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City Walks and Tactile Experience

Mădălina Diaconu

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to develop categories of the pedestrian's tactile and kinaesthetic experience of the city. The beginning emphasizes the haptic qualities of surfaces and textures, which can be "palpated" visually or experienced by walking. Also the lived city is three-dimensional; its corporeal depth is discussed here in relation to the invisible sewers, protuberant profiles, and the formal diversity of roofscapes. A central role is ascribed in the present analysis to the formal similarities between the representation of the city by walking through it and the representation of the tactile form of objects. Additional aspects of the "tactile" experience of the city in a broad sense concern the feeling of their rhythms and the exposure to weather conditions. Finally, several aspects of contingency converge in the visible age of architectural works, which record traces of individual and collective histories.

Key Words

architecture, city, materiality, tactility, walking

1. Introduction

One of the major problems when dealing with tactility concerns the imprecision of this notion. Tactility is usually considered synonymous with haptic sensations; as such, it refers primarily to the experience of touching with hands and feet, but includes any other active or passive epidermal contact. Moreover, touch registers sensations of pressure, vibration, and tickling, and provides information about an object's surface, its consistency, and form. However, in a broad sense, tactility may be used as an umbrella term for epidermal sensations, including proprioceptive sensibility, the thermal sense, and sensations of pain. The interpretation proposed here will follow this broad definition. Accordingly, the aesthetics of the tactile experience of the city refers to the potential of cityscapes to produce a pleasurable physical and somatic experience in the bodily subject.

The city has always been a fertile ground for cultural metaphors. The critics of modernity compared it successively to a machine, a wild beast, an asphalt jungle, or an anthill.^[1] Meanwhile many architects and urban planners manifested a predilection for organic metaphors with positive connotations. The isomorphism between buildings and cities, on the one hand, and human bodies, on the other hand, has a long tradition that dates back to Vitruvius. However, these organic metaphors differ from what might be called the skin of the city in at least two respects. First, they often transpose the natural order into the socio-political one, as in Plato, Locke and Hobbes. And secondly, the terms of comparison have been made either with sense organs and body parts or, more recently, with the cardiovascular system and bodily fluids.

On the contrary, the following "footnotes" on the tactile aesthetic remain on the literally superficial level of the urban

epidermis. In some respects, they invert Michel Serres' metaphor of skin as "carte d'identité" and "carte moirée"[2] and invite one to "caress" the skin of the city map by strolling through it. To begin, we will highlight the imaginative potential of material qualities and textures; then we will move on to consider the vertical stratification of cities, from the sewers to the profiles of buildings and roofscapes. The kinaesthetic sensations of walking through the city are doubled by the feeling of the urban pulse and microclimatic atmosphere. Finally, patina may be said to objectify a site's memory and archive the multiple traces left by the touch of weather, people and history.

2. Textures and Surfaces

The tactile experience of cityscapes implies touch not only directly but also indirectly by means of synaesthetic correspondences, as when we see tactile qualities or when the loud echo of the steps inside a building make us feel cold. The intertwining of vision and tactility has inspired several aesthetic analyses, from Herder's theory of feeling (*Gefühl*) in architecture and sculpture to Alois Riegl's conceptualisation of a "tactile look" in ancient Egyptian art, and from Bernard Berenson's eulogy of the tactile values of sculpture to Merleau-Ponty's concept of vision as a "palpation" with the eyes.[3] The pedestrian, too, "palpates" the surface of buildings, feeling their size, shape and firmness, protrusions and edges.

It goes without saying that the urban skin is an ideal screen for the projection of images and messages, from anonymous drawings to cryptic graffiti and garish advertisements. The semiotics of the urban skin reveals walls to be places on which personal and collective history come together and repressed feelings spring into the light. However, it is the "physiology" which comes to the foreground in the urban "dermatology." In Bachelard's footsteps,[4] the matter matters as a source of sensory richness and material imagination.

The recent history of design is likely to indicate the revival of interest in new materials. After the 1970s focussed on new functions, the 1980s on aesthetic aspects, and the 1990s on emotions, we face at present "the challenge of new materials." [5] In the last decade, publications and databases [6] have emerged specialising in new and innovative materials, the so-called ultramaterials, extreme textiles, architextiles, and smart or intelligent materials. Also designers' guides to surfaces focus on a knowledge of materials which is "hands-on" in the strict sense of the word. All these tendencies show that material structures and surfaces have assumed primary importance in design activities.

If we now take two trivial examples, the wall and the street, it turns out that no sooner do we switch our perceptive mindset to a "tactile look" than we discover innumerable examples of tactile features, such as textures, fissures or membranous surfaces. It is undeniable that this perceptive shift often involves anthropocentric projections. Demolished houses resemble corpses, whose missing windows – hollow orbits – evoke unmistakably pain and death. Dirty, musty, humid façades, covered in blue mould, suggest associations with rare skin diseases. And natural processes of decay lead in the long run to what might be called *exfoliations* or desquamations of

walls, when their plaster is sloughed away. On the contrary, exceptional and deliberately artistic are the cases of material *transplant* in architecture. For example, Daniel Spoerri "cut out" in 1975 a corner of his restaurant in Düsseldorf and transferred it to Milan, where he opened a new restaurant called *Restaurant du Coin du Restaurant Spoerri*. Some walls are impenetrable and solid, like crusts and carapaces, others, light and transparent, are almost liquid.

Strictly speaking, every wall is a "skin," a borderline between the private and the public space. Each conceals and presents at the same time, and presents by concealing its interior or by masking its support structure. The façade means "the face under which buildings mask themselves in order to achieve a public look and prestige (*Ansehen*) and to play a part."[\[7\]](#) However, the epidermic reminiscences are particularly strengthened by the *membrane structures*. Examples include not only Christo's and Jeanne's architectural wrappings, but also the so-called "airtecture" of roof structures (e.g. textile covering-overs).

As for paving works, one of the priorities of recent years was to facilitate barrier-free movement across the city for disabled people, which is in the first place a tactile-kinaesthetic task. Also new pavement patterns have been developed, whose diversity delights both eyes and feet. Previous theories have emphasized the origins of streets, along the initial "route of the ass"[\[8\]](#) or following the model of animal pathways.[\[9\]](#) Other approaches focused on intercultural comparisons between the spatial patterns of the street network[\[10\]](#) or dealt with pavements as media of social interaction and "togetherness."[\[11\]](#) Nevertheless, ways are also *material* mediums of movement; in this respect, they may be made of natural simple materials (waterways, airways) or imply a complex of different artificial layers (highways). According to Walter Seitter,[\[12\]](#) every street consists not only of a solid, stable body covered with a hard and even surface, but includes also the empty air space above this, without which no free movement would be possible. Only this duality makes of the street a tunnel cut out of the city and a corridor across it.

From an etymological perspective, the "route" is a "broken way" (vulgar Latin, *via rupta*), that is, a road that removed any obstacles in its way. Thus from the outset, the psycho-geography of the street implies a certain violence, which is obvious also in the homogenisation of the earthly substrate by building a road: "What counts on a street is not the specific character of the terrain, but only its higher or lower degree of suitability for the circulation, the 'physical condition' of the street, its gradient, etc."[\[13\]](#) The better the street, the more can its material consistency be disregarded and its circulation speed be focused upon. For Heidegger, the street is merely the "instrument of going" (*Zeug zum Gehen*) and epitomizes the inconspicuousness of the ready-to-hand.[\[14\]](#) This epidermic character of the pavement, meaning the perception of its materiality, usually becomes evident only when the medium fails to serve its purpose, on poorly "mended" streets that let you feel their unevenness or even put your life at risk by their holes.

Somehow related to a metaphorical tactility of the street is the

rank growth, that is, the vegetation which, without being planned or in spite of planning, makes its way through the *fissures* of the pavement or between rails. Landscape architects and urban planners seem to have changed lately their attitude toward unexpected weeds and learned to appreciate them as symbols of the vital power and creative disorder (entropy) of nature.^[15] Such a turnabout may well be understood as a reaction against the present overregulation of public space; instead, nature has to be respected by the architect as a design partner endowed with its own will. Old wild gardens, whose patina has emerged in time through uncontrolled natural growth, irradiate atmosphere and have a specific expressivity. The unpredictable in general has also an emotional value. In sum, we have to learn to practise the letting-be of the "otherness of nature". Unpredictable vegetal growth proves that architecture is an ongoing process that continues also after the completion of the building, whose main purpose is less to build works than to enable others to use them. From this perspective, architects have to build in such a manner that would allow their work to "grow wild."^[16]

3. Depth: Porosity, Profiles and Roofscapes

The epidermic structure is also implied by the porous character of architecture, from the potholes of the construction sites to the fine sieve structure of the ground and pavement that allows rainwater to infiltrate the earth. In addition, now and then, orifices in the urban skin open to the sewerage network and hint discreetly at the invisible city beneath our feet. Even if we refrain from thinking of this subterranean urbanism in ontological terms, such as Merleau-Ponty's concept of a "porous being" (*être de porosité*),^[17] one still can hardly suppress any analogies with the psychology of unconscious. The sewers represent the viscera of the metropolis, its *entrailles* or "L'intestin de Léviathan" or even "the conscience of the city," in which all things merge together and confronts each other, where there is darkness, but no secrets any longer.^[18] The evacuation of residues is essential for the health of a city, just as repression is a condition of psychological health; urban hygiene and human psychic hygiene go hand in hand. Le Corbusier's functional, completely conscious and rational city turned out to be an insane utopia: an idealistic "radiant city," without pores, depths or shadows, would be suffocating. The waste materials beneath the skin of the city belong to life itself; accordingly, the tactile aesthetic states that one should put up with the real-life conditions.

Also the natural experience of edifices is multi-perspectival, while architectural photography prefers the frontal view of buildings, conceived as secluded units. Some "faces" of buildings or façades have asperities or protuberances, others are so smooth that the gaze almost glides along their surface. By contrast, the view in profile is mostly unspectacular on those streets that respect the building line; the flatness of the façades and the continuous front of buildings effaces here any possible individual profile. However, a different picture of the street seems to have been the rule for the pedestrian of the medieval city. Building protrusions included then "counters that projected from shops and the awnings that protected these counters from the weather, external stairs, [...] bridges

between buildings, balconies, and cantilevered upper stories or jetties," oriels, bow-windows of shops, shutters, hanging shop signs and swinging street signs.^[19] All building projections and swinging or free-standing signs along the footways were successively prohibited in England between the 17th and the 19th century. Also in Italian and German cities building ordinances regulated the permitted number, size and location of jetties and limited ornamentation. Some of these restrictions had practical reasons, given that protruding objects impeded traffic and endangered passers-by. Other regulations, mainly the preference given to classicist flat façades and the predilection for an undeviating building line, had aesthetic motivations. It might even be assumed that the recession of tactility in architecture, dictated by urban authorities, is interdependent with the historic process by which the primacy of look emerged in modern philosophy and science.

The only protuberances that survived in modern domestic architecture are balconies and loggias, but even then only for hygienic reasons (the need for fresh air). However, contemporary architecture, with its free-standing edifices of an irregular and almost sculptural form, appears to have rediscovered the pleasures of the tactile look. Sometimes a small detail is enough to enhance tactile impressions and physiological analogies, such as the "tentacles" of the Kunsthhaus in Graz.

After the flattening of facades, the last refuge of the tactile look was up on the roofs. Roofscapes frequently maintained their irregularity and diversity, consisting of pitched, scaly or plain surfaces, greenery, chimneys and mechanical equipment. This almost bird's eye view makes the transition from the pedestrian's perspective to the cartographic or aerial view; at the same time, the panorama of roofs still entails the *tactile* embracing with the eyes of the corporality of buildings, pointed extremities and domes, sculptures on the top of buildings, and hanging gardens. The movement of eyes may even become physical: the classic film scenes of chases across rooftops can be located only in cities. They make people involved become aware of the real limits of their condition as pedestrians, while looking into the urban precipices induces in them a feeling of vertigo. The city is not a map, but a three-dimensional lived space.

4. Strolling

Monotonous broad and straight avenues with long vistas invite you to adopt a nimble walking pace, whereas crooked streets and small spaces slow down your pace and invite you to bend, sit, or squat. Le Corbusier was aware of this when he opposed the straight artery as "streets of work" and high speed to the winding "streets of rest" in the garden-cities.^[20] The circulation speed through the city responds not only to the topography and the spatial order, but also to the material substrate of the road, as well as to design elements, such as carefully designed façades and even the height of the steps of stairs. From the convergence of all these factors emerge different styles of walking, from the waved mass movements on the smooth but wide stairs of the underground stations designed by Otto Wagner in Vienna to the energetic and steep

individual ascension into the towers of cathedrals.

But who can describe all the existing manners of walking? Balzac tried in 1853 to classify them scientifically and failed. [21] In the 1980s, Lucius Burckhardt made another attempt, namely to lay the basis for the *Spaziergangswissenschaft* or *Promenadologie*. [22] Even though his project was not without irony, the new “science” was introduced into the curriculum of the Art University in Kassel; and his former students are still engaged as “Spaziergangsforscher” in organizing and documenting city walks. [23] But first of all, strollology (in Burckhardt’s translation) implies a logic of perception that manifests strong analogies with the tactile experience.

For example, Lucius Burckhardt was guided by the question of how we mentally construct the image of a landscape. His answer was that this representation emerges by connecting perceptive sequences as in a chain or string of pearls, that is, in an incomplete synthesis. It is interesting that Erwin Straus had described in a similar way the tactile experience from a phenomenological perspective: “When I am touching, I feel only a piece, but as a piece. Touching the border of the armrest, I am going along, experiencing the arm rest piece by piece, one moment after another. The momentary character is essential to any tactile impression, ‘moment’ being understood both in the temporal and the kinetic meaning.” [24]

The absence of a closed horizon, the succession of moments and the urge to go further, by which Straus characterizes tactility, can be applied also to the experience of walking. In the particular case of the cityscape, this implies that the route to the destination influences the perception of the final point and helps to understand it. This was indeed the case in the past, when the encounter with a building was “prepared” gradually by walking toward it. In other words, the meaning of an edifice was relational, depending on its location within the city. This contextual kind of knowledge, Burckhardt argues, has become somewhat blurred nowadays: the passenger may pop up directly from the metro and find herself in front of the building. To compensate, new buildings would have to provide by themselves, without any support from the environment, a context and a story. One might say, their façades have to be talkative.

To sum up: *physical movements* are the condition of tactile feeling; *open representations*, its form of knowledge; and *narrative*, its method of description. And indeed, how can a “cityscape” (conceived as an unity) be more accurately portrayed than by *sequences* of words, images and sounds, that is, by means of literary or cinematic narrative techniques?

What may be called “tactile knowledge” is thus dynamic and fragmentary.

The phenomenon of *flânerie* has inspired several artistic projects (Benjamin, the Situationists), anthropological theories about the language and memory of places (Certeau, Augé), initiatives of “urban pilgrimage,” not to mention gender approaches (Meskimmon) or training methods for architects (ironically named by Bogdanović the “Johnnie-Walker method”). [25] What possibly could have been left unsaid?

First, as has already been pointed out, flânerie takes place not only on the horizontal, by strolling along streets, but also up and down stairs and elevators, as well as by crossing the porous, perforated buildings through passages and inner courtyards. The tactile-kinaesthetic perspective enriches the flâneur's bi-dimensional extended space with the exploration of depths and heights. The city is *three-dimensional* and corporeal. Moreover, the pedestrian or cyclist *interacts physically* with the uneven topography of the city. The tactile experience, which is "the most profound knowledge of the city,"[26] implies multi-modal bodily involvement and physical condition. The interactive character of "tactile knowledge" means also reciprocity: one cannot touch without being touched. The subject of vision could be imagined as being placed outside the world observed; the tactile subject, on the contrary, is necessarily connatural with his environment, *tangible* and *exposed* to the touch of others. The voyeur secretly enjoyed the power of his incognito "studies"; in contrast, the "tactile" pedestrian experience retrieves the "dialectics of the flânerie,"[27] that is, its double movement, the concomitant psychical distance and physical nearness, perspicacity and empathy, lucidity and exaltation of the senses.

Another feature of the view *à plain pied* and of the corresponding on-site knowledge is that they remain *local*. A well-documented example of this is the historic change in the perception of cathedrals. Camillo Sitte[28] argued that, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, these were partly leaning against other buildings, so that they could suddenly take one by surprise just as one turned a corner. Whereas their front looked into an opened *piazza*, seen from behind, they dominated narrow streets and blocked the view, as if they were stopping any movement. The cathedral was obviously the final destination of all human routes. Only in the nineteenth century, municipal governments in several European cities thought that they would improve the view of cathedrals by clearing the space that surrounded them. However, by converting them into free-standing buildings, they extracted them from the urban fabric. Moreover, in the Middle Ages the size of the cathedrals, the fact that there was no higher building, and the crowded space in the city made impossible any full-view of them from within the city and implied a *play of plural* and even *contradictory perspectives*.

Moreover, tactile space is essentially *relational*; form and size are a matter of proportions. Therefore to "read" the space means to measure it first bodily, with fingers, palms, elbows, arms, or feet, before converting these into numbers.[29] Thus each thing is understood in relation to others and translated into the body-based units of measurement, from what is too small to be felt (the infinitesimal), to what can be held in the hand or embraced, until to what cannot be grasped, neither perceived, nor conceived. The house of God inspired awe because its size transgressed any relation to the scale of the human body and embodied the absolute limit of what can be grasped only in a negative way: the inconceivable. In this respect, Herder was right to take the sense of touch as the basis for the experience of "colossal figures" in sculpture and architecture.[30]

At the opposite pole stands Roland Rainer. This architect considers that enormous residential projects and broad wide boulevards are unfriendly, lack any proportion and scale, and cannot be grasped or understood.^[31] Instead he praises the human scale of the historical urban centres, of old oriental cities, garden-cities, and allotment gardens. Like Camillo Sitte before him,^[32] Rainer gives preference to narrow, winding streets, low buildings, large tree crowns, and inner courtyards that protect one from rain and heat and transform urban space into half-closed spaces. Upon closer inspection, his ideal of living coincides to a large extent with Bollnow's: both reduce the meaning of habitability to feelings of security (*Geborgenheit*), protection, confidence, self-expression, and enhanced identity. Moreover, both Bollnow and Rainer support their interpretation by the Heideggerian discourse on dwelling. But whereas Bollnow almost misanthropically mistrusts any other people than one's own family, Rainer dreams of transforming public space into a domestic one. Here the "Nordic" inwardness meets the "Southern" culture of living on the streets. In spite of this, Rainer sacrifices the Parisian flâneur's curiosity about other people in favor of the confidence in the familiar; his inhabitants stop walking, their sensory drunkenness is softly appeased. Instead of drifting like Rimbaud's "drunken ship" in search of diversity and adventure, the residents of the garden-city Puchenau (in Upper Austria), who exemplify Rainer's positive standard, live happy, healthy (and supposedly sedentary) lives in their homes as in their castles. The debate between the apologists of vast housing estates and those of garden cities that integrate rural character into the suburbs is still running.

5. Pulse and Rhythm

"Cities can be recognized by their pace just as people can by their walk," wrote Robert Musil.^[33] The physical movement through the city finds here the counterpart in the inner movement of the city itself. This can hardly be measured but only *felt* by immersing oneself in the city, and therefore it implies once more a metaphorical tactility. The pulse of the city can usually be perceived by watching the pedestrians' and the vehicles' movements, or it can be reproduced by cinematic means, like in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin. Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and Dziga Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929). The traffic and the people are "the blood pulsing through the city."^[34] Or to quote Musil again: "Motor-cars shooting out of deep, narrow streets into the shallows of bright squares. Dark patches of pedestrians' bustle formed into cloudy streams. Where stronger lines of speed transected their loose-woven hurrying, they clotted up – only to trickle on all the faster then and after a few ripples regain their regular pulse-beat (*Puls*). Hundreds of sounds were intertwined into a coil of wiry noise, with single barbs projecting, sharp edges running along it and submerging again, and clear notes splintering off – flying and scattering."^[35]

This living city that engages all the senses is the very opposite of the panoptic urban ideal which achieves the highest level of visual order at the price of desolation. In spite of appearances, the "tactile" city does not succumb to chaos but has a complex order and patterns of rhythm. The city

overlays everyday rhythms and the cycle of the seasons with its own calendar of holidays, festivals and sales campaigns. In addition, the beat of the city grows together as a kind of vector that results from the interweaving of all the inhabitants' routes and from the interaction of their kinetic, gestic and verbal energies: "Like all big cities, it consisted of irregularity, change, sliding forward, not keeping in step, collisions of things and affairs, and fathomless points of silence in between, of paved ways and wilderness, of one great rhythmic throb and the perpetual discord and dislocation of all opposing rhythms, and as a whole resembled a seething, bubbling fluid in a vessel consisting of the solid material of buildings, laws, regulations, and historical traditions."[\[36\]](#)

At the same time vitality may express a juvenile *joie de vivre* or threaten to degenerate into open violence. In any case, it implies not only rhythmical regularities but also the chance or maybe danger of unpredictable experiences, encounters or accidents, in one word: contingency.

6. Climates

Another aspect of contingency, which is directly related to epidermal sensations, concerns the weather. Unlike the voyeur's almost disembodied eye, the pedestrian is exposed to sun and heat, wind and precipitation.[\[37\]](#) It is the rain in the first place that makes citizens become aware of the fact that tactile sensations cannot be completely banished from the city, in spite of all the technological devices that isolate humans thermally from their environment, such as air conditioning or heated seats on public transport. All of a sudden, rain reminds us of the vulnerability of our human condition. In addition, rain has a disturbing effect on everyday order and imposes its own rules of behavior: an unexpected torrential shower temporarily suspends the imperative of efficacy, makes us change routes and prefer to wait under a shelter until it stops. As a matter of fact, the historic beginning of urban *flânerie* is closely related to the emergence of sheltered passages that allow us to continue our walk even under unfavorable weather conditions.[\[38\]](#) Rain is also "a parentheses of good manners"[\[39\]](#) that not only breaks the rules of formal communication but also opens the way for new contacts. Heavy rain and snowfall make transport collapse. Floods bring people together and make them regain their solidarity against a common enemy. Puddles bring, all of a sudden, a certain creativity into walking automata, constraining the pedestrian to make leaps, improvise new routes, and adopt a "flourished" gait: walking becomes dancing. To put it another way, rain is anarchic and poetic.

As for temperature in the city, extensive meteorological measurements confirm that green spaces, water areas, and housing density produce microclimatic differences and make it possible to develop specific climate maps for cities. On the one hand, parks and green belts are known to act as the "lungs" of the city; on the other hand, inner city and other high density landscapes lack "porosity" and do not allow evaporation. These differences have implications for the urban policy concerning the choices of planting and the distribution of vegetated environments.

7. The Touch of Time

The physical-material, natural-climatic, and historic contingency dimensions of the city can be gathered together under the generic concept of *patina*. This "skin" on the objects results from the convergence of material, time, and touch and may be defined as the visible surface of a temporal depth. What distinguishes patina from other visual surfaces is precisely the slow sedimentation of repeated local touches. The long-running process by which it is produced is involuntary and anonymous, a sort of "crystallization"^[40] of the touch of weather, people, and history. Patina makes visible not only the subject's corporality, but it embodies also a certain "vulnerability" of the material and its memory.

Traces and marks, scratches and fissures record gestures, store time and save the city's history (*Geschichte*) and its oral "histories" from oblivion. The material structure of patina is itself that of a "geological" set of superimposed layers (*Ge-schichte*) and signs. For Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé^[41] there were the *names* of streets and metro stations that helped maintain the traditions of a community and added a poetic, mythic, and imaginary geography to the physical space. However, not only names but also building materials are able to create atmospheres, to evoke history, enhance the habitability of a city and even reinforce the residents' self-identification with the city. In this sense, patina stands for the ongoing process of the production of a lived space through the physical interaction between people and architecture. In other words, patina transforms the architectural skin of the city into a palimpsest that encodes both micro-histories and events of History in materials.

In this way, patina converts time into a positive aesthetic agent. Historical buildings and places emanate a certain flair or atmosphere, which may disappear as a result of restorative work in spite of the architects' efforts to carry out accurate reconstructions (or maybe precisely because of that). Weathering and age confer character to a building; for this reason, some architects even recommend simulating the effects of ageing, such as wear, discoloration or pollution.^[42] The design of the urban skin has to navigate between the Scylla of performing a superficial face-lift of the city and the Charybdis of the conservation and restoration projects that transform the urban space into a museum and the skin of the city into a lifeless crust.

To sum up, the tactile perception of cities is multi-layered. This refers in the first place to visible tactile qualities, as when we "see" textures and fissures, virtually "touch" profiles of buildings, or "embrace" the view of roofscapes. At a deeper level, tactility is inseparable from movement as a condition for experiencing the three dimensions of the urban space: its volume, its porosity, and its heights and hidden fundamentals. The never-ending process of experiencing the city has effects on its narrative representations: the character of a city is the sum of its stories, which occasionally become visible as patina of the objects. Finally, tactility in a broad sense includes feeling differences between the microclimates of the city, as well as its inner movements, pulse and rhythms. This catalogue of "tactile" categories may be extended, applied to several cities for comparative purposes (for example, regarding their materials, rhythms and architectural responses

to the climate) or be adapted to specific types of flâneurs (such as the blind). The above-mentioned categories are not necessarily aesthetic, but they may develop such values and enrich the poetics of city from the perspective of embodied subjects.

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