Spain and Its Sun

Urban Ideas, Microhistorical Methods

Petra Ellerby
Western Washington University

The early modern Iberian city was both a physical, palpable place—a location where people lived, worked, traveled, governed—and a construct of thought, a compound product comprised by matter and imagination. Like all complex cultural touchstones, Spanish cities and their ideological representations functioned in concert as well as competition, acting upon each other through continuous cycles of mutual influence. Both halves of this urban equation were integral and impactful; both were unique, if not entirely discrete; and both can be most effectively understood with the aid of an investigative approach that reflects their overlapping organization.

It is the aim of this paper to provide a précis of sorts, an overview of the city and its cultural images. Any holistic attempt to chart these multifaceted systems must employ the aid of diverse sources and varied approaches, and the following sections will (to this end) be arranged around an exploration of evidence both primary and secondary. First addressed are the 'structures' of cities, the tangible sites of everyday existence; next in line is a discourse on the role of ideas and ideology, an investigation into the paths by which cities—both real and imagined—became a symbol, tool, and even weapon of Iberian identity. Each of these analyses are interspersed with perspectives and methods drawn from relevant studies, and the paper's larger layout—one which combines contemporaneous depictions with contemporary analyses and matches physical objects with their mental models—aspires towards a symmetrical treatment that mirrors its subject. It is in the essay's third and final section that this method and its merits are most clearly outlined, interrogated, and understood.[1]

1. Place[2]

Christopher Friedrichs' seminal 1995 volume on sixteenth-century cities opens with the grand assertion that a town's walls its essence make. "To understand the early modern [metropolis]," Friedrichs writes, we must begin "by looking at its physical form," by noting and observing its "spires, [...] steeples, towers and rooftops."[3] From this vantage, it is a city's "rows," "buildings," "houses," "churches," and "squares" which are of initial interest; here, an "urban topography" of tangible objects provides the primary key to meaningful inquiry.[4]

Friedrichs' approach is not without significant merit, and his exegetical emphasis on streets and squares is not a modern invention. Indeed, this '*urbs*'-oriented understanding has significant historical validity.[5] In *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities* (1588),[6] the Italian humanist Giovanni Botero claimed that European cities' "straight streets," "fine buildings," and "wondrous walls" were a principal

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[1] This compositional strategy is deeply indebted to Richard L. Kagan and Marías Fernando (see esp. *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000]).

[2] The following two section titles are again drawn from Kagan's *Urban Images*. 'Space', within this framework, is the social-conceptual counterpart to physical 'place'. See esp. Kagan, *Urban Images*, 17.

[3] Christopher R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City, 1450-1750* (London: Longman, 1995), 15, 3. (Henceforth '*TEMC*'.)

[4] Friedrichs, *TEMC*, 4, 5, 29.

[5] Yet more thanks are due to Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 9, for this handy definition; see below for more on the interplay between a physical/political and *urbs/civitas* divide.

[6] Henceforth '*On the Causes*' or '*OTC*'.

part of their glory.[7] As Botero argued, citizens flocked to "the city of Thespiae for its excellent statue[es], Samos for [...] its temple, Alexandria for Pharos, Memphis for the pyramids, [and] Rhodes for the Colossus."[8] Venice's success is attributed to its "miraculous site [...], the height of its towers, the richness of its churches, the splendour of its palaces," and *On the Causes* ties the prosperity of all hypothetical settlements to the convenience of their locations, the fertility of their soils, and their proximity to rivers and other useful waterways.[9]

Within Botero's cultural-cognitive framework, physical facts are the primary stuff of metropolitan self-definition. As *TEMC* claims and *OTC* corroborates, urban contexts were understood to be important thanks to their status as ideal material settings where humans, who are "by nature [...] desirous to share [their] goods," could engage in commerce and conversation. At their core, then, early modern cities functioned as optimized 'containers' that allowed for congregation, comingling, "manufacturing, crafts, and trade."[10] Human activity was (of course) a required ingredient, but Friedrichs' 'urban topography' served as the principal enabling factor which provided both a means and an impetus for these fundamentally physical activities.[11] Cities were the locus of economic exchange thanks to convenience, the convergence of peoples, and the role of density in enabling trade. According to this materialist perspective, it was an array of tactile traits that drew Spaniards towards their regional cores.[12]

Early modern ideas about physicality and politics also tied township structures with the nature of power. Cities served as concrete units of social organization due largely to their geopolitical position, their spatial organization, and their regional (and often trade-related) prerogatives. As James Casey argues in his 1999 survey of *Early Modern Spain,* these grab-bags of influence were "[m]arked out by walls and privileges, by charters of liberty and separate citizenship rights," standing—thanks to their borders, both physical and political—as "bastion[s] of freedom in a still feudal countryside."[13] Within solid walls, with the aid of topographically-enabled commerce, cities were able to "maintain [internal] traditions of political hegemony" and "were regarded by rulers as integral parts of the hierarchy of power."[14] Hard-won slivers of self-government became closely associated with physical prowess, and the tactical defensibility of well-planned cities made them "the [necessary] partners of the monarchy, [...] the nucleus of the resettlement of the Moorish frontier and, in the civil wars of the fifteenth century, a bulwark against a plundering baronage."[15] It is in this sense that urban enclaves and their actual bounds became an essential

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[7] Giovanni Botero, *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities (1588)*, trans. Geoffrey Symcox (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 14-5.

[8] Botero, *OTC,* 14.

[9] Botero, *OTC,* 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, and 27.

[10] Botero, *OTC,* 3. See Joseph F. Patrouch, “European Cities: Containers or Groups of Inhabitants? A Review of Some Recent Developments in Early Modern Urban Studies,” *History Compass* 7, no. 5 (2009): pp. 1350-1362, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00631.x for a survey of the contemporary scholarship that accords with this 'container'-focused perspective.

[11] 'Physical' in the sense of movement (i.e., involving the transportation of goods).

[12] According to some lines of argumentation, it was this collection of physical data-points which accounted for the fact that sixteenth-century cities were alluring to those of lesser means. James Casey (James Casey and James Casey, “Patricians and Paupers: The Urban Commonwealth,” in *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* [London: Routledge, 2003], pp. 111-137, 121-2) argues that "[t]owns in Spain [during the early modern era] are perhaps [best] seen as refuges for the poor," and the rising labor demands of these early modern metropoles "were [often] met by short-range migration."

[13] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 111.

[14] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 111.

[15] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 131.

ingredient in governmental affairs, and an entity seen as such by residents and rulers alike.[16] From a perspective informed by five hundred years of hindsight, this metropolitan fact—and the processes it enabled—can be understood as a catalyst for societal change, a stepping-stone in the road towards modernity. Shifts in patterns of urban life, residency, demography, and sociopolitical power certainly contributed to a changing cultural landscape, and it is difficult to deny the role of material considerations in this set of important developments.[17]

A city's streets were not, however, the measure of its meaning. Contemporaneous paradigms of societal perception were not limited to the literal, and modern scholarship has moved to incorporate this understanding. The allure of the urban setting certainly involved cold hard facts about population density and the structure of city squares, but these spatial features were deeply intertwined with dreams and depictions of cultural power.[18] Botero's discourse did draw to a great degree upon the physical convenience of cities, the centrality of their structures in the comings and goings of human commerce, but cities were not merely places that enabled economic activity. For Botero himself, they were also—and equally importantly—"the stage on which justice, strength, liberality, magnificence, and other virtues [...] sh[o]ne forth in the greatest glory."[19] Our philosopher may have been indulging an especially *civitas*-focused[20] impulse when he wrote that a city "does not consist in the extent of its site or the circumference of its walls [and is instead comprised by] the number of its inhabitants and their strength," but this partisan definition does point toward a critical consideration.[21] People moved to cities and cities acted upon (and responded to) people thanks to a set of ideas about what a city was, and meant, and could—or

[16] Casey, Patricians and Paupers, 131. See Alexandra Parma Cook and Noble David Cook, *The Plague Files: Crisis Management in Sixteenth-Century Seville* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), for an intimate portrait of Seville's place as both a fundamental and functional unit of political structure.

[17] Cf. Joseph F. Patrouch, “European Cities: Containers or Groups of Inhabitants? A Review of Some Recent Developments in Early Modern Urban Studies,” *History Compass* 7, no. 5 (2009): pp. 1350-1362, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00631.x, 1351.

[18] The directional tendency of the above points itself indicates that there was more to a metropole's impact than its physical reality, its ability to provide convenient berth for traders and travelers.

[19] Botero, *OTC*, 3.

[20] See note 24 for this term and its origin.

[21] Botero, *OTC*, 9. Patrouch's point about modernization (see note 17) indicates that a city's mental representation is the aspect of its identity which matters most in a sociocultural sense, and *OTC*'s argument operates along similar lines.

perhaps *should*—be.[22] As Friedrichs knew, "even a short walk down [a city] street [must teach] us something about the *social* fabric" of its material reality.[23]

2. Space

Richard Kagan writes in the preface to his turn-of-the-century study on *Urban Images* that "notion[s] of city [which] accorded precedence to people, not bricks" were "echoed in most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century histories of Spanish cities," while the idea of a city "as [a] physical entity" existed—cf. Botero—"only in competition with the idea of the city as *civitas*," or community.[24] Topographical emphases ('*urbs*'-oriented lenses) can account for only half of the means by which urban spaces were understood in early modern Iberia, and overly narrow or "particularistic portrait[s]" of this compound world elide a whole universe of salience.[25] In both 1530 and 2023, "attempt[s] to describe the city [merely] as an architectural entity" cede their place to definitions that present urban locales as "gathering[s] of meanings."[26] Spanish cities can best be described as "sacred spaces," as Casey contends, and "[t]he walls of a town" remain relevant primarily insofar as they "st[and] as a material symbol of its *identity*."[27]

Cities, then, were considered critical not only by virtue of those impacts which early modern Iberians associated with location or layout, and were indeed elevated to a dominant position as a result of human imagination.[28] The collections of people contained within a city's streets were not forgotten, and the sum of their perceptions and understandings—their 'mental maps,' as it were—accounted for a large share of the identifying material that made a city fully *itself* at any given historical moment.[29]

It is clear that these mental representations were constructed primarily on a shared, and often civilizational, scale. Indeed, the city as a sociopolitical unit was understood to be of central corporate

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[22] Pilgrims did flock to Memphis for its pyramids and Rhodes for its Colossus, but the draw of these sites had as much—or more—to do with their cultural significance as it did with their physical presence (Botero, *OTC*, 14). Cf. Casey's description of the city as a "bastion of freedom" (note 13; *Patricians and Paupers* p. 111), a mental designation that was similarly tied with cultural symbolism and physical reality. See also Casey, *Patricians and* Paupers, 121-2, regarding the question of why those who had been "driven out of their own lands" by the transition from agricultural feudalism to enclosed pastureland sought refuge in cities that were more 'imagined refuges' than actual "sources of employment." This gap between factual, physical reality (re: job numbers and food availability) and projected sanctuary necessitated the involved, "heroic work" of charitable brotherhoods and strategic safety nets (Casey, *Patricians*, 122; see also 123-8). Cf. Juan Luis Vives, *On Assistance to the Poor*, trans. Alice Tobriner (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

The eighth chapter of Mary Elizabeth Perry's *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990) provides another important window into these demographic effects and the social response they eventually engendered.

[23] Friedrichs, *TEMC*, 5 (emphasis mine). See also p. 23: The importance of walls was "as much psychological as practical..."

[24] Richard L. Kagan and Marías Fernando, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 10-1. (Henceforth '*Urban Images*'.)

[25] Kagan, *Urban Images*, 11.

[26] Kagan, *Urban Images*, 15, 17.

[27] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 112, 113. Emphasis mine.

[28] . . . eventually becoming one of the most prevalent sociopolitical paradigms or discourses within an early modern intellectual environment.

[29] Considerations involving the centrality of cultural ideology cannot be ignored, because the one—the rise of cities, the development of urban ideas—could not have occurred without the other.

importance in the composition of Spanish national identity. For Botero, cities were the site of civic virtue, an ideal arena both for self-definition and self-realization; Casey's comment on the relationship between national and municipal power (see note 14 above) implies that peninsular political ideologies found their ultimate expression in the interplay between Crown and city.[30] (Towns themselves proved to be excellent loci for political theater.[31]) Even when the delicate dance between monarch and municipality became unbalanced, dissent was formulated through an urban lens, and the ultimate result of the "great wave of revolts of 1519-22 was to reinforce [extant] social hierarchy in Spain."[32] "[F]or some time [...] the commonwealth [had been] being redefined as a national rather than a local forum," and the "loss of financial autonomy by [...] town councils as the monarchy sought to keep a closer watch on the budget" proved threatening (to cities) indeed.[33] Nevertheless, the rallying cry of 1519's *comuneros* illustrated a desire to return to an earlier, yet still urban, status quo. Discomfited citizens appealed to their royal sovereign not for a revolutionary end but a metropolitan renaissance, seeking instead the restoration of quintessentially Hispanic city government.[34]

As Kagan chronicles, the notion of city as civilizational self also extended beyond Spain's domestic sphere, reaching past the borders of peninsular Iberia and insinuating itself into an ever-expanding colonial landscape. Ideas about cities and civility scaffolded Spanish identity from an internal perspective, but this exercise in collective definition was also accompanied by an external implication. If cities conferred the stuff of civilization, what might their lack convey?

Botero, for one, wrote that those who "live dispersed" tend towards "savage mentalit[ies] and rude customs" best remedied by means of urbanization. As he argued, it was through this logic that "the [Iberians] and the Jesuit Fathers use[d] every means to gather [Indigenous populations] together in the most suitable places, where, following a civilized manner of life, they bec[a]me more easily instructed."[35] From *OTC*'s vantage, the city can be seen—and indeed *was* seen—both as the locus of civilized and of civiliz*ing* life.[36]

It is no coincidence that this ideological framework was employed for expansionist ends. A Spanish sense of imperial self, buoyed by continental urban culture, became a powerful means of legitimization at home and of conquest abroad. As Stuart Schwartz writes in his illuminating contribution to *The Oxford*

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[30] Botero, *OTC*, 3.

[31] Consult Teofilo F. Ruiz, *Spanish Society, 1348-1700* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 133-76 for insight into the ostensibly unifying role played by royal entries and religious festivals.

[32] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 134.

[33] Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 136-7.

[34] "Long live the king," they cried. "Long live the king and down with bad government!" (Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 129-35. See esp. p. 131.).

[35] Botero, *OTC*, 10.

[36] Kagan, *Urban Images*, 26. This notion is an old one, an idea deeply rooted in Hispanic history, which "emerged during the course of the medieval Reconquest of Muslim Spain and later had special significance for Spaniards engaged in the conquest and settlement of the Americas." The "crusading memory" seems (in Casey's eyes) to "have played a decisive role in the sense of identity of many Spanish towns," and Botero's treatise again confirms that this continental tendency did not remain confined within its original geographic bounds (Casey, *Patricians and Paupers*, 112). According to *OTC*'s second chapter, the 'Visigothic' Spaniards employed city-life as a defense against invading "Moors," a strategy which is (within Botero's discourse) also justified and dignified via recourse to Roman precedent/antiquity (Botero, *OTC*, 11). The Italian's account is interspersed with endless examples both ancient and contemporary; for *OTC*'s thoughts "*On Removing People from Their Own Countries to Our City*" as an imperial strategy—a strategy justified via Roman precedent—see pp. 13-4.

Handbook of the Atlantic World, the metropolitan "forms and practices of Spanish government [rapidly] took shape in the [newly colonized] Caribbean; Santo Domingo was first, but "[s]maller cities and town quickly followed until, by 1540, there were thirty-four [settlements], each, *as in Spain*, extending authority over the surrounding countryside."[37] Following the (imagined, idealized) examples of ancient empires, Spanish rulers "took possession of [New World frontiers] through the foundation of towns," and cities served in this sense as the "vanguards of empire."[38] A common Spanish response to Indigenous resistance involved policies of "resettlement or 'congregation'" which allowed colonists and missionaries to more easily control their subjects, theoretically providing them with the ideal context for "learn[ing] to live in a civilized manner."[39]

The coarse reality of Schwartz's 'resettlement' strategies draws this developing world back towards its fundamental, physical function. An entity first encountered as an assemblage of walls, towers, and streets is transformed into a political unit, a cultural framework, a collective identity, and a strategy for success[40] both at home and abroad. That the Hispanic city-system system was so central and so universal as to encompass even dissent—think of Castile's *comuneros* or perhaps of Bartolomé de las Casas, the defender of Indigenous dignity who introduced his objection to colonial cruelties by noting that the original Americans had cities, too—indicates the depth and adaptability of metropolitan paradigms.[41] It is this ability to contain multitudes, as Walt Whitman might say, that reveals the extent to which 'urban' ideas had become coextensive with the mental and material reality of Iberia itself.[42]

3. Study

This paper's progression from the tangible to the theoretical illuminates a process of continuous construction, a stepping, leapfrogging, and building off (or upon) each successive consideration. Cities and their mental reflections functioned as a lens through which societal self-perception could occur, an intellectual framework and sociopolitical lexicon that encompassed all options for action. In Iberia proper, metropoles dotted the physical landscape and dominated political discourse; in the Americas, their image and actuality were employed in as a foundational tool in the effort to construct a New Spain.

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[37] Nicholas Canny, Philip D. Morgan, and Stuart B. Schwartz, “The Iberian Atlantic to 1650,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 147-164, 151, 150 (emphasis added).

[38] Kagan, *Urban Images*, 26, 7; see p. 28 for the colonies' urban juridical/jurisdictional structure (a legal outline which turned New Spain into an "empire of towns").

[39] Schwartz, *Iberian Atlantic*, 151. Cf. Kagan, *Urban Images*, 21: "cities [...] represented the ideal instrument of evangelization [another aspect of the 'civilizing' equation] in as much as the countryside, with its dispersed population, was not conducive to faith." Aggressive actions were justified by means of a city- (and confession-) based civilized/uncivilized divide, and primary methods of imperial expansion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries likewise drew upon metropolitan ideas to shape their practical tactics. The Iberians' "conquest culture" was, thus, fundamentally urban (Schwartz, *Iberian Atlantic*, 151).

[40] And subjugation...

[41] See Kagan, *Urban Images*, 24: "Particularly noteworthy was the definition of city expressed by Fray Bartolome de las Casas in his *De Potestate Civile*, a treatise written c.1560 in defense of Peru's native communities against the depredations and extortions of Spanish settlers. Las Casas accorded the city a privileged place, defining it, following Aristotle, as 'a perfect, self-sufficient community whose life lies in its republic.'"

[42] And had become (in fact) a dominant mode of perceiving and understanding *the world*.

These intermingled means, motives, and ends were inextricable within their original context, inextricable in contemporaneous accounts, and any good faith attempt to follow the contours of such a complex constellation must necessarily lead to some corresponding measure of methodological cross-pollination. The sources and studies employed in the present essay represent a wide range of perspectives and approaches, all of which are necessary—and some of which are, to some extent, contradictory. Friedrichs' emphasis on immersive, experiential scholarship[43] clashes with a common developmental model outlined by Joseph Patrouch,[44] although the lackluster determinism demonstrated by J.-P. Rubiés' *Worlds of Europeans, Africans, and Americans, C. 1492* belies the more graceful shape that theoretical approaches are able to assume—cf. Kagan, for one, whose deft bridging of image and actuality unearths enormous insights while remaining laser-focused on a very specific set of historical sources.[45]

Kagan's doubled presentation of *urbs* (physicality) and *civitas* (community) is most representative of *this* essay's structural approach,[46] although Friedrichs' focus on matter *as* mind acts, in its own modest way, as an implicit bridge between *Urban Images*' two subjects.[47] Casey's treatment is somewhat more traditional and relies on a chronological framework to outline its argument about the shifting relationship between city and Crown;[48] Schwartz is similarly straightforward, adding an additional element of compositional sanity into this heady (and often abstract) mix.[49] The primary-source immediacy of Friedrichs' writings[50] meshes well with Casey's event-based outline, and both function as critical prerequisites for any good understanding of the background and basis behind Kagan's larger scaffold. An alliance of physical situatedness and "collective experience" cannot stand without roots of some sort,[51] and Kagan's, Casey's, Friedrichs', as well as Schwartz' works endow each perspective with necessary contextual heft.[52] As is apparent in the manner that these studies have been employed above, the more (to speak frankly) the merrier. Complete accounts must encompass both *urbs* and *civitas*, matter and mind, Friedrichs' rejection of overdetermined developmentalism *and* Schwartz's/Casey's embrace of cities as changemakers.[53] Such a

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[43] See Cook and Cook, *The Plague Files*, for a related approach.

[44] Cf. pp. 8-9 for Friedrichs' rejections of "highly misleading" teleological tendencies.

[45] I.e., the volume's titular urban images. Indeed, Kagan's work is a textbook example of a successful attempt to address, consider, and encompass physical as well as ideological/intellectual/identity-oriented considerations. See page 17 for a superlative summing-up of related concepts.

[46] Defining a city as "a gathering of meanings" certainly helps to span the spectrum from physical to conceptual... (Kagan, *Urban Images*, 17).

[47] See note 23.

[48] But is, nevertheless, an excellent and indispensable source. Cf. *Patricians and Paupers*' interaction with/inclusion of political-historical background info (to pick but one example, pp. 118 provides a very detailed outline of elite entrenchment in mid sixteenth-century municipal governments).

[49] Schwartz's very reasonable outline proposes to "view the early creation of Iberia as a joint process and a dialog," emphasizing a (eminently comprehensible) common set of ideas and beliefs (*Iberian Atlantic* 147).

[50] Once again, cf. Alexandra Parma Cook and Noble David Cook, *The Plague Files*, which is very intentional in its archival focus. "We have chosen in this narrative to let the protagonists' voices be heard as much as possible," they write; it is through this technique that the Cooks' "microhistory" comes alive (Cook & Cook, *The Plague Files*, 12). "Our hope is that by staying close to the words of the protagonists [...], today's readers can enter, if only briefly, into their world" . . . (13).

[51] Friedrichs, *TEMC*, 7.

[52] Patrouch's survey serves (within this context) to catalyze the reader's attempt to locate each 'camp' within its modern historiographical matrix. See esp. Joseph F. Patrouch, “European Cities: Containers or Groups of Inhabitants? A Review of Some Recent Developments in Early Modern Urban Studies,” *History Compass* 7, no. 5 (2009): pp. 1350-1362, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00631.x, 1350-1.

[53] Friedrichs, *TEMC*, 8, 9; see Casey, *Patricians and* Paupers, 117-137 for a well-crafted chronology of the development (and devolution) of early modern city government.

rich synthesis disallows misleading overinvestments in "grand narratives" and granular details alike, acting as a guardrail against explanatory hubris.[54]

But, fundamentally, the ideal analysis is a compound analysis because the same is true of its chosen focus. This process of mutual illumination, an interaction which mirrors that of the city and its twinned forms, most fully illustrates the importance of including diverse and even divergent understandings.[55] Considering both Kagan and Casey is an especially productive act not only in that it prevents methodological isolationism but also because it reflects the nature and complexity of each scholar's shared subject. Of course, *this* paper's particular prerogative is tilted towards an emphasis on intellectual history, and it is in that ideological realm that a comprehensive perch proves most critical.[56] But multi-modal approaches to compound concepts can also enrich social, political, or even military-historical perspectives, and the impracticability of addressing *every* angle in *every* article can be redressed by means of acknowledgment and interaction.

As Botero wrote in the preface to his now-familiar treatise, cities are "like little worlds constructed by man within the great world created by God, and just as the contemplation of Nature leads to recognition of the greatness of God, in the same way the study of cities affords a special sign of man's excellence."[57] Botero's grandiose analogy, in which God and Nature are replaced by Man and City, captures the central assumption embedded within the present paper's stated aim. Spain and its cities contained an ambiguous, ambivalent collection of metropolitan ideas, some which were certainly far from "excellent," but it is beyond dispute that cities as physical and ideological units *were* a critical part of Iberian culture. That microcosm, treated microhistorically,[58] captures an image of such significant sociological weight that it can be used—as *OTC* indicates—to understand the whole.

"What is greater than the sun?" Botero asked. Yet where else "are the force of its light and heat better demonstrated than in the concave space of a tiny mirror"?[59] But if only one point of the mirror is admitted into a given analysis, how misleading must that reflection really be? And what, in the end, could be more fitting than an inquiry which follows its subject?

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[54] Friedrichs, *TEMC*, 11. Keeping in mind, of course, that cities/city-concepts themselves cannot act as an exclusive key to Spanish history...

[55] Neither can exist while the other doesn't survive.

[56] I.e., in service of a more accurate, more internal/emic understanding of the ideas early modern Iberians understood.

[57] Botero, *OTC*, 3, 4.

[58] Yet cohesively/comprehensively!

[59] Botero, *OTC*, 4.

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