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## 'Ontological Planning' As a New Approach in Urban Development

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## **“ONTOLOGICAL PLANNING” AS A NEW APPROACH IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT”**

### **ABSTRACT**

“Ontological Planning” as a new concept, this paper will attempt to clarify an interpretation of the existential philosophy in urban dimension, the adaptability of this interpretation to physical planning and the main principles of ontological planning. New concepts have been developed in the planning process in parallel to the processes of urbanization, growth, industrialization and urban development. The social, economic and spatial planning efforts in these concepts and methods aimed to generate solutions that have been inclusive of problems and sustainable. However, something has remained missing during the planning of the city, which is complex and big and constantly creates problems. Planning has usually been proven inadequate in searches for solutions to urban problems. This new approach, which is based on longitudinal observations and the assumption that a relationship can be established between the space and the existentialist philosophy, has been opened to debate in the scientific world. The ontological planning approach, which is presented in this paper, is not a new method, nor is it a hypothesis that excludes the existing methods. On the contrary, it is an attempt to add a new and long-awaited point of view by integrating the “existential philosophy” into the integrative (holistic) and sustainable planning process.

Ontological planning will take steps that will enable a fusion of the society and the space via;

- Space planning defined by the idea of existence (being),
- Addition of moral (ethical and aesthetic) criteria to technique,
- Establishment of the relationship between space and love
- Adding spirit to the space
- Addition of the morphological energy of the space to planning.

# **“ONTOLOGICAL PLANNING” AS A NEW APPROACH IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

## **1-INTRODUCTION**

This study is about the concept of “ontological planning”. As a source, this concept tries to bring further expansions to the pattern of planning through being on the trace of philosophical revolution and relying on ontological reality with the improving planning process. Can a city planner who has been tired of cyclical defences, reach to a new synthesise through reinterpreting the planning process and philosophy in the light of ontological reality? This article is going to find an answer to this basic question. As of yet, it is difficult to guess how this searching will result as of yet. However, running after the “planning –practicing processes” which change its axis in accompany with changing administrative mentality and administrators and cogitate about how to direct them doesn’t bring a successful conclusion. If a mutual relation could be established between ‘big mind’ and ‘common mind’ through asking existential questions, it is expected that it could make an extension to the planning philosophy and a radical and permanent solution could be find to the problem. In this sense, the paper aims to bring the problem up to discussion, set up principles as deep as the discussion may go and exemplifying some titles on an application with a second study of the title *“Architectural Interventions and Urban Transformation in the Arrangement of MevlanaCelaledin Rumi Square Ignoring Ontological Planning Approach”*. If ‘the Ontological Planning Approach’ that is the first stage of intellectual process can give the basic principle reflecting to the period and can provide a basis for those who are interested in the subject, it will be able to achieve its goal.

New concepts have been developed for planning paralel with the period of urbanisation, development, industrialisation and progress. New methods have been tried. Through those concepts and methods, it was aimed to produce the inclusive and maintainable solutions for problems of planning activity from the point of social, economical and spatial perspectives. However; while planning the complicated, big and continuously problem producing city, the planning and its process generally has been insufficient in the seek for the solutions of the problems of the city. The problem has gained new and different dimensions in some cities that have come up to some levels in progress and urbanization stages. Especially, the period that followed industrial revolution rapid urbanization and the population accumulation has been the period which new planning pursuit was accelerated. As a new concept, “the Ontological

Planning” is going to try to clarify the interpretation of existential philosophy in the urbanic dimensions with this pronouncement, the adaptability of this interpretation into physical planning and its principles.

The ontological planning approach that is introduced in this study is a new method and it isn't a hypothesis which excludes the existing methods. On the contrary, it is the effort of including the different and new perspective which its deficiency is felt through the addition of “existential philosophy” to the integrative and sustainable planning process.

## **2- INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATION OF ONTOLOGICAL PLANNING**

Ontology is a philosophy of existence. Various philosophers have made expansions for basic existence categories. Ontology generates ideas especially on characteristics and relationships as well as the objects, the physical value of the objects. Ontological reasoning and ontological evidence is a general concept which deals with the permanent, non-temporary “essence” and comprises all the existing ones. Ontology deals with the realities beyond the apparent and perceived at first touch, genuine assets and the core of intellectual assets.

In his book of three volumes called “A History of Western Philosophy” with Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950, Bertrand Russell (1945) starts the western philosophy with Socrates although he also mentions from the philosophers before Socrates. The cynics who dominate ancient philosophy during the periods of Plato, Aristotle and afterwards, Sceptics, Epicureans, Stoics and Plotinus always sought for absolute reality. The basic focus in this study is not the history and theory of philosophy; it was aimed to understand some philosophical approaches which were assumed to overlap with ontological planning.

The Western consideration started out seeking for reality using logicalness with Socrates, idealism with Platon and rationalism with Aristotle. However, it hasn't naturally achieved “Absolute Reality” during this journey. Because, as Piron said, “Human beings can't find the reality, because, it isn't something obtainable”. However, both the trio of logicalness idealism and materialism and the Greek philosophy at the final point the mind can reach continues seeking for reality. It will and it should do do.

- While the Renaissance develops the rebel and revenge of the mind against superstition,
- While Descartes seeks for the ways of believing through mind (I think, so I exist)
- While Pascal challenges to the forgery,

- Laynpric, achieves the idea of “Impartibility-unity” in the objects and events.
- While Voltaire presents the convenience as the basis of a belief system,
- While Kant reconciles rationalism with the perceptivity of “Unity”, indeed, seeks for ontological reality. Perhaps, this is the seeking for “the Great Mind in the axis of soul”.

This study is an effort to understand the ontological reality and define a planning comprehension within this reality which focuses on the “happiness of human”. For that reason, observing and comprehending the revolution of philosophy in both Eastern and Western philosophy in the meaning of –“ontological reality”- seems important. The relations between ontological reality and planning should be read on “human beings” who are the core of society and the universe. How should we understand and know human while we are seeking for the great mind? Where should we begin to access the basic input of ontological planning? Two ways or an integrated third way which those two ways are optimized may be followed. All of the suggestions have the potency of taking to the conclusion. The important matter here is the effort to achieve ontological reality – the great mind.

- a- It may be started out from the Kant’s critics of pure mind (Criticism) or Hegel’s dialectic comprehension heads for spirit from the material (idealist Materialism) (Kant 1781, Hyppolite, and Heckman 1979). At this point: it is the stage which ontological reality is a part of the human existency in the simplicity of such questions; What are the eyes, how do I see?, What are ears, how do I hear? and What is brain, how do I perceive? Materialized eyes, ears and brain don’t make a sense alone (Merleau-Ponty,1964). Those organs make a sense when they are parts of a human body which has all of them. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2008), the organ without a body is unarticulated, fallen to bits and became displaced. Such a body is unhealthy and in the process of corruption and collapse.
- b- Within the dogmas of the mystic east “it isn’t possible with or without mind” (Cottingham 1996).
- c- Everything is the part of a whole. In case the relationships between the parts and the whole is understood; the roles, limits and efficiency of each part have been defined.
- d- In the approach which doesn’t exclude the both approaches (mixed and integrated), it is to determine the locations of the parts in that system.

## 2.1. The Planning-Implementation Process and its Problems

Related to the development of human beings and urbanization, the information produced for the name of Planning and transferring information to application has occurred within a continuous change and development, it will be and it should be so. Resulting from the dynamic structure of planning and changing, each approach sometimes supports the parallel idea and sometimes we encounter it as the conflict of priorities depending on the differences of objectives and targets. It hasn't got rid of them and perhaps it is not necessary to get rid of them.

From the point of understandability of the process, of course, the study should be executed on the scientific background which evaluates and considers the developed planning theory and techniques. The planning related to answering the needs of the century;

- Protecting the disadvantaged sections of the society,
- Examining the process administration rather than result-based behaviors,
- Providing an organization from local –to- center and from individual –to- society,
- Controlling the capital flow and sharing the obtained plus value among the shareholders of the plan,
- Organizing the relationships between the assets and capital in the real estate market through planning policies,
- New planning approaches which emphasizes the communication language and democratic participation and defends that the definition of the relationships between the political actors and the decisions of planning were developed and will continue developing (Table 1).

Table 1. The approach of developed planning theory and techniques

	<b>GENERAL APPROACHES</b>
<b>Rational Comprehensive Planning Approach:</b>	The result should be focused in planning. First of all, the problems and targets should be defined and then they should be analyzed. Alternative solutions should be produced and the best solution should be chosen and applied. The course of events should be continuously observed and watched during the application. The obtained results should be evaluated.
<b>Dis-jointed Incrementalism Planning Approach:</b>	Wherever the tendency is directed, the activity should be organized accordingly. Wherever the intervention is needed, the intervention is executed in conformation with the conditions of that region. An intervention to execute on a definite place doesn't have to conform to the interventions to be executed in other places.
<b>Procedural planning theory:</b>	The process should be focused in planning, namely, procedures and methods are in the foreground. It is important to define the works to

	be done and they should be put in order one by one.
<b>Advocacy Planning Approach:</b>	Planning can't be considered independent from social values. Planning should be aware of the existence of different opinions in each subject. Planning is made in order to defend the rights of disadvantaged groups and answer their needs.
<b>Political Economy perspective Planning Approach:</b>	Planning should be done to organize the accumulation and circulation of capital. Planning should be done related to the land and real estate markets. The ideologies are effective on the ways of planning.
<b>The Just City Planning Approach:</b>	Planning also has a utopia. The settlements which social benefits are also distributed most ideally in society as well as economical benefits may be established. Economical growth isn't bad however it should be a fair and balanced growth. The ways to provide human beings a better life environment within the global capitalist system should be sought. The core is as important as the process itself.
<b>Communicative Action Planning Approach:</b>	Planning is a political process. There is an information pollution and destruction within the practice of planning. Thus, the developed arguments and the type of language are important. The background information that the organizations own should be considered. The language which owners of power use should be known well; manipulations should be analyzed and struggled against them.
<b>Collaborative Planning:</b>	There is an emphasis to relativity and unilateral interpretation. All types of information are meaningful. The right of each individual to express opinion is considered. The institutional environments to provide this are established. It is important that the individuals from different opinions try to understand each other and find a middle ground.
<b>Strategic Spatial Planning Approach:</b>	Strategical spatial planning is defined as a broad participation administrative process which is based on planning towards special attraction centers and detailed designing activity through determining the subject/problems and fields with strategical priorities within the content of the produced scenario fiction in accompany with the set of long and short termed targets and objectives which are determined based on a definite vision and mission.

### 3- BASIC CONCEPTS of ONTOLOGICAL PLANNING APPROACH

Ontological Planning approach was constructed on the basic concepts which are one within the other, side by side or involving each other as an alternative way to “2.1. Planning-Application Process and its Problems” (Figure1).

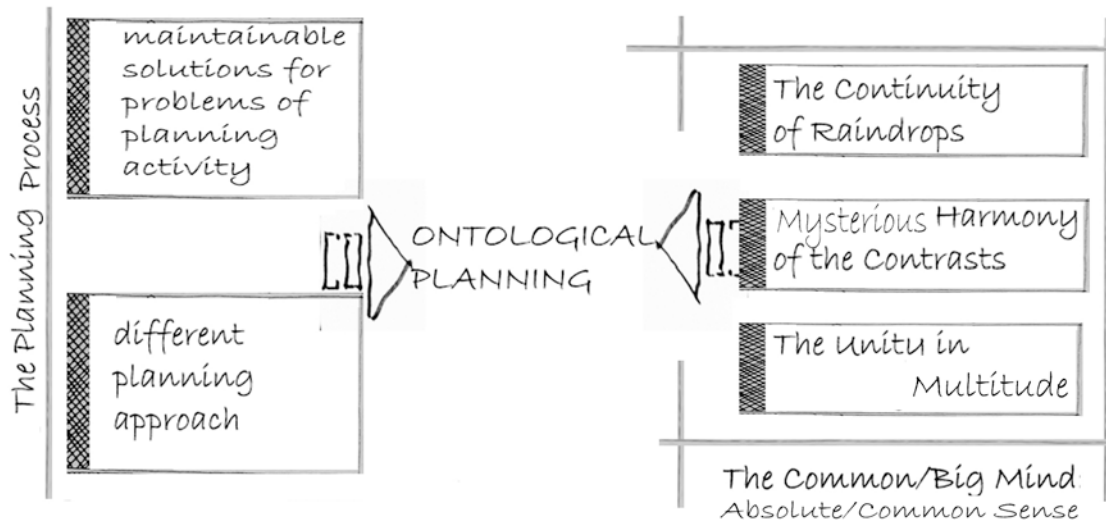


Figure 1. The basic concepts of ontological Planning Approach

### 3.1. The Continuity of Raindrops

It is possible to explain the phenomenon which includes transferring the produced informance and application-tools and processes of solution into a continuous plan and application in continuity over the metaphor of “Rain”.

There is an organic bond among all the existing ones. One thing can't be completely isolated from the other things. This relationship which will be sought through mind within the ontological reality should be related to taking its photograph just for a moment. Then, the plan maker reaches the condition of “the limited mind” which seeks for solution on a picture and develops techniques – as usual -. The objective should be to give “ontological reality” the meaning within the process through time-related dimension of this reality. On one hand the planning becomes independent as “Rain drops” and on the other hand they are combined to each other through continuity. While the previous drop is disappearing, the following drop shares the common characteristics which come from the same source although it is independent from the previous one. The fate of disappearing and meeting at the same source will provide the formation of new drops – they are not old drops yet they consist of them.

While Ontological planning adopts the dimension of “Time-Continuity” in the “Raindrops”, it also follows the continuity in the structural characteristics of the plan as content. In the time-related dimension; the drops which follow each other in the process of existence-annihilation process namely, planning-application processes the following second drop takes place of the



first drop while the first drop disappears in the ontologically natural existence continuity in spaceless-continuous manner should take place of the others. However, it should be independent from the previous drops as well as it is independent from the following drops. It should be aware of being disconnected both from the previous drops and the following drops but having the same genetics.

### **3.2. Mysterious Harmony of the Contrasts**

The existence explains itself through its contrast. The contrasts which exist in different planning approaches annihilating each other is keeping its contradictions in a unity of the plan without losing the reason of diversities, making the contradictions live within the balance of problem-solution and gather them in a common solution. One of the most important problems seen in the practice of planning-application is the problems occurred as a result of the principles of the plan such “absolute” dominance and constancy, the responses to this problematic structure and the skidding from end to end. The unearned incomes which gains incredible dimensions fed this skidding in prior sizes. This pattern necessitates re-definition of the relationships between the plan maker and the equipments and actors of mechanisms-application as well as the plan itself. The current situation related to this is: “Nothing is adjacent to the plan and plan maker (in its absolute definition) but nothing also should be disconnected from it (far from its inspection and principal directing-control) either.” Developing a process in the balance of “It is impossible with or without plan” should be regarded as one of the main principles of ontological planning. This principle will enable self-development to be used as an actor and a planning technique within the plan considering some/local needs, resources and social structures.

### **3.3. The Unity in Multitude**

The planning process should be the field of balance and focusing where the planning-application activities in different fields are gathered and associated. In this sense, the ontological planning should have a structure which is inclusive and the notion of “the Unity in Multitude” is actualized.

- Involving all the parts but they don't consist of that part,
- A table with a lot of switches on it, each switch has and dominates its own content and each switch is in harmony with the other switches
- A “trial balance Table” which evaluates the parts and the bundle of decisions waiting energization under each switch in a complete balance and vitality and has a great mind.

The process of ontological plan and planning should have achieved “love and excitement”. Love from the point of existential philosophy is a desire to be annihilated in a big whole which it was separated from but unsimilar to it. The excitement is the seeking for this annihilation. In this sense, ontological planning should be the ground for a “meeting” platform which the parts come together, which isn’t perceived one by one but maintains its existence. “Respect to the lines” and “Knowing own limits” is the core of a whole universe. If this perception which is among the basic characteristics of the creation may be reflected and enlivened to existential reality planning in accordance with its own scales; an ontological harmony between the plan and the user is naturally and “easily” provided.

**3.4. The Common/Absolute Sense:** It seeks for the big mind which is subordinate to the spirit that will inspire the ontological planning. Then, where is the spirit? What represents the spirit in this relationship? At the point of defining and interpreting the spirit, no agreement has been achieved even among the psychologists up to now. Our purpose isn’t seeking for this agreement. Then, the spirit should exist in this system of relationships with its manifestation. It collects this in four factors which complete human beings (Kısakürek 1982).

- Attention and Mercy
- Violence and Justice
- Modesty and Civility
- Mind and Wisdom

Their coexisting is also a good moral. (Ibn Arabi 1997). Good moral is the final stage. The moral of spirit is LOVE (Imâm-i rabbânî, 2008).

From the ontological aspects; Love is missing the annihilation and annihilating the one which creates it. Love is based on a thinking systematic which is without lies and pure. Love takes human into a human typology who distributes when he finds and is grateful when he can’t find. From this point of view, the ontological planning which is directed towards the mind in command of spirit pulls away from its digitized enthusiasms and expectations. The understanding of an ontological planning should be a plan without lies, pure, producing and distributes the produced things to the shareholders which are common and in near-far interactions within the feeling of “Justice”. Such a planning is;

- Ontological and according to the creation.
- Individualist. It aims to reach the each individual one by one.

- It is social. It considers social socio-economic balances.

Shortly, ontological planning principles are about trying to reach to absolute/common mind within the continuity of rain drops and providing opportunity for the secret comprehension of controversies and providing unity in multiplicity. As Hegel stated (1910); if a human can't achieve the absolute truth in a topic, nothing is absolutely correct or absolutely wrong in planning. Whatever we can't accept as "the absolute true", it is the curtain of the absolute true. Every approach should be the truth of "that moment". It should provide solutions for the problems of its own context. However, the planning to be done through ontological approach will bring new solutions to the next stage without producing deferred problems if it can provide structural continuity and unity among the drops. It is important to achieve the dimensions of love and excitement in planning. The plan should;

- Make interpretations in the cycle of existence-absence and in the balance of continuously raining rain drops for independency and independency,
- Digitalize the chemical of rain drops when necessary and use the digital data base skillfully,
- Transforming the results of digitalized idea into the principles of "Theory" and "Planning",
- It should be done with the perception of the plan maker/human who can add interpretation-feelings (spirit) into planning while doing this. Ultimately, planning will achieve the "ontological" dimension when this human is able to transform the "Big Mind" into a planning team who represent the common mind which correlates between the ontological reality and plan.

#### **4-THE BEGINING INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION**

Ontological Planning approach is adding spirit to the space and also addition of the morphological energy of the space to urban planning. Ignoring ontological planning approach, all spatial decisions for making better will create new problems and will create worse condition.

Ontological planning approach is, as an alternative way, based on fundamental concepts that are intertwined, side by side or incorporate one another. These concepts are;

- "Continuity of Rain Drops",
- "Mysterious Harmony of Contrasts",
- "Unity in Multitude" and

-“Absolute/Common Sense.

All this metaphors create a general approach and understanding of planning. Ontological Planning approach adds spirit as well as morphological energy to space with putting the “human being” in the center. “Ontological Planning” as a new concept, this paper will attempt to clarify an interpretation of the existential philosophy in urban dimension, the adaptability of this interpretation to physical planning and the main principles of ontological planning.

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