are the theoretical issues involved in the elaboration of the section, bearing in mind the epistemological implications of the notion of ambiance? How does one define the consistency – the "homogeneity", the adequacy – of the instrument in relation to that object?

We will start our exposition with a brief presentation of the section and of the field study, in order to situate the questions proposed above.

2. The "synoptic potential" of the section and the research on the urban space

According to the definition of Marie-Claire Robic, a section, or transect, designates to geographers

> a system for land observation or the representation of a space, along a linear path and following the vertical dimension, aimed at emphasizing a superposition, a spatial succession or relations between phenomena: geological section, bio-geographical section or transect[7].

Such a notation system has been in development since the 19th century, as a tool for studying natural and social phenomena. Recently, it became a current mode of graphical description for geologists, geographers, and landscapers. However, it is still rarely used for studying cities (TIXIER, 2016, p. 133)[8].

When applied on an urban scale, the section is traditionally a static and technical mode of description of the constructive data, as indicated by Tixier (*ibid*.). However,

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[5] Other works in the domain of Discourse Analysis have explored, in the last years, Ginzburg reflections about the "evidential paradigm". Cf. SOUZA, GARCIA & FARIA, 2014; TFOUNI, DOS SANTOS, BARIJOTTO & SILVA, 2016; TFOUNI, PEREIRA & MILANEZ (eds.), 2018, among others.

[6] Project *PIR Ville et Environment* – CNRS – PUCA *"L'ambiance est dans l'air: la dimension atmosphérique des ambiances architecturales et urbaines dans les approches environnementalistes."* (2009-2010), coordinated by Nicolas Tixier (cf. TIXIER *et al.*, 2011). It was a collaboration between Brazilian and European institutions: the Laboratory of Urban Studies (LABEURB/NUDECRI), at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil; the Environmental Company of the State of São Paulo (CETESB), Brazil; the CRESSON/ENSAG Laboratory; the Environmental Service and the Urban Prospective Service of the city of Grenoble, France; the Social Science Research Centre (PACTE), at the University of Joseph Fourier, Grenoble, France; the Laboratory of Social Dynamics and Spatial Reconstruction (LADYS), at the Paris I University, France; and the G. d'Annunzio University, Pescara, Italy.

[7] http://www.hypergeo.eu/spip.php?article345

[8] For a detailed presentation of the history of this methodological instrument, its origins, first applications, transformations, and current uses, cf. TIXIER, 2016, 2017; TIXIER *et al.* 2011, 2016; POUSIN, 2011, 2012, 2014; POUSIN *et al.* 2016.

according to the same author, it animates itself when suggesting a synchrony of practical gestures that offer an opening for the narrative – for a multitude of possible narratives (*ibid.*, p. 132). Such an opening allows for the inscription of texts, photographs, drawings and other forms through which a place is enunciated, to which we more frequently have access *in situ* or *en parcours* (*ibid.*). The sensibility to the inhabitant's narrative, to their way of enunciating the place, with its ambiances and practices, is a central issue for the comprehension of the "ordinary factory of the city", in the author's expression (*ibid.*).

The general goal of the research carried out in São Paulo was elaborating an instrument with the characteristics described above, through the incorporation of techniques linked to the transect, to the sensitive *parcours* and to the narrative of place. On the one hand, the section was thought out to methodologically operationalize an approximation between the works on architectural and urban ambiances and the environmental studies (cf. TIXIER *et al.*, 2011). On the other, to articulate – in practical and operational terms – the academic research field and the field of urban/territorial management (*ibid.*). Its purpose was to explore possible meeting grounds between perspectives that are traditionally distant from one another in their approach of the city, and which deal with the following issues:

(a) different *scales* of the urban view, given that the studies on ambiances focus on local issues – related to the sensory experience *in situ* –, and which are usually classified as *micro*; while the environmental studies, in general, work with global issues, related to the environment and a *macro* view of urban management;

(b) different *disciplines* in academia (architecture and urbanism, environmental studies, geography, sociology, psychology, language studies), whose objects are more directly or indirectly tied to one or another scale (*micro* or *macro*);

(c) different social *institutions*, in the attempt of promoting a dialogue between academia, the government, and civil society, with the purpose of achieving subsidies for public policies related to urban waste management.

It is with the purpose of interrogating such a methodological gesture – which is, at the same time, *multifocal*, *multidisciplinary*, and *multi-institutional* – that the exploration of the "synoptic potential" of the section was proposed. This is a characteristic pointed out by the urbanist Patrick Geddes, in the early 20th century. According to Tixier, Melemis and Brayer (2011, p. 247), the section permits one to:

>…inscribe in watermark, in a graphical and static representation, the narratives of life, and also the perceptions of ambiances. The section does not imply the prevalence of a discipline, nor exhaustivity of data regarding a place; on the contrary, it selects everything that it finds in its way and authorizes, precisely, the links between *architectural*, *sensory* and *social dimensions*, between what is *private* and what is *public*, and what is *mobile* and what is *built-in*, etc. (*our translation, emphasis added*).

At this point, we would like to highlight some aspects of such a proposal, which hinge on the central ideas of *heterogeneity* and, simultaneously, of *relation* to the definition of what is the urban space, or even the space of social life, in general. More specifically:

i. The characterization of the (urban) space as a set of *heterogeneous facts*, which present themselves as *separated*, *fragmented*, and *dispersed*, but that establish *relations* between themselves, and from which results a *unity*.

ii. The acknowledgment that these relations *are not evident* and that the theoretical work must consist in an effort to *make them become visible* – hence the value of the heuristic gesture of *forging relations*.

iii. The necessity of elaborating *methodological tools* to enable the technical and analytical operationalization of that gesture of forging relations.

Precisely such aspects define the "synoptic potential" of the section as proposed by Geddes. As stated by Tixier, Melemis and Brayer (*ibid.*), it is the capacity of co-presentation and co-conception – in disciplinary terms – of the section as a graphic tool that contributes to the effort of making visible the relations between heterogeneous phenomena that are related to society and to space. In the specific case of the Scottish urbanist, what is at stake are the relations between forms of collective human life and the frameworks of physical geography:

>At the beginning of the 20th century, the Scottish urbanist Patrick Geddes insisted on the "synoptic" potential of the section, that is, the ability *to make relations visible*, a result of long historical periods that are observable in the present, which link the *collective human social forms* to the *framework of physical geography*. His use of this graphical projection aimed to *combine different disciplinary perspectives* into *one single visual representation*. (*ibid.*, p. 246, *our translation, emphasis added*).

At this point, in relation to our research, we should ask: which are the elements that are related by the section in a metropolis such as São Paulo, regarding the issue of the waste collection in the city?

3. The city of São Paulo: environmental and sensitive aspects of the domestic waste management

The research sought to gather architectural, social, environmental, and sensory issues linked to the problem of domestic waste in São Paulo. Its focus was the journey of the garbage collection trucks, from the city centre to the sanitary landfill. Four districts along this journey of approximately 35 kilometers were selected (cf. OKAMURA, 2011).

The objective was to comprehend the impact of the waste issue on the ambiance and on the environment of the various and heterogeneous districts that the journey of the waste crosses. How do inhabitants deal with the waste? Does it have a negative impact on the surrounding areas (unpleasant odor, air pollution, attractiveness of animals)? How does the public service of collection work at the location? Is there a work of sorting and recycling the waste to minimize the environmental impact? (cf. OKAMURA, *ibid*.; MASSON & BRAYER, 2010).
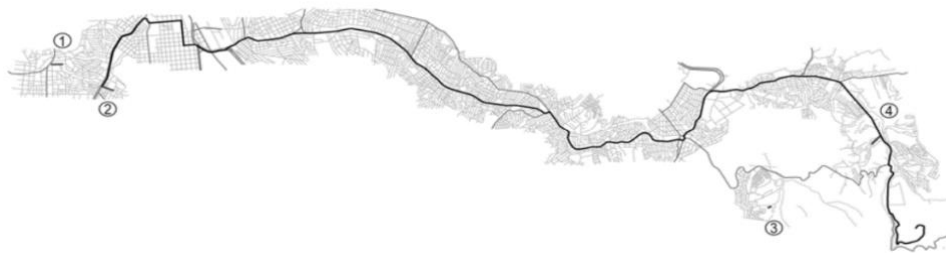
SELECTED PLACES OF STUDY

Figure 1: Map of East part of São Paulo agglomeration. The thickest line represents the way followed by garbage trucks from "transbordo" (#2) to sanitary landfill (spiral at the right end of the line). (Figure taken from MASSON & BRAYER, 2010)

Figure 2: Block plans of the four selected neighborhoods.
The sections lines are represented in black (Figure taken
from MASSON & BRAYER, 2010).

The research was divided into three stages[9]:

a) The data collection

On the one hand, data concerning environment and built forms was collected, taking into account existing documents (maps, official measures, technical and research projects) and photographs taken by the research team. On the other, data related to practices and inhabitants' narratives was collected. The team interviewed inhabitants, local experts, administrators, and workers; they visited waste treatment factories, as well

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[9] For a more detailed description of the field study and of the elaboration process of the sections, see OKAMURA, 2011; TIXIER, MELEMIS & BRAYER, 2011; MASSON & BRAYER, 2010; TIXIER, 2016.

as the sanitary landfill, and followed waste collection vehicles (cf. OKAMURA, *ibid.*; MASSON & BRAYER, *ibid.*).

b) The mounting of the sections

The first step consisted in identifying the more relevant issues that emerged from that set of heterogeneous data, related to space, practices, atmosphere, environment, and policies. The next step was selecting the data considered to be more representative of each of those issues. The mounting of this data resulted, thus, in a "hybrid" instrument, that related the characteristics of the physical morphology of the place (of the habitations and the public space of the street) to excerpts from the interviews and reports of social practices (cf. MASSON & BRAYER, *ibid.*).
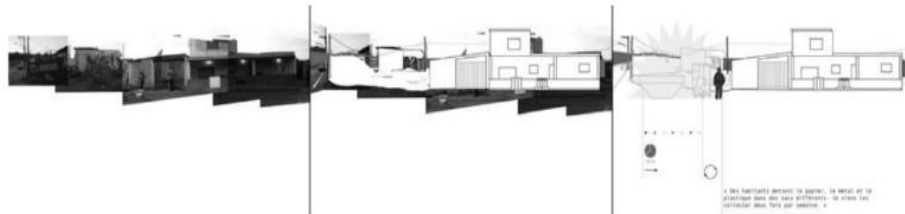
STAGES OF THE SECTION MOUNTING

Figure 3: Stages: 1) photographs collage; 2) drawing shapes and background; 3) placing people, practices and texts (Figure taken from MASSON & BRAYER, 2010).
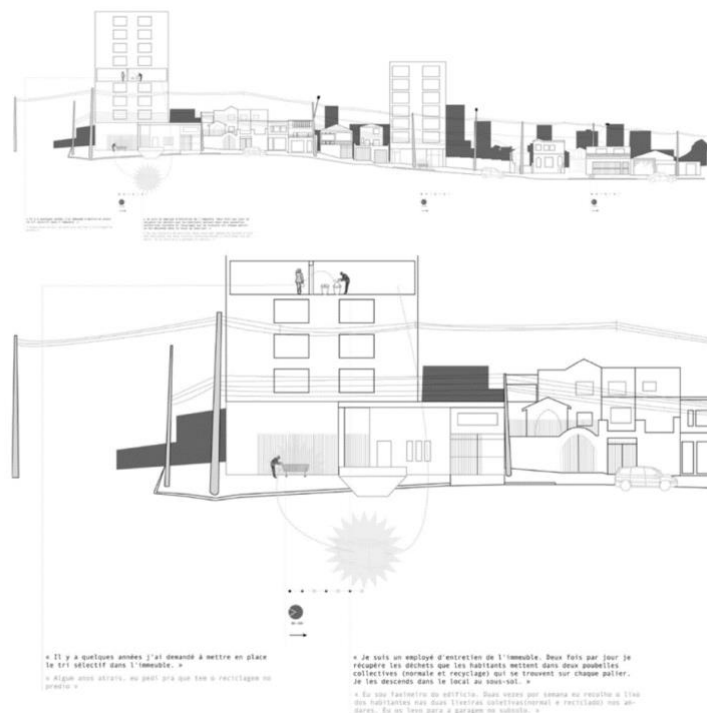
SECTION #1 - VILA MARIANA

Figure 4: Section #1 – Vila Mariana: full section and zoom. The length of the printed drawing was over 2.5 meter (Figure taken from MASSON & BRAYER, 2010).

c) The fulfillment of the "long table"

The last step of the project consisted in the fulfillment of a public atelier, which summoned the subjects involved in the research (scientist, administrators, technicians, dwellers), so that they could visualize the executed sections spread out on a *long table*[10]. In contrast to the ritual of the round table, gives Amphoux (2011), the long table is a more informal experience, which incentives people to speak in a more spontaneous manner than in ordinary interview experiences. It also enables exercising a panoramic view of the sectioned territory, and, simultaneously, zoom in on specific details (*ibid.*). Thus, the experience allows: a) a collective discussion on the results of the research; b) an intervention on the (re)writing of the section, by adding or excluding elements, in a gesture closely related to the one of the graffiti artist (*ibid*.); c) the identification of polemical issues; and d) an inventory of possible actions (cf. AMPHOUX, *ibid*.; TIXIER, 2016).

Figure 5: "Long table" of debate on the executed sections. São Paulo, July, 2009 (Image taken from AMPHOUX, 2011, p. 155).

It is not of interest of this article to focus on the methodological and technical challenges involved in each of the steps of the construction of the section, neither on the discussions carried out during the "long table" nor on its impact on the outline of potential urban projects[11]. Our goal is to approach a more general question, as we have already enunciated: what is the theoretical gesture that orientates the elaboration of an instrument

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[10] For a detailed description of the "long table" device, see AMPHOUX, 2011; POUSIN, 2014; TIXIER, 2016; TIXIER & DOUSSON, 2016.

[11] These issues have been already discussed by other authors, such as OKAMURA, 2011; TIXIER, MELEMIS & BRAYER, 2011; MASSON & BRAYER, 2010; AMPHOUX, 2011; TIXIER, 2016.

such as the section, considering the epistemological implications of the notion of ambiance? That is:

- How to conceptualize such an operation that consists in gathering, in one single graphic instrument, heterogeneous elements, of different dimension and scales?

- To what extent does that allow one to visualize the unity of the space, be it in its sensory or environmental dimension?

- How is the exhaustiveness of the instrument defined in relation to that unity, considering its necessary fragmentary nature, and the simplification that every writing technique represents?

- How to conceive the articulation of the different registries of knowledge on the territory, linked to scientific, technical, administrative, or daily practices?

- How to define the potential relevance of the section for the outline of public policies?

4. The section device and the "police method"

Bearing in mind the observations on the "synoptic potential" of the section, we propose to take a detour, and to characterize the elaboration of such an instrument with basis on an image: the police method. That is, the image of the detective that gathers in *one single framework – one single field of vision –* disperse and apparently disconnected clues, one next to the other, in order to visualize relations between them, and get to the author of the crime. We can also think of the image of a medical doctor, who in a similar procedure registers the symptoms of the patient in a framework, in order to identify the disease (similar to *Dr. House* from the television series). It is worth noting that what is at stake in both stances is the issue of the *method* and of the *view*, which allows going beyond the evidence, in order to see regularities between apparently disperse and disconnected traces (here we are thinking about the notions of *dispersion* and of *regularity* of Michel Foucault's archeological method). In an analogous manner, it is possible to consider the different heterogeneous facts that conform the urban space as "clues", as "symptoms" of our ways of inhabiting the space. Such "clues" are dispersed in different scales and institutional instances, and that the section enables uniting, in an attempt to *visualize relations* between them, and permitting their *interpretation* – given that their *signification* is *not evident*.

In our understanding, among the various and complex issues involved in the (re)elaboration of that methodological tool, a central one is to determine the *status* of these facts that it allows to relate, as well as the *nature* of the unity that results from these relations. This leads us to the observations on the issue of the *view* in the analysis of the everyday experience, which we present in the following section.

5. The opacity of the space: between the *evidence of the image* and the *decentralization of the view*

It's not a usual thing to do, to say: 'Well, this evening I'm going to examine that corner of the ceiling.'[12] It is with these words of Harvey Sacks that Jean Paul Thibaud and Nicolas Tixier start a debate, in their article "L'ordinaire du regard" (1998), about a central issue for the analysis of the ordinary experience, which is the object of ambiance studies. The issue is the difficulty of describing the triviality of the urban space, of the common places of everyday life – that is, details that seem insignificant and anodyne, but are revealing evidence of forms of sociability that characterize the city.

According to the authors, such difficulty does not come from the fact that these details are not *concrete* or not *visible to the naked eye*, but precisely from the fact that they usually go unnoticed because they are *too visible* and *too familiar* (just as the "corner of the ceiling" in Sack's citation). Therefore, the issue that concerns this type of description is one of *affecting the conditions of the view*, in order to question its *effect of evidence* and *naturality*; this leads to a reflection about the *place of the observer* and the *role of memory* in the practice of observation (*ibid*.).

This is the main issue that the aforementioned authors set out to discuss in their article about the work of the writer Georges Perec. According to them, rather than the *image* itself, it is a matter of the *view* that is at stake in Perec's descriptions of the urban public space. These descriptions produce a *decentralization of the axis of the view* that put to the test the evidence of the *inhabitant's view* – thus destabilizing the perceptive habits and the effect of familiarity with the world.

In this debate around Perec's work, we can identify a specific stance on the everyday account of the experience, which we propose, in this article, to extend to other

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[12] SACKS, Harvey, "Lecture 1. Doing 'being ordinary'", In: *Lectures on conversation*, Vol. II, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995, p. 217. Available at:
https://archive.org/details/HarveySacksLecturesOnConversationVolumesIIITheEstateOfHarveySacks199
5/page/n3. Accessed on April 2, 2019

urban instances and to associate with the epistemological model that Carlo Ginzburg named "evidential".

6. Ginzburg and the "evidential paradigm"

6.1. The emergence of the paradigm

Ginzburg also starts his well-known essay "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm" ([1979] 2013) with an epigraph: *God is in the detail*. It was taken from the *Mnemosyne Atlas* of the art historian Aby Warburg. In it, we find a certain resonation with Sack's quote as related to Ginzburg's reflections on a manner of executing research, characterized by a *zest* for the *revealing detail*, for the *minutia*. Emerged in the late 19th century, this model would come to affect various disciplinary areas, from historiography and history of art to paleontology or psychoanalysis.

As pointed out by the author, one of the events that marked the emergence of this epistemological model – or paradigm – was the publication of a series of articles on Italian paintings in the journal *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* [Visual Art Journal], between 1874 and 1876. The articles were signed by Ivan Lermolieff and Johannes Schwarze – both pseudonyms of the Italian Giovanni Morelli, who proposed a new method of attribution for antique paintings.

To distinguish copies from originals, Morelli stated that one must not focus, as was so often the case, on the most conspicuous characteristics of a painting, which are the easiest to imitate (as the famous Leonardo's smiles, for example). Instead, one should examine the most trivial details that would have been the least influenced by the characteristics of the artist's school – such as earlobes, fingernails, shapes of fingers and of toes (cf. GINZBURG, *ibid.*, p. 87).

According to Ginzburg, this method was highly criticized and thought to be mechanical and grossly positivist, causing it to fall out of favor. The interest in Morelli's writings was renewed by the art historian Edgar Wind. This author saw in Morelli a typical example of a modern attitude towards the work of art, an attitude leading to the appreciation of the details of a work of art, rather than focusing on the work as a whole (*ibid.*). Wind established a parallel between Morelli's gesture, the police investigation method, and the "modern psychology" method – a reference to the Freudian psychoanalysis. Regarding the police method, Wind comments:

> Morelli's books [...] look different from those of any other writer on art; they are sprinkled with illustrations of fingers and ears, careful records on the characteristic trifles by which an artist gives himself away, as a criminal might be spotted by a fingerprint […] any art gallery studied by Morelli begins to resemble a rogue's gallery (WIND[13] *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 88).

Ginzburg points out that this analogy was also developed by other authors, such as, for example, Enrico Castelnuovo. Castelnuovo approximated Morelli's presumptive method to the one ascribed, almost contemporaneously, to Sherlock Holmes by his creator, Arthur Conan Doyle. According to the author, the art connoisseur resembles the detective who discovers the perpetrator of a crime – or the artist behind a painting – based on *evidence that is imperceptible to most people* (cf. GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 88).

Regarding the parallel with psychoanalysis, Wind observes:

> To some of Morelli's critics it has seemed odd that personality should be found where personal effort is weakest. But on this point modern psychology would certainly support Morelli: our inadvertent little gestures reveal our character far more authentically than any formal posture that we may carefully prepare. (WIND *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 89)

It is interesting to note that Freud himself was an admirer of the Sherlock Holmes literature and a reader of Morelli (everything points to this being the same period in which he was studying lapses)[14]. Freud cites him in the essay "The Moses Michelangelo" (1914), while establishing an association between the Morellian and the psychoanalytical methods:

> Long before I had any opportunity of hearing about psycho-analysis, I learnt that a Russian art-connoisseur, Ivan Lermolieff […], had caused a revolution in the art galleries of Europe by questioning the authorship of many pictures, showing how to distinguish copies from originals with certainty, and constructing hypothetical artists for those works or art whose former supposed authorship had been discredited. He achieved this by *insisting that attention should be diverted from the general impression and main features of a picture, and he laid stress on the significance of minor details*, of things like the drawing of the finger-nails, of the lobe of an ear, of aureoles and such *unconsidered trifles which the copyist neglects to imitate and yet which every artist executes in his own characteristic way*. I was then greatly interested to learn that the Russian pseudonym concealed the identity of an Italian

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[13] Edgar Wind: "Some points of contact between history and natural science". In: SAXL, Fritz; PANOFSKY, Erwin; WIND, Edgar *et al. Philosophy and History. Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*. London Oxford University Press, 1936, p. 255-264.

[14] Ginzburg remembers that Freud himself revealed his interest in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes to a patient (*the wolf-man*).

> physician called Morelli […]. It seems me that this method of inquiry is closely related to the technique of psycho-analysis. It, too, is *accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from unconsidered or unnoticed details, from the rubbish heap, as it were, of our observations* […] (FREUD [1914] *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid.*, p. 89-90, *emphasis added*)

The importance of Morelli's essays to the young Freud, still far from psychoanalysis, is indicated by Freud himself:

> […] the idea of a *method of interpretation* based on *discarded information*, on *marginal data*, considered in some way *significant*. By this method, *details* usually considered of *little importance*, even *trivial or 'minor'*, provided *the key for approaching higher aspects of human spirit* […]. (*ibid.*, p. 91, *emphasis added*)

The similarity between Morelli's, Holmes', and Freud's methods lies in the recognition that infinitesimal traces permit the comprehension of a deeper – otherwise unattainable – reality: *traces* or, more precisely, *symptoms* (for Freud); *clues* (for Holmes); and *pictorial marks* (for Morelli) (*ibid.*, p. 92).

From what has been presented, we should formulate the following issues that are relevant to our discussion.

First, it is important to highlight that, if this method focuses on the minor details, on particular features that are often neglected, it is not insofar as they are relevant *per se*. They are relevant because they speak of a *whole*, that is, of a more general reality – according to the aforementioned examples, the master of a painting, the author of a crime, or even the psychic structure of subjects. Therefore, there is no opposition or dichotomy between *particular* and *general*, between *micro* and *macro* levels of analysis.

A second issue regards the nature of these clues and the work of interpreting them. We refer back to the remarks made on the *view* and the *method*, and the issue of *evidence*. Such clues are imperceptible and go unnoticed, despite being "concrete" (i.e. *material*) and *in plain sight*. The problem of the vision resides in the *view of the layman*. That is, it is necessary an *observational device* – a *method* – which allows the *affecting of that view*, so that it can *see*, and thus *interpret*.

Lastly, this interpretive method is based on the possibility of *establishing relations* – analogies, parallels, oppositions… – between *apparently disassociated* clues. This represents a crucial point on the examples of Sherlock Holmes' shrewdness, as illustrated

by the following excerpts taken from "The Cardboard Box"[15]. The tale starts with the event of two severed ears being sent through the mail to a maiden lady, in a scene that is closely observed by Holmes and commented on by Watson:

> Holmes paused, and I [Watson] was surprised, on glancing round, to see that *he was staring with singular intentness at the lady's profile*. Surprise and satisfaction were both for an instant to be read upon his eager face, though when she glanced round to find out the cause of his silence he had become as demure as ever. (CONAN DOYLE, 1892, p. 932 *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 89, *emphasis added*)

We should note that the key to Holmes solving the case was not only the meticulous observation of the anatomical characteristics of the ears *themselves*, but also his ability to establish an *analogy* between the ears received through the mail and the ears of the girl who had received them. Thanks to this analogy, Holmes concludes that the victim was a close relative of hers:

> As a medical man, you are aware, Watson, that there is no part of the body which varies so much as the human ear. Each ear is a rule quite distinctive and differs from all other ones. In last year's *Anthropological Journal* you will find two short monographs from my pen upon the subject. I had, therefore, examined the ears in the box with the eyes of an expert, and had carefully noted their anatomical peculiarities. Imagine my surprise then, when, *on looking at Miss Cushing, I perceived that her ear corresponded exactly with the female ear which I had just inspected. The matter was entirely beyond coincidence. There was the same shortening of the pinna, the same broad curve of the upper lobe, the same convolution of the inner cartilage. In all essentials it was the same ear. Of course, I at once saw the enormous importance of the observation. It was evident that the victim was a blood relation, and probably a very close one*. (CONAN DOYLE, *ibid.*, p. 937-938, *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid.*, *emphasis added*)

6.2. The historical roots of the paradigm

Ginzburg links the evidential model to the method of the medical semiotics, as a discipline that is characterized by the diagnosis of diseases that are inaccessible to direct observation based on superficial symptoms, which are sometimes irrelevant to the layman's view. He also highlights the biographical coincidence that Morelli, as well as Conan Doyle and Freud, were all medical doctors. However, still according to the author, the roots of this model go much deeper. Ginzburg links it to the image of the Neolithic

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[15] In: CONAN DOYLE, Arthur. 1892. *The complete Sherlock Holmes short stories*. London, 1976.

hunter, which the author characterizes as perhaps the oldest gesture in the intellectual history of humanity.

The human being, argues Ginzburg, learned to sniff out, record, interpret, and classify such infinitesimal traces as, for example, broken branches, excrement, tufts of hair, entangled feathers, or stagnating odors, in order to reconstruct the shape and the movements of his *invisible prey*. This gesture enabled the hunter to produce an *account*, a *narrative*:

> The hunter would have been the first to 'tell a story' because he alone was able to read, in the silent, nearly imperceptible tracks left by his prey, a *coherent sequence of events*. (*ibid*., p. 93, *emphasis added*)

It is worth pointing out that, in this detailed observation of clues, what is at stake is an exercise of *interpretation* – of *reading* – based on the possibility of *relating clues* to establish a *coherent set of events* – which *could not have been directly experienced by the observer*. In other words, it represents the capacity to *go from the known to the unknown, with basis on evidence*: "when causes cannot be reproduced", acknowledges Ginzburg, "there is nothing to do but to deduce them from their effects" (*ibid*., p. 105-106).

The author goes back in history in order to provide examples of this form of evidential knowledge, present in the most various and heterogeneous contexts: from Babylonian diviners practices (dedicated to reading messages written by the gods in stones and in the heavens), to graphology works of the Renaissance (that postulated the parallel between the "character" of the letter and the "character" of a writer's personality), and to some forms related to everyday practices (such as being aware of an approaching storm by the sudden change in the wind).

Among these examples given by the author, we would like to examine closer an ancient oriental fable that represents an extremely illustrative allegory of this model of knowledge.

It is the story of three brothers that meet a man who has lost his camel (in some versions, a horse), and who are able to describe the animal without having ever seen it ("it is white, blinded in one eye, and carries two goat-skins on its back, one full of wine, the other of oil"). The brothers are therefore accused of stealing it and are brought to trial. The occasion serves to show how, by means of a myriad of small clues, they could reconstruct the appearance of an animal that they had never seen (*ibid*., p. 93).

Ginzburg comments that the fable was very popular in the West. It was reedited and translated into the main European languages, and it inspired Voltaire's version in the third Zadig book (1747)[16], based on a 16th century version of that fable. Voltaire transforms the camel of the original version into a bitch and a horse. Accused of theft, Zadig exculpated himself before the judges by recounting aloud the mental process that had enabled him to sketch the portrait of two animals that he had never seen:

> I saw on the sand the tracks of an animal, and I easily judged that they were those of a little dog. Long, shallow furrows imprinted on little rises in the sand between the tracks of the paws informed me that it was a bitch whose dugs were hanging down, and that therefore she had had puppies a few days before. (Voltaire *apud* Ginzburg, *ibid*., p. 105)

Ginzburg states that these lines, and those which followed, were the embryo of the 19th century mystery novel. They inspired Edgar Allan Poe, Émile Gaboriau (in the creation of the character "Monsieur Lecoq"[17]), and Arthur Conan Doyle. The author highlights, however, that Zadig was a reference not only in fictitious literature, but also in discussions on the scientific method. The naturalist Georges Cuvier, that at the beginning of the 19th century formulated the laws on comparative anatomy that enabled the paleontological reconstructions, drew a parallel between the method of the new science of paleontology and the one of Voltaire's character:

> Today, anyone who sees only the print of a cloven hoof might conclude that the animal that had left it behind was a ruminator, and this conclusion is as certain as any in physics and in ethics. This footprint alone, then, provides the observer with information about the form of the teeth, the jawbone, the vertebrae, and about the form of each leg bone, the thighs, shoulders and pelvis of the animal which had just passed: *it is a more certain proof than all Zadig's tracks*. (CUVIER[18] *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 105-106, *our translation, emphasis added*)

The name Zadig had taken on such emblematic value that, in 1881, Thomas Huxley defined the procedure that lead to Darwin's discoveries as "Zadig's method" – i.e., the ability of making "retrospective prophecies" as a function of science. The central issue in this scientific model is the capacity of apprehending what "lies out of the sphere of immediate knowledge", of "seeing what to the natural sense of the seen is invisible":

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[16] VOLTAIRE, 1747. "Zadig", in Voltaire's "Candide", *"Zadig" and Selected Short Stories*, ed. D. M. Frame, Bloomington, 1966, p. 110-111. Translated from: Voltaire, "Zadig ou la destinée". In: *Romans et contes*, edited by R. Pomeau, Paris, 1966, p. 36.
[17] GABORIAU, Émile, *Monsieur Lecoq, I, L'enquête*. Paris, 1877.
[18] CUVIER, Georges. *Recherches sur les ossements fossiles*, vol. I, Paris, 1834, p. 185.

[…] even in the restricted sense of 'divination', it is obvious that the essence of the prophetic operation does not lie in its backward or forward relation to the course of time, but in the fact that it is *the apprehension of that which lies out of the sphere of immediate knowledge; the seeing of that which to the natural sense of the seen is invisible*. (HUXLEY[19] *apud* GINZBURG, *ibid*., p. 193, *emphasis added*)

6.3. The evidential paradigm and the "crisis of classical reason"

Crisi della ragione is the title of the book in which Ginzburg's essay was first published, in 1979. The work gathered specialists from various disciplines in order to delineate the framework of new movements of thought that called into question the classical rationality, and that, in the words of Anna Maramotti, make "the most audacious connections between forms of knowledge and life practices" (MARAMOTTI, 1981, p. 743, *our translation*). It is in the midst of such a debate that Ginzburg retrieves the evidential cognitive process. In the vast repertoire of examples and authors that his great erudition presents to us, the author identifies the existence of a *common matrix of thought*, of a *same model of intelligibility of the world* common to the very heterogeneous scientific, artistic, technical, and everyday practices he describes (cf. *ibid.*).

We sustain in this article that the researches on urban ambiances inscribe themselves in that same matrix of thought described by Ginzburg – i.e. they establish *a model of intelligibility of the space* that we can characterize as *"evidential"*.

We could still ask: what is the relevance of this model in understanding the object of researches on ambiances? What are its consequences in conceiving the interdisciplinary nature of those researches? To what extent does the method of such researches correspond to "Zadig's method"? To what degree can a linguistic technology such as the section represent a methodological support for those same researches?

7. Unity and dispersion of the urban space: the symbolic, historical and political dimension of the sensitive experience

As we mentioned, the construction of a model of knowledge that focuses on the details does not lead one to lose sight of the whole – i.e. the more general reality that these details reveal. It is based on the perception that reality is opaque, directly inaccessible,

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[19] HUXLEY, Thomas, "On the Method of Zadig: retrospective prophecy as a function of science". In: *Science and Culture*. London, 1881, p. 128-148.

and that all there is are "clues" that allow one to "decipher" it. This results in defining the relation between the subjects and the world as a *symbolic, interpretive relation*.

In this gesture, we can identify a common stance to various scientific disciplines established throughout the 20th century under the inflection of anti-positivism. Such a posture can be understood as an "antinaturalism". That is, as the critical inquiry, in relation to their respective objects (the subject, society, the space, language…), on the evidence of human reality as being strictly biosocial. This evidence is called into question through the recognition of the active role that the symbolic practices plays in its formation. Recognizing that the guiding principles of human phenomena are not natural is the first step in establishing a historical approach to such phenomena. The natural laws are inexorable and immutable, and independent from the will and the actions of the subjects – while history is contingent; it is precisely what changes, or what can change (cf. RODRÍGUEZ, 1998; RODRÍGUEZ-ALCALÁ, 2005).

From such a perspective, therefore, to assume a historical conception of the urban space means recognizing that the space of human life is not *naturally given*, but is *symbolically produced* by the subjects through their practices, which are inscribed in specific economic, political and cultural conditions.

However, while the subjects do produce the space, the process is not transparent to them – to paraphrase Marx's well-known statement on history. History, in its turn, does not develop in the *void*, but in a space, that is *material*. This attributes to space, to its own physical, constructed configuration a specific status, which links it to historical, social, and subjective processes.

In other words, *the historical spatialization processes are opaque and we do not have direct access to them,* but only to *"clues"* that are dispersed among the different instances of the production of social life – from ordinary experience to political, administrative, and scientific practices. In this sense, the city can be seen a *dispersion of objects, subjects, and events* that, through the *relations* that they establish between themselves, produce a *unity* (which is both heterogeneous and contradictory). The comprehension of this unity relies on the possibility of making those relations visible, which leads us back to the necessity of constructing devices of observation, of reading, of interpretation.

In such a work of interpretation, it is fundamental to take into consideration the constitutive relation between the space and the social, conceived in political terms. That

is, we should consider that the *forms of spatiality* are inseparable from the *forms of sociability*, that *space* and *society co-form* each other, in and through a same historical process. Given that societies are characterized by hierarchical, antagonistic and contradictory relations of power, the different and heterogeneous spatial/social facts must be considered as evidence of political processes, marked by tension and by the dispute for a common – but unequally – divided space.

At this point, we can refer back to the *"corner of the ceiling"* from Sacks' citation, as a metaphor for spatial elements whose observation is relevant to the extent that they are evidence of our ways of living together, in which they reveal "an existence of a common ground that connects us to one another" (THIBAUD, 2002, p. 7, *our translation*). We can also think of the meaning of building a sidewalk or a public square, on one hand, or a wall, on the other. This is an issue that is simultaneously technical/technological (constructive), administrative (of mobility regulation in the city), and political, which affects (and is affected by) the forms of sociability (a square or a sidewalk *unite*, enable *gathering*; a wall *divides*, *separates*).

This inseparability of technical and social phenomena, of the "quantitative" and "qualitative" data – by the acknowledgment of the political that unites them –, allows one to think of an articulation between them, in terms of scales, disciplines, and institutions.

As in regard to the object of our research, we can characterize the waste collection in the city of São Paulo as an issue that is simultaneously and indissociably: a) *technical/technological*, for the resources and strategies in the collection and processing of waste; b) *aesthetical* (*sensorial*), which affects the inhabitants' everyday practices, in a "micro" scale; c) *economical*, that involves the public administration costs for the processes of collection – which, in its turn, is a source of income for people that work in recycling; d) *"macro" ecological*, of preserving the natural environment… and so on.

Understanding how those different aspects speak of political forms of sociability, to achieve subsidies for participative and democratic public policies, is a complex task for which it is necessary to create a *space of listening* to different institutions and subjects involved – be it scientists, public administrators, technicians, or inhabitants. The section, associated with the "long table" device, could contribute to create such a space. However, this space should be conceived not as a homogeneous space of *consensus*, but as a space of *difference*, of *misunderstanding*, of conducting *litigation* and *contradictions* that define

the political nature of social relations in the city (cf. ORLANDI & RODRÍGUEZ-ALCALÁ, 2004; RANCIÈRE, 1995).

8. The section as a writing tool of the space: from the *representation of the image* to the *registry of a view*

When a wise man points at the moon, the fool looks at the finger.
Chinese proverb

Up until this point, we have focused on the heuristic value of the theoretical gesture of observing the details, for the apprehension of the unity of space, and on the methodological adequacy of the section, as a tool that allows those details to be brought together. According to Frédéric Pousin (2011), due to its schematic nature, the section reduces a large quantity of information in order to reveal its connections, and thus allowing one to see a structure.

Hence the question: of what nature is this structure?

Pousin himself provides us a clue, when he refers to the *theoretical value* of the section as a visualization device. According to the author, the section proposes the image of a structure that *is only visible because of the scheme that it designs*; it reveals dimensions that *are only visible through a specific form of interpretation* (cf. *ibid*., p. 160).

This theoretical value of the device hinges on a fundamental issue that limits the scope of Ginzburg's metaphors. The master of a painting, the author of a crime, or Zadig's animal, exist *beyond* and can be reached through clues they leave behind. On the contrary to such examples, the reality – the structure – that the section enables one to visualize is not a *real object* – an essence "hidden" behind the empiric reality waiting to be "uncovered" –, but a *theoretical object*, constructed by a *view* – by a *point of view*.

Such a distinction is imperative in order to avoid a substantialist conception of structure that prevails in certain human science disciplines, as a result of the transfer of methods from structural linguistics, based on the founding work of Ferdinand de Saussure[20] (cf. SÉRIOT, 2016). According to Patrick Sériot:

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[20] With his *Course on general linguistics*, Saussure outlined the contours of modern linguistics, which would come to be considered "the pilot science of human sciences". It is a posthumous work written and published by his students in 1916, with basis on their notes from his classes.

> The slow break, the difficult and not reflected upon journey as that of the platonic thought of archetypes, of eidos, hidden, revealed in its terrestrial avatars and sensitive to the non-substantialist idea of structure, is one of the most exciting moments of 20th century intellectual history. However, to take this into consideration, a radical distinction must be made between a *real object* and an *object of knowledge*. (*ibid.*, p. 430-431, *our translation*)

An object of knowledge does not exist empirically until it is appropriated by a theory, just "as the mineral exists underground, having to be extracted and isolated from the lump of soil that surrounds it" (*ibid.*, 431, *our translation*). For Saussure, *it is the point of view that creates the object*. The elements of a structure are not given beforehand – they are not simply present in the empirical reality as "elements of substance" –, much in the same way that "Mr. Durand has a hat and a pair of gloves", in the words of Tullio de Mauro, quoted by Sériot (*ibid.*, p. 437, *own translation*). These elements only exist within the boundaries of their relations (*ibid.*, p. 441).

Sériot states that, with this resolutely theoretical definition of the object of science, the founder of modern linguistics operated a major epistemological revolution, which was barely understood by many of his followers. Sériot focuses his analysis specifically on Russian linguists from the Prague linguistic circle (such as Roman Jakobson and Nicolai Trubetzkoy). However, his observations are valid for understanding the developments of the notion of *structure* in the various domains of the human sciences that were impacted by Saussure's work (such as anthropology, historical materialism, psychoanalysis, geography or urban studies, to just mention a few).

The central issue in Sériot's critique resides in the frequent equivoque of identifying *structure* with *totality*[21]. According to Sériot, Saussure's theory of the *point of view* leads to the abandonment of all ontological research that looks for a structure inherent to the order of things, of a "totality" waiting to be discovered: a structure belongs only to the constructed object (*ibid.*, p. 438). This conception comes from the recognition that the empirical reality is too complex and multifaceted and cannot be understood directly and, in its totality, (*ibid.*). With respect to the object of linguistics, Émile Benveniste states the following:

> We believe that we can arrive directly at the fact of language as an objective reality. Actually, we only understand it according to a certain

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[21] We can mention, as an example, the work of Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (cf. his book *Da Totalidade ao Lugar* [From Totality to the Place, [2005] 2008, São Paulo: Edusp).

> point of view, which we must first define. We should stop believing that language can be understood as a simple object, which exists for itself and is susceptible to total apprehension. (BENVENISTE, 1966, p. 38, *apud* SÉRIOT, *ibid.*, p. 438, *our translation*)

Making ours the words of the author about language, we state that when approaching the *space*, an *ambiance*, we do not directly reach an empirical reality, a simple object that is susceptible of total apprehension. We are constructing a *theoretical object*, based on an always *indirect and fragmentary apprehension of the real object, which is in itself unattainable*.

From such considerations, we sustain the necessity of introducing a radical distinction, namely: the distinction between *whole* and *totality*. If an ambiance is a "contextual whole", which is *unified* and *indivisible*, and that cannot be reduced to the sum of the discrete individual elements that compose it (cf. THIBAUD, 2004), such a "whole" (a *constructed unity*) must not be confused with a "totality" (an *immanent unity*). Such a distinction, in our understanding, represents a crucial turning point in the definition of the theoretical status of an ambiance as a unity and delineates a posture in face of our possibility (our limitations) of knowing the world, in a general manner.

Abandoning a totalizing view of the object calls into question the idea of "completeness" as related to the *theory*, the *method*, and the *technical instruments* in ambiance research.

On the one hand, the interdisciplinary nature of this research cannot be conceived through a *cumulative* idea, of *complementarity* or of possible *synthesis* between the different theoretical perspectives, and which would result in a "more exhaustive" or "complete" approach to the object.

On the other hand, regarding the exhaustiveness of a technical tool such as the urban section, the inevitably selective operation implied in its construction does not correspond to a *limit of the method*, but to the *nature itself of the object*. That is, to its "incompleteness" (just as Eni Orlandi's classical characterization of the object of linguistics), to the inevitable fragmentary nature of the view that constructs it. It is in relation to this view, to this point of view – to be previously defined – that the exhaustiveness of the section must be conceived.

Thus, we state that the section does not *represent a space* (a *real object*), nor does it represent a *fragment* of that (*real*) space: it *registers a view* on it (a *theoretical object*).

We vindicate with this the stance of the fool from Chinese proverb of our epigraph (mentioned by Michel Pêcheux [1975] 1988). We sustain that if the space is the moon, then the section is the finger (the registry of the finger) – and that all that is left for us is to act like the fool (to look at the finger), since the moon (the real object) is inextricably out of our reach.

9. Final considerations: the linguistic technologies and the fabrication of a shared view on the city

Jean-Paul Thibaud proposes considering the ambiances as a *common ground* of everyday experience. The author points to two possible meanings of this expression, which he considers two faces of the same coin. The first one refers to the possibility of the sharing of an ambiance, as a phenomenon experienced by the senses (*experienced ambiances*); the second one is related to the possibility of sharing the idea of ambiances, and to test the extent to which it is possible to agree with this notion (*reflective ambiances*) (cf. THIBAUD, 2013, p. 7; 2014, p. 282-283).

Such a possibility of passing from the field of the *sharing of the experience* to the field of the *sharing of knowledge* requires the elaboration of conceptual and methodological tools to grasp the heterodox object that is an ambiance. This elaboration, on its turn, demands a clear definition of what is at stake in this notion, in theoretical and epistemological terms. Otherwise, the notion of ambiance could come to be diluted in the great diversity of perspectives that share this field of research and thus lose its specificity and strength as a particular observatory of sensitive space.

As we have affirmed, an ambiance is a unity characterized by a particular relation between "the parts" and "the whole" – or, in Thibaud's words, "*a unity* that gives meaning to *the whole* and *its parts*" (THIBAUD, 2013, p. 205, *emphasis added*). Consequently, we can say that if the *method* of the research on ambiances is founded on the observation of the "parts" (the minutiae of the everyday experience, the microphenomenon of the daily life), its *object* is "the whole" (the unity of the senses) – understood as a *theoretical construct*, *fabricated by a view*.

This is the intelligibility model that we can identify in the large and heterogeneous set of examples presented by Ginzburg, in Foucault's archeological rationale, in Freud's psychoanalytic approach or in Saussure's structural method. It rests upon an intellectual "associative" operation that consists in *describing relations* (of analogy, opposition,

simultaneity, reciprocal determinations…) between dispersed visible elements, in order to comprehend a *functioning* and identify an *order* (of discourse, of language, of subject, of society, of space…), which is not directly apprehensible.

It is as a tool to assist such an operation that we can conceive the section and define its methodological consistency for the apprehension of urban ambiances. As a writing technology, the section *registers a view* on the city, that relates disperse elements and permits a narrative. While registering that view, it permits *returning* to it and *sharing* it, which allows visualizing new relations, formulating new narratives. The section, reinforced by the experience of the "long table", becomes, therefore, an open instrument of co-notation (cf. AMPHOUX, 2011) – a characteristic that evokes Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, mentioned by Ginzburg (cf. TIXIER, 2016). With this, it can be an instrument for *destabilizing the evidence of our view on space*, for recognizing its *collective character* and, thus, for *fabricating a shared view* of our everyday sensitive experience in the city.

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