

Caracas:

Privatization and re-signification of public spaces

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RESUMEN

Caracas. El tema de este escrito es la privatización del espacio y la resignificación del dominio público en un análisis espaciotemporal del desarrollo del tejido urbano. El análisis se basa en conceptos como la metamorfosis del espacio habitado y las diferentes categorías del espacio para comprender un contexto de exclusión social. Esa construcción socioespaciotemporal conduce a identificar un ambiente urbano particular, basado en: privatización del espacio colectivo, modos de vida pública desconectados y grandes disparidades socio-económicas. La periodización permite una visión general de las transformaciones de las esferas socio- políticas y económicas, y ayuda a comprender la estructura de relaciones entre los actores involucrados en esos procesos que resultan principalmente en inequidades sociales, imposición de la economía de mercado global, abstención de acciones por parte de los gobiernos y modelos de paternalismo. Se analizan tres objetos urbanos construidos por el Estado: La Avenida Bolívar, los bloques de vivienda social y las 5 mayores autopistas. Estos ejemplos denotan los procesos sociales de adaptación, distorsión e integración de modelos y estructuras al contexto local e indica mudanzas funcionales a través del tiempo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Espacio público, Tejido urbano, Exclusión social, Desigualdades sociales, Ambiente urbano.

ABSTRACT

Caracas. The Theme of this Paper is the privatization of space and re-signification of the public domain in a space-time urban analysis of the development of the actual urban fabric. The analysis is based on concepts as the metamorphosis of the inhabited space and the different space categories for understanding a social context of social exclusion. This social-space-time construction leads to identifying a particular urban environment, based on privatization of public space, disaffiliated modes of public life and great social disparities. The *periodization* which gives an understandable overview of the transformations in the socio-political and economical spheres, and clarifies the structure of relationships among the actors involved in the processes, resulting mainly in social inequalities, increased market forces, withdrawal of governments and previous authoritarian regimes. The analysis focus also on three selected main state built urban typologies: the Avenue Parisian, social housing blocks and urban highways. These examples which denote the social processes of adaptation, distortion and integration of imported models and structures to the local context and indicate changes of function through time.

KEY WORDS: Public Space, Urban Fabric, Social Exclusion, Social Inequalities, Urban Environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The actual societies live a major global process of extreme urbanization. The urban space is strongly attached to the physical condition, which is highly relevant for understanding the different categories of space for further reading and interpretation of different elements of the cities: the public domains, right of citizenship or illegal status, central planning weaknesses, paternalism modes and events of social turbulence.

It is important to examine the space as social within the physical urbanities, where dynamic structures and fixed forms perform, as well deal with space production build upon processes of adaptation, distortions and confrontations for its in-depth understanding. In that way a discovery is made on the urban object or «rugosidades»¹ (urban wrinkles) (Santos, 1996) that denote the space condition as a social production through space and time. A whole cultural content is inscribed on the scenarios performed in daily public life of cities.

As we live the era of media and information, fluctuation of capitals and fast urban growths; studying the velocities of actions and the space metamorphoses can decode the processes of accumulations within the urban fabric. Subsequently the production of urbanities is an accumulation of space production processes; that correspond to radical changes or stagnation of the system.

The urban landscape is a mosaic of relations where the most superficial or deep transformations meet. It is in the urban landscape where punctual or macro interventions take form, where the local meets the global, where transformations and new relations take form, and where new functions and the systematic order meet.

The construction of the space in the selected urban concentration, the City of Caracas, is a complex accumulation of processes taking place through space-time. For the analyses of the specific area, selection of three main objects or «rugosidades» was needed, which exposed a reality and a complexity of many interdependent issues in interaction: economics, urban forms, social encounters, ideologies, moral believes, actors in politics, science, technological advances and religious patterns.

This paper was based on the use of historical periodicities enclosed in particular social, political and economic processes for interpretation of the space structure of the city throughout time. Part of the reading of the space was the exposure of the constant reinvention of social space, which has been happening as a local process of adaptation to the strong distortions through history. Mostly those adaptations were made on structures that came from abroad or were re-production from the insiders.

An emphasis was further given on the construction of the space in Caracas from the mid of the 20th century forward, mainly focused over two socio-political periods: the Last Dictatorship and creation of The Social Democrat Era and the final fracture of the system into The Socialism of the 21st Century.

To reveal the space attributes, an overview on the urban development was necessary, using three observation objects: *Plan Rotival*² (1940-1951), *23 de Enero*³ (1955- 1959) and the *five main highways* (1945-1965), which denote the transformation of the space functions through the two historical periods. These Objects were chosen as they are masterpieces of the International Architecture movement built upon topographies of transformative processes; they are places of public life and perform new scenarios of potentials for the future of the public life of citizens.

1- HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CARACAS

The urban structure of Caracas presents a combination between imported models and the specific conditions of the place. In view of the fact that the inspiration in urban development usually came from abroad, the foreign influences, followed by local reactions, can be read in each phase of the city's development. The imported urban ideas and plans came initially from Spain, since

1. Rugosidades in English wrinkles derive from Milton Santos theories, that define objects that unmask social processes of accumulation.

2. The biggest urban plan ever executed in Caracas centre, which denotes the break of colonial grid in to new modernism boulevard, part of El Plan Regulador o Plan Rotival.

3. Built during (1955-1959) nowadays 23 de Enero is an urban expansion complex of 96 fordist dwelling blocks with great open space for greening and public use, 23 of January was the day Dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez was taken out of Power.

Caracas was founded as a Spanish colony, than Napoleonic France, Britain and finally suburban North America.



Figure 1. Urban Development of Caracas

Source: Bomberg, R.; Jaimes, M.; 2007. *Hausmanisation at its best: Lessons from the Plan Rotival Caracas. Triolog* (93), pp. 12-18.

'Santiago de León de Caracas' was founded in 1567. The first known map of the city is dated from 1578 and was a part of a report sent by 'Juan de Pimentel', governor and captain of Venezuela, to the court of Phillip II. According to the 'Leyes de Indias', Spanish laws for colonized American territories, the first planning instrument imported from Spain, the city was organized on a square grid system starting from a central square, from which the city grew outwardly. The plan coincided the Renaissance ideas for the ideal city (nine blocks out of which the central one is open space – the Plaza), and the urban structure established, remained constant between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. The important role that the Catholic Church played in the Spanish society and respectively in the process of conquest and colonization can be seen in the position of the religious buildings. Seven out of eight blocks surrounding the central square were owned by the Church – with the main church placed on the most important site – and only one was designated for governmental activities. The hinterland at the east of the initial grid was divided among the powerful landlords (valley masters) who owned the land or the private haciendas and mastered the agricultural economy.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century the city grew slowly restrained by poverty, earthquakes and epidemics. Settling the rising population into the already established urban area controlled the growth of the city. The city fabric was subdivided, meaning, the blocs were divided into smaller units. In that way, over a period of fifty years, from 1772 to 1806, while the urban area of Caracas was almost the same, the population rose twice, from 19,000 to more than 40,000 inhabitants. (González, 2002)

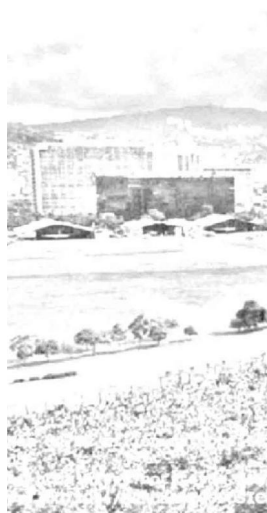
From the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century Caracas enjoyed a period of relative prosperity with an economy based on trade of coffee, cotton and cocoa with the European countries. The Colonial rule ended with the War of Independence (1821-1823). After Independence and with Venezuela's separation from Great Colombia⁶, Caracas became the capital of an independent country. The fight for power among the old conservative and liberal leaders of the War of Independence, led to bloody second conflict- a civil war, which held the capital in a state of slow growth.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century over the period from 1870 to 1888, under the aegis of 'Guzmán Blanco' who ruled the country, a boom in construction began in Caracas. The architecture was seen as a suitable instrument for showing the modernization and reconstruction of the country. Venezuela opened its doors to foreign investments and European migration. The attempts made by 'Guzmán Blanco' to transform Caracas into a modern European alike city, which could express its role as the capital, were inspired by the new ideas obtained from the enlightened rhetoric of 'Napoleon III'.

The new social order was secular, built on science in contrast to the colonial order, which had been built on theology. In order to modernize the country, his government introduced a modern European agenda, based on English and especially French experiences. Based on the secularity, many religious building were demolished or converted into museums, universities and other public institutions to satisfy the needs of the new emerging class – the bourgeoisie.

The end of the nineteenth century was marked with the arrival of the tramcar, which led to a first expansion of the city to the south and creation of the first suburb: 'El Paraíso'. Richer families moved into new residences, and consequently the centre of the city started to be abandoned. With





the arrival of the automobile, the abandonment of the city's centre became even more pronounced, since the middle and upper class families moved in the new residential districts built in the east of the city.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Venezuelan relations of labor and production would be rapidly altered from an agricultural based economy to an oil industry economy. The finding of huge reserves of petroleum led the country's development direction to another step. The whole country experienced fundamental changes. Over a short period of time the country shifted from a poor to a relatively rich one. The dependant trade of an agricultural based economy changed in to an oil trade base economy and industrial development order, consequently, the society shifted from a rural to an urban one. There were huge migrations from the countryside to the city, searching for the new source of labor concentrated in the urban centre. After the Second World War, Venezuela opened the frontiers for European migrants looking forward to the high-qualified labor forces. In only a few decades, the population grew from a few thousand to several millions, generating massive demands for services, infrastructure and housing.

Today's modern appearance of the city was almost entirely developed on the back of the oil boom that began in the 1940's. The modernizing vocation of the dictator 'Marcos Perez Jimenez', and his ideological efficiency, converted Caracas into a city full of technological and aesthetic buildings. Part of the implemented urban renewal project for the city centre «Plan Rotival», imported model from the French urbanist Maurice Rotival, was brought in this period. The first highest concrete towers built in Latin American were built in Caracas: the «Centro Simon Bolivar». As a result of the new imposing social order in this period, social housing developments like «2 de Diciembre» were done. Almost all of the public administrative buildings were built in the Western part of the city.

The intensive modernization program that began with Marcos Perez Jimenez continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, with the construction of many highways and concrete structures.

In the political sphere the mid of the twentieth century marked great changes – the swift from previous major authoritarian regimes, into a new Republican Democratic order after the overthrow of the last dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez. While the struggle with public institution in governmental withdrawal was taking part on the West of the city, privatization was taking part on the East side: middle and upper class privately developed residential areas, shopping malls as public space were created, privatization of medical services and education increased. As a result, great imbalances of inefficient public service were found in the West, while privatization took a major role to play, as an answer of government's inefficiency and corruption, and liberal economic models. The relation of spatial configuration and the social status of the inhabitants enclosed in a private services and car oriented life embodiment a privatized capitalism base system as main instance for space production. This marked the beginning of exclusive public life.

After more than forty years of oil based economy and social democratic governments in withdrawal based on populism; political agenda more than ever would take a major role to play. Caracas as the central space of the political administration and encounters would perform as a topography of space-politics by excellence: The figure of 'Hugo Chavez' and the «21st Century Socialism» Populism has always been the great Latin American temptation, representing a desire of change within continuity, without the violent rupture that both the socialist and capitalist processes of industrialization experienced» (Touraine 1986: 12).

Policies of collaboration with the 'leading empire'⁴, a dependant linkage to the international set prizes of the oil, which bring huge amount of foreign revenues; in contrast with increasing rates of poverty brought into a final democratic result in the Elections of December 1999, the Commandant Hugo Rafael Chavez Frias was elected with more than 50% of votes among the others. A new systematic order and space political regime would be established. It was then clear that left ideologies and socialist ideals were the most adjustable for such a context.

In 2001 New Constitutional law was launched with the «new social order», where among strong fight against any kind of privatization, moral power is given to the urban poor. The new social order is based in '5 motors': *Facilitate Law*. new law implemented that allows president to

4. The conformations of a united Front against North American imperialism, in these phase the dependant laces would be distressed. Thrust for importation substitution within the South American, Caribbean and Central America block is one of the biggest commercial achievements.

take greater decisions among the other powers, the direct way to socialism; *Constitutional reform*: a socialist state of rights; *Moral and Lights*: education of people under socialist ideals as a main value; *The new geometry of power*: is the re-ordering of the geopolitical nation into a socialist one, *The explosion of communal governance*: as the protagonist of the democracy, revolutionary and socialist state which determines that power resides on citizens. All these new moral and public speeches are the political impulse for the process called 'La Revolución Bolivariana'⁵: empowered citizens, endogenous development, and local participation as a form of governance and socialism as main instance.

The set of high oil prices mask strong short-term political expenditures and subside with no long-term solutions, which take precedence over longer-term investment for the wealth of the country inhabitants. The reflection of a Late Latin American Left movement context based on the Reinvention of ideals as the Geopolitical reunification of the South American Region⁶ and a strong plunge to structurally and mediated struggle against the northern system is another cause of local wealth run off. Chavez is a local derivation of so many years of bad administrated «populism»⁷ and previous governments in withdrawal among development.

Among the population there has been a strong plunge in division of civilians between the two parties with or against the government. Citizens of Caracas, as the central space for political administration, would appear with another face; they would invade the streets as huge collective demonstrations against and for the revolutionary cause are happening.

2- PROCESS, STRUCTURE, FUNCTION AND FORM OF CARACAS

In the following text the focus is made on the last two periods: from 1940 to 1970 and from 1999 until now, once the previous periods, as formerly explained, are marked with slow growth and no significant changes in the urban perimeter of the city. Three objects of analysis are being chosen: Plan Rotival (1940-1951), 23th of January (1955- 1959) and the five main highways (1945-1965), which are clearly showing the transformation that has happened over the two periods. What they have in common is that they are all imposed imported structures that constitute the main topography of the transformative process through spacetime of the city of Caracas. It is paper, it are also considered the interrelationships among the society instances, as Santos (1996) suggests, that the space is included in this consideration.

2.1- The process of modernization and urban expansion from 40's until 70's

Over the first period, when it comes to religion, the social order was secular, built on science, which is in clear contrast to the former colonial order, built on theology. In terms of economy and politics, the period was marked with the transition from an agricultural to an oil and industry economy as well as from an oligarchic and traditional community to a business – oriented and modern society. The private contracting was introduced, and the administration of the incomes was on very high level. The ideology was based on creation of a modern country, but also creation of a country for all citizens. The Ethics shown was 'We spent what we have'. This is easiest to be seen in the high quality public works that transformed Caracas into a modern city. In this period breaking up with the colonial planning happened, and a French planning model was introduced. The principles of the CIAM were also introduced and implemented. The development of the science and the technology was driven by the social needs, and there was a huge progress in the building technology and the concrete industry. The period of the oil boom is also marked with a huge migration. Firstly there was a migration from the countryside, but also a migration from Europe, related to the Second World War. At the beginning of the period 20% of the population belonged to the urban poor, there was an emerging middle class connected especially with the migration from Europe, but the decision-making was made by the upper class.

5. The socialist political order established which keeps the same relations of production and labor, based on Simon Bolivar's Hegemonic ideals from imperialism.

6. The idea comes from the post-colonial ideals created by Simon Bolivar; intends a Re unification of La Gran Colombia, to create a geopolitical force in the South against the system.

7. Derived from social democrats, scholars state a constant expenditure of time and energy from the communist to ingratiate themselves with populists, while the latter just try to distant from the other: Populism actions derive the main source for getting political votes.

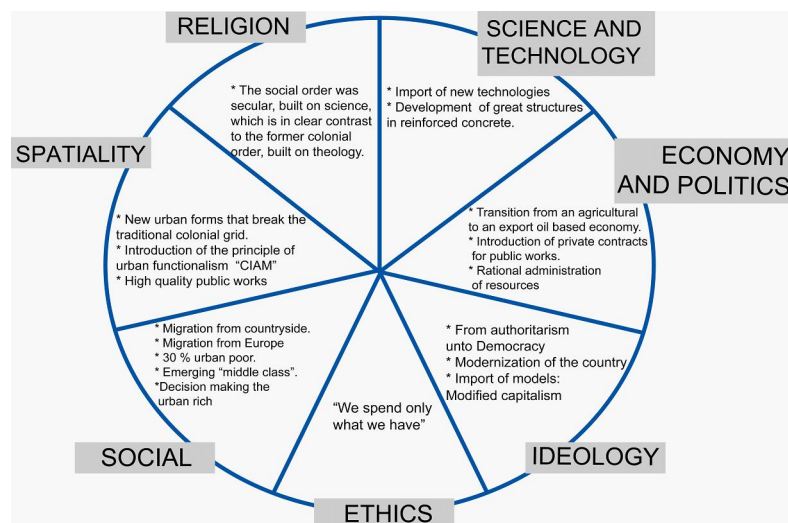


Figure 2. Interrelations of social instances applied for the period from the 1940's up to the 1970's in Caracas, according to the methodology utilized in the seminar «Latin American Cities though «Space-Time»».

2.1.1- Plan Rotival: «Avenue Parisian» 1940- 1951

8. Centro Simón Bolívar are the two formally aesthetic concrete towers at the end of Avenida Bolívar were the delight of international architecture connected to the oil revenues and the high technically qualified new emigrants allowed these high quality concrete towers construction.

9. Urbanización el Silencio is a further housing development by Carlos Raul Villanueva behind the Centro Simón Bolívar; in order to fulfill the dwelling needs for a middle class emerging.

10. El Plan Regulador done in 1946 and designed by Rotival was contracted again by the National Commission of town planning, since Maurice Rotival was responsible for both plans they are now a days known as Plan Rotival (Vallmitjana: 1989)

11. Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, Lausanne (1928) .The new International style for the built environment

Because of the lack of local expertise in planning and urban design, several foreigners were hired to prepare the urban plans for the city. Through the engineer 'Maurice Rotival', who was the most important foreign advisor in the programs for the renovation of the city, France's monumental urbanism played a crucial role in late 1930s Caracas. He created the Plan Monumental approved in 1940. According to the plan, the centre of Caracas (See fig. 3) was planned as a multi-functional nucleus, developed along great corridors. Among them, the Central Avenue, today known as 'Avenida Bolívar', was the main corridor. Following east-west axis along the valley, the Central Avenue questioned the old pattern of the city, by imposing the French boulevard onto the grid of squares, which the Spanish urban planning had institutionalized in Latin America. The Avenue was intended to create a connection between the city centre and the surrounding countryside and set up an image of urbanity, welfare and order for the rest of the city, following the French experience. The Plan Rotival intended to give back the city centre its former social importance. Two significant projects were developed for the old city after the plan, 'Centro Simón Bolívar'⁸ and 'Urbanización El Silencio'⁹.

The new 'Plan Regulador'¹⁰, presented in 1952, was also made by Rotival. The plan was based on ideas of urban planning such as the principles of urban functionalism and the division of zones, following the principles of the CIAM¹¹. The result was separation of industrial, commercial and residential areas. With this plan the intention of reinforcing the old city centre as the social, historical and cultural nucleus, was completely forgotten. After the introduction of the plan it became clear that the housing for the working class would not be provided. Consequently, shortly after the plan was launched, slums started to appear in the old city centre and the same started facing degradation.

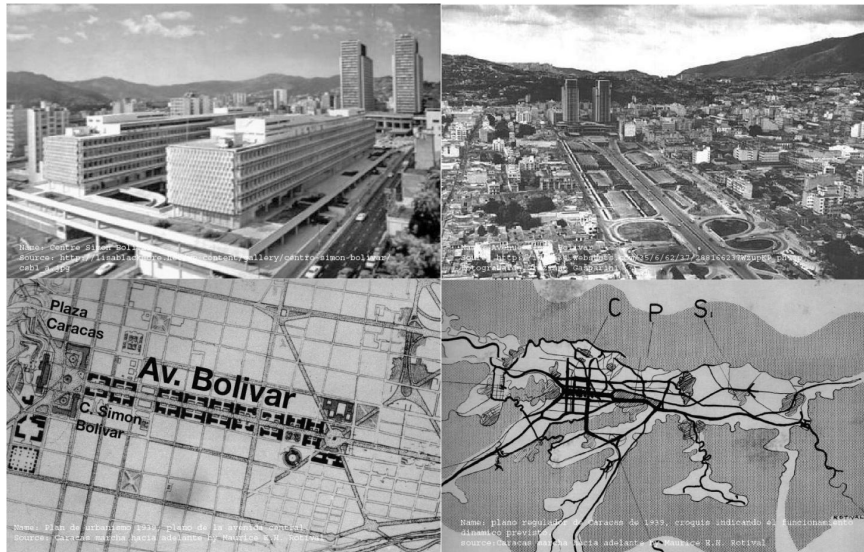


Figure 3. Composition of photograph showing Avenida Bolívar at the time when it was built

2.1.2- 23 de Enero: 96 dwelling blocks 1955- 1959

As a part of the governmental ideology for modernizing the country there was an attempt of providing housing for the urban poor. 'Urbanization 23 de Enero' represents the biggest attempt for social dwelling. The area is named after the date on which Marcos Perez Jimenez - the country's last dictator - led Venezuela amid protests on January 23th, 1958, initiating the modern democratic period. 'Urbanization 23 de Enero' (See fig. 4) was an ambitious project, which included development of 96 fordist blocks complex spread over an enormous expansion of the city. It was build with the idea to replace the area's slums. It was designed to give working class people light, space, air and green, so they can live better. Today, the multi-colored apartment blocks are home to 76,000 people. However, the growing demand of the urban poor has not been satisfied, making the slums expansion not only inevitable but necessary.



Figure 4. Composition of photograph showing the complex 23 de Enero at the time when it was built

2.1.3- Five main highways: the car oriented city 1945- 1965



Apart from the Avenida Bolívar, in the late 1940's all the avenues were transformed into highways. The construction of the highways was related with the governmental ideology of constructing a modern city. The highways represent the country's innovation in reinforced concrete technology. They governed the idea of turning the economical sources into reproductive investments. Huge amount of investment were made in infrastructure projects. Five main highways were built (See fig. 5): 'Caracas-La Güaira' highway which connects the city with the harbor; 'Avenida Bóyaca' highway which represents a border between the city and the national park El Ávila; 'Francisco Fajardo' highway which provides communication between the East and the West; 'Valle- Coche' highway which is a national highway that connects Caracas with the rest of the country and 'CaracasBaruta' highway which provides connection with the southern city's development. Unlike the spatiality and social role of the avenues, the five new highways have fragmented the city like borders and strongly transformed the perception of the city. These roads separated entire communities. The role of streets as a social fact was substituted by the new experience of the fast driving car on broad urban highways, developed for an emerging new class of inhabitants: the car owners.

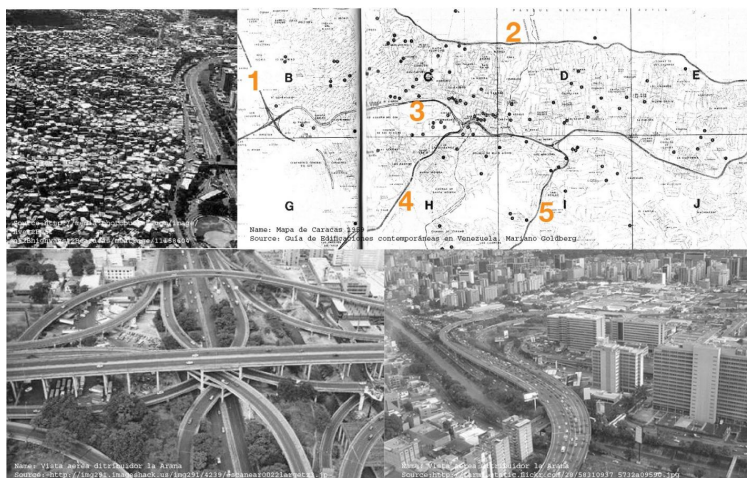


Figure 5. Composition of photograph showing the five new highways

2.2- Insurgent citizens experiencing the final decline of socialization space from 1999 until today

In the second period the ideology was the creation of 'Socialismo del siglo 21' (see fig. 6) and strengthen the left wing network among the South American block; inside the country the creation of the PSUV¹². Concerning international politics investments are been made by the Venezuelan government as a consequence of the high oil revenues and over cash flow existing inside the country.

There is a short-term political expenditure for the urban poor and great subsidies for the cause. There is a regression knowledge economy and innovation technology, in comparison with global economies; as well the society performs an information and technology direction. The period is also marked with downgrading middle class and extreme social polarization: extremely rich and the governmental actors embody the decision-making circle and economical leading group. The fragmentation and segregation are easy to be read in the physical shape of the city. Dense dwelling settlements with inadequate living conditions (Slums) and gated communities in sprawl residential areas.

12. PSUV Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela as unique form for local participation and the new leading political party.

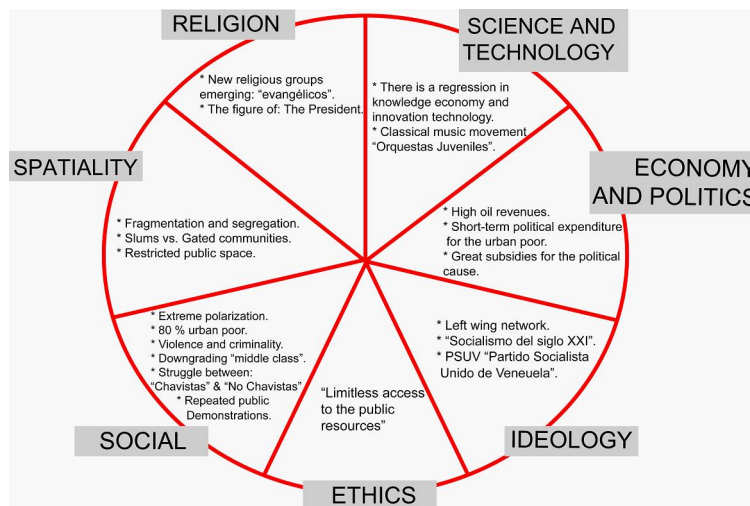


Figure 6. Interrelations of social instances applied for the period from 1999s up to now in Caracas, according to the methodology utilized in the seminar "Latin American Cities through "Space-Time".

2.2.1- 'La Avenida Bolívar', the Revolutionaries Avenue

In former times projected as an old colonial centre modernisation plan; for the modern man and the setting for the political administration institutions, today represents a totally recreated urban imaginary of «La Plaza Roja»¹³, (see fig. 7) the socialist oriented union square, the new socialists use these space for occupy their feast. Emerging landscapes from those who believe in another future build upon Chavez political set up.

Where once Rotival proposed «Le Boulevard Parisian» for the modern citizens, nowadays groups of thousands, mainly adept to the government have constructed their own function of space, and alluring with sentences like: *Venezuela ahora es de todos, el pueblo es el que manda*¹⁴. (Venezuela belongs to us all; the people are the ones that rule). Since then this urban landscape would turn to be a space of social interactivity in all senses since other public cultural activities as the visit of the photographer 'Spencer Tunick' would take share to make his naked citizens artistic photograph; or urban agriculture in the surrounding empty plots of the Avenue.

13. Referring to the iconic space for communist movements around the world, the communist leading colour is red.

14. The existences of space of flows were the mediated information technologies take a huge role.



Figure 7. Composition of photograph about different public life scenarios at the Avenida Bolívar



2.2.2- 'El 23 de Enero': The Vertical Slum

In spite the high-speed urbanization, migration of labour forces to the centralized centres, insufficient central planning measures for development and expansion of the city derives the endogenous and bottom up self constructed cities enclaves or slums areas. The situation of uncontrolled development, self-made houses and squatter urban Land is a reaction toward dwelling necessities: The barrios of Caracas represent the response of popular communities toward the lack of housing. The site of 23 de Enero a major dwelling development from the late 50's experienced in a dramatically way space invasion phenomena and 'slumification' of green areas, and would be prearranged call an informal settlement. Nonetheless this settlement represent the most typical local reaction toward the lack of planning, a local product based on struggle and personal needs.

The '23 de Enero' nowadays is a unique slum with the vertical and horizontal morphology (see fig. 8) vertical blocks built to ensure living standards for workers and the single houses with extreme high density below, used by the same social group, as well this enclave assemble one of the most active communities within the revolutionary process leaded by Chavez, and the radicalization off the cause into violent groups.



Figure 8. Composition of photographs, resemblance to the vertical and horizontal urban configuration, related to vertical and horizontal influences

2.2.3- The 5 city Highways: public space for RE-insurgents

Morphologically the insertion of highways brought the infrastructural scale in to a city that use to have a town scale, after the insertion of such elements Caracas would never speak again about places, town planning or city life. The highways that slice through the city, built between the 1940's and late 1970's are scenario for an emergent social reactivity. Nor the highly educated neither the former rich groups agree, with the new system: appropriation of the space for collective demonstrations draws the dissatisfaction against the corrupted ambience lived in the city (See fig. 9).

Concerning fragmentation the highways have a major role to play. During times of outburst they embody a social functionality of unity and collective struggle; they are used for public demonstrations, given the lack of well defined open areas for such purpose.

The invasion of public life in the highways as something that started as a social reactivity went into deep transformation as a space for open public life. In despite of the need of such kind of social healing activities, as it is public life, local municipalities have given permit for this issues and a well organized network between citizens, local authorities and police surveillance makes

possible that every Sunday, highways would be closed for the cars and open to the public: for doing sports, walk, or just gather.



Figure 9. Composition of photographs, resemblance insurgent citizens and new forms of public life experimented in the automobile highways.

3. CONCLUSIONS: ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN POTENTIALS OF CARACAS

The spatial conviction of a modernity imposed is the remaining structures were the urban condition operates in Caracas. The presence of Highways instead of avenues, as main instance for private owned automobiles, a fragmented spatiality and old concrete structures that are recycled for the huge governmental administration set, former quality social housing that becomes the most dangerous slum of the city and a spectacular avenue under the auspice of violent conflict and anarchy.

The urban life quality standards are low: scarce public transportation systems, urban highways for single automobile use, people living in extreme isolation in non-slums areas, strict under security systems, gated communities, fenced houses and streets with extreme control access, scarce infrastructure services like streets in the slums, water and electricity immerse in an ambience of violence ruled by few asocial, lack of pedestrian paths and sidewalks, as well environmental problems because of the dense traffic by single automobiles, psycho stress of citizens because space is physically restricted for pedestrian and highly insecure, sanitary problem and detriment of weak soils where the slums are allocated, since mostly they are built in very hilly areas, which causes avalanche during rainy season.

The city is built upon infrastructure and density. It is almost impossible for pedestrians because the limited public areas which are generally colonized by 'buhoneros'¹⁵ and their selling or mayor privatized commercial activities. The public space is a patchwork of left over areas, no-go areas and enclosed parks, with no clear definition and colonized by dangerous features as thieves with weapons that can attend against anyone's life at any time.

The urban environment of the city of Caracas is suffocating car orientated and psychologically violent.

By on the other hand it has great environmental advantages, is one of the Latin American cities with the best air quality; since there is a National Park called *El Avila*, at the northern part of the city with exuberant tropical vegetation, a mountain of 2.300 m high, with dense nature and

15 Local name given to street vendors of Caracas, they conform and illegal horizontal network or trade.

excellent preserved ecosystem. The case of the highways mentioned before are for this ecosystem a preservation advantage, the 'Avenida Bóyaca' or 'Cota 1000'. There is a urban policy that prohibits urban development above 1000 m height in the skirts of the mountain. It is a strong boundary between urban sprawl and dense nature.

In conclusion, the living conditions and the political order finally lead to define two kinds of social enclaves that outline space in Caracas: the segregated with a limited access to a private based service life and the isolated with no sense of public life.

The new socio-political order established denotes the most intrinsic production of an extended development in social disparities, and the outburst of an inherent conflict between the urban poor and the urban rich.

The impact on the different categories of space could be evidenced: the urban objects selected for the analyses reveal these new space of socialization as part of the crack process from an old traditional democratic onto a new revolutionary carry on, which is the most adjustable principle for the context.

A period of fissure and radicalization of a system based on the dominance of privatization, segregation, social poor and fragmentation into new urban behaviours emerging, insurgent citizens and new social functions that do not find a defined space of action with no major role to play within the political paraphernalia.

The new processes that actual societies experiment are based on flows of actions and interactions rather than radical changes from the system, therefore there are no new materialized physical forms from the Socialism of the 21st Century, neither deep transformations among those who have the power, space is an operative field of social interactivity. The actual Revolutionary process represents the space of flows, where through media the government struggles against late capitalism inequality, despite the local economy cannot be de-attached from the former ways of production and labour relations within this system the local structure perform as weak to fight the big beast.

Therefore is clear how strong the global market forces upon the Latin American countries are and how weak in action for the local populations our governments are. As a glance of hope the discovery of all these new social functions over the old forms, coming from the very local, let us think in a more social future, a more positive future for cities like these. The big changes to come will be not simply physical forms or different actors in the power, rather new collective behaviours and stronger reactions towards the improvement of their own built environment; development of the very local and the paradigm of a multiethnic society capable to transform itself and improve their own ways of living.

It is clear that this is a non-positive fissure at all, but positive potentials for the development of a better built environment and it is about what the city will become in the future: an infrastructural city that will go back to the urban scale through great new space policies and plans to be done, a city immerse in a spectacular climate condition with great dense nature, a diverse public life under the aegis of security and the hope of a strong collective commitment to upgrade the living conditions of the two social enclaves and the hope of responsible commitment and efficient actions to bridge the existing social disparities.

The urban forms mentioned before expose a new functionality of emergent sociality: insurgent citizens able of change the function and mode of use of the city, in spite of their own will. This is the outburst of local reactions and the evidence of a social future. In a holistic sense these huge complexity of identities and adaptations reveals a society that recreates its own imaginary to recreate itself, able to generate a scope of progress and potentials.



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