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Fernando Carrión Mena
Paulina Cepeda Pico *Editors*

Urbicide

The Death of the City

 Springer

The Urban Book Series

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Editors


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Contents

Part I Introduction

- 1 Urbicide: An Unprecedented Methodological Entry in Urban Studies?** 3
Fernando Carrión Mena and Paulina Cepeda Pico

Part II Urbicide. The Death of the City

- 2 Urbicide. The Liturgical Murder of the City** 25
Fernando Carrión Mena
- 3 Death By Theory and The Power of Ideas: From Theories of Cities to “Smart” Cities** 47
Michael Cohen
- 4 Urbicide: Towards a Conceptualization** 59
Maria Mercedes Di Virgilio
- 5 Urban Order and Disorder. Genealogy of Urbicide** 77
Eduardo Kingman Garcés and Susana Anda Basabe
- 6 Imaginaries and Archetypes on the Death of the City** 93
Alfredo Santillán Cornejo
- 7 COVID-19 and the City: Reframing Our Understanding of Urbicide by Learning from the Pandemic** 107
Roberto Falanga and João Ferrão

Part III Annihilation: The End of the Public Space

- 8 The Ideology of Public Space and the New Urban Hygienism: Tactical Urbanism in Times of Pandemic** 127
Manuel Delgado-Ruiz

9	The Transformation of Urban and Digital Spaces from a Democratic Perspective	145
	Arnau Monterde and Joan Subirats	
10	Streets, Avenues, Highways	157
	Pablo Fernández Christlieb	
11	The Post-automobile City From Deterritorialization to the Proximity City: The Case of Madrid	171
	José María Ezquiaga and Javier Barros	
12	Mobility as an Expression of the Urbicide: The Risks of Transport Modernization in Latin American Metropolises	205
	Pablo Vega Centeno, Jérémy Robert, and Danae Román	
Part IV Decline of the Built Environment		
13	The Urbanisation of Risk	235
	Andrew Maskrey and Allan Lavell	
14	Urbicide or Suicide? Shaping Environmental Risk in an Urban Growth Context: The Example of Quito City (Ecuador)	263
	Jose M. Marrero, Hugo Yepes, Paco Salazar, and Sylvana Lara	
15	Between Greens and Grays: Urbanization and Territorial Destruction in the Sabana de Bogotá	293
	Alice Beuf, Germán Quimbayo Ruiz, and Olaff Jasso García	
16	Overregulation, Corruption, and Urbicide	315
	Vicente Ugalde	
17	Obsolescence of the Built Environment	333
	Valeria Reinoso-Naranjo and Manuel Martín-Hernández	
Part V Dissolution of Social Interaction		
18	The (Un)made City: Spatial Fragmentation, Social Inequalities and (De)compositions of Urban Life	359
	Ramiro Segura	
19	The City and the Abandonment of Public Space. Between Neoliberal and Citizen Urbanism	377
	Patricia Ramírez Kuri	
20	A “New” Urban Colonialism? North–South Migration and Racially Structured Gentrification in Latin America	395
	Juan Pablo Pinto Vaca	

21	Urban Frontiers in the Fracturing City: Heritage, Tourism and Immigration	419
	Jesús M. González-Pérez, Josefina Domínguez-Mujica, Margarita Novo-Malvárez, and Juan M. Parreño-Castellano	
22	The Production of Emptied Places in the Borderlands of the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires	447
	Andrea Catenazzi and Julieta Sragowicz	
Part VI Degradation and Abandonment		
23	Reconstructing Cultural Paradigms. Experiences in East Europe: The Historical Memory of the Historical Centers in Lithuania	467
	Olimpia Niglio	
24	Lose the Memory, Lose the History, Lose the City	489
	Salvador Urrieta García and Veronica Zalapa Castañeda	
25	Revolt and Destruction. The Public and Monument Landscape in Latin American Cities	511
	Francisca Márquez	
26	Trends of Urban and Territorial Reconfiguration in Metropolitan Buenos Aires	531
	María Carla Rodríguez	
27	Anatomy of an Urbicide. Social Housing in Santiago 1980–2006 ...	555
	Alfredo Rodríguez and Ana Sugranyes	
28	Urbicide. A Look Through the Mirror	565
	Inés del Pino Martínez	
Part VII Destruction of Common Life: Violence		
29	The Besieged City: Geographies of Crime	585
	Alfonso Valenzuela-Aguilera	
30	Urbicide, Violence, and Destruction Against Cities by Criminal Organizations	603
	Arturo Alvarado	
31	Discursive Understandings of the City and the Persistence of Gender Inequality	637
	Nora Libertun de Duren, Diane E. Davis, and Maria Lucia Morelli	
32	Border Cities Between Life and Death: Ciudad Juárez and El Paso	655
	Mauricio Vera-Sánchez and Luis Alfonso Herrera-Robles	

Part VIII Contraction of Public Management: Privatization

- 33 The Metamorphosis of Infrastructure in Latin American Urbanization: From Insufficiency to Presence as Fictitious Capital** 673
Beatriz Rufino
- 34 Public Policies (Or Their Absence) as Part of Urban Destruction** 693
Marcelo Corti
- 35 Metropolitanicide? *Urbs*, *Polis* and *Civitas* Revisited** 707
Mariona Tomàs
- 36 International Tourism, Urban Rehabilitation and the Destruction of Informal Income-Earning Opportunities** 725
Alan Middleton
- 37 De-urbanization: From the Shock to the Revolution of a New Urban Logic** 751
Paulina Cepeda Pico

Part IX Urbicide: Cities Cases

- 38 Grassroots Spaces Make London Exciting: The Relationship Between the *Civitas* and the *Urbs*** 779
Pablo Sendra
- 39 Rio de Janeiro: The Trajectory of the Wonderful City, Violence, and Urban Disenchantment** 793
Mauro Osorio, Maria Helena Versiani, and Henrique Rabelo
- 40 The Implosion of Memory. City and Drug Trafficking in Medellín and the Aburrá Valley** 813
Luis Fernando González Escobar
- 41 Caracas. Urbicide and Precariousness of Urban Life at the Beginning of the Venezuelan Twenty-First Century. The Worst of Capitalism and Savage Populism** 843
Alberto Lovera
- 42 Santiago, the Non-city? Destruction, Creation, and Precariousness of Verticalized Space** 865
Loreto Rojas Symmes, Alejandro Cortés Salinas, and Daniel Moreno
- 43 Neoliberal Urbicide in Barcelona. The Case of Ciutat Vella** 891
Pedro Jiménez-Pacheco

Part X Epilogue

**44 Epilogue. Remake Us from Ruins, Collective Memories
and Dreams** 917
 Víctor Delgado

Index 939

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Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1

Urbicide: An Unprecedented Methodological Entry in Urban Studies?



Fernando Carrión Mena and Paulina Cepeda Pico

If the sidewalk ends up favoring the automobile over the pedestrian, the street dies and the end of the city begins. Jane Jacobs (paraphrasing).

Abstract This chapter introduces the debate of Urbicide as a methodological and theoretical way to understand urban studies. Cities are one of many urban territories and are the most relevant, with a social and historic construction. The configuration process of cities has an origin and also an apparent end. But the urban policies and planning do not consider the process of destruction of cities and try producing utopian cities. This chapter opens the debate about the way that urbanization and urban development are conceived to cause the death of today's cities and principally poses as a methodological theoretical framework from three central inputs: denial of denial, socio-spatial adjustments and transformations, obsolescence and destruction of the city, which then opens up into six components of analysis (annihilation, deterioration, dissolution, degradation, destruction and contraction).

Keywords Urbicide · Urban studies · City theory · Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The twenty-first century has been cataloged by the United Nations as the century of cities, due to the amount of agglomerated population that inhabits them. Globally, 57% of inhabitants live in cities, that is, more than 4.2 thousand million people. They also concentrate the greatest economic activity (80% of world GDP)

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(World Bank¹ 2022); acquiring a strong protagonism even comparable to that of States and large global corporations, according to Sassen (2001).

Nevertheless, from this relevant weight that the city has, the debate of its crisis and decadence is proposed, until the limit of the topic of the death of the city, due to the aggressions that it suffers, as well as the deep and structural transformations that it goes through. These phenomena have arisen from certain general, spatial or sectorial components, as well as from its most intimate and specific structures.

Therefore, we have some exemplary cases that have occurred systematically throughout this twenty-first century. According to the Mayor of New York, Bill De Blasio, September 11, 2001, is “*the darkest day of our city*”. He said this because of the attack on the Twin Towers of The World Trade Center by an incursion of three commercial flights that left the area in ruins and took the lives of 2,996 people and left around 2,680 people injured. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed New Orleans leaving floods, thousands of deaths and a loss of more than 125 thousand million dollars. Between 2000 and 2020, the foundational historic center of Quito, as in other cities, reduced its population by an annual average of 2.5% by forced eviction, emptying the society, reducing its time of use and reducing space in 2015, according to UN-HABITAT, 24% of the global urban population lives in informal human settlements or suburbs, it means, out of the city.² In February 2022, Russia carried out a targeted tactical bombardment of the largest cities of Ukraine. This resulted in destruction, death and mass expulsion of citizens. In May 2022, UN Commissioner Michelle Bachelet, visited Mariupol, stated that “*a city that was once prosperous, now lies in ruins*”.

Undoubtedly, it is about references of the destruction and death of cities around the world, with the aggravating factor that they are neither unique nor isolated cases. Oppositely, it generates a global effect that influences other territories. But they are even more representative because they impact the urbes in different ways, which are the most significant artificial asset produced throughout the history of humanity.

War aggressions, negative urban processes, the modification of ecosystems and historical transformations have generated devastating impacts on certain sectors of cities, as well as on the totality of some of them. Indeed, the public space—which is the city—is undergoing a process of dissolution and agoraphobia,³ due to the monopoly of certain functions, to the rupture of diversity (Jacobs 2011), to the violence that reduces social interaction (Carrión and Velasco 2018), to the logic of the market that expels population (Abramo 2012); to the damage of the ecosystem in which it is inscribed, producing fires, floods and countless disasters (Lavell 2000) and finally the wars that rage against cities because of their cultural, social, economic and political weight (Graham 2002).

¹ World Bank: <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>.

² Suburb is a compound word, where *sub* is a prefix meaning: low, below or inferiority; and *urb* refers to urbe, that is, less than city or, as defined by the DRAE: “population nucleus located on the outskirts of a city.

³ Borja (2003) states that it is a “class” disease that reinforces a segregating and denying discourse of the city.

These destructive facts have been brought to the attention of the media, universities, political parties, citizens, social movements and academia. This has led to severe questioning from citizens in general. But these phenomena are also expressed socially through a collective complaint that grows in the citizens' claims and, above all, in the presence of certain vindicating and contesting collective projects of the city. As a consequence of this perspective and this conjuncture, there is a confrontation of two predominant and different models of the city: one, governed by the sense of the market and the other by the meaning of the utopia of *living well* or of the respect for the citizen condition, inscribed in the right to the city (Lefebvre 2020; Harvey 2013).

The processes of selective and massive destruction of cities take place without the impediment of local, national and international institutions in charge of ensuring their existence and evolution. Such is the case that they have remained undaunted by the impact of wars, urban violence, the emptying of spaces, the expulsion of activities and people and climate change, among others, that is, of governments that maintain complicit silences, as well as, in many cases, direct, consistent or inconsistent public policy actions that lead to the deterioration of the city, causing, as a whole, both urbicide (destructive process) and urbanicide (process of complicit silence), as Carrión argues in his chapter of this book.

This institutional quality questions their structural capacities to counteract the negative impacts that occur in the city, either because they have entered into the logic of the minimal state or because the classic and traditional paradigms of action do not contemplate this problem. This leads to a type of government where conflict is present. On the one hand, between those who advocate the weight of the private world (accumulation), and on the other, those who demand the relevance of the public (democratization), both in the exercise of government and in its own institutional structure.

These transformations have a temporal and historical configuration, since a long time ago, but also spatially, distributed throughout the planet and converted into an essential part of the content of the urbe. Therefore, they are evident now in deep structural processes of destruction, which lead to the following questions that roam the world: Why and how do these destructive phenomena occur in cities? Why do institutions do very little to neutralize them? What is the social and private response to these processes?

This handbook seeks a collective response to these questions, beginning with a call for attention to this destructive fact that occurs on a daily basis and unnoticed. The publication does not seek to present this phenomenon in a pessimistic and unalterable way; on the contrary, it is a warning that seeks to be—from a critical point of view—a contribution to the orthodox approaches of urbanism and urban development, since cities are the main scenarios of progress and also of conflict and destruction, assuming the condition of a contradictory political community, which simultaneously develops and could die.

With this handbook called "*Urbicide or the death of the city*", we want to contribute to the knowledge of cities, but provoking a methodological turn within its hegemonic vision. First, overcoming the understanding of the city as if it were an

exclusively physical material object; and second, from the design of public policies born exclusively from *urbanism*⁴ and *urban development*⁵ aimed at monopolistic and market logic.

Therefore, the purpose is to open a critique to the concepts of *urban development* and *urbanism*, which have been pigeonholed in mercantiled and unilateral trends, by adding them a new double connotation. On the one hand, by means the logic of *creator or creative destruction* (Schumpeter 1994) through the historical perspective. In other words, a process of decay of the old city (urbicide) that leads to generate a new one, negating the previous one. And, on the other hand, from the structural perspective of the city, as a social and political community, where common sense, social interaction and respect for collective rights are systematically eroded. These two connotations are framed within an incoherent recognition of the transformation of the territorial configuration or scale (city, region, system).

In view of this, we seek to deepen our knowledge of the dynamics of the creative power of negation, in order to understand the causes of its destruction and, based on them, to create the conditions of life, of “y” in the city, not only from the perspective of innovation, but also of the change of meaning that should follow urban development. It is, in other words, to draw attention to how the existing city (memory, buildings, population) is destroyed and eroded under explicit liturgies: that is, of an order with recognizable logics, actors and forms. This methodological turn will allow to look at the city from what is lost and is destroyed, not only in a critical way, for the sake of supposed “superior” values coming from politics, culture or economy, which end up by functionalizing the own institutions behind these purposes; and not to promote strategies aimed at mitigating the destructive effects, in order to begin (re)building a real city and urban condition to live better.

To this, the first thing to be discussed is the meaning of *urban development*, which cannot be conceived under a quantitative notion of growth, for example, demographic (range-size), economic (real estate investment) or territorial (urban sprawl, compact-dispersed city, verticalization). Rather, it should be aimed at solving the unsatisfied needs of the population, reducing inequalities and promoting good living. The second point to discuss is *urbanism*, so that it ceases to be a discipline that promotes urban development from the exclusive perspective of territorial *production and consumption* (territorial ordering), dialectically adding it the focus on the social, that is, on social justice and *civility* (Carrión and Cepeda 2021).

A logic of *urban development* and *urbanism* that breaks the social, economic and environmental balance leads, for example, to the erosion of the past in the form of memory, accumulated *acquis*⁶ or the production of oblivion. Also to the logic of consumer freedom that segments markets (fragmentation), and denies the principle

⁴ Urbanism was born at the time of the industrial revolution and its object is the study and intervention in the urbs; that is, in the organization of the territory and the own services of the city.

⁵ Urban development, also a tributary of the industrial revolution, is understood as a set of technical and administrative measures aimed at territorial planning, without ignoring the production of services (health, education) and infrastructures (mobility, energy), as well as the control of spatial and population expansion.

⁶ *Acquis*: a set of moral, cultural or natural assets accumulated throughout history.

of urban unity. In addition to the expansive or densified urban growth that violates the environment, producing, in turn, phenomena that revert against the city itself, destroying or even killing it. Finally, it leads to the construction of stereotyped cities, governed by the market and masculinities, due to planning that denies social and functional diversity.

In synthesis, they should focus more on analyzing and assuming the contraction, destruction and involution experienced by urbs and, therefore, their inhabitants. This means focusing less on the production of buildings and infrastructures and more on the effects of exclusion, expulsion and quality of life; less on consumerism and costs of services and more on the impacts generated by pollution (lack of recycling, watersheds that supply water to cities and then receive sewage); less on conservation that freezes history and more on *productive heritage* that adds value to history (Carrión and Cepeda 2022a); less on the dynamics of urban production and more on the logics of reproduction, which contribute to the quality of life of the population.

In this sense, the concept of *urbicide*, which was born in that decade of the sixties, refers to violence against cities, whether due to military strategies,⁷ environmental effects or mismanagement. This concept structures the narrative of the liturgical murder that urbes experience, when aggressions are committed with premeditation and malice aforethought, by identified actors. In short, it is structured with the intention of understanding the practices aimed at the production of oblivion, the erosion of the material foundations of the city and the destruction of common life.

In this way, the concept of *urbicide* begins to interpret urban processes from the social sciences, with phenomena that were already present a long time ago and that produce contemporary structural crises. This is the case of what it meant at the end of the nineteenth century in Paris with Haussmann or in Barcelona with Cerdà; but also in the USA, with the penetration of the automobile and in Latin America, with the process of *urbanization without a city* (slums, young towns, popular colonies) since the middle of the last century.

This set of processes seeks to be scientifically understood in order to counteract them. To this purpose, this handbook is an attempt to generate a process of systematization of different thematic inputs, arising from the confluence of different voices from Europe, USA and Latin America. In this sense, it is a collective, theoretical and methodological construction of *urbicide*, born from the convergence of common efforts.

⁷ Atrocious cases such as those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, of Guernica after Franco's fascism, or of US President Bush's preemptive wars. The ex-mayor of Belgrade, Bogdan Bogdanovic, pointed out that the wars in the Balkans were anti-urban, with the aim of undermining the cultural values concentrated in the cities.

1.2 The Urbicide: New Methodological Entry for Urban Studies

Assuming the concept of *urbicide* implies a change in the method of analysis and understanding and, moreover, of acting in the city. It is a contemporary paradigm that highlights the *destructiveness* that emerges in the production of the urbe and, therefore, questions the traditional way in which it is understood and managed. It seeks to explain what is lost, what is destroyed and, above all, the reasons why all this occurs, that is, the causes of its own destruction, in order to act upon them. And this is not a recent, punctual or isolated process, because it has history and is structural.

The process of urbanization is generated by the logic of agglomeration of population and activities in specific territories, while the city is directly related to the production of public space, services and its collective condition. In this, amalgam can be, strong tensions, conflicts and contradictions, where the city and its vital cycles are affected. For example, with the industrialization process that has occurred since the mid-nineteenth century in Europe or since the Second World War in Latin America, the acceleration of migration from the countryside to the city has produced vast areas that cannot be considered, strictly speaking, cities, but on the contrary, only human settlements, as defined by United Nations Habitat.⁸

In this historical process, the city, understood as the space of agglomeration and social interaction, goes through multiple stages that can even lead to its death, as in fact happens, because it is a living organism. So, for example, if it loses its internal and structural conditions, such as life in common, the death of the city sets in. But also, if its condition as a living organism is not assimilated, it will not be understood that it is a process in which death is present. That is, the explicit practices that certain specific actors have to lead to the death of the city are unraveled. In general, they are carried out under established or liturgical practices in accordance with an explicit order, leading to the destructive end of the essence of the city.

The urbicide, then, is a death or demise of a being that has life and that, therefore, can be susceptible to losing it. Moreover, because everything that lives has an intrinsic value inscribed in the meaning and principles of ontology (being and its properties), that is, in a condition of existence that is expressed according to its social, spatial and temporal expressions. Ontology, as a principle of the strata of being, is historically established through a close relationship between social and environmental aspects to conform an ecosystem, because the city does not exist independently of society (community) and of the place where it is produced (nature). In this way, the community (society) and the territory (place) are the result of an indissoluble historical process.

In addition, cities concentrate the largest number of people on the planet, which humanizes them. This implies overcoming the orthodox and hegemonic conception

⁸ Human settlement is a place where population groups are established in precarious shelters. These places do not become neighborhoods or part of the city, because they lack services, infrastructure, housing and public space. They are informal or illegal, which makes public policies ignore their existence.

of the city, inscribed in the rationality of an inanimate physical object or inert material (urbs), composed of a territory (urban structure), buildings (urban functions) and a set of infrastructures (material base of the city). In this way, it is indispensable to incorporate the essential condition of citizenship (civitas), which is formed in the public space (urbs), in order to make the city what it really is: a *political community* (polis).

The starting point for this statement comes from the fact that men and women live in groups or communities, as they are social and political animals, due to their inability to solve their problems in isolation or individually. But they do so not only to survive, as is the case with animals, but mainly *to live well*. Therefore, it is not just any community, it is a *political community* (polis), because the city is not the simple aggregation of people or families, but rather the presence of citizens (civitas), with its rights and duties (sovereignty), governed by regulated institutional frameworks.

Hence, the political community is contrary to the individualism that, for example, advocates the market (consumer sovereignty) as well as coming from the contraction and incoherence of the public (minimal state) and from the limitation of the use of public space (disturbance of social interaction). On the contrary, the city, understood as a political community, shows the ways and forms in which urban society constructs the modalities of coexistence among citizens and their ties with the polis, as a territorial and political unit of representation. This is defined by Lefebvre (2020) from the right to the city, both in its use and in the participation of its actions.

The city is a social construction born from the societal nexus that comes from conjugal life (home), domestic space (house), village dynamics (community) and citizen formation (public space) under a specific purpose: to live well. In this manner, the city is configured as the common place or town hall, where the house, the village and the public space coincide at the same time to form the political community, with the purpose of producing “the happy and virtuous city proposed by Aristotle (Carrión and Cepeda 2021).

If the purpose of living well is not achieved collectively (city of the commons), an *urbicide* process is structured, with which, human rights as a whole are violated, particularly the rights of nature (environment) (Acosta and Martínez 2009), the rights of the city (Carrión and Cepeda 2021) and the rights to the city (Lefebvre 2020; Harvey 2013; Carrión and Dammert 2018). If this happens, the rights of citizenship as a group are violated, because their lives are associated, such that if one of them fails, everything collapses; then cities lose many of their virtues, conditions and vital characteristics.

If citizenship acquires the rights OF and TO the city, as is already happening *per se*,⁹ this means, on one side, that the land and the environment receive an explicit social function, which means that they establish a relationship between society and the ecosystem in a univocal and balanced way, that is, of the city with nature and

⁹ The right to the city has gained ground in Latin American societies, first from the institutional perspective, when it was enshrined in the constitutions of Brazil (1988), Ecuador (2008) and Mexico City (2018). But also internationally within The New Urban Agenda (2016) and the Habitat International Coalition (HIC).

vice versa, and on the other side that the urbe be capable of self-regulating, which supposes having its own resources, competences and policy: self-government. It is with autonomy; otherwise, it is impossible to satisfy the rights to/from the city.

Therefore, when this happens, that is, when the collective rights of the citizenry are violated, there must be a *political community* capable of interpreting uricide as a crime, in order to correct the behaviors which are opposed to living well and to the common sense of the polis (political community). This means, in an unpostponable way, having to typify uricide as a crime, included in the penal codes of our cities and countries, because it is not a common homicide but a murder. In the meantime, it is worth asking: Who is responsible for the deterioration, destruction, abandonment, erosion of the city? Who should assume the costs of all that this implies? What cities are emerging after these crises?

These phenomena have been little studied, although they have some important antecedents that should be highlighted. Francoise Choay (2009) states that since the beginning of the twentieth century, some European cities began a process of deconstruction, through certain factors related to urbanism, which provoked a sudden modernity with, for example, the new road axes in Paris (Haussmann) or the widening of Barcelona (Cerdá). Along the same lines, but in the United States of America, Jane Jacobs (1973) analyzes life and death in cities, based on the weight of the motor car, the predatory verticalization and the insecurity of certain urban places in New York City. Likewise, some analyses have tried to explain what is lost, due to the effects introduced by: real estate investment (Huxtable 2010), destruction by dispossession of housing and population expulsion (Berman 1987). These are analytical processes that study the erosion or negative impact on cities, but which seek an explicit theoretical interpretation, because they remain in the observation and description of the facts. But, in addition, they cannot find a common dialectic that intertwines them and leads them in the same direction, both analytically and resolutely.

Subsequently, since the second half of the last century, new analyses appear describing the processes of negation of the previous urbanization by the installation of a new one, provoking the destruction of the old. But it will be in other cases, such as those of the wars, that this new theoretical approach is explicitly consolidated. There appear authors such as Coward (2006, 2008) and Graham (2002) who interpret the violent destruction of the material and human in the urbs, taking the example of the Aleppo wars in Syria. Likewise, the phenomena of terrorism is analyzed, especially of the Twin Towers in New York-USA (Shaw 2000; Campbell et al. 2007), something similar but not explicit is the case of Sendero Luminoso in Lima, as well as the violence in Medellín-Colombia or Celaya-Mexico, as in other cities of the world, where there have been relatively similar phenomena.

In recent times, some authors, such as Carrión (2014a, b), have added to this trend the processes of gentrification, colonization of memory and de-urbanization. To these thematic inputs, it would be necessary to include the negative impacts coming from the natural phenomena of volcanic eruptions (Armero-Colombia), earthquakes (Santiago-Chile), climate change (New Orleans-USA) or even plagues (Spanish Flu) and pandemics (COVID-19) (Herscher 2006; Carrión and Cepeda 2022b), among

others. With all these thematic entries, the multidimensionality of the phenomenon and of the concept of urbicide appears.

In this way, the characteristics of the death of the city have been present throughout history, albeit with different expressions. Perhaps, for this reason, at least three organizing inputs of the area can be found:

- The first, coming from the explicit phenomenon of the *negation of the negation* (Hegel 1977), as it occurred throughout history when a city dies to give birth to the appearance of a new one. This process expresses the successive character of development through a process of substitution or negation of the old. But it should also be noted that in many cases vestiges of the previous phase remain to form what could be called a *palimpsest*.¹⁰ This happened, for example, with the cities of the Inca Empire, such as Cusco and Quito, when, during the Spanish conquest, they were (re)founded with other logics that denied the previous ones. It also happened with the end of the walled city, which gave way to the emerging modern city, with the rupture of the limits or walls, to open up to what would later be known as the urban region or metropolitan area. These processes are inscribed, following Borja, in that: “*Periodically, when change seems to accelerate and is perceptible in the expansive forms of urban development, the death of the city is decreed*”.
- The second, born from the *spatiotemporal adjustments and transformations* (Harvey 2013), where the generalized problems of the presence of motor transport stand out, which breaks the pedestrian and proximity logic of the city, causing the development of *suburbs* (that is, less than a city), of *dormitory cities* (expression of the non plurifunctional nature of the urbe) or of *car cities*, where large road axes for motor vehicles dominate over demands on a human scale (North American and European urban highways). These phenomena occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, which continue to this day, provoking the destruction of social interaction and of the city’s own dynamics.
- The third, originated by the *obsolescence or destruction of the essence of the city*, where, on the one hand, external phenomena stand out, such as wars that use them as scenarios or places to settle political, cultural and economic conflicts. But also, on the other hand, internal events, born of the modification of *ecosystems* (pollution, climate change), of the sense of community on which the production of real estate projects is based according to profitability, located in the peripheries or in urban centers (densification and gentrification); and of the impulse of the dynamics of consumer sovereignty that produces fragmentation and segmentation. It is about intrinsic processes to the city, which took place 40 years ago, originated in the decade of the eighties and inscribed in the globalization process, which tend to erode the original sense of city as *civitas*.¹¹ For they were alerted more than

¹⁰ According to the DRAE, Palimpsest is: “Ancient manuscript that preserves traces of a previous writing that has been artificially erased”.

¹¹ *Civitas*, from Latin, means city, that is, the organized community where citizenship is integrated and where it satisfies their rights.

half a century ago by Lefebvre (2020), when he stated: “*The city is, therefore, everything that is experienced, known, represented, built or destroyed as a city.*”

With this background, the current peculiar destruction of the city, which has never been so evident, is analyzed. In this process, these three explanatory ways converge and they do it from the concept of *urbicide*, as an analytical category. The purpose is to interpret and explain the processes of annihilation, destruction, degradation and contraction that have been occurring within cities, from a multidimensional perspective. Additionally, to understand these processes within dynamics that occur deliberately and not by chance or by natural logic, because behind them there are social, economic, public and cultural forces that explicitly drive them, with clear logic and order.

Therefore, it is about different forms of *un-urbanization* or denial of urbanization, which tend to question the meaning of *urban agglomeration*, through the modality of *sub-urbanization*, which is nothing more than an expression of something inferior to the city, deduced from the prefix *sub*, which produce precarious human settlements in Latin America, and of high income in the United States of America and Europe (dormitory cities, which are not cities). What is clear is that under no point of view it is the production of a city that allows its inhabitants to live well.

As a counterpart, there are the compact zones within cities, which are forming large interstitial voids, increasingly extensive and complex, in the manner of what Marc Augé (2008) defined as the *non-places* and Carlos de Mattos (2010) as the *artifacts of globalization*, which managed to attract strong capital investments and produce important urban brands, but not collective processes of urban integration, denying, then, the sense of city.

Finally, during its evolution, the existing city is denied in order to give birth to a new one. This happens in certain spaces within a city, such as those native or foundational places, where local society tends to reject, stigmatize or abandon them, configuring what could be denominated as *urban patricide*, that is, a process of denial of the historical origin of the city or of a particular space. It is a way of negating the past, whether remote (origin) or recent (modernity). This is the case of historical centers, ports or beaches, from which cities initially emerged, not only do they turn their backs on them, abandon them, but also degrade or kill them in the collective imagination. This is a process where cities tend to deny their original act, physically or symbolically, producing deterioration, destruction and denial.

1.3 The Structure and Content of the Book

This publication has an expository logic that is structured in ten sections, in which each of them represents a thematic approach to the concept. It begins with a first theoretical–methodological approach to the process under several inputs and finishes an epilogue that seeks to systematize the process in order to open the debate to an inverse logic of how the city has been thought, but with an optimistic sense. In

the intermediate sections, the different topics that articulate this methodology are developed in a direct way.

This means that the book should be read in its totality and under the proposed sequential order. With this, a complete and comprehensive conceptual construction of the phenomenon is structured, that is, a theoretical notion, anchored in multiple heterogeneous realities, built from an inductive point of view, from different themes (environmental, economic, social, institutional), as well as types of cities (European or Latin American), which coexist as a whole. It is, then, the result of a collective construction project, where the parts integrate into the whole, to produce this theoretical and methodological contribution for the understanding of cities, from contemporary perspectives and paradigms.

The book starts with an exhaustive reflection in theoretical and historical terms to subsequently identify the processes that have followed the construction of the category urbicide, in order to place it in the present time. It continues with the sections that show the different dimensions of urbicide, exposed in the different chapters, which follow the logical sequence of the exposition, to later describe, in its interior, the articles that compose it which emphasizes that the intention of the book is the collective construction of the concept under its theoretical and historical discussion, as well as its specificities occurring in reality.

In that perspective, the book is structured with the following chapters or dimensions of analysis: ii. positioning of the concept and its multidisciplinary and epistemological inputs; iii. annihilation of commonplace systems, it is, of public space; iv. deterioration of the material basis of the city; v. dissolution of social cohesion as gentrification and inequality; vi. degradation and abandonment due to social conditions and denial of history; vii. destruction of common life by violent phenomena (wars); viii. contraction of institutional frameworks such as deregulation and privatization; ix. significant cases of study. This is in addition to the introduction and epilogue.

1.3.1 Part 1. Introduction

The handbook “*Urbicide or the death of the city*”, begins with a study that seeks to situate this thematic as a methodological theoretical framework from three central inputs: denial of denial, socio-spatial adjustments and transformations, obsolescence and destruction of the city; which then open up into six components of analysis (annihilation, deterioration, dissolution, degradation, destruction and contraction). This construction is framed within the current debates on the city, relating them both to the literature and to the critical positions they carry. Finally, it includes the presentation of the theme and the general characteristics of the publication.

1.3.2 Part 2. Urbicide. The Death of the City

The death of the city has a liturgical dynamic that is instrumented from both physical and symbolic perspectives, that is, from the material and the urban imaginaries, in an integrated, historical and structural manner. In this first part of the book, the basis of the paradigm of urbicide is constructed from six different but complementary approaches. It starts with a theoretical perspective assumed by Michael Cohen and Fernando Carrión, then with the historical entry elaborated by Eduardo Kingman and Susana Anda. Subsequently, it continues with the vision of the crisis developed by Mercedes Di Virgilio, then with the presentation of the theme of disaster (COVID-19) by Roberto Falanga and Joao Ferrao, and concludes with the vision of urban imaginaries by Alfredo Santillán.

The construction of ideas and urban theories structure the scenarios that, according to Michael Cohen, can generate the life or progressive death of the city and, within it, of the citizens. Thus, the way in which the city is assumed by public and private actors makes them responsible for the strong impact on urban production and/or destruction. Highly changing and vulnerable urban territories develop multiple moments of crisis that, according to Mercedes Di Virgilio, become a challenge for Latin American cities. There, the housing crisis, which is structured under the neoliberal thesis, as an effect of the constant urban growth, does not mean processes that allow a dignified condition to house citizenship. Likewise, Roberto Falanga and Joao Ferrao suggest that the impact of pandemics in cities must be assimilated under certain public powers, which generate ambivalent processes, both destructive and constructive, toward the management of disasters of these global characteristics.

In that sense, Fernando Carrión suggests that cities are crossed by multiple threats originating in the territorial, symbolic and social spheres, leading to dramatic effects that generate forces of social resistance. In this sense, cities are built and destroyed, according to Eduardo Kingman and Susana Anda, to contribute to the proposal of urbicide from the historical perspective, and with it analyze the breaking point between urban order and disorder, imprinting a distinctive seal on governance. So the processes of destruction that accompany the historical condition of the city have an important dimension in the urban imaginaries, according to Alfredo Santillán's contribution, which adds a *moral dilemma*.

1.3.3 Part 3. Annihilation: The End of the Public Space

If public space is the city, it is experiencing its annihilation and devastation as a result of the processes of privatization, violence and exclusion, in the form of agoraphobia (Borja and Muxí 2003). The reality of the agony of the street due to the monopolistic use of the motor vehicle is evident, as well as the transfer of physical-material activities to the digital world of technological platforms, which have a global, virtual

and private condition. In this sense, the group of chapters that make up this section discuss several turning points, all related to public space.

According to Manuel Delgado, public space is managed as an ethical scenario of good citizenship, with a strong idealistic tendency of morality, leaving aside its conflictive essence. Then, certain logics of tactical urbanism appear as emergent, generating a conflict between urban culture and urbanistic culture, where the aesthetic and formal order the space, annihilating it, because they leave aside its real conditions to live in.

On the one hand, the speed of cities generates inequitable ways of using and moving through them. According to Pablo Vega Centeno, Jeremy Roberts and Danae Roman, poorly designed sustainable mobility initiatives affect the daily mobility of citizens, as well as the lack of resources, control and appropriate public policies, since most of them reproduce the mercantile trend, which reduces the options for an adequate mobility for certain vulnerable groups. On the other hand, the direct relationship between urban production and the exponential growth of large mobility infrastructures is part of the displacement of weaker activities to the peripheries and the colonization of new urban territories. According to José María Ezquiaga, these models of individual mobility generate consumerism and degradation.

This monopoly also has a territorial and temporal base that is built from the street, the avenue and the highway, according to Pablo Fernandez Christlieb, when it structures the social condition from these infrastructures that make it impossible to experience the city. Finally, according to Joan Subirats and Arnau Monterde, in the cities the transit of people, events and flows must be assumed in their global condition, for being immersed in a world of digital networks, so understanding this double condition or analogy allows us to analyze the trajectory that cities take when they enter into these logics of tension.

1.3.4 Part 4. Decline of the Built Environment

The relationship between the city and its environment builds an ecosystem that generates constant imbalances, especially when the city and its urbanization process deteriorate its surroundings, causing its own destruction. To understand this dynamic, five moments stand out, addressed in this part: the urban production of risk, described by Maskrey and Lavell; the construction of vulnerability by Marrero, Yepes, Salazar and Lara; the destruction of the natural territory by Beuf, Garcia and Quimbayo; the obsolescence of the urban material landscape by Reinoso and Martin; and the incoherent regulations to the physical, expansive and densified production by Ugalde.

Capitalist urban production is a generator of risk, according to Andrew Maskrey and Allan Lavell, which is produced, accumulated and made visible in the urban structure, being an endogenous historical process. Therefore, risk and vulnerability in urban environments are factors created by human and collective action, as shown by Marrero, Yepes, Salazar and Lara, producing extreme situations, which come

to qualify them as *kamikaze (suicidal) cities*. This process of accelerated urbanization at the beginning of the cities is still developing with new and particular capitalist logics. Large residential projects driven by private dynamics and located in protected areas, according to Alice Beuf, Jasso Garcia and Quimbayo, produce a high level of environmental degradation that simultaneously deteriorates the city and the environment.

This urban spillage constantly mutates, producing the abandonment of territories where the relationship between urbanism and architecture, according to Reinoso and Martin, enters into conflict, producing obsolescence and expiration of material goods. In this and any other process, the regulatory function of the city government determines the course of the relationship between city (artificial) and nature (originary), leading to Ugalde's reflection in which he describes the permissive and incoherent effect of urban regulations that is responsible for the cyclical process of urban deterioration.

1.3.5 Part 5. Dissolution of Social Interaction

Cities behave like a factory that produces inequalities, preventing spatial and social integration. In this sense, the neoliberal logic of the city is determinant, as it dissolves into a constellation of discontinuous spaces. This social dissolution is evidenced by the loss of rights, the reproduction of inequalities, the segregation that expels the poor, the urban voids that generate social ruptures and the contemporary fractures caused by demographic and migration trends. In this sense, Patricia Ramírez Kuri analyzes public space and describes how the influence of urban neoliberalism destructs historical and cultural configuration of the cities and causes social damage. But the citizens create forms of articulation and vindicate rights.

According to Ramiro Segura, the city is considered an organic form within the different modalities of existing contemporary urbanization, in this sense the city *is made and unmade*, and the author proposes that, from a double dynamic, on the one hand, the social and spatial powers that unmake the city and, on the other hand, the ways of remaking the city, the (dis)composition of urban life is generated. New demographic trends, in terms of aging and migration, transform territories and deploy new vulnerabilities. In this sense, societies that are at risk (social, political, natural) have developed important urban exodus processes in the last century, but opposite to this there is a strong movement of societies with purchasing power to less developed and more economic territories.

For Juan Pablo Pinto, the trend of relocation of retired U.S. migrants to Latin American cities generates processes of segregation and destructive production of urban spaces, because of the influence of mechanisms of foreignization and colonialism that are not new. Meanwhile, according to Jesús González, Josefina Domínguez, Margarita Novo and Juan Parreño, the urban borders or limits that are configured within cities are the consequence of the segmentation of social classes that reproduce impoverishment and gentrification as delimiting forces. Finally, Andrea