

# Communicative Interaction for the Construction of the Wasteland in Postconflict's Colombia\*

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**ABSTRACT**—*The objective of this article is to present the partial results found in the analysis of the narratives, made by the actors of the Rabanal wasteland, based on the communicative interaction, from the Theory of communicative action proposed by Habermas, Jüngen(Habermas, 1981 ). In this sense, this research assumed that the TAC is the interaction that actors perform for social construction, based on language. Likewise, in the methodological process three stages were developed: descriptive, analytical and interpretative; considering the postulates raised by the critical analysis of discourse from the critical-social perspective proposed by Neyla Pardo. It stands out in this research that the discourse that is built around the Rabanal wasteland is polysemic and ambiguous and does not favor consensus.*

**Keywords**—Language, TAC, Wasteland, ACD, LEEN, Rabanal.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Jürgen Habermas introduces language in communicative processes, as an element that allows "elucidating the world of life" (Habermas, 1981:10) and unveiling it from intersubjectivity. This approach led to the recognition of the importance of thinking the world of life around the Rabanal wasteland (Habermas, 1981:10) and trying to elucidate it, in order to understand the actions that are generated and reverted against a natural reserve, which generates environmental processes, ecological and conceptual constructions elaborated from language and that lead to practices that favor or disfavor human existence.

Therefore, the world of life that develops around the wasteland of Rabanal, shows the ecological deterioration, from mining, agricultural and livestock activities product of conceptual constructions, elaborated from the language and that are reverted into actions that degrade the environment and do not allow the development of consensus, leading to favorable practices for all social actors living around this natural reserve. This problem leads to answer the question:

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What is the communicative interaction that the actors of the Massif Rabanal Wasteland perform for the construction of the wasteland concept and its possible social and environmental effect?

To answer this question, it was assumed that the *Theory of Communicative Action* (TAC), Habermas, as:

Term communicative action for "those expressions (linguistic and non-linguistic) with which subjects capable of speech and action assume relations with intention to understand each other about something and coordinate their activities. These communicatively coordinated activities can consist of communicative or non-communicative actions" (Habermas, 1981: 454)

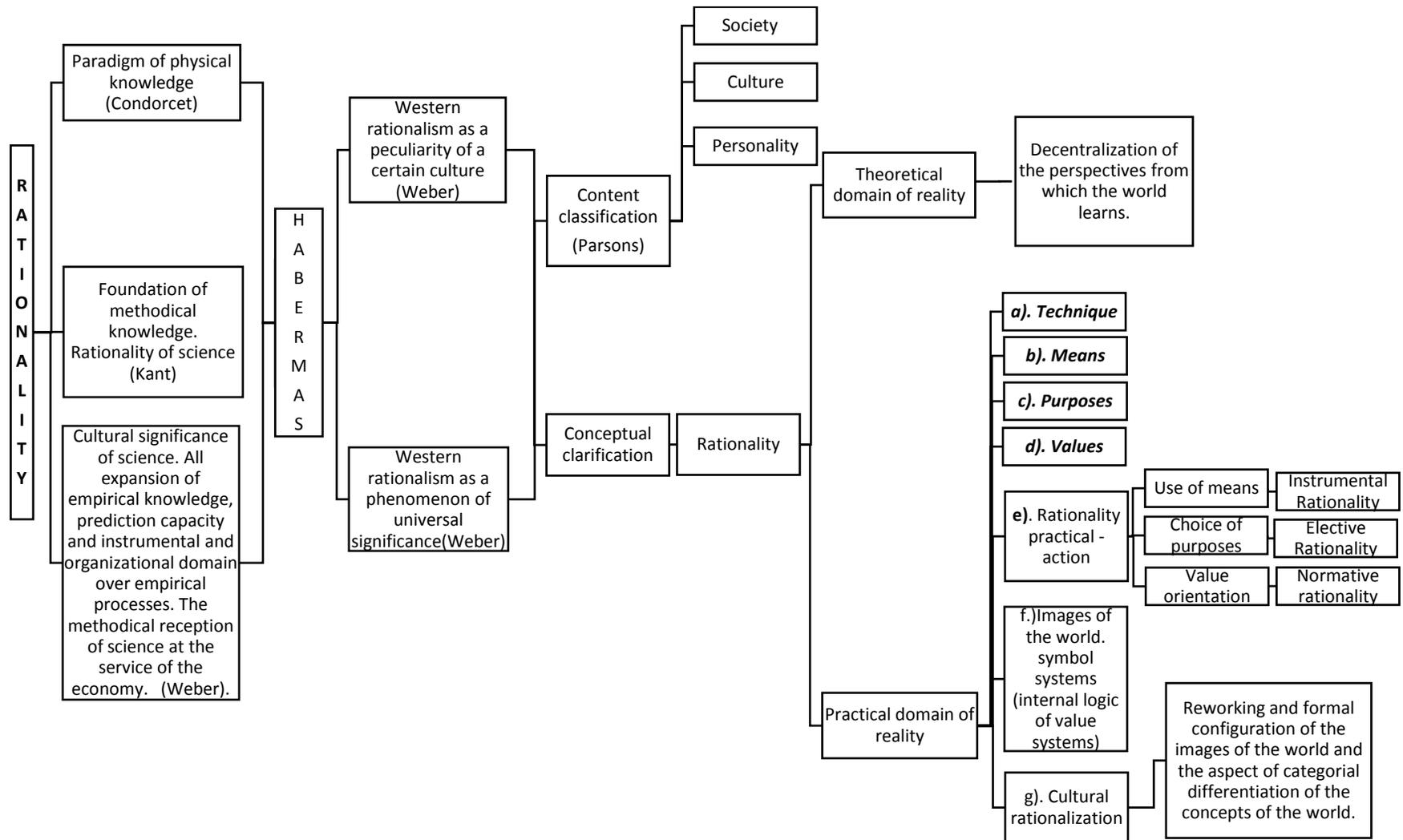
That is to say, the speaker has three pretensions of universal validity: a) truth constituted by the logic present in the objective world; b) correction (normative) organized in the linguistic understanding of the intersubjective world; and c) sincerity or truthfulness, which constitutes criticism in the subjective world. The theory of communicative action is an explanation of practice in the contexts of the world of life (intersubjective, objective and subjective), which is structured and organized with a specific and functional purpose from intersubjectivity. This characteristic is raised by Habermas (1981), as a practice that allows social actors to reach consensus, establish criteria of truth, identify coherences and inconsistencies between the intersubjective, objective and subjective world, as well as allowing the validity of actions, product of speech acts Austin (1981) and Searle (1969).

In this sense, and assuming the interpretative perspective proposed by Max Weber, Habermas (1981) take up the ideas of *social rationalization* in the modern world making a deep and detailed critique of this concept and compares three specific positions of Marx, Horkeimer and Adorno, which were shared by Max Weber (Habermas, 1981:198). In this sense, Marx points to the social rationalization from the productive forces, from an empirical knowledge and the improvement of production techniques, qualification and organization, considering the efficiency of the available work force. Max Weber argues that the capitalist economy and the modern state as those subsystems of rational action, which are deployed in Western rationalism; it is here that Weber proposes the reification of social relations that stifle motivations and nourish life rationally; for Horkeimer and Adorno, from the Weberian perspective, and understanding the proposal of an automated instrumental reason, rationality is understood as the amalgam that occurs between the domination of nature, with the irrationality of some classes over others; "Thus the productive forces operate the stabilization of alienated production relations" (Habermas, 1981:199). Habermas observes that for these authors (Horkeimer, Adorno, Marx and Weber) what at the time the technique and science was emancipation now become a means of social repression. Thus, for Habermas, the relationship between social rationalization and the increase in the instrumental and strategic rationality of the contexts of action is contradictory. In the same way, he observes that a broad concept of rationality should be identified in the same plane of productive forces, something that does not happen, due to the minimal concept of action used by Marx, Weber, Horkeimer and Adorno. Habermas (1981) saying that this concept is not sufficiently complex enough:

To apprehend in social actions all the aspects which social rationalization can ignite [...] "the rationalization of the action orientations and the structures of the world of life is not the same as the increase and complexity in the systems of action".

Here, he questions and says that they are not the same, the categories of action with the systemic categories; likewise, thinking rationality as a paradigm of knowledge (Condorcet) and under the foundations of methodical knowledge and the rationality of science (Kant) up to the perspective of the cultural significance of science (Weber), leads Habermas to try build the topic of rationality starting from 1). The logic of the rationalization of the images of the world; trying to get a 2). Structural model of social rationalization (ethics from the Protestant ethic) and finally, propose the rationalization of law. For this research emphasis will be made on the first section in order to make an approach to understanding the processes of communicative interaction that allow us to construct an object (wasteland) product of intersubjectivity.

For the clarification of the first component, Habermas proposes that it is necessary to understand the phenomena of Western rationalism to go first to classification by content and secondly to conceptual clarification in order to understand if Western rationalism is inherent in a certain culture or it is a phenomenon of universal significance. Proposal that for the case that occupies us, would allow to understand if the processes of rationalism that are generated by social actors are subject to their peculiarities and are anchored to the culture of the community of the Rabanal wasteland or if the form of meaning and conceptual elaboration of the wasteland is constructed from some universal structures.



**Scheme 1.** Interpretation of the phenomenon of Western rationalism  
 (Source: Educational Languages Research Group -LEEN.)  
 Date: September 2017

As seen in the scheme 1. Access to the problem of rationality, is addressed by Habermas(1981) from the paradigm of physical knowledge (assuming the postulates of Condorcet); the foundations of methodical knowledge and the rationality of science (proposed by Kant) and the cultural significance of science that implies the expansion of empirical knowledge, the ability to predict and the instrumental and organizational domain over empirical processes (according to the postulates of Weber). In this sense, Habermas analyzes two positions on the one hand if Western rationalism is typical of a culture and on the other hand observes whether Western rationalism is a phenomenon of universal significance. In this discussion he states that there are two ways to account for the particularity or universality of Western rationalism: one is the classification of contents, and the other is conceptual clarification. Facing the first Habermas (1981) proposes that a classification of content should be given from the social, cultural and individual (assume as a personality) and for the second should clarify the concept of rationality for which proposes two outputs one theoretical and one practical. Facing the theoretical Habermas proposes to assume a *decentration* posture (Piaget) which will allow us to move from the particularity to universality. In relation to the practical domain to understand rationality, Habermas proposes to consider the following aspects: a). Technique, b). Means, c). Purposes, d) values, e) Practical-action rationality f) the image of the world as symbol systems, and g) cultural rationality. In this sense, classifies the use of the media as the way to establish instrumental rationality; the choice of purposes, such as elective rationality; and the orientation of values as normative rationality. In the face of cultural rationalization Habermas defines that this is given by the formal re-elaboration and configuration of the images of the world and the aspect of categorial differentiation of the concepts of the world.

Under this perspective, communicative interaction understood as a product of communicative action makes sense.

## 2. ACTION AND COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION

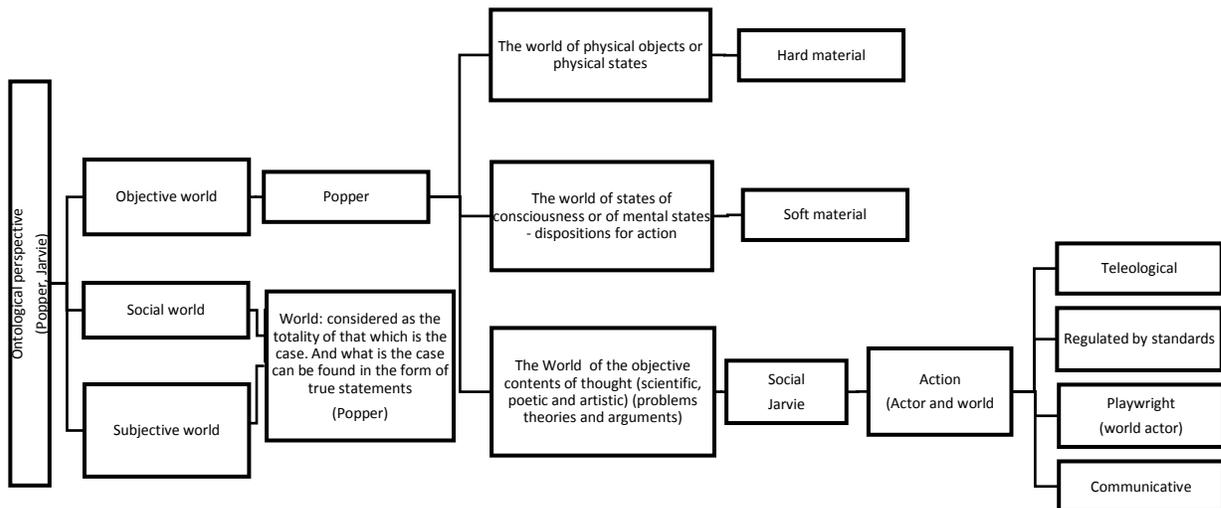
To understand the concept of action Habermas proposes to understand it within rationality and from the sociological field. Faced with the first proposes that it be seen from the concept of communicative rationality in order to understand the concept of communicative action. In this aspect points out that the linguistic understanding refers to a rationally motivated agreement reached among the participants, which is measured by claims of validity susceptible to criticism and that these manifestations or emissions are symbolic and in this sense proposes to analyze how the actors (inhabitants of the Rabanal wasteland) refer to something in the world (Rabanal Wasteland). Thus the concept of *communicative rationality* (Habermas, 1981:110) requires looking at the validity forms of discursive performance; along with the relationships that participants engage with the world through communicative action and with which they expect their linguistic manifestations to be valid. In this aspect Habermas emphasizes the fact of the need for *decentration* that must be made by the actors to convert the world view into a process of evolution of the images of the world. Thus, "bases the concepts of action from ontology" (Habermas, 1981:111) . In his dialogue with Popper, Habermas adopts a reflective attitude towards the third world (the world of science, arts and poetics) and characterizes it as an autonomous world of higher level that refers to the truth and above all that has susceptible problems of investigation; that this (third) world is related to the first one inasmuch as its theories, problems and arguments allow it to describe and explain its processes. Thus, Habermas "places in the middle of the two the world of the subjective spirit, the acts of knowledge and action"(1981). At this point, it is necessary to highlight that Habermas (1981) realizes that there are non-cognitive elements of culture that are marginalized from this appropriation made by the third world in front of the first but that it is precisely these non-cognitive elements of culture that allow and support a sociological theory of action. And so concludes that social actions are guided by cultural values, however, that these do not always bear any relation to the truth.

It is questioned if these non-cognitive elements should be denied or on the contrary they would be included and classified within the third world. To give a solution, Weber accepts the second way and proposes that the non-cognitive elements constitute spheres of validity and says that just as the legal elements can be analyzed from normative rectitude and art from authenticity and beauty, for Max Weber, the non-cognitive elements of culture and cultural tradition as a whole can be classified and validated as knowledge that develop spheres of value and systems of special knowledge. In this way, he links these non-cognitive elements with the third world and assigns to it the responsibility of evaluating the components of the culture as well as the instrumental cognitive ones. In this sense, he poses a problem from the given language that must be

confronted, the meaning of "validity" and "knowing" on the basis that they cannot correspond in the same way as the theories and statements "cultural values do not fulfill an expository function" (Habermas, 1981:121).

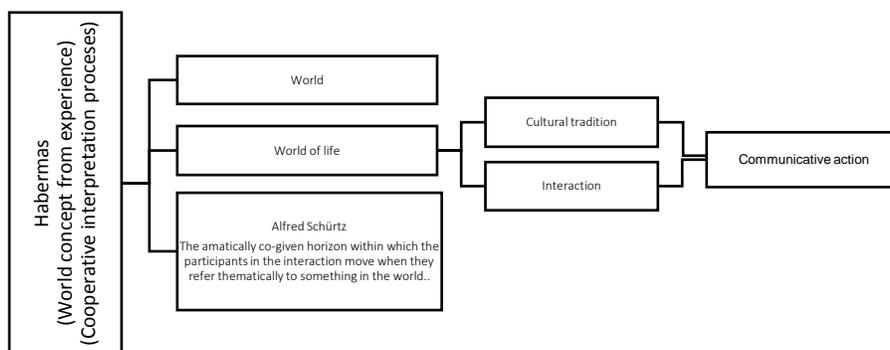
Graphing the above, we can show according to the scheme 2. that from the ontological perspective Habermas relies on the postulates of Popper and Jarvie to account for the objective, subjective and intersubjective relationships that allow us to understand the communicative action which would be given both by the cognitive elements that are the product of the investigation, the subjective product of the interaction and the objectives as a result of the interpretation and analysis that the first two mentioned.

Thus, Habermas affirms that "in choosing a certain sociological concept of action we commit ourselves with certain ontological presuppositions" (Habermas, 1981:122).



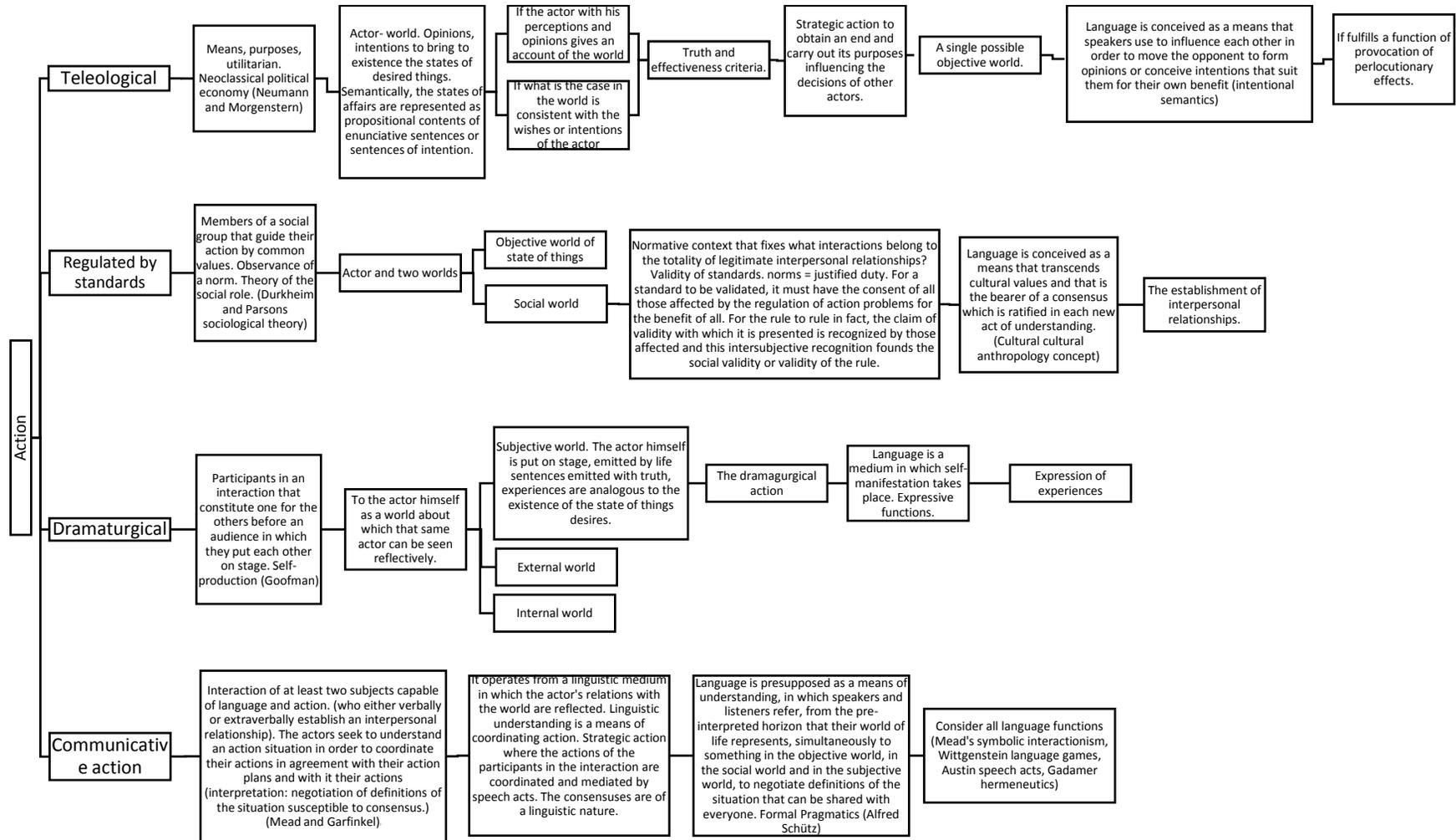
**Scheme 2.** Ontological perspective of the action  
(Source: Educational Languages Research Group -LEEN.)  
Date: September 2017

Thus, Habermas summarizes that the communicative action would be given by the cultural tradition and the interaction that arise from the world of life; understanding this as the scenario in which cooperative processes of interpretation take place and experience is assumed as an element that allows us to define or assume a world concept (see diagram 3.). For this research the concept of Alfred Schütz was assumed, which states that the world of life is an "amatically co-given horizon, within which the participants interact when they refer thematically to something in the world" (Habermas, 1981:119)



**Scheme 3.** Concept of the world from experience  
(Source: Educational Languages Research Group -LEEN)  
Date: September 2017

As it was previously stated, Habermas reduces and classifies the action concepts used in sociology in four: teleological action, action regulated by norms, dramaturgical action and communicative action. As seen in the diagram 4. The communicative action includes both the independent actions and the reflective relationships that the actor keeps with the world in the processes of understanding. In this sense, Habermas characterizes speech acts in order to define the concept of communicative action. He assumes that in keeping speech acts a propositional content, offering an interpersonal relationship and generating an intention of the speaker, it would be clear that the concept of communicative action falls short if one looks from the analytical philosophy of language given that "linguistic conventions are apprehended from the conceptual perspective of the follow-up of a rule, and they are explained by means of a concept of intention of the action reduced to conscience of rule" (Habermas, 1981:139). Therefore, Habermas raises the "triple relationship of communicative action with the world" (Habermas, 1981:139) (propositional content, interpersonal relationship, speaker's relationship). In this way, Habermas (1981) summarizes that action is the symbolic manifestation in which the actor (teleological, regulated by norms, dramaturgical) enters into relationship with a world (See Scheme 4.).



**Scheme 4.** Classification of the action.  
(Source: Educational Languages Research Group -LEEN.)  
Date: September 2017

Likewise, it distinguishes between primitive actions and complex actions affirming that this is done through "the execution of a different action; that to differences of that one cannot be executed by means of another action" (Habermas, 1981:141), aspect this considered by Habermas like false in reason that the actions are realized by means of movements. The actor correlates these movements in such a sense that correalization means that the end of the actor is the execution of a plan of action and not of the corporal movements with whose help he performs the actions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

For the research, the methodology of Investigation-Action was taken, whose approaches allow a communicative and transformative output as Hoyos refers:

"Generate a participatory process capable of critically relating the world of life of the participants, their contemporaries, the stories they know and their own, based on the structures of human communication, which lead to the reconstruction of the meaning of what is intended to be interpreted as a content and a message from someone, from a culture, from a certain era, worthy of being interpreted and criticized" (Hoyos & Uribe, 1987:7)

In this regard, a six-month fieldwork was carried out, during which the corpus was compiled and the information systematized. Semistructured interviews were conducted around work tables, forums and public hearings interposed by the inhabitants in favor of the defense of the wasteland territory, which yielded a total of approximately thirty hours of recording in which an exhaustive review was made to select fragments of corpus in relation to the general classification of the categories of analysis.

This research was assumed from an "interpretive perspective" (Macías, 2003) This research was assumed from an "interpretive perspective" understanding that the role of language is essential to interpret the meaning, which is generated by the social interrelations of man, with himself, with the rest and with the world. Thus a qualitative approach will favor the understanding of the social contexts where the actions take place that, for that matter, was Rabanal Wasteland, the actors and their relations with the world. This approach helped to refine the questions according to the data collection, observations and descriptions that were made in the context. This flexible process favored the interpretation between the theory of communicative action and the research question, for which several answers were found. Thus, the fundamental objective was to analyze the construction of the Wasteland concept through communicative interaction. Field observations were made, daily activities were systematized, the natural environment was observed and the linguistic registers generated in forums, interviews and spontaneous conversations were made with social leaders, peasants, academics and environmentalists interested in the Rabanal Wasteland. The population was integrated by the inhabitants of the Massif Rabanal Wasteland, who were located in the geographic space corresponding to the municipality of Ventaquemada Boyacá; which is a part of the total extent of the wasteland. The type of sampling was intentional or selective, and was used because of the representative cases of the population studied. The strategy used was "snowball" (Rojas, 2006), which allowed identifying a key informant, and this identified another, whom to interview, and so on. It is understood to be key informant to the person who is recognized with more experience on the subject of analysis and who at a given moment could deliver relevant information on the perspectives of the wasteland; In this regard, 33 informants were registered, including professors, civil authorities, natural leaders and legal representatives of different organizations.

Due to the characteristics and techniques used, some ethical aspects were taken into account because of the social and scientific value, in such a way that it was sought to improve the living conditions or well-being of the community through awareness in the face of the consensus and agreements in relation to the Rabanal wasteland. In this sense, the informants were not exposed to any risk or physical or psychological aggression. This investigation did not have any personal benefit or contribute to the acquisition of private or public pecuniary resources. In relation to scientific validity, this research assumed the description of the corpus based on the qualitative data analysis tool Nvivo 11 pro, under the institutional license obtained by the Universidad pedagógica y tecnológica de Colombia and implemented by the discourse analysis laboratory of the doctorate in language and culture. The corpus was classified, transcribed and uploaded to the Nvivo 11 pro program. This procedure yielded inputs on high, medium and low frequencies; word trees, cloud marks,

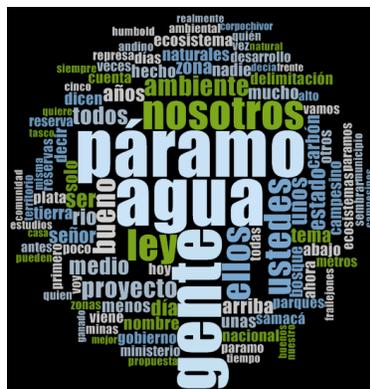
cluster analysis, identification of lexical units and relationship diagrams among others. With these data, a process of qualitative analysis and interpretation was carried out, which allowed to recognize the phenomenon for the construction of the wasteland concept, together with the social actions product of the communicative interactions carried out by the actors. Likewise, this research considered the "ethical aspects for qualitative research" (González, M. 2002). informed consent in order to verify that the actors participated in the research, without their values, interests and preferences being attacked. Likewise, their participation was voluntary and with sufficient knowledge about the project in relation to the purpose, risks, benefits and alternatives of the research.

#### 4. RESULTS

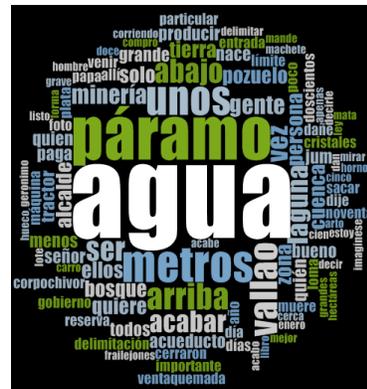
The theory of communicative action allowed elucidating and understanding the social processes that were generated, with the intermediation of language. Each of the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions of the social actors that participated in this investigation were assumed as events given with the sole intention of making themselves understood in the face of the problem caused by the mining, agricultural invasions in the wasteland and with the desire to coordinate activities that mitigate the progressive destruction of this ecological niche. These communicatively coordinated activities were on the one hand communicative activities such as dialogues, forums, interviews among others, and on the other by non-communicative actions such as mining, deforestation, increased agricultural and livestock activities among others; which allowed to understand that if the truth can only be constituted by the logic present in the objective world, it would be necessary to observe the general environmental law 99 of 1993 of Colombia, which reads that: "The areas of wastelands, sub-wastelands, the births of water and aquifer recharge zones will be subject to special protection"<sup>2</sup>, this aspect is not constituted under the norm of the objective world and in that sense, what is established normatively in the intersubjective world generates ambiguous and complex organizational dynamics, which as observed in the narratives generated by the actors, each assumes different perspectives of linguistic understanding in front of the wasteland; an example that accounts for this second validity claim, is described in the following cloud markers: in number 1. Linguistic understanding is organized from the environmental, the normative, the institutional, centralized and controlled. This means that, compared to the cloud mark number 2. Regarding the transcription of corpus of the narratives of the inhabitants of the Rabanal wasteland, the understanding is organized from the territory, as a physical and tangible concept that morphologically semanticizes in *wasteland* (see cloud mark 2), next to this concept is that of *water*, as a paradigmatic synonym of the concept of wasteland. That is to say, the intersubjective world that is created from the law and from the speech, in front of the same territory, is contrastive and antonym.



**Image 1:** Colombia (law 99 of 1993).  
Date: August 2017.



**Image 2.** Conversations and interviews of the inhabitants of the Massif Rabanal Wasteland.  
Date: August 2017.



**Image 3.** Environmental experts in the field.  
Date: August 2017

<sup>2</sup> General Environmental Law of Colombia. (Congress of Colombia, 1993), Article 1, Numeral 4.

And in front of the third validity pretension, related to the sincerity and truthfulness that is constructed from the critic in the subjective world, it is observed in the same way, that as institutions (law, society and academia) are created conditions that imply propositions of truth or sincerity in contexts with specific structures and purposes, closed and functional only from the intersubjectivities that are established within each of them. But, the results of the analysis show that it is necessary for social and institutional actors to reach consensus and establish criteria of truth that allow coherence between the objective, subjective and intersubjective world, this would favor greater validity of the actions, with speech acts, that comply with its content, illocutionary and perlocutionary and that each propositional content generates conditions of sincerity and truthfulness.

For the above, and in reference to the social rationalization in the modern world, this research showed, as Marx says, that the law aims at the social rationalization from the productive forces and that is why next to the concept of wasteland are semantic expressions such as sustainability, corporations, renewable resources among others that point more to a knowledge from the techniques of production, qualification and organization (see graph 1.). Likewise, if the narrative is observed from the empirical knowledge of the inhabitants, a tendency to the capitalist and productive economy is recognized. Not far away are the narratives from the academy that advocate maintaining the water resource as a source for sustaining life (see cloud mark 3.).

The same results were found in the conglomerates and branched maps elaborated from these three macro narrative structures (Law, society and academia). An additional result found in clusters 1-3 is the propositional identification of the wasteland concept from the reification (Weber) and from this communicative action an automated instrumental reason of domination of the Rabanal wasteland is generated from the norm and from the irrationality of some communities over others, with the purpose of generating either the displacement of the peasants, the invasion of the territory with productive activities and in the last forms of social repression that the communities demand of the intersubjective behaviors that imply the modification of their contexts of action. With these results, we observe the contradiction that exists between the social rationalization established by the inhabitants, as actors of the Rabanal wasteland; against the increase of instrumental rationality established by normative and scientific actors.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, as initially stated, it can be concluded that the conceptual elaboration of the wasteland is constructed through universal structures and that therefore Western rationalism is well anchored and rooted in this territory that it could be understood that the idea of wasteland as reification acquires a universal meaning, given the idea of water as a renewable resource. Thus, physical knowledge is not on a par with methodical knowledge or cultural significance or how the theoretical domain of reality, given by the norm or academia can be summarized, is not on par with the practical domain of reality established by the population.

Similarly, reviewing the perspectives of apprehension of the world (law, inhabitants, academics and environmentalists) shows that the theoretical domain that is proposed from the wasteland, generates three categories that highlight such as: environment, mean and resource. That is to say, the access to the problem of the wasteland is assumed from an instrumental rationality, where the aims, the technique and the means are marked but not the values. In this sense, empirical knowledge is emphasized in order to dominate, organize and control the territory. It is here, where particular positions are observed that do not allow the "decentration (Piaget)" (Habermas, 1981:141) to reach agreements and establish a cultural rationality. (See map branched 1.)

Env.	Env.	Nat.	Renew.	Jurisd.	Pres.	Us		Sust.	Munic.	Be		Counc.	Syst.
				Auton.	They	Auton.	Proj.	Cons	You	Nat		Good	State
Mean.	Law	Water	People	Region	Gov.	Mini.	Others	Exec.	Spec.	Prog.		Repre	Years
						Some	Days	Up	Zone	Acc.	Fond	Invest.	Who
Res.	Art.	Wast.	Ent.	Terr.	Activ.	Dep.	Inv.	Case	Princ.	Terr.	Comp.	Def	Ecos.
				Manag.	Use	All	Lic	Areas	Metros	Dir.	Ecos.	Material	Down
Res.	Art.	Corp.	Func	Par.	Proj	Use	Minus	Day	River	Agree m	Mun	Others	reserve
						Area	Park	Stud.	Mr.	Autho r	Nat	Land	all
								Norm	Zones	Conf.	Org.		

**Branched map1:** cross-transcription of the corpus between law-inhabitants and academics and environmentalists experts in the subject. (Source: Languages Research Group -LEEN)  
Date: September 2017

The cultural rationalization, defined by Habermas, allows the re-elaboration and formal configurations of the images of the world and the aspect of categorial differentiation of the concepts of the world. In this sense, this research showed that the Wasteland images were configured from subjective linguistic resources; establishing differential categories based on instrumental reason. Consistent with these ideas, it was observed that from the identification of categories: ecological, social, economic and institutional policy were found subcategories.

Categories	Sub Categories
Ecological	Water (s), Soil (s) (subsoil), air, wetlands, native plants, environment, (environmental (s)) wasteland, nature, fauna, flora, atmosphere, ecosystem
Social	Preservation, conservation, reforestation, recycling, pollution, sacred, education
Economic	Agriculture, mining, livestock, employment, income,
Institutional policy	Crime, norms, rights, politics, law (s) legal, (legality, legally), governmental environmental management participation (s), community (ies), Regulations, Legal (legal)

**Table 1:** categories of analysis. (Source: Languages Research Group -LEEN)  
Date: September 2017

It is not surprising in this part of the discussion, to find that in the ecological category, the semantic representations are given to the objective and phenomenological world, hence, once the narratives issued by the inhabitants are analyzed, the law and the academy gives a process of retentivity towards the flora, the atmosphere, the ecosystem, the plant, the soils, the water as isolated objects of the social world and resignified only with a particular interest. In relation to the economic category, the asemantic force is added to the

economic category, in such a way that it is expected to preserve, conserve, reforest, recycle only to the extent that social actions involving agriculture, mining, employment can be favored at the same time and income. These forms of rationalization, which must be coordinated and consensual, show that there are irrational, dismembered and separated actions in front of the same object that is the wasteland. Not far from this situation is the institutional policy, which as a normative action tends to instrumental rationality, control and domain of the territory.

IR1: Of course, there are only the ones that count, is the only thing that counts is that?

IC1: the money, the money that you are going to win and is that, today is ruling us, not the president, not the Senate, not the constitution, not the laws, the money is ruling us, and I already said that on the network, that's it, today the one that governs us is the money

IR1: yes

IC1: no more

IR1: Of course, no, that's complicated

IC1: and unfortunately the Colombian people have not wanted more, they come and offer the mayor a ticket, to the treasurer, to the planning

IR1: and when the wasteland is over there, what will they do, what will the people do?

IC1: they will think about bringing water from another side, I do not know what the hell, there is not the first machine that makes water.

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