

# Urban Spaces that Speak: Discursive Construction of Ideology and Aesthetics in the Political Field

**How to cite this article [Chicago]:** Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés. "Urban Spaces that Speak: Discursive Construction of Ideology and Aesthetics in the Political Field." *Novum Jus* 20, no. 1 (2026): 199–234. <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2026.20.1.7>

Eduardo Andrés Perafán Del Campo



# Urban Spaces that Speak: Discursive Construction of Ideology and Aesthetics in the Political Field

Eduardo Andrés Perafán Del Campo\*

**Received:** August 04, 2025 | **Evaluated:** September 09, 2025 | **Accepted:** December 01, 2025

## Abstract

This article proposes an aesthetic-political approach to public space as a central site for the ideological configuration within the political field. Through a theoretical review, it explores how professional elites translate their values into interventions that shape regimes of visibility, exclusion, and appearance. In this framework, aesthetics operates as a dispositive of sensible structuring that conditions citizen experience and delimits the possibilities of political action. Public space is understood as both a physical setting and a communicative form in which meanings, bodies, and positions are contested.

**Keywords:** aesthetics, ideology, politics, public space, discourse, visibility.

\* PhD candidate in social sciences from the University of Granada, Spain. Master's in political and international studies and bachelor's in political science from Universidad del Rosario, Colombia. Director of International and Interinstitutional Affairs at Universidad del Quindío, researcher, academic editor, professor, analyst, and public and international affairs consultant. Email: eaperafan@correo.ugres. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9981-2679>

# Espacios urbanos que hablan: construcción discursiva de la ideología y la estética en el campo político

---

Eduardo Andrés Perafán Del Campo

---

**Recibido:** 4 de agosto de 2025 | **Evaluado:** 9 de septiembre de 2025 | **Aceptado:** 1 de diciembre de 2025

## Resumen

Este artículo propone una aproximación estético-política al espacio público como lugar central en la configuración ideológica del campo político. A partir de una revisión teórica, se exploran las formas en que las élites profesionales traducen sus valores en intervenciones que configuran regímenes de visibilidad, exclusión y aparición. La estética, en este marco, opera como dispositivo de estructuración sensible que condiciona la experiencia ciudadana y delimita las posibilidades de acción política. El espacio público se comprende aquí no solo como soporte físico, sino también como forma comunicativa en la que se disputan sentidos, cuerpos y posiciones.

**Palabras clave:** estética, ideología, política, espacio público, discurso, visibilidad.

## Introduction

When we begin the path that leads us to explore the relationship between aesthetics and politics, some of the first ideas that come to mind are those of political art. Thus, protest art, or artistic pieces that serve as vehicles for transmitting messages of vindictiveness or nonconformity against specific policies, immediately appears. However, the relationship between aesthetics and politics does not reside exclusively in these phenomena that we could hastily categorize as political art. On the contrary, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, which also leads us to think about the relationship between art and politics, possesses an even ontological condition that allows us to question what they have in common: the distribution of the sensible and the practices of visibility or staging.

To develop the two conditions mentioned previously, we will investigate how art and politics are configured. According to the approach we will develop in this paper, the idea of art refers to the following definition:

What the term ‘art’ designates in its singularity is the framing of a space of presentation by which things of art are identified as such. And what links the practice of art to the question of the common is the constitution, at once material and symbolic, of a specific space-time, of a suspension with respect to the ordinary forms of sensory experience. [...] art consists in constructing spaces and relations to reconfigure materially and symbolically the territory of the common.<sup>1</sup>

In this sense, art is both the sensible evidence of a structure that makes visible what is art and invisible what is not, and it is a space where new sensible objects continuously reconfigure the experience of the common.

Concerning the concept of politics, it can be pointed out that: “[It] is not the exercise of, or struggle for, power. It is the configuration of a specific space, the framing of a particular sphere of experience, of objects posited as common and as pertaining to a common decision, of subjects recognized as capable of designating these objects and putting forward arguments about them.”<sup>2</sup> In this way, we can observe that art and politics are related to the idea of the familiar space-time. This concerns the distribution of roles, the assignment of meanings, and who is recognized as

---

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, *El malestar en la estética* (Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual, 2011), 31–32.

<sup>2</sup> Rancière, *El malestar en la estética*, 33.

entitled to assign those meanings within the common sphere—particularly within political space. On the other hand, the ways of making this common space visible possess a condition proper to art and, in general, to the universe of the aesthetic.

In this vein, Rancière<sup>3</sup> invites us to think that:

More precisely, then, the relationship between aesthetics and politics consists in the relationship between this aesthetics of politics and the ‘politics of aesthetics’ — in other words in the way in which the practices and forms of visibility of art themselves intervene in the distribution of the sensible and its reconfiguration, in which they distribute spaces and times, subjects and objects, the common and the singular.

Thus, aesthetics and politics have a foundational relationship, which can be observed by delving into the representational or relational conditions of aesthetics.

Representative aesthetics is related to the practices of the State, and relational aesthetics is part of Rancière’s proposal for a new concept of politics, which will be detailed below. When we turn our gaze to the terrain of the representative, we observe a way of making a form visible on an object by transforming it into a sensible object. Rancière<sup>4</sup> tells us that “the power of ‘form’ over ‘matter’ is the power of the class of intelligence over the class of sensation, of men of culture over men of nature.” The representative elements of social distinction are generated and serve as the basis for different forms of domination.

If we think of this condition from Bourdieu’s<sup>5</sup> theory, we could assimilate the structure of the fields with the division of the sensible as proposed by Rancière. The struggle for the monopoly of specific capital will account for the efforts of a field’s agents to perpetuate a particular form of domination. In response, distinctive elements emerge. These elements aim to continuously represent—within the field—the values and ideas shared by dominant agents. As a result, the field’s **sensible** objects are shaped by an aesthetic that emanates from those who have accumulated large amounts of specific capital and occupy privileged positions within the field’s structure.

---

<sup>3</sup> Rancière, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Rancière, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociología y cultura* (Ciudad de México: Grijalbo, 1990).

This comparison has a place within the realm of representative aesthetics, that is, within the logic of the State. However, it is important to emphasize that, according to Rancière, what could be called Bourdieu's theory is that the artistic and political fields lack clear boundaries and a completely independent logic, though they do possess a certain autonomy. That which is transversal to all fields (domination) also possesses an aesthetic connotation transversal to all these structures. Rancière<sup>6</sup> points out that "the legitimacy of domination has always rested on the evidence of a sensory division between different humanities. [...] there are stakes linked to the confusions, or rather the distinctions, of aesthetics that concern the social order and its transformations." This means that social division, even in the purest Marxist category, the concept of class, has at its core the logic of aesthetic division or distinction.

Now, if we depart from Rancière's thought and look at the panorama we have seen from a general perspective, aesthetics and politics, besides being two different and autonomous realities, are two elements that condition the life of the members of a social group. Within a social framework, subjects are constantly exposed to aesthetic elements that reinforce a particular political narrative. This narrative is based on values, ideas, and principles that shape an understanding of the social universe, i.e., an ethic that manifests itself in the concrete actions of political agents in a social context. These actions, which are the result of a particular ethos, are transformed into aesthetics by being evidence of the distribution of the sensible and being staged, by impacting the sensible frames of reference of the subjects and, in turn, by finding forms of resistance in the face of the aesthetic distinction.

This means that political ethics is also related to political aesthetics, an area that has often been overlooked in scientific studies. In this sense, several thinkers have approached political aesthetics as an object of study and proposed theories to deepen the relationship between aesthetics and politics. The literature on this subject presents us with various approaches ranging from the study of the processes of the irruption of aesthetic categories in the field of politics, such as the positioning of war and the warrior through its embellishment as pivotal elements of the Italian fascist political project,<sup>7</sup> to rethinking the idea of the aesthetic and the political based on some of Jacques Rancière's ideas already presented.

---

<sup>6</sup> Rancière, *El malestar en la estética*, 12, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, *La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica* (Madrid: Taurus, 1982).

From different perspectives, the authors in this section point out the political value of aesthetics in transforming social reality. One of the best examples of this condition that aesthetics possesses is the symbolic use of urban design to endow public space with new meanings and to redefine the population's representation of the territory. Thus, the possibility arises of finding a concrete physical space where aesthetics and politics meet. The search for such physical space will refer us to the study of the concept of public space from an aesthetic-political approach, which will demand our attention in this work. This article is a research effort to conceptualize, deepen, and exemplify the relationship between aesthetics and politics through studying public space.

We will first explore primary academic debates about the relationship between aesthetics and politics to achieve this goal. Second, we will introduce the category of public space, approached from an aesthetic-political perspective. From this category, we will observe how the concepts elaborated can be applied to phenomena amenable to scientific research, particularly in the study of public space. Finally, we will draw the pertinent conclusions.

## **Aesthetics and Politics: Debates and Approaches**

From the early writings of Baumgartner to contemporary academic production shaped by—and indebted to—Jacques Rancière's aesthetic approaches, it is possible to trace efforts of a theoretical nature to explain and sustain the relationship between aesthetics and politics. The two primary debates that bring together the approaches of aesthetic thinkers concerning politics have traditionally focused on a) the autonomy of art concerning politics and b) the aestheticization of politics. The first debate reflects on how art is defined by its autonomous character within the sphere of politics and, in this sense, inquires into the particular conditions of art (its rules of operation and criteria of excellence) that differ from the bureaucratic and rationalist logics of politics. The second integrates art and politics within the same sphere, making possible the State's aesthetic interventions for political purposes to establish parameters of aesthetic order in society.

These two aesthetic debates are related to discussions in Political Science regarding the concept of autonomy and the processes of the State's governmentalization. In the first instance, autonomy is directly related to freedom, which differs across political systems; the conception of freedom varies in liberal democratic, republican, and communitarian orders. Indeed, in each of these systems, the citizenry assumes its

autonomy vis-à-vis the State in distinct ways. In this definition of the spheres that differentiate the public from the private, art redefines its autonomous character in relation to politics.

Secondly, the various mechanisms and strategies that the State has developed to carry out processes of governmentalization, which, according to Foucault, are translated into forms of behavior, surveillance, and control, reveal the possible consolidation of the State as an anesthetic agent with the capacity to interfere with the referential frameworks of the subjects' sensibility. In this way, we witness the aestheticization of politics.

These two debates can be interrelated to give birth to an aesthetic understanding of the relationship between the State and the subject. On the one hand, the aestheticization of politics refers to the State's capacity to interfere with subjects' sensible understanding to consolidate a concrete project of citizenship. On the other hand, the autonomy of art reveals the possibility of constructing subjectivities that allow the constitution of an individual sensitivity concerning the State.

One of the questions around which the great discussions in Political Science in modernity have orbited, namely, the inquiry about the limits of State intervention in the private sphere in general, can be reformulated in aesthetic terms to question the aesthetic intervention of the State in the sensibility of society's members.

Finally, these two debates will be complemented by a third discussion that, at this point, is familiar to us: Jacques Rancière's aesthetic theory. We will explore three paths that aesthetic thinkers have developed to consider the relationship between aesthetics and politics: a) the aestheticization of politics, b) the autonomy of art, and c) the politics of aesthetics. We will call these paths aesthetic-political debates, which will consolidate as this research's theoretical pillar. In turn, these primary debates will be nourished by other contemporary theoretical perspectives, allowing us to approach the study of public space practically.

### a) The Aestheticization of Politics

This debate revolves around the irruption of art into politics, which, as Gama<sup>8</sup> points out, is assumed to be a conquest of sensibility judgments over rational judgments in

---

<sup>8</sup> Luis Eduardo Gama, "Arte y política como interpretación," *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 35 (2009): 99–111, <https://doi.org/10.7440/res34.2009.09>.

political activity. The term “aestheticization of politics” was first coined by Walter Benjamin in his studies of fascism and its relation to political aestheticization. As Paredes<sup>9</sup> points out, Benjamin observes, particularly in the fascist use of aesthetics to embellish war, a clear example of the aestheticization of politics. From a contemporary communication perspective, authors such as Mouffe<sup>10</sup> and Papacharissi<sup>11</sup> highlight how aesthetic and affective resources increasingly displace rational deliberation in the construction of public space. Let us observe the following words taken from Benjamin’s *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*:<sup>12</sup>

War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony.

In this way, we have an example of how sensible elements are incorporated into the logic of rational order expected of modern states, thereby establishing aesthetic order criteria that allow the reproduction of a concrete ideology. For Benjamin,<sup>13</sup> the fascist citizen exalts war insofar as the fascist State has incorporated this criterion into the sensible frames of reference of the subjects through aesthetic resources. However, this debate is not limited to totalitarian regimes, as Benjamin would have it in his time. The aestheticization of politics accounts for a state’s efforts to impose a specific sensible regime and to condition the sensible referents of its members.

We can find several examples of political aestheticization processes. Let us recall, for example, the efforts of the National Socialist government of Germany during World War II and the democratic Government of the United States during the Cold War to establish a cinematographic policy that would make it possible, through the use of aesthetic resources, to permeate the sensibility of subjects and endow a form of state action and a series of concrete policies with the condition of beauty.

---

<sup>9</sup> Diego Paredes, “De la estetización de la política a la política estética,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* no. 34 (2009): 91–98, <https://doi.org/10.7440/res34.2009.08>.

<sup>10</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London: Verso Books, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Zizi Papacharissi, “Affective Publics Solidarity and Distance,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Media Sociology*, ed. Deana A. Rohlinger and Sarah Sobieraj (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197510636.013.6>.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin, *La obra de arte*, 56.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin.

As Crespo<sup>14</sup> indicates in his doctoral dissertation, in the case of the United States, it was possible to evidence it “from the creation of offices and regulations that regulated the policies developed by the government towards cinema, to the establishment and support of a series of organizations that were in charge of ‘selling’ the American image and the American Way of Life.” In this sense, we could even think of the aestheticization of politics as one of the resources of the U.S. liberal democratic government during the Cold War to sustain its foreign policy. The outcome of the Cold War, which favored the U.S. political, economic, and normative project, could be an example of the effectiveness of political aestheticization in contexts beyond the national sphere.

In Germany, as Glover indicates, the Government established a series of aesthetic canons for film production that endowed the German citizen with beauty while seeking a clear, intentional reproduction of aesthetic prejudices against Jewish stereotypes in cinema. In the words of Adolf Hitler, we can find clear evidence of political aestheticization using the art of propaganda staged through cinema: “Its effect for the most part must be aimed at the emotions and only to a very limited degree at the so-called intellect ... The art of propaganda lies in understanding the emotional ideas of the great masses and finding, through a psychologically correct form, the way to the attention and thence to the hearts of the broad masses.”<sup>15</sup>

At this point, we could ask ourselves about the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the debate on the aestheticization of politics. In this debate, this relationship is characterized by the conjunction of art and politics in the same scenario, in which politics becomes art and is transformed into a tool for modeling a mass that would be transformed into a work of art through the impression of the work of the “artist-ruler” on it. From this approach, this aesthetically malleable mass would be society.

## b) The Autonomy of Art

The debate over the autonomy of art begins with Kant’s<sup>16</sup> aesthetic approaches to the sublime and the beautiful. For this thinker, the judgments that emanate from reason are differentiated from those that derive their sustenance from sensibility.

---

<sup>14</sup> Alejandro Crespo Jusado, “El cine y la industria de Hollywood durante la Guerra Fría (1946–1969),” *PhD diss.*, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2009, 166.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Glover, *Humanidad e inhumanidad: una historia moral del siglo XX* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Observaciones sobre el sentimiento de lo bello y lo sublime* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004).

Reason and sensibility are two autonomous spheres to which human understanding has access in clearly differentiated and exclusive ways.

With Kant's efforts to distance sensible judgments from those of reason, the tradition of aesthetic reflection on the autonomy of the sphere of art vis-à-vis the other spheres that comprise the human being's life begins. Thus, within the debate on the autonomy of art, the question arises of how the sphere of art is configured in contrast to other spheres of human action. What elements are exclusive to art?

Now, concerning the debate over the autonomy of art, a question arises: How does the relationship between aesthetics and politics develop? In the face of this question, it is essential to highlight the work of one of the first modern thinkers to establish communication links between aesthetics and politics, namely Friedrich Schiller.<sup>17</sup> This author condensed in *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man* his ideas on the liberating role of art in a context in which the State has suffered extreme mechanization in its governmental logic so that "the modern State does not constitute the adequate atmosphere for the realization of humanity, that is, for the deployment of all its potentialities, whose culminating point represents genuine freedom."<sup>18</sup> Schiller responds to this State's incapacity by proposing an aesthetic formation of citizenship, using art-based education to compensate for the State's exclusively rational, bureaucratic logic with sensible elements. Along these lines, art not only compensates for the disenchantment of the modern world but also brings to light contemporary tensions surrounding the body, desire, and recognition. Perafán del Campo<sup>19</sup> argues that erotic capital can be understood as an aesthetic-political category that reveals how bodies are normed, exhibited, or resisted in both public and symbolic arenas.

Thus, given the original independence of art from politics, it was possible to lay the foundations for the understanding of a relationship between aesthetics and politics of a compensatory nature that, sometime later, would be reaffirmed by the philosopher Joachim Ritter. For this author, art compensates for "the disenchantment of the world originated through the process of modernization, stimulating

---

<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Cartas sobre la educación estética del hombre* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Luis Eduardo Gama, "Arte y política como interpretación," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* no. 35 (2009): 100.

<sup>19</sup> Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo, Sebastián Polo Alvis, and Jessica Lizeth Caro Pulido, "Mirror box: ¿Una reivindicación estética sobre el capital erótico de la mujer?" *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología Jurídica* 1, no. 1 (2020): 183–206.

the development of the agent of a new enchantment.<sup>20</sup> This means that, from the autonomy of art, the aesthetic properties of sensory character allow one to intuit phenomena that are not perceptible from the exclusive use of reason and contribute to reconstructing the enchantment of a political world continuously disenchanting by the modern State.

### c) Aesthetic Policy

There is a debate that we could call critical within the discussion on art and politics. It is critical insofar as Marxist currents nourish it and create conceptual tools that enable the recreation, at the aesthetic level, of a structure that perpetuates a relationship between the dominator and the dominated. The leading exponent of this debate is Jacques Rancière, who has incorporated the idea of aesthetic policy to define the inherent relationship between art and politics.

For Rancière, four concepts enable us to delve into the relationship at issue, which is fundamental to understanding this author's theoretical contribution. These concepts are *pólice*, *partage* or distribution of the sensible, disagreement, and politics.

The first concept we will develop is that of *pólice*. This category refers to the control and determination of the "modes of doing, being, and saying," that is, to the capacity to establish determined spaces and times, in which the subjects must develop without the apparent possibility of situating themselves in other places than those established. This is because the *pólice* is in charge of ontologically establishing these presuppositions of immobility, thereby imposing an inequality in the mobility of bodies in the essence of the demos.

The *pólice* is directly related to the processes of the aestheticization of politics. Government efforts to establish aesthetic criteria in society are understood as *pólice*. Thus, it is expected of the subjects that, from their sensible structures, they manage to apprehend the criteria established by the *pólice* to condition an aesthetic experience. The above is under penalty of being susceptible to normalization of behavior in case a subject leaves in evidence the non-apprehension of such criteria.

In addition, this concept can be broadly nourished by Foucault's work on the various mechanisms of governmentalization that states have developed to ensure the exercise

---

<sup>20</sup> Gama, "Arte y política como interpretación."

of surveillance and control over subjects' sensibility. According to Foucault,<sup>21</sup> the means by which the State establishes ways of being, doing, and feeling in society, which are controlled on the basis of the concrete dynamics of power it has at its service, are understood as *pólice*. The concept of *pólice* can also be reconsidered in light of contemporary discussions on digital sovereignty. Perafán del Campo et al.<sup>22</sup> demonstrate that states deploy aesthetic and discursive strategies to assert their authority even in non-physical domains such as cyberspace.

The second concept to be dealt with is the distribution of the sensible. Thus, according to Rancière, by *partage*, we can understand:

[The] system of sensible evidence that allows to see at the same time the existence of a common and the divisions that define the places and the respective parts [...] [it is] this apportioning and reapportioning of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, and of noise and speech constitutes what I call the distribution of the sensible.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, if the *pólice* is the agent from where the directives of the partition emanate and its control is exercised, the distribution of the sensible is the very evidence of said partition where the possession of the *logos* is made evident. That is to say, where the visibility of those who possess the word and the invisibility of those who can only produce noise because they do not possess *logos* within the *partage* is observed.

The distribution of the sensible is the aesthetic structure of the political, which sustains each subject's place within the public, creating barriers and limits to the movement of the sensible bodies. Everyone is assigned space within the *partage*. However, some sensible understandings do not conform to this distribution and fail to find a space within the partition so that the subjects associated with such transgressive regimes become without parties.

The third and fourth concepts are, respectively, disagreement and politics. According to Rancière, these two concepts are directly related since the nature of politics is

---

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, "El sujeto y el poder," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 50, no. 3 (1991): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3540551>.

<sup>22</sup> Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo et al., "Estado y soberanía en el ciberespacio," *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 16, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.6480>.

<sup>23</sup> Rancière, *El malestar en la estética*, 3.

disagreement. Thus, we can understand political disagreement as: “[the situation] where X cannot see the common object Y is presenting because X cannot comprehend that the sounds uttered by Y form words and chains of words similar to X’s own.”<sup>24</sup> This means that political disagreement is, in the first instance, a situation in which a dispute over the possession and dispossession of the logos is evident. Then, we can observe that politics is the antonym of police, since politics involves disagreement and litigation, whereas the police seeks to construct agreement and settle such litigation.

This understanding of politics as disagreement and litigation can be further specified if we treat conflict not as a mere disruption of order, but as a visible expression of social divergence—that is, as the widening distance between normative expectations, social positions, and competing claims over what counts as common and who is entitled to speak within it.<sup>25</sup> From this perspective, divergence provides an additional analytical vocabulary for describing how protest, deviance, selective application of criminal law, and multicultural demands become publicly staged disputes over recognition and legitimacy in shared spaces.<sup>26</sup> Put differently, divergence helps to name the social and symbolic conditions that make disagreement perceptible and enduring, clarifying how the struggle over the distribution of the sensible is sustained through competing “orders” and their amalgamations.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Rancière, *El desacuerdo: política y filosofía* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1996), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Enrique del Percio, “Divergencia: inquietantes manifestaciones del amor, el sexo, el derecho y otras instituciones,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 7–36, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/276>.

<sup>26</sup> Jorge Enrique Carvajal Martínez and Óscar Javier Trujillo Osorio, “Protesta social en América Latina: análisis desde la divergencia como categoría de la criminología del sur global,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 185–214, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/282>; Pablo Elías González Monguí, “Divergencia social, selectividad e inmunidad en la aplicación del derecho penal,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 37–74, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/277>; Marco Alberto Quiroz Vitale, “Divergencia y desviación como categorías del pensamiento criminológico,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 215–42, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/283>; Jairo Vladimir Llano Franco, “Diversidad, pluralismo, divergencia y multiculturalismo: el movimiento indígena por el reconocimiento en Colombia,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 243–72, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/download/284/637/1437>.

<sup>27</sup> Luis Felipe Dávila, “Cuando dos puntos se alejan: desviación, divergencia y órdenes sociales amalgamados,” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 75–102, <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/278>; Germán Silva García, Angélica Vizcaíno-Solano, and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar, “The Debate Concerning Deviance and Divergence. A New Theoretical Proposal,” *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 14, no. 2 (2024): 505–29, <https://doi.org/10.35295/osl.s.iisl.1813>.

Thus, finally, it can be stated that the concept of politics, according to Rancière,<sup>28</sup> is: “whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration—that of the part of those who have no part.” That is to say that politics is the act by which the disagreement and the dispossession of the logos of those who have no part within the distribution of the sensible are made visible, which manages to illuminate the configuration of the partition and to glimpse the inequality that underlies it in terms of the immobility and invisibility of the sensible bodies.

Art acquires an emancipatory role in this debate, and politics is the aisthesis. The political aspect is where the sensitivity distribution occurs, and the parameters are set based on the subjects’ sensitivity in the public scenario; roles, spaces, and bodies are distributed. Politics has an artistic character as an ontological condition of its activity. Political action is necessarily aesthetic insofar as, through a staging nourished by the visibility practices of art (especially performance), it allows a glimpse of an unequal distribution of the sensible and vindicated forms of sensibility that have no space within the partage. Politics and aesthetics are linked by a common artistic bond inherent to their very nature.

## Aesthetics, Politics, and Ideology in the Public Space

### Public Space as a Framework for Political Intervention

The debates we have held above allow us to explore various contexts in which politics and aesthetics meet. However, in this article, we will focus on a place where both physical and theoretical contexts converge—a scenario in which diverse aesthetic stimuli condition reality. This place is a public space, so we will delve into this concept on the following pages.

Delgado<sup>29</sup> has deepened the conception of public space as an ideology and has updated it to the democratic context. Delgado invites us to consider public space from three points of view: 1) the perspective of the existence of an urban space where a series of differentiated relationships occur, which can be called urban; 2) an understanding that situates the physical space as a place where one

---

<sup>28</sup> Rancière, *El desacuerdo*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Manuel Delgado, *El espacio público como ideología* (Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, 2015).

materially coincides in an ephemeral way and whose access is conditioned by what is legally public, as opposed to what is legally private; 3) a proposal from political philosophy refers us to a deliberative context where we discuss and exercise control over what concerns us all as citizens: the public.

The aforementioned approaches, often in a differential manner, invite us to consider a fourth, integrated approach that allows us to observe both the material conditions of public space and the universe of subjectivities that operate within it. This gives rise to the alternative idea of public space that Delgado puts forward in the following terms:

The public space would become that domain in which [the] principle of communicative solidarity is staged, a sphere in which an interactional agreement and a co-produced discursive conformation are possible and necessary [...] it is assigned the strategic task of being the place where nominally democratic systems see or should see the truth of their egalitarian nature confirmed, the place where the rights of expression and assembly are exercised as forms of expression and assembly [...] it is assigned the strategic task of being the place where nominally democratic systems see or should see the truth of their egalitarian nature confirmed, the place where the rights of expression and assembly are exercised as forms of control over the powers from which those powers can be questioned in matters that concern everyone [...]. The public space is one of those notions that demand the fulfillment of the reality it evokes and, in a certain way, also invokes a nominal fiction conceived to induce thinking and acting in a certain way, and that urges to be instituted as an objective reality.<sup>30</sup>

In a democratic system, public space serves as tangible evidence of the embodiment of democratic ideals—behavioral norms that, when internalized by the citizenry, shape the interactions that occur there. However, as we have pointed out in previous pages, this materialization of political ideals in sensible contexts is not exclusive to democratic systems. For example, through Walter Benjamin's<sup>31</sup> work, we could observe how public space was also where the Italian fascist political project was staged, and the fascist citizen was recognized as part of it. Parades, music, architecture, design, and a set of rites were arranged in public space as part of an urban morphology based on concrete political interests.

---

<sup>30</sup> Delgado, *El espacio público como ideología*, 23, 28, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, *La obra de arte*.

The concept of public space acquires an instrumental character. The interests and values of the professional elites are reflected in the material form of the public space and, to a certain extent, condition the relationships that develop within it. Thus, there is an intention to shape the idea of citizenship as part of a political project unfolding in the public space. Regarding this planning, Delgado points out:

It is a matter of inculcating a hierarchization of values and meanings, a capacity to control their production and distribution, a capacity to make them influential, that is to say, to make them execute the interests of a dominant class, and to do so while concealing them under the guise of supposedly universal values [...] domination not only dominates but also directs and morally orients both social thought and action [...]. That place we call public space is thus a material extension of what in reality is ideology.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the concept of ideology (to which we will return later) emerges as a determining factor in the physical form public space assumes. Thus, public space will be the object of intervention by professional elites with a specific objective: to condition urban imaginaries about space so that streets, squares, museums, and, in general, public gathering spaces are transformed into places where the political project of citizenship is realized. The values, ideas, beliefs, and other abstract categories that constitute the ideological terrain are transformed into sensible objects through public space design, which conditions interactions. Regarding this process, Delgado states:

The objective is, therefore, to carry out an authentic transubstantiation. [...] A series of ritual operations and a few incantations and a purely metaphysical entity suddenly become a sensible thing, which is there, which can be touched with the hands and seen with the eyes, which, in this case, can be traversed and re-traversed. A theoretical space has magically become a sensible space. What was once a street is now a potentially inexhaustible stage for communication and exchange, [...] all in a sphere that everyone can appropriate, but cannot claim as property; physical framework of the political.<sup>33</sup>

Now, although it is possible to evidence the will of a professional elite to condition urban imaginaries in public space through its aesthetic interventions, Delgado states that this condition can hardly be considered a determinant in reconstructing the subjectivities that operate in this space. In this way, a discussion arises about who

---

<sup>32</sup> Delgado, *El espacio público como ideología*, 25, 26, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Delgado, 29.

can determine the meaning of public space, in which several hypotheses emerge that do not easily yield a clear answer. As Delgado points out:

It has been sufficiently remarked that it is naïve and unjustified to sustain the pretension, which is usually sustained from the city's design, that the constitution of the project of an urban morphology automatically determines the social activity that will develop in its bosom. This kind of urban idealism assumes that urban form is a behaviorist system that guides human action through conditioned reflexes, the source of which lies in the arrangement of architectural volumes or the distribution of public space elements. Instead, we know that another morphology—the social one—always has the last word on what a given built place is for and what it means.<sup>34</sup>

However, the social morphology mentioned by Delgado is also conditioned by the aesthetic reality of public space insofar as it is the material framework of the political project to which citizens are inscribed. Citizens cannot escape the architecture and design they encounter daily, or the aesthetics and symbolism that refer to particular ideologies. Crossing streets and squares, moving around the city, and engaging with museums, parks, and libraries are part of citizens' daily lives and constantly expose them to expectations for how to interact with, live in, and feel the city. In other words, urban morphology shapes social morphology. Although it is neither possible nor sensible to assume a deterministic position regarding the degree of influence of the aesthetics of public space on the construction of subjectivities, it is possible to point out its importance and conditioning character as the first sensible reality in which citizens develop.

On the other hand, from Hannah Arendt's theory,<sup>35</sup> locating public space as a visibility scenario is possible. For this thinker, public space becomes a space of appearance and recognition. The public is that which "can be seen, felt, and heard by all." In public space, citizens become visible to others, and their singularities are staged. Additionally, public space is the scene of encounter par excellence for Hannah Arendt, not only as a physical place but also as a space that escapes the territorial and allows the construction of subjectivities. It is the space of "common appearance"<sup>36</sup> where the relationships that condition citizen identity are interwoven.

---

<sup>34</sup> Delgado, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *¿Qué es la política?* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1977).

<sup>36</sup> Gustavo Zapata, "El espacio público y su fundamento en la libertad," *Papel Político* 17, no. 1 (2012): 164, <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=77724876006>.

Public space is also the scenario where political action takes place. From Hannah Arendt's perspective, such action is consolidated as the physical manifestation of freedom, which requires a series of moral and political conditions to crystallize.<sup>37</sup> Such conditions appear in the public space as enabling and conditioning elements of political action, whether from Arendt's democratic perspective or from axiological referents far from democracy (such as totalitarianism, despotism, etc.). The moral condition in public space refers to the evidence of values, principles, and ideas that constitute the axiological framework of interaction in that space. On the other hand, the political condition mentioned by Arendt could refer to the power relations that condition the possibility of appearance or invisibility of certain actors, ideas, and manifestations in the public space.

Based on the abovementioned approaches, aesthetic intervention in public space could condition how political action emerges. This means that if the values shared by professional elites and imprinted in the aesthetics of public space are oriented to "establish relationships between people belonging to a diverse and plural community that try to maintain a certain sense of community"<sup>38</sup> and to strengthen community ties through respect and recognition of difference, we could observe a space that consolidates as fertile ground for democratic political action. Thus, aesthetics becomes a fundamental tool for shaping a concrete political project that can lead to more or less democratic social realities.

Within this context, a significant aspect of the control certain professional elites exert over public space is their ability to shape the common appearance. This form internalizes certain aspects as principles of identity and axiological referents of citizen action. The political dynamics behind the decision-making process on urban morphology can be interpreted as a quest to position an aesthetic of what citizens can see, feel, and hear in public space. Like any political endeavor, this process would lead to differential appropriation by those who interact with and inhabit public space. We could witness the emergence of agreements and disagreements, processes of resistance, and vindications of different ways of thinking, feeling, and living in this space.

---

<sup>37</sup> José Francisco Jiménez Díaz, "La propuesta de ciudadanía democrática en Hannah Arendt," *Política y Sociedad* 5 (2013): 937–58. [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_POSO.2013.v50.n3.41862](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_POSO.2013.v50.n3.41862).

<sup>38</sup> Jiménez Díaz, "La propuesta de ciudadanía democrática," 942.

## Political Aestheticization in the Public Space

The intention of molding the elements that condition the idea of citizenship and making public space its place of staging is directly related to the concept of *pólice* and political aestheticization. The matter of which the space is composed becomes public space insofar as it is represented as such. The professional elites imprint a form on public space and transform it into a sensible object, which, to a certain extent, conditions the social relations that develop within it. The professional elites are the policymakers who establish a division of the sensible by molding a particular urban morphology.

For example, style understood as a tool for communicating meanings is one of the main elements that condition the aesthetics of public space and, therefore, an important resource for political aestheticization. As Roger Scruton<sup>39</sup> points out:

Through style, we grasp what has been highlighted, what serves as a backdrop, and the links that bind everything to everything else. [...] What reaffirms our role in everyday social life. In this sense, the premeditated arrangement of sensible objects in public space is established as a symbolic referent that communicates to citizens what is expected of them.

However, despite the efforts of the professional elites to condition the framework for citizen interaction through their aesthetic interventions in public space, it would be naïve to assume that the meaning they seek to represent there is the same as that constructed by the subjects who cohabit it. The ideal mentioned by Delgado, regarding public space as a grand courtly ballroom where harmony is expected between the music and the steps of the attendees, is an urbanistic ideal that does not correspond to reality. At most, we observe the intention of a host playing a particular melody, expecting his guests to follow the rules that tempo and style demand. However, the staging of the dance would reflect a complex, heterogeneous panorama of interpretation and differential appropriation of the music, in which, although a familiar melody is shared, each one makes the music his own from his situated reality and stages a dance with steps that are often different from those expected. Despite the professional elites' attempts to define the aesthetics of public space, citizen appropriations produce alternative meanings. These resignifications

---

<sup>39</sup> Roger Scruton, *La estética de la arquitectura* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985), 113.

can be interpreted as acts of insurgent communication,<sup>40</sup> where citizens contest and redefine imposed urban narratives.

In this way, we can situate two distinct aesthetic currents in the study of public space: two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, we have the efforts of a professional elite to establish a division of the sensible that accounts for a vision of citizenship and imprints a form on public space, emanating from a particular ideology. On the other hand, we can find evidence of a process of appropriation of such aesthetics emanating from a political project and giving rise to new meanings by subjects concerning the sensible objects arranged in public space. The values and ideas that seek to be represented and erected as symbols of an ideology through the styles of streets, monuments, squares, and the architecture of public buildings condition the aesthetic framework of public interaction among citizens. However, the citizens finally have the last word on how they feel and how they live with the sensible objects erected in public spaces.

Studying public space from an aesthetic-political approach offers us the possibility of approaching the two paths we have proposed. However, due to the limitations of the researcher's role, it would be difficult to account for both the design process and the appropriation of public space from an aesthetic perspective in an investigation. For this reason, we will focus on the first of the two paths in this research. This means that we will focus on the processes of political aestheticization that account for how the values shared by a professional elite are transformed into aesthetic experiences in public space.

## Ideology and Representative Aesthetics

Throughout the last pages, we have mentioned the concept of ideology. We have said that public space is where a particular ideology is staged, influencing how sensible objects are arranged in space. However, a detailed definition of this concept is necessary. For this reason, we will turn to Teun van Dijk to define ideology. Van Dijk moves away from classical Marxism by positioning ideology beyond the fetishistic or masking character it used to connote of the social world. As this author mentions: "ideologies are the basic systems of social cognition, made up of shared mental representations specific to a group, which are inscribed within the

---

<sup>40</sup> Alicia Mattoni and Emiliano Treré, "Media practices, social movements, and performativity: Transdisciplinary approaches," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2020): 48–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2020.1722821>.

‘general beliefs’ (knowledge, opinions, values, truth criteria, etc.) of entire societies or cultures.”<sup>41</sup>

For van Dijk, discourse plays a fundamental role in transmitting ideology; it is the primary tool of ideological reproduction. This author argues that ideology constrains subjects’ actions through discourse, controlling their ways of doing and saying. This idea refers to the concept of power developed by Foucault<sup>42</sup> in his book *The Subject and Power*, in which power is thought of as action on actions. That is to say, the possibility that someone’s will can interfere with the set of possible actions another possesses. Similarly, Foucault wonders who holds such power, to which he replies that power is neither possessed nor held. Power is a relational aspect that exists only to the extent that one tries to impose one’s will on others and to condition possibilities of action, not as an exogenous element in a relationship. For Hannah Arendt, discourse and action are inseparable, and it is impossible to think of one without the other. In the same way, discourse and action are found in public space as correlative elements, mediated by power relations, which help us understand political action.

In this regard, a professional or dominant elite—such as the one responsible for shaping a particular urban morphology—produces discourses that can be analyzed to uncover the ideological foundations of aesthetic interventions in public space. Silva García<sup>43</sup> argues that institutional discourses are not neutral; they create social realities that validate certain practices while marginalizing others. This perspective is valuable for understanding how these interventions function materially and discursively. They shape visibility regimes and define how citizens can present themselves. Accordingly, by examining a specific intervention—such as the design of an avenue, the construction of a museum, or the redevelopment of a square—it is possible to trace the discourses articulated by the elites who conceived, commissioned, designed, and financed the project. This allows for analyzing the justificatory arguments and the relationship between these discourses and the sensible objects arranged in space. Ultimately, the aim is to examine how the political field functions across diverse spatial and ideological contexts and to identify the logic and interests

---

<sup>41</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideología y discurso* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2003), 92.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, “El sujeto y el poder.”

<sup>43</sup> Germán Silva García, “La construcción social de la realidad: Las ficciones del discurso sobre la impunidad y sus funciones sociales,” *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 17, no. 1 (2022): 105–23, <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.7743>.

underpinning aesthetic interventions in public space and their connection to the ideologies held by professional elites.

This rationale extends to digital environments, where discourse acquires material form through interfaces, platforms, and algorithmic structures. As Koerner and Perafán del Campo<sup>44</sup> observe, digital technologies alter the frameworks through which normative orders are produced and reshape the aesthetic registers that mediate the construction of citizenship and political subjectivity. Similarly, Couldry and Mejías<sup>45</sup> refer to this phenomenon as “data colonialism”—a contemporary logic of appropriation that captures human life through the infrastructures of digital connectivity. Under this paradigm, the aesthetics of public space are no longer confined to physical geographies; instead, they are reconfigured through the spatial logic of platforms, which function as new sites of aesthetic intervention and political inscription.

Let us recall that, according to Rancière, representational aesthetics seeks to impose a form on the matter and to endow the relationship between the work’s constituent elements with meaning. In this sense, ideology could be that which is imprinted on the matter of the sensible bodies in the public space, the sound of a discourse that can be perceived through the style of the sensible objects arranged in the public space, and that refers us to the values, ideas, and beliefs of a professional elite.

The reflection we have carried out so far has led us along the first of the two aforementioned paths: that of the values and beliefs of professional elites, transformed into aesthetics in public space. For this reason, although we consider that there is a wide range of interaction, appropriation, and the creation of diverse meanings regarding the sensible objects of public space, as mentioned above, these elements will not be addressed in this research. What attracts our attention at this point is the relationship between professional elites, ideology, aesthetics, and public space.

## Public Space and the Political Field

One of the best ways to understand the political game behind the processes of political aestheticization of public space is to refer to the theoretical approaches

---

<sup>44</sup> Andrei Koerner and Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo, “Derecho social y tecnologías digitales,” *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 15, no. 2 (2020): 251–78, <https://doi.org/10.15332/625>.

<sup>45</sup> Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejías, *The costs of connection: How data colonizes human life and appropriates it for capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503609754>.

of the famous French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>46</sup> This thinker developed two fundamental concepts that have become theoretical pillars of social science research: field and habitus. We will use these two concepts to deepen the discussion we have been having.

A field refers to a battlefield—a space where agents fight among themselves for the monopoly over the capital at stake. The basic social structure allows us to evidence the relationships, strategies, and power games that give life to the social world. As Bourdieu<sup>47</sup> indicates, fields are

structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position in these spaces and can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (partly determined by them) [...] The structure of the field is a state of the relationship of forces between the agents or institutions involved in the struggle, or, if you prefer, the distribution of the specific capital accumulated during previous struggles, and that orients further strategies. That very structure, which underlies the strategies aimed at transforming them, is always at stake.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, habitus is related to the set of beliefs established as a “system of dispositions acquired through implicit or explicit learning that functions as a system of generating schemes.”<sup>49</sup> This concept refers to the accumulation of subjective elements that professionals in a field apprehend, constituting access requirements. The habitus conditions the forms of expression and interaction proper to each field. Therefore, the existence and enactment of a specific habitus can be observed within each field: a political habitus in the political field, an economic habitus in the economic field, a legal habitus in the legal field, and so forth.

Now that we have defined these two central concepts, let us return to the object of study at hand: public space. By establishing a dialogue among Bourdieu’s<sup>50</sup> theory, Hannah Arendt’s theory, and Delgado’s approaches, we can relate the political field to the notion of public space. The aesthetics of public space could be part of the physical evidence of the play of political actors and the habitus of the dominant agents in the political field. Public space as a scene of appearance is also evidence of

---

<sup>46</sup> Bourdieu, *Sociología y cultura*.

<sup>47</sup> Bourdieu.

<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu, 135–36.

<sup>49</sup> Bourdieu, 141.

<sup>50</sup> Bourdieu.

the rules of the game or of the moral and political conditions (Arendt) that make the emergence of political action possible. In this sense, public space would be both a product of the political field and the physical framework of the political (Delgado).

Amézquita<sup>51</sup> points out that the property that makes the political field particular is the possibility of producing ideas about the social world that are legitimized by the mandate given to political actors. In democratic contexts, a typical struggle in the political field, such as holding elections, allows us to observe the production of diverse understandings of the social world by candidates, as evidenced in their political speeches before the electorate. Voting would legitimize these visions of the social world, and the winning vision would be the one most widely shared among voters. In this way, we could observe that, in elections, there is an exercise of validating the values and beliefs represented by the candidates, through which either an intention to introduce new elements that condition the rules of the game within the field or to maintain the established rules is expressed.

Let us think, for example, about the 2014 elections in Colombia. In those elections, the then-President, Juan Manuel Santos, and the official opposition candidate faced off. The situation in the country at the time was the establishment of a negotiating table between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the oldest guerrilla group on the American continent—the dialogue aimed to reach a peace agreement to demobilize the guerrilla group. The Santos administration, the promoter of the possible agreement, used the discourse around achieving the peace agreement as a central electoral resource. This idea was consolidated as an extension of what is enshrined in the Political Constitution of Colombia regarding the understanding of peace as a right and a duty subject to mandatory compliance. The general opinion supported the peace narrative promoted by the presidential candidate. It validated such a social worldview, in which peace was established to shape the development of Colombia's political field.

The second presidential term of Juan Manuel Santos was conditioned by the positioning of the peace narrative in all government spheres. From the 2014 National Development Plan, *Todos por un Nuevo País*<sup>52</sup> (a macro-guiding document for public

---

<sup>51</sup> Constanza Amézquita-Quintana, "Los campos político y jurídico en perspectiva comparada," *Universitas Humanística* no. 65 (2008): 89–115, <https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/univhumanistica/article/view/2243>.

<sup>52</sup> Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP), *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2014–2018: Todos por un nuevo país, tomo 1* (Bogotá, D.C.: Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015).

policy in Colombia), to daily interactions among political agents, the peace narrative was at the forefront. The emblem of the silhouette of a white dove on the lapel of government officials was positioned as an aesthetic reference to national politics, and the idea of peace, apparently, was transformed during the Santos period as a sine qua non element of the Colombian political field, to which, of course, there was also resistance. In this case, the peace agreements were signed on September 26, 2016, and the Colombian political landscape was altered by the creation of a transitional regime to support the state's efforts to implement the agreements.

At this point, the Colombian case also requires a methodological caution: in the analysis of conflict, legality, and public order, it is often assumed—explicitly or implicitly—that interpretive models produced in the Global North can be transferred without friction to Global South realities, even when they overlook local institutional textures and historically specific forms of exclusion.<sup>53</sup> A growing body of socio-legal and criminological scholarship produced from Latin American vantage points insists, instead, on examining how knowledge is evaluated, how Eurocentric narratives of universality are contested, and how situated conditions shape penal control, sustainability conflicts, and political exclusion.<sup>54</sup> Read in this key, the governmental inscription of the peace agenda—such as through the 2014 National Development Plan—can be understood not only as policy, but as a discursive intervention competing for legitimacy within the political field, precisely the kind of symbolic work that the following paragraph attributes to political professionals.

<sup>53</sup> Germán Silva García and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar, “Evaluación de la investigación jurídica publicada en libros e impacto en la educación superior colombiana,” *Revista de Pedagogía Universitaria y Didáctica del Derecho* 10, no. 2 (2023): 101–20, <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-5885.2023.71285>.

<sup>54</sup> Oscar Alexis Agudelo Giraldo and Jorge Enrique León Molina, “Una devaluación del mito eurocéntrico sobre la universalidad de los derechos humanos: la sospecha latinoamericana,” *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* 21, no. 44 (2023): 986–1004, <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.1260>; Pablo Guadarrama González, “Cultura e ideologías en el pensamiento latinoamericano,” *Cultura Latinoamericana* 40, no. 2 (2024): 64–87; Fernanda Navas, “Sobre la conceptualización de la estrategia militar en Colombia y el conflicto armado,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología Jurídica* 6, no. 9 (2024): 67–89; Germán Silva García, “Crisis y transformaciones en el control social penal en el contexto de la cultura jurídica colombiana,” *Cultura Latinoamericana* 39, no. 1 (2024): 156–92; Germán Silva García and Angélica Vizcaíno-Solano, “Profissão jurídica: poder político e exclusão social. ‘A dança dos que sobraram’,” *Revista Eletrônica de Direito e Sociedade (REDES)* 12, no. 1 (2024): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.18316/REDES.v12i11853>; Germán Silva García and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar, “International Anti-Drug Policies and Corrupt Public-Private Coalitions: Perspectives from a Criminology of the Global South,” *Economía Institucional* 26, no. 51 (2024): 139–63, <https://doi.org/10.18601/01245996.v26n51.07>; Germán Silva García and Diana Marcela Bonilla Uyaban, “La sostenibilidad en el análisis criminológico. El caso de la minería carbonífera en Boyacá,” *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 18, no. 2 (2023): 270–92, <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.9743>.

Through the example above, we can observe how political professionals' vision of the social world, evident in their speeches and validated through elections, can materialize in elements that condition political practice in the political field. This practice could also condition substantial elements in other fields. For example, justice is linked to the legal field.<sup>55</sup> However, it would be naïve to think that validating a political project automatically leads us, in all cases, to evidence the materialization of those values in political practice. Each political field is different, and its events correspond to different socio-historical contexts. We cannot always observe a correlation between the discourse validated in elections, the performance of political actors once elected, and political aestheticization. Through victory, professionals accumulate substantial capital, enabling them to consolidate their dominance in the political field and secure significant margins of political maneuver. The political interests behind the endorsement of a candidacy are not always aligned with the values discursively socialized to the public. An example of this condition is the research developed concerning the public space of Cuernavaca (Mexico) by Filipe Narciso and Ramírez Velásquez.<sup>56</sup> These authors point out that the discourse on the aesthetics of public space in Cuernavaca was sustained by the narrative of the "right to the city," through which all citizens had the right to use and enjoy the newly beautified spaces offered by the city. Regeneration, beautification, and competitive positioning of the city were guiding principles in the aesthetic interventions in the city's public space since 2009.

The narrative of the right to the city, inaugurated by Lefebvre in the 1970s and widely disseminated in Europe as an urbanistic ideal, according to the authors, is reinterpreted by the professional elites of Cuernavaca's political field within an urban policy that privileged urban use for the middle and upper classes. The official discourse that favored the creation of integrated citizenship and the idealistic dissolution of class differences in public space through its open, shared use was transformed into an aesthetic experience that, rather than integrating, encouraged exclusion.

For Filipe Narciso and Ramírez Velásquez, the public space in Cuernavaca was transformed into:

<sup>55</sup> Óscar Alexis Agudelo Giraldo and Astrid Rocío Galán, "Derecho injusto: fórmula de universalización y Derechos Humanos," *Novum Jus* 9, no. 2 (2015): 111–36, <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2015.9.2.5>.

<sup>56</sup> Carla Alexandra Filipe Narciso y Blanca Rebeca Ramírez Velásquez, "Discursos, política y poder: el espacio público en cuestión," *Territorios* 35 (2016): 37–57.

A space built by hegemonic classes for their usufruct, based on traditional typologies such as the garden, the square, and the park that fulfill the functions of recreation, leisure, to see and be seen, of a meeting between agents of equal status or social class, markedly homogeneous in interests, tastes, expressions, or cultural traditions. In them, the lower classes had no place, and the spaces destined for them fulfilled functions different from those of the upper class.<sup>57</sup>

The values and beliefs of Cuernavaca's professional elites were manifested in aesthetic interventions in public spaces that sought to beautify the city and create new sites of consumption. However, certain factions of Cuernavaca's population could only enjoy this capacity for consumption. In particular, those social spectrums benefited from the economic progress Latin America experienced in the first decade of the 21st century.<sup>58</sup> Within a mercantilist ideology, the aesthetic intervention in public space was consolidated as a mediation tool between consumption and citizenship, the attraction of international financial capital, and the projection of Cuernavaca as a modern, attractive city.

The aesthetics that accompanied the political project of intervention in the public space of Cuernavaca could be summarized in the following words of the authors: "the idealization of the beautiful; the tendency to remove the ugly and dirty from the central or main spaces of the city; [the staging of] the imaginaries of the middle and upper classes."<sup>59</sup> In this way, we can evidence a process of political aestheticization that, although discursively supported by democratic principles, in practice, we can observe how, from an aesthetic perspective, it divides and fractionates the territory, consolidating social class as an element of territorialization of public space and making the possibilities of appearance and visibility in it exclusive.

The practicality of the example we have presented lies in its evidence of a form of political aestheticization that, in public space, embodies the beliefs and interests of a professional political elite. However, the authors of this research could incur some generalizations by establishing, as a trend in Latin America, the use of public space as a mediation between consumption and citizenship, and the harmful effects on social integration that this trend reflects. We could be facing an approach, perhaps not very accurate, that points out a dichotomy between the rule of economic

---

<sup>57</sup> Filipe Narciso and Ramírez Velásquez, "Discursos, política y poder," 44.

<sup>58</sup> Sebastián Polo Alvis and Enrique Serrano López, "Nueva república, nuevo horizonte, nuevo porvenir," *Novum Jus* 12, no. 2 (2018): 165–88, <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2017.12.1.7>.

<sup>59</sup> Filipe Narciso and Ramírez Velásquez, "Discursos, política y poder," 48.

and market logic and the development and social integration in public space. To a certain extent, for the authors, the projects of beautifying public space, competitive positioning of cities, modernization, and attracting capital necessarily result in the division of public space into classes and social exclusion.

The example of Cuernavaca illustrated a case where this apparent dichotomy occurred. This was due to the process of political aestheticization, stemming from an ideology and political interests that benefited certain well-off social factions. However, as we have pointed out throughout this document, political aestheticization can reduce the moral and political conditions for the emergence of democratic political action, but it can also strengthen the conditions that make tolerance, plurality, and integration possible. This is subject to the beliefs and values that the professional elites may share in each particular case of political aestheticization. Contrary to what Filipe Narciso and Ramírez Velásquez suggest, there may be examples in Latin America that demonstrate it is possible to bring together competitiveness, economic growth, beautification of the urban landscape, empowerment of populations in conditions of exclusion/vulnerability, and the strengthening of social integration through aesthetic interventions in public space.

An example of this condition is the Parque Biblioteca Pública España<sup>60</sup> project in the city of Medellín, where a monumental library, accompanied by a comprehensive district government intervention, was erected in one of the most neglected peri-urban areas of the city. In this intervention, contrast was the aesthetic tool through which the creation of a new public space was symbolized. In contrast to the dynamics of inequality, exclusion, and violence that preceded life in the La Popular and Santa Cruz neighborhoods and were rooted in the aesthetics of marginal neighborhoods, a new form of human interaction within a new aesthetic was proposed. As Manzatti, the architect in charge of the library's design, points out,<sup>61</sup> the aesthetic challenge of this construction was in "how we propagated a different life and how we propagated it in purely visual terms."

This alternative way of life emphasized encounter as the fundamental principle of public space, which took physical form, symbolically conceived as a place of

---

<sup>60</sup> Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo, "La estética del Estado social de derecho: el caso del Parque Biblioteca España en la ciudad de Medellín," *Novum Jus* 17, no. 2 (2023): 375–402, <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2023.17.2.15>.

<sup>61</sup> *Maravillas de Colombia: Biblioteca España, Medellín*, directed by Señal Colombia (Colombia: Señal Colombia, 2015), documentary.

beauty, in a context historically marked by its absence. Within this space, those who had long been marginalized and rendered invisible found a renewed possibility to reclaim their right to beauty and recognition. As McGuire<sup>62</sup> argues, the interplay between architecture and collective experience in contemporary cities transforms urban space into a communicative environment where spatial arrangements convey meanings, values, and ideologies. Public space thus becomes a scenographic arena in which social actors not only circulate and interact but also express, perform, and negotiate their place within the urban narrative. This notion is echoed in the words of Sergio Fajardo, then mayor of Medellín, who affirmed: “We are going to break with the idea that the most beautiful things are for the richest, and instead offer the most beautiful to the humblest.”<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, an aesthetic-political analysis could also enrich the understanding of cases from other geographies. For example, the High Line<sup>64</sup> is a park built on the old elevated train tracks in New York City, promoted during Bloomberg’s mayoralty. In this case, transgression can be identified as an aesthetic element that conditions the park’s sensible reality. However, this transgressive aesthetic is not born from the act of ecological rebellion of the green that invades the spaces and the urban delimitation of steel and concrete, nor from the act of social resistance that appropriates and reinterprets marginalized spaces considered as “waste places” to generate scenarios of social interaction parallel to the status quo. On the contrary, the transgressive aesthetics of the High Line is the discursive form that, within the framework of this project, assumes the ideology of urban landscape architecture and is inserted into the urban renewal project of the Hudson Yards area of New York City.

The examples given above are just a few scenarios in which aesthetics and politics meet through the design of public space and shape urban morphology. They could give rise to new research grounded in the approach developed throughout this article. Aesthetics, ideology, and public space are categories that, from an interdisciplinary perspective, can point to enriching elements within academic work and serve as tools for future research on urban phenomena.

---

<sup>62</sup> Scott McGuire, *The media city: Media, architecture and urban space* (SAGE Publications, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> *Maravillas de Colombia: Biblioteca España, Medellín.*

<sup>64</sup> Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo, “Rebellion as a commodified product in public space: The case of the High Line in New York City,” *CUHSO, Cultura-Hombre-Sociedad* (forthcoming).

## Conclusions

This article has examined the aestheticization of politics as a process through which political and professional elites inscribe their ideological frameworks into public space. Rather than being neutral or merely decorative, aesthetic interventions operate as instruments of symbolic order: they configure regimes of visibility, produce affective atmospheres, and structure the appearance and behavior of citizenship. These interventions shape the physical environment and how the political becomes sensible—how it is seen, felt, and experienced. From this perspective, public space ceases to be a passive backdrop and emerges as an active site of ideological projection.

At the same time, public space must be understood as a communicative medium in which these aesthetic configurations function as discursive forms. Urban design, spatial organization, and stylistic codes communicate messages of authority, legitimacy, and collective identity. The aesthetic decisions of elites do not merely reflect ideology—they materialize it. However, this communicative order is not closed. Aesthetic meaning in public space is always subject to tension, negotiation, and dispute. Competing visions of the city, divergent projects of representation, and clashes over symbolic control reveal that the aestheticization of politics is never a unidirectional act of domination but a field of strategic intervention within the broader political arena.

In this light, the aesthetic-political framework advanced here allows us to critically interpret urban form as a dynamic site of power, communication, and ideological struggle. Future inquiries might further explore how public aesthetics are mobilized to legitimize political projects and produce exclusion, recognition, or symbolic capital. The challenge is to read spatial interventions not as isolated acts of design but as operations within a broader logic of political communication, in which the city itself becomes a message—a contested message authored by elites but interpreted, negotiated, and, at times, resisted in the very spaces they construct.

## References

- Agudelo Giraldo, Óscar Alexis, and Astrid Rocío Galán. “Derecho injusto: fórmula de universalización y derechos humanos.” *Novum Jus* 9, no. 2 (2015): 111–36. <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2015.9.2.5>.
- Agudelo Giraldo, Óscar Alexis, and Jorge Enrique León Molina. “Una devaluación del mito eurocéntrico sobre la universalidad de los derechos humanos: la sospecha

- latinoamericana.” *Revista Científica General José María Córdova* 21, no. 44 (2023): 986–1004. <https://doi.org/10.21830/19006586.1260>.
- Amézquita-Quintana, Constanza. “Los campos político y jurídico en perspectiva comparada.” *Universitas Humanistica* no. 65 (2008): 89–115. <https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/univhumanistica/article/view/2243>.
- ArchDaily en Español. “Parque Biblioteca España / Giancarlo Mazzanti.” *ArchDaily en Español*, February 19, 2008. <https://www.archdaily.mx/mx/02-6075/biblioteca-parque-espana-giancarlo-mazzanti>.
- Arendt, Hannah. *¿Qué es la política?* Barcelona: Paidós, 1977.
- Benjamin, Walter. *La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica*. Madrid: Taurus, 1982.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Sociología y cultura*. Ciudad de México: Grijalbo, 1990.
- Carvajal Martínez, Jorge Enrique, and Óscar Javier Trujillo Osorio. “Protesta social en América Latina: análisis desde la divergencia como categoría de la criminología del sur global.” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 185–214. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/IlaeOjs/article/view/282>.
- Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias. *The costs of connection: How data colonizes human life and appropriates it for capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503609754>.
- Crespo Jurdado, Alejandro. “El cine y la industria de Hollywood durante la Guerra Fría (1946–1969).” *PhD diss.*, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2009.
- Dávila, Luis Felipe. “Cuando dos puntos se alejan: desviación, divergencia y órdenes sociales amalgamados.” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 75–102. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/IlaeOjs/article/view/278>.
- Del Percio, Enrique. “Divergencia: inquietantes manifestaciones del amor, el sexo, el derecho y otras instituciones.” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 7–36. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/IlaeOjs/article/view/276>.
- Delgado, Manuel. *El espacio público como ideología*. Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, 2015.
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP). *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2014–2018: Todos por un nuevo país, tomo 1*. Bogotá, D.C.: Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2015.
- Filipe Narciso, Carla Alexandra, and Blanca Rebeca Ramírez Velásquez. “Discursos, política y poder: el espacio público en cuestión.” *Territorios* 35 (2016): 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.12804/territ35.2016.02>.
- Foucault, Michel. “El sujeto y el poder.” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 50, no. 3 (1991): 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3540551>.
- Gama, Luis Eduardo. “Arte y política como interpretación.” *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 35 (2009): 99–111. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res34.2009.09>.

- Glover, Jonathan. *Humanidad e inhumanidad: una historia moral del siglo XX*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2001.
- González Monguí, Pablo Elías. “Divergencia social, selectividad e inmunidad en la aplicación del derecho penal.” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 37–74. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/view/277>.
- Guadarrama González, Pablo. “Cultura e ideologías en el pensamiento latinoamericano.” *Cultura Latinoamericana* 40, no. 2 (2024): 64–87.
- Jiménez Díaz, José Francisco. “La propuesta de ciudadanía democrática en Hannah Arendt.” *Política y Sociedad* 5 (2013): 937–58. [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_POSO.2013.v50.n3.41862](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_POSO.2013.v50.n3.41862).
- Kant, Immanuel. *Observaciones sobre el sentimiento de lo bello y lo sublime*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004.
- Koerner, Andrei, and Eduardo Andrés Perafán del Campo. “Derecho social y tecnologías digitales.” *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 15, no. 2 (2020): 251–78. <https://doi.org/10.15332/625>.
- Llano Franco, Jairo Vladimir. “Diversidad, pluralismo, divergencia y multiculturalismo: el movimiento indígena por el reconocimiento en Colombia.” *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 243–72. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/llaeOjs/article/download/284/637/1437>.
- Mattoni, Alice, and Emiliano Treré. “Media practices, social movements, and performativity: Transdisciplinary approaches.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2020): 48–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2020.1722821>.
- McGuire, Scott. *The media city: Media, architecture and urban space*. SAGE Publications, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269572>.
- Mouffe, Chantal. *For a left populism*. London: Verso Books, 2020.
- Navas, Fernanda. “Sobre la conceptualización de la estrategia militar en Colombia y el conflicto armado.” *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología Jurídica* 6, no. 9 (2024): 67–89.
- Papacharissi, Zizi. “Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Media Sociology*, edited by Deana A. Rohlinger and Sarah Sobieraj, 61–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197510636.013.6>.
- Paredes, Diego. “De la estetización de la política a la política estética.” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* no. 34 (2009): 91–98. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res34.2009.08>.
- Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés. “Estética, ideología y espacio público.” *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana* 25, no. Esp. 4 (2020): 65–83.

- Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés. "La estética del Estado social de derecho: el caso del Parque Biblioteca España en la ciudad de Medellín." *Novum Jus* 17, no. 2 (2023): 375–402. <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2023.17.2.15>.
- Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés. "Rebellion as a commodified product in public space: The case of the High Line in New York City." *CUHSO, Cultura-Hombre-Sociedad* (forthcoming).
- Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés, Sebastián Polo Alvis, and Jessica Lizeth Caro Pulido. "Mirror box: ¿Una reivindicación estética del capital erótico de la mujer?" *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología Jurídica* 1, no. 1 (2020): 183–206.
- Perafán del Campo, Eduardo Andrés, Sebastián Polo Alvis, Marco Emilio Sánchez Acevedo, and Catalina Miranda Aguirre. "Estado y soberanía en el ciberespacio." *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1–46. <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.6480>.
- Polo Alvis, Sebastián, and Enrique Serrano López. "Nueva república, nuevo horizonte, nuevo porvenir." *Novum Jus* 12, no. 2 (2018): 165–88. <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2017.12.1.7>.
- Quiroz Vitale, Marco Alberto. "Divergencia y desviación como categorías del pensamiento criminológico." *Nuevos Paradigmas de las Ciencias Sociales Latinoamericanas* 14, no. 27 (2023): 215–42. <https://nuevosparadigmas.ilae.edu.co/index.php/IlaeOjs/article/view/283>.
- Rancière, Jacques. *El desacuerdo: política y filosofía*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1996.
- Rancière, Jacques. *El malestar en la estética*. Buenos Aires: Capital Intellectual, 2011.
- Schiller, Friedrich. *Cartas sobre la educación estética del hombre*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 2005.
- Scruton, Roger. *La estética de la arquitectura*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985.
- Señal Colombia. *Maravillas de Colombia: Biblioteca España, Medellín*. Directed by Señal Colombia. Documentary. Colombia, 2015.
- Silva García, Germán. "Crisis y transformaciones en el control social penal en el contexto de la cultura jurídica colombiana." *Cultura Latinoamericana* 39, no. 1 (2024): 156–92.
- Silva García, Germán. "La construcción social de la realidad: las ficciones del discurso sobre la impunidad y sus funciones sociales." *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 17, no. 1 (2022): 105–23. <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.7743>.
- Silva García, Germán, and Angélica Vizcaíno-Solano. "Profissão jurídica: poder político e exclusão social. 'A dança dos que sobraram'" *Revista Eletrônica de Direito e Sociedade (REDES)* 12, no. 1 (2024): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.18316/REDES.v12i11853>.
- Silva García, Germán, and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar. "Evaluación de la investigación jurídica publicada en libros e impacto en la educación superior colombiana." *Revista de Pedagogía Universitaria y Didáctica del Derecho* 10, no. 2 (2023): 101–20. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-5885.2023.71285>.

- Silva García, Germán, and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar. "International Anti-Drug Policies and Corrupt Public-Private Coalitions: Perspectives from a Criminology of the Global South." *Economía Institucional* 26, no. 51 (2024): 139–63. <https://doi.org/10.18601/01245996.v26n51.07>.
- Silva García, Germán, and Diana Marcela Bonilla Uyaban. "La sostenibilidad en el análisis criminológico. El caso de la minería carbonífera en Boyacá." *Via Inveniendi et Iudicandi* 18, no. 2 (2023): 270–92. <https://doi.org/10.15332/19090528.9743>.
- Silva García, Germán, Angélica Vizcaíno-Solano, and Bernardo Pérez-Salazar. "The Debate Concerning Deviance and Divergence. A New Theoretical Proposal." *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 14, no. 2 (2024): 505–29. <https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl.1813>.
- van Dijk, Teun A. *Ideología y discurso*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2003.
- Zapata, Gustavo, "El espacio público y su fundamento en la libertad," *Papel Politico* 17, no. 1 (2012): 159–174. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=77724876006>.