political things

Catalogue

Plazas, centralized response to countries, public spaces in other socialist former institutions of importance different. For unlike the Plaza de Armas (nationalized after '59) occupying the center of the Revolution.


Gainesville, FL. see: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE482

José Alvarez, 2004, "The barbacoas product of productivity and party nonproductive and un-inhabited illegal settlements, the spatial policies of the Revolutionary Police assigned frowned upon (R. Castro 1996). In accordance to some message to the people, These establishments police raided only certain according to some

These conditions alternative even at prices high in the same time, food at the agricultural available through the ration booklet at (nationalized after'59)

1000 scholarships for Pakistani by January 2007 Medicina (1999) Escuela Latino Americana de

with the sale of agricultural and meat products."

These conditions alternative even at prices high in the same time, food at the agricultural available through the ration booklet at (nationalized after'59)
Architecture of the Margins

The discourse seeking its role in complexity

Havana is a significant experience, to the smallest detail. From an architectural perspective, it would be defined challenging, if not shocking. We talk about a city which has been the capital to “socialist republic”, “liberal democracy” and “Spanish colony” respectively. This city is a manifestation of complexity, with its socialist condition, capitalist heritage and spatial transformation it has been experiencing. “Havana is an anomaly in contemporary urban history.” It leaves the architect face to face with chaos, and renders the rational tools of design discourses useless in its irrationality. The understanding of the order behind this chaos would require new tools; new ways of looking at a city.

Similar issues are addressed by several theoreticians, such as Tafuri or Lefebvre, back in the 70’s, in reference to complexity of 19th and 20th century metropolises. The urban complexities of 21st century could be defined as more advanced if cases like Istanbul, Caracas, Havana are considered. However, the basic principles defined by those 40 year-old theories, and their criticisms of design practices’ intercourse with such complexities, still seem valid, even inspiring, today. In the light of these approaches, it seems like architecture, at the moment, should be concerned with the question of how to intervene in such complexities. In this endeavour, a wider vision seems to be vital for architecture. To be able to understand the complexity of today’s city, the notion of “space” should be put into question in the first place, since it is the main occupation of the discourse. And since an unoccupied space is not a concern for architecture, the “occupiers” of the city should be put into question together with it: Society.

Society & Space

“Society is constituted spatially, and space is constituted socially…”

Thinking of society as the domain in which everything else could be defined, as Durkheim explains, the same counts for space. No such association could be defined without the space they constitute. Since a society is based on the association of individuals living together, the necessities of organization, regulation, production, etc. emerge inevitably. Therefore, society cannot be grasped without the spheres of politics and economy, since they enable living together in the first place. Consequently, the “city” find its definition as the space mediations between these spheres take place. Society, politics, economy and the city are such conceptions which are indefinable without each other, simply

“Scientific and mathematical chaos: Chaotic systems are systems that look random but aren’t. They are actually deterministic systems (predictable if you have enough information) governed by physical laws, that are very difficult to predict accurately.”

(www.wikipedia.org, retrieved on 27.01.2009)

1 Roberto Segre and others, Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis, 314.
Havana Politics

“Mapping” the politics in space

Inspired from the political character of Havana, this study explores the influence between the political sphere and the city space.

1. Collection
The mapping begins with the collection of political “things” encountered in Havana. A political thing would be defined as follows:
Any “thing” that renders a political character in the space occupied / politicizing the space occupied / constitute a link between the space and politics (directly or indirectly).

The collection is involves various material (notes, sketches, photographs, text) from a diversity of sources (the visit to Havana, books, internet). The mapping of the relationships between these diverse materials, and the “meanings” it would reveal, aims to “get a grip” on the complexity of the phenomenon.

2. Catalogue
The catalogue aims to “map” the relationships between the collected “things”. The categorization is based on the attributes experienced/observed at first sight:
FORM, SCALE, TIME-SPAN, IDEOLOGY, ACTOR.

The catalogue is constructed in three stages:
1. categorization based on “form” and “scale”
2. notating the interrelations between “forms”
3. categorization based on “actors”
“Since the world expressed by the total system of concepts is the world as society represents it to itself, only society can furnish the generalized notions according to which such a world must be represented.... Since the universe exists only in so far as it is thought, and since it can be thought totally only by society itself, it takes its place within society, becomes an element to its inner life, and society may thus be seen as that total genus beyond which nothing else exists. The very concept of totality is but the abstract form of the concept of society: that whole which includes all things, that supreme class under which all other classes must be subsumed.”

— Emile Durkheim

3 (in reference to Weber’s explanation of the city as a phenomenon of Western civilization in its origin)

“...it was only in the Western world that two simultaneous processes occurred that allow a population settlement to be properly described as a city: the market (and the regulations of the politics of the urban economy) and the politico-administrative authority that governed the residents of the city, at the same time guaranteeing them (or at least some of them) certain rights relative to their political destiny.”


Politics’ Influence in Space

“Today the state and its bureaucratic and political apparatuses intervene continually in space, and make use of space in its instrumental aspect in order to intervene at all levels and through every agency of the economic realm. Consequently, (global) social practice and political practice tend to join forces in spatial practice, so achieving a certain cohesiveness if not a logical coherence.”

Considering politics as one of the major aspects in the complexity of contemporary cities, the relationship between politics and space should be inquired intensively. National monuments, propaganda images, social housing developments, public spaces, social services and etc. can exemplify some instances in which these two spheres interact. This phenomenon, requires an understanding of the notions “ideology” and “utopia”. Manfredo Tafuri explains the influence of these notions in space with ideology’s rendering itself useless by capitalist development in 19th century, and transforming itself into utopia; “the construction of the future”: “This revision of ideology was thus a project for establishing the dominion of a realized ideology over the forms of development”

National monuments, propaganda images, social housing developments, public spaces, social services, etc. would be explained as this effort of integration with the “forms of development” from the perspective of architecture. On the other hand, as Henri Lefebvre explains, from the perspective of the state, they are means of manifestation of the state authority in space. Accordingly, the influence of politics in space unfolds as the association of the politics with the state authority (propaganda, monuments, social services), with its regulatory and organizational mechanisms (social housings, public spaces, planning codes), and with production and exchange mechanisms (shopping centers, business districts, land speculation, industrial zones) examined deeper.

The Role of Architecture

The production of space by urban societies, takes place in the city. Therefore architecture today seeks its definition in this context. As society “progress”, or rather transforms to be critical, architecture transforms with it. Tafuri explores this process the discourse has been experiencing in detail, and defines it as a “drama” that condemns architecture to “sublime uselessness”. In regard to the “progress” of society, he explains: “What is of interest here is the precise identification of those tasks which capitalist development has taken away from architecture.” and he continues “Paradoxically, the new tasks given to architecture are something besides or beyond architecture.” However, it seems fair to suggest an alternative interpretation of this “end of the discipline” rather as an ongoing “transformation” in which architecture seeks a redefinition, or reestablishment of its role as a discipline.

Tafuri explains this transformation process as follows:

“But architecture, at least as traditionally conceived, is a stable structure, which gives form to permanent values and consolidates urban mor-
The UF/IFAS Florida Cooperative Extension Service helped establish other outlets for the agricultural food at the agricultural government stores (Alvarez, 2004). At the former COCA-COLA company, the Havana Exhibition (2002) of unquestionable prestige in Cuba.

In addition, the introduced neighborhood eateries of Evil" list (2002), and creating free Cuban Center for Genetic Reform 1960) and transport the fighters of the Cuban Theatre Yara (1947).

However, the Cuban-bred operators were making too much money in the Havana metropolitan area. Allegedly, these establishments were short lived. In February 1994, Gainesville, FL. see: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE482

Rationing System, Overview of Cuba's Food In 1993, and creating free commercial markets was becoming an embarrassment to the agricultural food at the agricultural government stores (Alvarez, 2004).

All these events were an embarrassment to the agricultural food at the agricultural government stores (Alvarez, 2004).

However, these establishments were short lived. In February 1994, Gainesville, FL. see: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE482

In 1993, and creating free commercial markets was becoming an embarrassment to the agricultural food at the agricultural government stores (Alvarez, 2004).
Those wishing to give up this traditional conception and bind architecture instead to the destiny of the city, had only to regard the city as the specific place of technological production—and the city itself as a technological product—thus reducing architecture to a mere link in the production chain." The new role for the architect in this process emerges with “the necessity of Taylorizing building production”: “The real unity of the production cycle having been identified in the city, the only suitable role for the architect was as organizer of that cycle.”

Capitalism’s success in producing its own spaces is emphasized in the works of both Lefebvre and Tafuri. It would be suggested here, this is also due to architecture’s success in integrating its own role to the mechanisms of capitalist development. What we face today is an hegemony of the economic system of capitalism over the role of architectural discipline. Therefore it would not be possible to define this role out of political and economical spheres.

The modernist movement in their practice of this new role, defined its ideology in “the task of unifying the subject and the object of production”: ideology’s transformation into “capitalistic-industrial utopia”. Bauhaus, Le Corbusier or Ernst May in Das Neue Frankfurt could be given as significant examples of this condition. “This despite the fact that its advent was hailed as a revolution - even as the anti-bourgeois revolution in architecture! The Bauhaus, just like Le Corbusier, expressed (formulated and met) the architectural requirements of state capitalism; these differed little, in point of fact, from the requirements of state socialism, as identified during the same period by the Russian constructivists.” The reorganization of capital internationally on the one hand, and the launch of the First Five-Year Plan in Russia on the other, entrenched the new role of architecture in the first half of the 20th century, both for the modernists and constructivists.

Although the direction of the argument here seems to be developed from a perspective focused more on the “capitalist development” of the society, and its influence over the discipline of architecture, such analyses emphasizes the similarities between socialism and capitalism, rather than isolating them. Lefebvre emphasizes the equivocality of such concepts of society; “capitalist”, “socialist” or “communist”, concerned with the difficulty of defining ‘society’ in the first place; thus the irrelevancy of considering any alternative society with isolation of these concepts. Socialist and capitalist systems are intertwined in their nature, and therefore inexplicable without their coexistence.

This statement becomes more evident in architectural sphere regarding the influence between modernist and constructivist movements. However, socialist space(society) proves its incapability in sustaining itself as an alternative to the capitalist one as it fades away in time. “New ideas (socialism, for instance), though not without force, have difficulty generating their own space...”
3. Analysis
The findings of the catalogue are as follows:
• a political “thing” is possible to be identified in multiple forms; as “place”, “object” and “image” at the same time.
• certain actors prefer certain scales and certain forms.
• certain possibilities for citizens to express themselves in Havana are identified
• citizens’ means of representation in space differs widely in terms of accessibility and frequency (quantity) from the state authority.

4. Keywords
At this stage the “political meanings” of the catalogued things are mapped/notated with words. In the end a list of “keywords” is obtained expressing how the “political characters” are constituted in space.

The relationships between them are sought further with the aim to identify the “actions” politicizing space.

5. Case Analyses
Several cases, identified previously in the stages of collection and catalogue, are analyzed with the keywords to clarify the definitions of identified actions.

Consequently, typography is utilized in these analyses to incorporate the words with space. A diversity of visual techniques required due to the differing characteristics of the cases.
explores this “failure” further in his analysis with an examination of the political strategies followed in the Soviet model. He argues, political organizations’ ignorance of space is the reason behind this, since they were not concerned with the consequences of the speeded-up “capitalist process of accumulation” in space, and rather relied “on deliberately privileged ‘strong points’ - on large-scale enterprises and cities”. The stimulation of “uneven growth” left the peripheral areas “abandoned to stagnation and (relative) backwardness, ...oppressed, controlled and exploited.”

On the other hand, the “Chinese road to socialism” is developed as a model concerned for the “production in space” together with the “production of space”. This strategy incorporates economic growth together with the “development and enrichment of social relationships” which would diminish uneven growth and lead to the “dissolution” of the conflicts between the urban and the rural with transforming them both, avoiding their “mutual destruction”. According to Lefebvre, the Chinese model proves “the theory of space is capable of accounting for revolutionary experience worldwide.”

In the cases of USSR and China, political organizations’ concern of space, either ignorance or acknowledgment, seems possible to provide an understanding of failure or success of these societies in sustaining themselves. In the case of capitalism however, political organizations’ economical concerns directly involve architecture, since its role is defined in those mechanisms. These conditions would be interpreted as, in capitalist politics there is inevitably a major concern for the production of space.

Politics’ Influence in Havana
To understand the complexity of Havana, it should be compared with capitalist and socialist development models discussed before, taking into consideration both their differences and similarities. For that purpose, it is required to acknowledge the sociopolitical transformations this place has been undergoing since colonial times. The post-colonial character of this socialist capital, as well as the post-revolutionary one, lies behind the complexity of its urbanization process.

The period between independence (1902) and revolution (1959) reveals the contradictory character of urbanization process not only in Cuba but also in other Latin American countries after independence is won:
“The contradiction between national independence, legally given substance through the existence of a national state, and economic dependence on the capitalism of the dominant countries gave rise to the stage of ’national dependence.’ ...Thus preindependence patrimony persisted after national autonomy had been won.”

Therefore, the way paved to revolution would be claimed to begin with the existence of the conditions of “national dependence” and “continuing patrimony” causing the stimulation of “uneven growth” in Cuba. The specific conditions of Latin

16 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 421-422.
17 Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “The City and Politics”, 170-171.
7. Tactics
The identified actions of politicizing space are defined as “spatial tactics” which might be exercised both by the authorities and citizens.

Recode
This manifold tactic can be defined as the strategy of reassociating the city to citizens by reusing the existing space for this purpose. This is achieved both by authorities and citizens as follows:
- renaming places
- placing images
- modifying the use/function of places
- modifying the space to define new places

Manifest
This is the most direct/explicit “tactic” in the context of Havana. Basically its achieved with the effect of “images” in space.

Authorities:
- Monuments
- Statues
- Government buildings
- Diplomatic buildings
- Propaganda

Citizens:
- Graffiti
- Personals

Neglect
This “tactic” would be described as the total of actions leading to the phenomenon of “decay” in Havana. Major reasons behind this can be listed as follows:
- Economic incapabilities
- Decentralization policies
- Polycentric development plans
- Manipulation of resources to periphery
- Suppression of the capitalist heritage
American urbanization of the period, gave way to the emergence of a new form of “opposition”, the guerilla, which developed a romantic attitude of rejection towards the city; a criticism of urban politics and their “lack of principles”.  

Consequently, “utopia” in revolutionary Cuba, is formed with an ideology of “morality”. In this aspect, the sudden transformation of Havana, the spatial revolution of the city after 1959, created new conflicts in this city of colonial and capitalist heritage. Differing from socialist examples, the policies of the revolutionary government influenced by economic factors, developed a “strategy” of re-associating the city to the citizens. For a revolutionary society surrounded with economical and political complications, it was an extensive strategy of beneﬁting the readily available resources; “reusing” the existing city.

This strategy of alternating the “meaning” of places, was achieved in multiple dimensions with keeping the basic principle same: “decode” a place into space, and “recode” it back as a place. This could be done with images, writings, renaming, functional or spatial modiﬁcations, etc.

The main factor behind such political actions would be explained with the lack of ﬁnancial (also institutional), resources for the production of a “new” space for the “new” society being constructed. Other than such policies, the “production of space” as the actual activity of building was limited to modest social housing programmes promoted by the state. However, the revolutionary Havana also beneﬁted from a fresh stock of incomplete projects initiated before the revolution by the local bourgeoisie and foreign investors, which are completed and transformed into their “new” uses with alternations in their programmes, or at least in their names, following the same strategy.

Such relations between politics and space would be claimed characteristic to Havana, taking the different nature of Cuban socialism into consideration. Compared to the Soviet model of accelerated accumulation of capital which drives the rapid growth in urban areas and exploits the rural ones, Cuban model of socialism might be thought more similar to the “Chinese road to socialism” in certain aspects. A policy of “decentralization” or “poly-centric development” has been followed for Havana since 1959, with the intention of overcoming the conﬂicts between the city and the countryside. This policy of decentralization might be explain by the economic paradigm in Cuba that was asserting the “suppression of the hegemony of capital” rather than the “elimination of the market”. Spatial consequences of these politics were signiﬁcant. Neglect of the capitalist and colonial heritage resulted in extensive decay of these buildings as in the rest of the city. Furthermore, informal developments such as “barbacoas” emerging as a result of the housing deﬁcit, occupied the colonial heritage suffering the worst form of decay. The contradiction of “shanties” in colonial houses creates confrontation in the city.
6. Tactics in Space Diagram

This diagram/drawing/writing is reconstruction of a generic section from Havana out of the identified “political meanings”. It is a “mapping” of forms, scales, actors and tactics in space.

The color range from blue to yellow demonstrates the actors, and therefore their level of expression in the city. This diagram demonstrates the integration of the phenomenon in space; its multiplicity of scale and form and the fields of action for state and citizens.
The collapse of USSR, increased this complexity further. The sudden shift in the economical paradigm of the city required new solutions by the government, which would be considered as “compromises” to capitalism. Individual initiatives regained their importance up to a level and had significant spatial consequences. New forms of places emerged in Havana, such as urban agriculture (parcelas), in house restaurants (paladares), in house hostels (casa particulares) and some other forms of touristic developments. These kind of emerging places, which “reuse” the existing ones, would be interpreted as the evidence of the state’s obligation to compromise to the spatial developments that could supply financial benefits to the system, and certain relief to the economical hardness of the period.26

These “emerging” places would be said to “generate” the space of the Cuban society under transformation (either the one tried to be constructed by the revolution or not), and they also demonstrate the possibilities for influencing the authority of state in Havana.

The Architect in Havana
Considering the redefinition of architecture’s role in the light of the previous discussion, it should be stated that the notion of “private property” is not the main concern regarding such a role, but it is rather the “capital” which constitutes the basis in any economic system.

Particularly because of this reason, architecture’s role is irrelevant in Havana: It is not possible to integrate itself in the production of the city neither via state or private capital. The current situation of the discipline would be summarized as follows: Architecture in Havana (most probably Cuba in general) has access to very limited national capital and restricted foreign capital (some restoration projects and some restricted foreign investments). Therefore the current validity of the discourse is minimal and consequently the exercise of the practice is restricted.

However, the “production of space” is still practiced actively in Havana, both by the state and the citizens. Current political paradigms give way to the possibilities for public initiatives to produce space with their own means under the toleration of the state. And these spaces are not necessarily “confirming” but possible to “challenge” the state hegemony in the city. Since any “role” architecture would take on cannot be without the “production of space” in a society, this field of influence between the “formal” and “informal” seems to be the right place to look for it in Havana...

Space’s Influence on Politics
“A paradox (...) is the fact that the political power which holds sway over ‘men’, though it dominates the space occupied by its ‘subjects’, does not control the causes and reasons that intersect within that space, each of which acts by and for itself.” Henri Lefebvre (emphasize added)

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26 Composed as an analysis of Segre, Azicri, unknown author of “Ingrown Disorders” and Premat’s works.
8. Margins

The margins would be explained as the emerging possibilities for the “production of space” within the system. They are defined with the compromises/tolerations by the authority.

Financial benefit
• gentrification
• commodification

“Gentrification” would be explained as the spatial consequences of compromises given by the state from its egalitarian policies for financial benefit. These political actions regarding the practice of tourism in general, provide significant input to the state’s resources and even though tolerated carefully they create confrontation in space. This is observed particularly in the case of colonial houses, which have been transformed into very dense multi-family residents after revolution and now certain amount of them being renovated to their “original” states with commercial policies: gentrified as touristic appeals.

In addition, practices as “Parcelas”, “Paladares”, “Casa Particulares” and some touristic places are other means of providing relief to the economic problems and therefore tolerated (under tight surveillance). Such compromises given to commodification and the development of private capital cause confrontation in the city.

The “situations” these margins emerge are identified as contradictory and cause confrontation in space. Such conditions constitute certain potential for stimulating transformation in the context of Havana: The dynamism of continuous modification process of existing places.

Self-maintenance
Certain practices are tolerated by the state, even they do not provide financial relief, but rather solve certain problems with informal initiative. The informal settlements of “barbacoas”, are tolerated, and also preserved, by the system due to the relief they provide on the housing deficit, beyond serious concerns about the living conditions, health and safety.

The contradictory consequences of such toleration is due to the decentralization policies of the state and also the expression of classes in a “classless society”. This creates confrontation between the historic and use value of the houses.
It would be in favor of the argument if the discussion is concluded back in a more general level. To understand how does these “margins” emerge and give possibility to architecture to find its role in the complexity of today’s society (the city), it should be inquired how space is capable of influencing politics.

This begins where the politics end. As soon space is “appropriated” it is beyond the control of any authority. Appropriation is the “synergy” between users and space: the citizens and the city. If political organizations are successful in producing the space in coherence with the needs of society, this synergy works together with the system and advances it (capitalism). However, if political organizations fail in producing the space in coherence with the needs of society, this synergy runs against the system as a powerful form of opposition and challenges it (Soviet socialism).

In the case of capitalist space, such coherence is achieved with the system’s sophisticated ability in overcoming the contradictions in space, at least covering them up. In Havana on the other hand, the system is not able to cover-up such contradictions in space (even neglects them). The synergy created by appropriation of the space in Havana challenges the state’s hegemony, with “barbacoas”, “parcelas”, “paladares”, and “casa particulares”, pushing the system to compromise. This leads to confrontation in space. The contradictions created by tourism (emergence of classes in a classless society and its expressions in space) stimulates this confrontation even further. In the complexity of Havana, in between these contradictions and confrontations in space, this “challenge” is the most concrete potential for any transformation, if not a resolution.

Under such circumstances, the architect needs to learn again. This condition is not only valid in Havana but also in other places of complexity. Architecture needs to transform, adapt itself into its new habitat; it needs to evolve. It needs to develop new tools, new strategies that can operate in this new habitat of complexities.

This requires a conception of space freed from its constraints, and accordingly a new approach to the city of today, free from the old habits of “stabilization” and “solving problems” but rather producing the spaces of contradiction to create confrontation in space; stimulate change. Such an approach to the practice of space, would then reveal the “potential” in the complexity of the city; the potential to transform itself.

In Havana, the constraints of the system defines the “margins” in which the architect can seek the proper “tools” to operate in this complexity. Intervening from these margins, architecture can produce spaces which can be both tolerated by the authority and appropriated by the citizens: Seeking its role inbetween the formal and informal production of space.

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27 Parallel to the notion of “trial by space”. Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 416-417.

28 Both Tafuri and Lefebvre seem to address directions similar to this one, although differing in certain aspects, but they do not seem to associate this role to architecture directly.
HYPOTHESIS

- the phenomenon is integrated in space in a multiplicity of scale and form

- smaller scales are more effective both for state and citizens

- hegemony of state causes fragmentation and redefinition of public spaces

- production of space takes place in between formal and informal initiatives

- possibilities for interventions from architecture to this process are restricted

- architecture’s role is invalid in this context

- the “margins” identified are the most significant possibilities of any intervention
"Is there nothing more to architecture than its reality – its references, procedures, functions and techniques? Or does it exceed all these things and ultimately involve something quite different, which might be its own end or something which would allow it to pass beyond its end? Does architecture continue to exist once it has passed beyond its own reality, beyond its truth, in a kind of radicality, a sort of challenge to space (and not simply a management of space), challenge to this society (and not simply a respect for its constraints and a mirroring of its institutions), challenge to architectural creation itself, and challenge to creative architects or the illusion of their mastery? That is the question."

Jean Baudrillard

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

reference for “writing in the margin”:
The margins constitute the constraints for a design.
These constraints are the potential at the same time.
They define the location, programme, materials and form as the consequence of these.

- a series of small scale “implantations”
- a spatial infrastructure in between the “private” and the “public”
- a basis for the public to produce their space
- providing financial benefit to the state
- providing relief on the housing deficit
- utilizing readily available materials and workforce in its construction
- a link between the “informal” and “formal” production of space that would find its particularity in its location