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**SEGREGATION, HYPER SURVEILLANCE, AND THE  
DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC LIFE:  
ARISTOTLE'S TYRANNICAL REGIME IN MODERN AND  
CONTEMPORARY CITIES?**

**Abstract**

This article explores the similarities between Aristotle's description of the methods used by a tyrannical government to conserve its power and several critiques of modern and contemporary cities. Some of the tyrant's methods include: the limitation of public spaces and gatherings; the decree that all citizens remain visible; and the political effort to ensure that his subjects remain unknown to each other. This article discusses these measures within the context of contemporary urban theory in which critiques of the modern and contemporary city bear similar themes: the destruction and erosion of public space, hyper surveillance of the population, and segregation within the city leading to a lack of political agency. This analysis refers to Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of American Cities*, in addition to other texts of urban theory, to

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question whether, and how, modern and contemporary cities have tyrannical characteristics as understood by Aristotle, while still being democratically-ruled cities.

**Keywords:** Aristotle; Philosophy of the City; Hyper-Surveillance; Segregation; Public Space.

### **Segregación, hiper vigilancia y la destrucción del espacio público y vida pública: ¿El régimen tiránico de Aristóteles en las ciudades modernas y contemporáneas?**

#### **Resumen**

Este artículo explora las similitudes entre la descripción de Aristóteles de los métodos usados por un gobierno tiránico para conservar su poder, y varias de las críticas que se le han hecho a las ciudades modernas y contemporáneas. Algunos de los métodos del tirano incluyen: el limitar el espacio y las reuniones públicas; el obligar a todos los ciudadanos a permanecer visibles; y el establecer políticas públicas para asegurarse de que sus súbditos no se conozcan entre sí. Estos métodos se discuten dentro del contexto de la teoría urbana contemporánea, en la cual se pueden encontrar críticas similares a la ciudad moderna y contemporánea: la destrucción y erosión del espacio público, la hiper vigilancia de la población, y cómo la segregación dentro de la ciudad impide la agencia política de la ciudadanía. Este análisis hace referencia a *Vigilar y castigar: nacimiento de la prisión* de Michel Foucault, y *Muerte y vida de las grandes ciudades* de Jane Jacobs, además de otros textos de teoría urbana, para cuestionar si, y cómo, las ciudades modernas y contemporáneas tienen características tiránicas, según las entendía Aristóteles, mientras que son ciudades democráticas.

**Palabras clave:** Aristóteles, Filosofía de la ciudad, Hiper vigilancia; Segregación; Espacio público.

#### **Introduction**

Aristotle's study of tyranny is made within the context of one of his main works, *Politics*, in which a comparative analysis of different forms of government leads him to explain his political proposal: the *polis*, a political community that strives to allow men to flourish. In contrast, Aristotle's description of tyranny portrays the worst form of government, one whose main objective is to cultivate citizens who are «poor of spirit» so they can be ruled with ease. To achieve this submissiveness, the tyrant must limit public spaces and gatherings, order all citizens to remain visible, and take all measures necessary for them to remain unknown to each other. Two millennia later, the topics of hyper-surveillance, segregation, and destruction of public space present in

critiques of modern and contemporary cities seem to echo the measures of Aristotle's tyrant. To present Aristotle's methods I first offer a brief description of the tyrannical state, its aims and its means of self-preservation. Then, I discuss the Aristotelian tyrant's three methods (segregation, hyper surveillance, and lack of public space/ public life) within the context of contemporary urban theory, with the aid of works like Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the prison*, Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of American Cities*, and the edited work *Architecture of Fear*. I will then discuss the similar effects of these measures in both Aristotle's tyrannical regime and in modern and contemporary cities. The purpose of this investigation is not to prove that modern and contemporary cities are equivalent to Aristotle's tyrannical one but to highlight how these urban landscapes exhibit tyrannical qualities as they reaffirm and maintain established power structures.

### 1. «To create citizens of poor spirit»: Tyranny as the Worst Type of Constitution

At the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states his plan to begin a study on the laws and constitutions of different cities. This study became a fundamental part of his next philosophical project, *Politics*, in which he sought to understand what type of regime would be ideal for the flourishing of men. His proposal, the *Polis*, is presented in the context of a rigorous investigation of existing regimes, which he classifies into six basic constitutions using two guiding principles: How many citizens hold the authoritative office? (one, few, many). And what is the purpose of said office? (to benefit the rulers or the ruled)<sup>1</sup>.

Aristotle considered kingship, aristocracy, and polity to be correct forms of constitutions because their rulers look for the community's common benefit and they are organized to serve justice and the flourishing of men<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, the regimes he describes as deviant are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, since their rulers strive for their own gain and are guided by their pleasure and not by virtue as the philosopher understood them. From the six

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<sup>1</sup> Deslauriers, Marguerite, «Introduction», *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, edited by Marguerite Deslauriers, Pierre, Destrée (ed.), Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1289a.

constitutions, he declared tyranny to be the worst<sup>3</sup>, since it is the corruption of the best regime, the kingship; and it also has qualities of the other two types of government he finds to be flawed. Like in a kingship, tyranny has a single ruler; like in an oligarchy, it aims to accumulate wealth at the expense of its subjects; and like in a democracy, the ruler acts against the upper classes<sup>4</sup>.

According to Aristotle, tyrants can emerge from any of the other forms of government, but most of them tend to rise to power within the context of democratic constitutions where their demagogic discourse against the rich classes gains them the support of the greater part of the population<sup>5</sup>. After taking control of the government, the tyrant must preserve his power by force and by establishing political measures that keep subjects humble, powerless, and distrustful of one another<sup>6</sup>. Citing the Persian empire and other «barbaric» tyrannies as examples, Aristotle lists the despotic measures that ensure the continuity of the autocratic regime<sup>7</sup>. According to the philosopher, to establish and maintain his rule, the Tyrant must: (1) ostracize and eliminate the men of free spirit; (2) ban common meals, clubs, education, study circles, debate groups; (3) do whatever it takes to maintain subjects unknown to each other; (4) force subjects to remain visible at all times; (5) have spies; (6) encourage quarrels between subjects; (7) impoverish his subjects; (8) raise taxes; and (9) be constantly at war<sup>8</sup>.

Although Aristotle conceived of these measures as characteristic of a tyrannical regime in 300 BC, they seem uncomfortably familiar to many of us living in democratic countries in 2017. In fact, it is common to find variations of these tyrannical measures featured in critiques of modern or contemporary cities. For this article, I refer to the critiques of modern and contemporary cities present in urban theory works that deal with the elements mentioned in Aristotle's tyrannical measures, specifically measures (2), (3), and (4) while classifying them into three categories: segregation, hyper surveillance, and lack of public space and public life.

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<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1289b.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1311a.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1310b15.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1314a15.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1310b25.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1313a25-1314a.

## 2. Tyrannical Methods in The Modern and Contemporary City

### 2.1. Segregation

As mentioned before, the third method described by Aristotle aims to keep subjects unknown to each other for the benefit of this type of deviant constitution. While Aristotle does not expand on the enforcement of this decree, he does stress that the tyrant should not limit his strategies and do «whatever it takes» to achieve this goal. In consideration of this lack of practical details, I will refer to the concept of segregation since it is often related to the isolation of citizens, the lack of political action from communities, and other negative effects in modern and contemporary cities.

If the tyrant aims to prevent its subjects from knowing each other, segregating the population would further his objectives since it prevents the development of trust and community bonds that result in collective political action. In a segregated city, citizens are more likely to be fearful of, and prejudiced against, each other, and therefore feel isolated and disconnected from their fellow city residents<sup>9</sup>. To secure this constitution, the tyrant must encourage this sense of distrustfulness between subjects through political actions. Aristotle is very emphatic in reminding the reader that the element that most threatens the tyrannical rule is trust: if citizens trust each other, the tyrant's power is imperiled<sup>10</sup>.

Observations on the political and ethical consequences of segregated cities also appear in urban theory literature, particularly concerning the impact of modern urban planning in cities all around the world<sup>11</sup>. Modern Architecture and Modern Planning were influenced and codified in The International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM<sup>12</sup>) over the course of forty years. One of the resulting documents of this Congress was the Athens Charter, written in 1933, which proposed that all new urban development be guided by four functional categories: dwelling, work, transportation, and recreation. These four elements would be the basic components of a new, rational, and organized «Functional City» a city fit for the modern man. Even though the modern urban planning transformation of the city was said to have no overtly

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<sup>9</sup> Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage Books, New York 1961, p.65.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1314a15.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter «After CIAM» of Mumford, Eric, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2002.

<sup>12</sup> For its acronym in French: Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne.

political intentions<sup>13</sup>, the separation of urban functionality and services, and their transformation to a modern aesthetic «turned out to be repressive, ugly, sterile, antisocial, and generally disliked»<sup>14</sup>.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, criticism of modern city planning began to mount<sup>15</sup>. One of its main critics was urban activist and theorist Jane Jacobs who, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*<sup>16</sup>, denounced modern city planning's conception of the city, which according to her, damaged social fabric by displacing communities and designing urban spaces that limited social interactions necessary to build the sense of mutual trust vital to empowered communities<sup>17</sup>. As an example, Jacobs cites Dr. Dan W. Dodson, whose research focused on the «long, monotonous (...) blocks on Manhattan's West Side»<sup>18</sup>. These «Super-Blocks» are one of the most ubiquitous and isolating characteristics of modern and contemporary cities as well as one of the most emblematic ideas of modern city planning<sup>19</sup>. Dodson observed how the dimensions of Super-Blocks seemed to be physically self-isolating to the point that many of those interviewed had no conception of their neighborhood beyond the street on which they resided. He deduced that «The present state of the neighborhood indicates that the people there have lost the capacity of collective action, or else they would have pressured the city government and social agencies into correcting some of the problems of community living»<sup>20</sup>. This analysis highlights the importance of a community's political agency in the context of improving the quality of life in the city. In other words, for Dodson, it is clear how the neighborhood's missing sense of community relates to the poor condition of their surroundings.

While Super-Blocks like the ones studied by Dr. Dodson hinder the process of community building because of its spatial design, other boundaries

<sup>13</sup> Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Edward T. Relph cited in Ellin, Nan, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa» *Architecture of Fear*, in N. Ellin (ed.), Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1997, p.53.

<sup>15</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit., p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> «In the 1960s a variety of post-planning positions emerged, with Jane Jacobs's and advocacy planning among the better known. Jacob's influential first-person critique of CIAM-like master planning has never been surpassed» in Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>17</sup> For more on this topic see: Callahan, Gene, Sanford, Ikeda, «Jane Jacobs' Critique of Rationalism in Urban Planning», in *Cosmos + Taxis*, vol. Vol 1, no. 3, 2014, pp. 10–19.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p.120.

<sup>19</sup> Modern city planners considered that frequent streets were wasteful: «The basic unit of city design is not the street but the block, more particularly the Super-block» in Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 120.

within a city do so as well—by segregating a city by race, culture, or class. The methods in which segregation can be manifested range from the physical (walls, blockades, checkpoints, and gated communities), to the intangible (price, status, or prejudice internalized by force or habit)<sup>21</sup>. In recent years, the economic segregation of contemporary cities is reflected in part by the proliferation of gated middle and upper-class communities<sup>22</sup>. In their article «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», Edward J. Blakely and Mary G. Snyder observe how segregation within a city with closed and privatized<sup>23</sup> communities manifests the tension between notions of civic responsibility and exclusionary aspirations rooted mainly in fear of crime and outsiders<sup>24</sup>, as well as the protection of privilege<sup>25</sup>. They argue that gated communities further economic segregation in the city and endanger the concept of organized community life by creating physical barriers that homogenize the population and privatize communal space.

The authors warn that: «The issues of social exclusion, privatization and segmentation that gated communities bring up raise concern that without social contact, the social contract that underpins the health of a nation will be damaged»<sup>26</sup>. In their view, gated communities not only reinforce the isolation and exclusion of individuals even in the most populated cities, but endanger the communal heterogeneity needed in a democratic society. They argue that this exclusionary segregation entails a social cost<sup>27</sup> as it limits the spaces in which a diverse public can share; thus reducing the contact people from different socioeconomic backgrounds can have with each other. The democratic process is hindered by this as it reduces the potential for people to understand

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<sup>21</sup> Marcuse, Peter, «Walls of Fear and Walls of Support», in N. Ellin (ed.), *Architecture of Fear*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1997, p.109.

<sup>22</sup> Blakely, Edward J., Snyder, Mary Gail, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», in N. Ellin (ed.), *Architecture of Fear*, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>23</sup> «Private communities are providing their own security, street maintenance, recreation facilities, and garbage collection. An entirely parallel, private system exists to provide schools, playgrounds, parks, and police protection for those who can pay, leaving poor and less well-to-do dependent on the ever-reduced services of city and county governments», In Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p.95.

<sup>24</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p.87.

<sup>25</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p.97.

<sup>26</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p.96.

<sup>27</sup> I would suggest that it also entails a political cost since the authors relate the effects of this type of segregation to the workings of a democratic society.

one another and their differences, which is necessary for them to commit to a common goal<sup>28</sup>.

## 2.2. Hyper Surveillance

Among the tyrant's decrees, the one that does the most to erode the citizens' capacity to develop collective action is the decree that subjects must always remain visible. The real purpose of this measure is to instill in the subjects an ever-present awareness that they are being observed, even if this is not truly the case. To explain this measure, Aristotle refers to a concept that is fundamental to his ethics: «habit»<sup>29</sup>. For this decree to work, it must become a habit for subjects to follow the tyrant's laws as if they are being watched by the tyrant himself. The constant state of awareness along with the repetitiveness of the tyrants' approved actions would turn humbleness, or «poorness of spirit» into almost part of the nature of the tyrant's subjects<sup>30</sup>. Essentially, the autocrat uses surveillance and visibility to secure his power by instilling in his subjects the habit of complete obedience.

The constant surveillance of subjects clearly tries to override man's nature as a «political animal»<sup>31</sup> since humbleness and servitude in this context refer to a state of complete compliance and lack of political agency. The success of this decree would have as a result a population of subjects that, because of their lack of political drive in pursuit of justice and virtue, Aristotle would call less than men<sup>32</sup>. This prospect would be beneficial for the tyrant since it would be far easier to rule over humble, obedient and less-than-human subjects than a population conformed by strong and politically-willed citizens. In other words, one of the most injurious aspects of the tyrannical regime is that it strips its subjects of one of the most intrinsic characteristics of humanity, according to Aristotle: their natural impulse toward political endeavors.

Aristotle's understanding of the importance of habits, surveillance, and control seem to foreshadow the work of the 18th century English philosopher

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<sup>28</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p.97.

<sup>29</sup> For Aristotle, none of the ethical virtues are due to our Nature but due to our habits. In Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103a15.

<sup>30</sup> The difference is that for Aristotle, although it might seem difficult, you can change your habits but not your Nature. In Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1152a32.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle offers this famous definition of man's nature in ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, 1253a5-10.

<sup>32</sup> For Aristotle, if a man does not fulfill that which is fundamental to its nature, he cannot be properly called a man. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a22.

Jeremy Bentham, specifically his design of the Panopticon. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*<sup>33</sup>, 20th century French philosopher Michel Foucault presents and analyzes Bentham's Panopticon: a circular building—used to house criminals, workers, or schoolchildren—consisting of radial cells surrounding a circular guardhouse for an inspector. The purpose of the building's geometry is to give the inspector an all-seeing capability while the inmate, in the case of a prison, can see neither his neighbors nor the inspector<sup>34</sup>.

Foucault's description of Bentham's proposed building's power reminds us of Aristotle's tyrant: «It is necessary for the inmate to be ceaselessly under the eyes of an inspector; this is to lose power and even almost the idea of wrong-doing»<sup>35</sup>. From this declaration, Foucault recognizes the principal elements of the Panopticon: the gaze itself, and the interiorization of this gaze. In both the Panopticon and Aristotle's proposed tyrannical regime, visibility is the perfect tool of control because, through interiorization, the observed becomes his/her own inspector. This discipline, or habit, «assures the automatic functioning of power»<sup>36</sup> by transforming the crowd into a collection of separated individualities. Because of this, the inspector (and the tyrant) need not worry about the possibility of collective action from the surveilled, but only about the actions of isolated individuals.

Many urban theorists have compared Bentham's Panopticon to contemporary cities<sup>37</sup>, especially with the rise of surveillance systems throughout the urban landscape. In her article «The gaze without eyes: Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space»<sup>38</sup>, Hille Koskela discusses the changes in urban landscape and design caused by the increase in electronic surveillance. She references Foucault and the Panopticon<sup>39</sup> to describe and understand the political and psychological effects of video surveillance in the city:

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<sup>33</sup> Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, op. cit., p.153.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, Michel, «The Eye of Power», in *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by C. Gordon, translated by Colin Gordon et al., Pantheon Books, New York 1980, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of a Prison*, op. cit., p.154.

<sup>37</sup> To name a few: Cohen (1985) *Visions of Social Control: Crime Punishment and Classification*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Lyon (1994) *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>38</sup> Koskela, Hille, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», in *Progress in Human Geography*, no. 24, 2000, pp. 243–65.

<sup>39</sup> Koskela discusses the similarities but also the differences between the city and the Panopticon. In Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», op. cit., p. 251. (Because of space concerns this section focuses on the similarities).

«Through surveillance cameras the panoptic technology of power has been electronically extended, making our cities like enormous panopticons»<sup>40</sup>. She argues that even though video surveillance was not an issue for ethical or political debate when Foucault was analyzing Bentham's Panopticon, this use of technology follows the same principle of the building, «to be seen but never to know when or by whom»<sup>41</sup>.

Koskela highlights the fact that the usage of electronic surveillance in urban spaces is considered, without much critical discussion, the first and easiest option for protecting upper-class, gated communities; semi-public spaces (e.g., shopping malls); and even city streets<sup>42</sup>. She further argues that although these types of surveillance technology are implemented to reduce crime and fear of crime, there is not definite evidence they do so<sup>43</sup>. Instead, surveillance cameras displace crime to other areas while accentuating the atmosphere of «fear, racist paranoia and distrust among people»<sup>44</sup>. First, it creates distrust and fear since the presence of the cameras signify the need for protection and therefore implies that the space is insecure. And second, visible surveillance cameras remind citizens of their own visibility; creating paranoia as the person observed does not know who is observing, why they are observing, and when they are actually doing so<sup>45</sup>. In this way, video surveillance's possible scrutiny functions as a deterrent that ensures discipline while eroding the confidence of the people using the space surveilled<sup>46</sup>.

The consequences of hyper surveillance in the city take a toll on public space and public life, for example in the case of Los Angeles, California, a city described as the ultimate product of defensible fortress-like architecture<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 243.

<sup>41</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 243.

<sup>42</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., pp. 244-45.

<sup>43</sup> Koskela argues that «there is little agreement among researchers about whether surveillance cameras actually reduce crime» Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 246.

<sup>44</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 247. Also in Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit., p.42.

<sup>45</sup> Such spatial condition is identified by Steven Flusty as «Jittery Space». In Flusty, Steven, «Building Paranoia», in *Architecture of Fear*, edited by Nan Ellin, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1997, p.48.

<sup>46</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 253.

<sup>47</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban

This city's extremely surveilled public places have been described as «sadistic», and with no natural social life since the possibility of spontaneous social behavior has been replaced by feelings of distrust and ambiguity<sup>48</sup>. Places that elicit these feelings are not welcoming to a diverse public, and even less so to the spontaneous manifestations of political indignation. The universal consequence of the crusade to «secure» the city is the destruction of any truly democratic urban space<sup>49</sup>.

### 3. Lack of Public Space and Public Life

By eliminating all educational endeavors and any type of public assembly, the tyrant's purpose is clear: he must eradicate any activity that empowers his subjects and increases their trust in themselves and each other. When Aristotle lists such activities, the philosopher refers to the philosophical gatherings led by Plato and himself, as well as other intellectual and leisure activities held at the *gymnasia*, *palaestrae*, and *lechae* of his time<sup>50</sup>. These public spaces were the settings for debates, conferences, and leisure in the ancient Greek *Polis*, and Aristotle considered these undertakings to be fundamental activities for the elevation of men's spirits.

In her appreciation of the political importance of such public spaces, Jane Jacobs echoes Aristotle's stance. Further still, Jacobs considers these public spaces to be fundamental for a healthy city life, especially for the development of trust needed to foster a healthy community. According to her, this trust is necessary for a healthy city life since «People must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other»<sup>51</sup>. In other words, the fundamental political function of city streets is the creation of community bonds that result in a sense of security and mutual responsibility between strangers.

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Space», art. cit., p. 247.

<sup>48</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 247. Koskela references Davis (1990) *The city of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. pp. 230-32 and Mitchell (1995) «The end of public space?: People's Park, definitions of the public, and democracy».

<sup>49</sup> Davis, Mike, «Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space», in M. Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and The End of Public Space*, Hill and Wang, New York 1992, p. 155.

<sup>50</sup> [fn. 1] found in : <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:lg0086.tlg035.perseus-eng1:5.1313b>

<sup>51</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 81.

In contrast, modern city planners considered the street to be a pernicious environment for humans<sup>52</sup>, and instead proposed parks as the ideal for human interaction. Also, they recommended sports as a replacement for the public activities of the street<sup>53</sup>. Before, streets were used for walking and socializing, but in the modern city, the street's main purpose is to be an avenue for transportation, preferably by car<sup>54</sup>. In fact, the ideal modern city would be one in which designers were able to achieve «at least an illusion of isolation and suburban privacy»<sup>55</sup>. In reaction to this kind of city planning, Jacobs warns that the elimination of casual public «sidewalk life», which is closely related to other types of public life<sup>56</sup>, leads to the isolation of its citizens<sup>57</sup> and other social problems like segregation and racial discrimination<sup>58</sup>.

Modern and contemporary cities' problems are not limited to the lack of public spaces, but extend to the diminished quality of social life that takes place in what few public and semi-public spaces exist due to the increase of exclusionary methods, such as surveillance and excessive control<sup>59</sup>. Also, important public services for communities such as libraries, playgrounds, and parks are either closing or being neglected while streets are increasingly desolate and dangerous<sup>60</sup>. This erosion of public space and public life is further aggravated by the recent and more ubiquitous forms of surveilled semi-public space (like shopping malls<sup>61</sup>) which are explicitly designed to permit only consumer-oriented activity, as opposed to the diverse activities that take place in «traditional» public spaces<sup>62</sup>. While these kinds of semi-public places homogenize the type of activities that can take place in them, the design of their space homogenizes the crowd with architectural and semiotic barriers<sup>63</sup>. These spaces prevent people from interacting with others who are not like them in

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<sup>52</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>56</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> Flusty, «Building Paranoia», art. cit., p. 58, also in Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> Davis, «Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 156.

<sup>61</sup> Mike Davis compares the architecture of the contemporary shopping mall to Bentham's Panopticon because of its «security oriented design and management strategy». Mike, «Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 170.

<sup>62</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit, p.34.

<sup>63</sup> Davis, Mike, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, Verso, New York 2006, p. 257.

terms of class, religion, race, or political views; consequently threatening the cross-cultural communication needed to create a diverse public<sup>64</sup>.

#### 4. Aristotle's Tyrannical Regime in Modern and Contemporary Cities?

The purpose of this investigation is not to reduce the concept of «the modern and contemporary city» in order to equate it to Aristotle's tyrannical regime, but instead to identify in the urban theory literature observations made during the analysis of contemporary cities that echo Aristotle's measures for the preservation of a tyrannical regime and, in doing so, discuss the similarities and differences between them. Furthermore, I believe that the similarities I am examining serve in the effort to explore the political baggage of the city in the context of western human thought.

In terms of the differences between them, the fundamental disparity between them lies within the decision-making process. While in the tyrannical regime all decisions are autocratic, in the modern and contemporary city the decision process is far more complex due to the different participative or representative democratic mechanisms. Not only this, the modern and contemporary city is characterized by being a product of different plans or democratic processes through time, while the urbanity of a tyrannical regime would be the result of one plan or one desire: for a party or regime to remain in power.

However, after analyzing the tyrannical methods present in modern and contemporary cities, one could argue that despite any intent, both result in benefits to a few powerful citizens at the expense of most of the population. For example, after presenting their findings, Blakely and Snyder concluded that the segregation exacerbated by gated communities directly benefit the few that use such geographic separations to protect their privileged position and further increase income and wealth differences that further benefit them<sup>65</sup>. Also, in the case of the increased surveillance of cities, Koskela argues that surveillance technology «links knowledge, power and space»<sup>66</sup> as it controls, categorizes, disciplines, and normalizes the population surveilled. Even

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<sup>64</sup> Flusty, «Building Paranoia», art. cit., p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p. 96.

<sup>66</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 251

though power relationships relating to surveillance are complicated due to some regulation by authorities, the surveillance of places like shopping malls, gated communities, and even city streets, result in the preservation of the status quo<sup>67</sup>, the protection of property, and the securing of profit<sup>68</sup>. Jacobs also recognizes the relationship between power, money, and city building when she mentions the *Housing acts of 1949 and 1954* and the *Highway act of 1954*, which were lobbied by construction, real-estate, and automotive interests, as the main reasons for the massive suburbanization and vehicle dependency which developed in the second part of the 20th century<sup>69</sup>. In other words, «form was following finance»<sup>70</sup> as cities' growth was determined by economic interests' lobbying in politics.

Even if there is a difference in their decision-making process, Aristotle's tyrannical regime and modern and contemporary cities seem to coincide in their effort to segregate and police their populations while limiting and eroding public space. While the tyrant's aim is clearly to secure his power, in the case of modern and contemporary cities, such measures are often taken to secure the city and control the less desirable segments of its population. However, the effect is the same in both cases, as citizens are left powerless in their respective individualities. One could reasonably say that both the tyrannical regime and the contemporary city protect their power following the well-known saying: «Divide and conquer».

This depiction of a segregated population with little political engagement is a recurring theme in the literature of urban theory and other disciplines: «we no longer speak of citizens, but rather taxpayers, who take no active role in governance...»<sup>71</sup>. Blakely and Snyder describe how the segregation of the city—with walls, street patterns, gated communities, and barricades—reduces the possibility of community, of people understanding one another and coming together for a common purpose. The authors underline how, in this context, a fundamental element of citizenship and a healthy political community is missing: sharing. Without this, the authors affirm that there is little possibility of solving social problems or regaining control of our neighbor-

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<sup>67</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit., p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> Koskela, «'The Gaze without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space», art. cit., p. 246.

<sup>69</sup> Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>70</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit., p.25.

<sup>71</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p. 97.

hoods<sup>72</sup>. They are not alone in this assertion, for many urban theorists have concluded this in their investigations about various aspects of the city. Flusty also comments on how the proliferation of spaces of control, and the elimination of public spaces where face-to-face interactions occur (streets, parks, bazaars, and plazas) threatens the free exchange of ideas and deters the “cross-cultural communication” necessary to create a diverse public<sup>73</sup>.

## Conclusion

If we look beyond the list of «tyrannical» methods described by Aristotle and enacted in modern and contemporary cities, we can see that, regardless of the purpose behind the methods, both create an environment that reinforces the status quo, one that hinders political transformation in favor of current political dynamics and structures. The city, and the powers that rule it, reaffirm themselves through policy and new development. It is in this sense that the city seems «tyrannical» because, as Aristotle states, «A tyrant will still be a tyrant even though his subjects do not wish it»<sup>74</sup>. Additionally, most of the time the city transforms itself—in the name of safety or progress—at the expense of those without political capital.

Using the Panopticon as an example, Michel Foucault argues that evolving technologies of power serve to maintain the status quo<sup>75</sup>. As well as Bentham’s circular building, in modern and contemporary cities we see how defensible urban design and technology are used to control and police a population. It is in this context, when political transformations are intentionally hindered through the use of space and urban policy, that the prospect of democracy is jeopardized.

The promise of democracy—that the voice and vote of the population as a political body will reach the best decisions for all—lies unfulfilled since there isn’t a proper political community that strives for a common good. There is no «we, the people» in a segregated, hyper-policed city, where citizens are isolated and suspicious of strangers, and there is no sense of community nor sense of responsibility towards fellow citizens. In this context, the arduous

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<sup>72</sup> Blakely and Snyder, «Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States», art. cit., p. 97.

<sup>73</sup> Flusty, «Building Paranoia», art. cit., p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1313a.

<sup>75</sup> Ellin, «Shelter from the Storm or Form Follows Fear and Vice Versa», art. cit., p.34.

and time-consuming work that is the democratic process is doomed to fail, for it thrives on compassion and empathy, which are notably absent in a city permeated with fear and paranoia<sup>76</sup>.

If we, as a society, strive for a democratic coexistence, we must rethink what aspects of our cities hinder said political processes. In this effort we might ask ourselves: Why do our democratically-ruled cities share attributes with what could be Aristotle's tyrannical urban landscape? And, if a city itself promotes fear, distrust, and seclusion, how can we change these conditions to bring forth positive change in our communities? It may seem very difficult in our context, and even more so in the awfully suffocating regime described by Aristotle. But even under the oppression of tyranny, the philosopher offers avenues to incite political change: «for a tyranny is not destroyed until some men *come to trust each other*»<sup>77</sup>. While Aristotle's measures to conserve the tyrannical regime might seem incredibly repressive and demoralizing, they also highlight the potential political power of its citizenry. When citizens start building a community and realizing their political agency, a repressive government's power *can* be challenged. Aristotle's words seem uncomfortably timely in our current context: first as a warning to recognize the measures and aims of a government that strives to remain in power; and second, as a reminder of our own potential power as citizens, and our capacity, when acting as a community, to transform our environment as it has been transformed before us, into an urban landscape that encourages justice, happiness, and the good life.

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<sup>76</sup> Martha Nussbaum shares this concern and lists «fear, envy and shame» as a danger to a democracy and good political causes if they are exploited by the government or the media. Nussbaum, Martha C., *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2013, p. 314.

<sup>77</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1314a.

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