

Havana: Space through tourism

Recibido para evaluación: 01 de Abril de 2009
Aceptación: 27 de Abril de 2009
Recibido versión final: 5 de Mayo de 2009

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RESUMEN

Milton Santos, geógrafo brasileiro, planteó en sus escritos que el espacio es una producción social en el tiempo. El presente trabajo se inscribe en una serie de estudios sobre distintas ciudades latino-americanas bajo los planteamientos de Santos.

Estudiamos la ciudad de la Habana que, estratégicamente situada en las Antillas, siempre actuó como puente hacia las colonias españolas en América. Tras la independencia cubana, la ciudad caribeña quedó bajo la órbita de la naciente potencia vecina, los Estados Unidos. La ciudad que durante la colonia basó su economía en el comercio de los productos agrícolas del interior, el tabaco y el azúcar, entrado el siglo XX, pasó a sostener su economía en el turismo fundamentalmente norteamericano. La ciudad atrajo por igual a importantes inversionistas hoteleros así como también a la mafia que monopolizó el tráfico de drogas y la prostitución. La desigualdad y el autoritarismo creciente trajeron la más conocida revolución americana y con sus reformas socialistas, la ciudad se congeló en el tiempo. Con el colapso de la Unión Soviética, el gobierno salió en busca de nuevas alternativas para generar ingresos. El turismo se ha convertido en los últimos años en la alternativa más efectiva para estimular la economía. Pero esta nueva transición trae nuevas interrogantes: ¿Cómo esta cambiando espacialmente La Habana?, y para el futuro ¿Cambios más profundos en el sistema socialista cubano transformarán o perjudicarán la herencia e identidad urbana habanera?

PALABRAS CLAVE: Análisis socio-espacial en el tiempo, Turismo, Periodización, Configuración espacial.

ABSTRACT

Milton Santos, important Brazilian geographer, stated in his writings that space is a social production through time. The present work belongs to a series of studies of Latin-American cities based on Santos' theories.

Our case study is the city of Havana. Strategically situated in the Antilles, the city always played the role of a gate to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. After the Cuban independence (1898), the Caribbean city fell under the influence of the crescent power of the United States. At the turn of the XXth century, the city which during the colonial times based its economy on trade of commodities from the mainland like tobacco or sugar, turned to be funded mainly by North American tourism. The city attracted legal investment and mafia groups equally. Disparity and growing authoritarianism led to the well known Cuban Revolution and with its socialist reforms, the city froze in time. With the Soviet collapse, the government searched for economic alternatives facing a strong U.S. embargo. Tourism appeared once more as an important source of income. Yet, this new transition raises questions like: how is this reorientation going to change spatially Havana? Or, how are deeper changes in the socialist regime going to affect the heritage and identity of the city?

KEY WORDS: Socio-spatial analysis through time, Tourism, Periodization, Spatial configuration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1515, the city of Havana located on the north-west part of Cuba, has been throughout history the biggest metropolis of the Caribbean. From the colonial times its position as hub between Spain and its overseas possessions granted the city a special vocation for trade. Until the 19th century, Havana's urban form was dominated by its fortress and the enclosure walls that defended the harbor against frequent attacks. Havana was even in that period, a cosmopolite city. Everything changed as industrialization and global trade took over the world. Havana became more important in that time, not only because of its position as hub, but also because Cuban tobacco and sugar started to be exported to the world market. Havana started then to host a crescent bourgeoisie of Creoles and Spaniards who concentrated their wealth in the city¹ giving it glamour and style; they were eager to turn the city into the «Paris» of the West Indies. The rise of Havana placed the city under the interest of world empires of those times. As the Spanish empire started to decline, a new young and ambitious power, the United States, started to search ways to control the city. Cuban independence wars gave the perfect frame to intervention. Due to the episode of *USS Maine* in Havana, the U.S. began a war against Spain, in which they won the remaining Spanish possession in the Caribbean and the Philippines. Cuba gained its independence by the *Teller Amendment* of 1898; but the *Platt Amendment* of 1902 subjugated the island to an economic and political control by the U.S. With the upcoming 20th century a new vocation for the city started to appear. This vocation was spotted because of the impressive accumulation of architectural heritage from the previous centuries.

1. Creoles, the native-born descendants of early Spanish, monopolized the sugar and tobacco trade from the inland and therefore became during the XIXth century an important economic power in Havana

The tourism industry began with *Tomas Cook* (1808-1892) in 1841 and has developed rapidly in early 20th century. Early U.S. tourism industry started to see in Havana a Caribbean paradise full of history and culture. From these days on, tourism replaced trade as the main engine for urban development. More important, throughout history, Havana was never an industrial city; development was always on behalf of service sectors, trade first and later tourism. As Segre (1997: 91) quotes Hardoy «In Cuba, like in the rest of Latin America, urbanization did not result from industrialization».

1.1. Research Focus: Economy and Tourism.

Taking into consideration the way the economy of Havana developed and shaped the space of the city through the centuries, one might consider tourism as a defining element in space. Therefore we began the space analysis through this instance. As Milton Santos (1997: 49) outlines, space is a social product through time. Tourism has developed economy in Havana and economy as production work has influence society differently through time and therefore production of space.

1.2. Research Problem: The Future

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the remaining communist countries had turned to free-market systems, but although the island now opens to foreign investment, the economic U.S. «embargo» has left the country in a relative isolation. Nowadays Cuba faces transition. In February, 2008 Raúl Castro succeeded Fidel Castro as the President of Cuba. Therefore, the continuity of Fidel Castro's politics is now in question. If Cuba turns to a more free state, the U.S. will reconsider the «embargo» and many more transnational firms will have access to the country, especially in the tourism industry. These facts raise a particular question, how these changes will affect urban form of Havana?



1.3. Research Objectives: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats for Havana

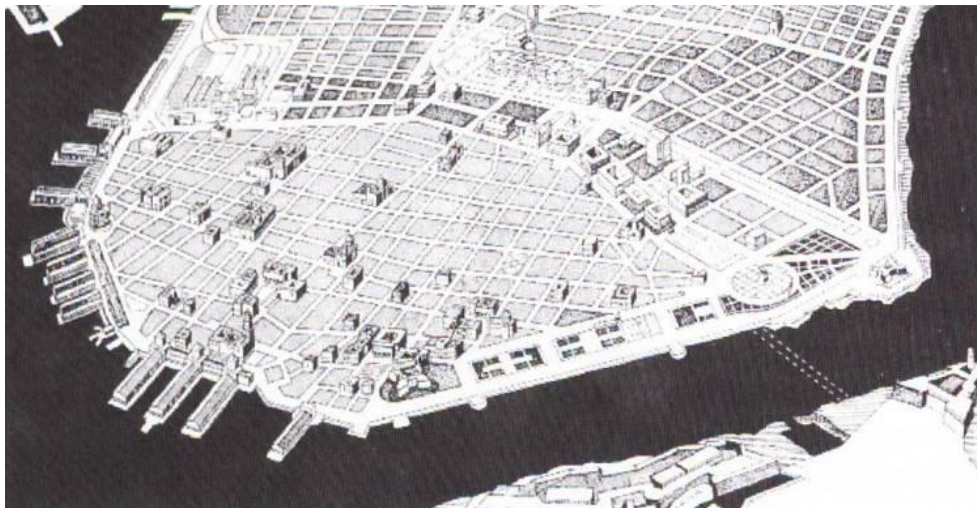
We will raise questions about Havana's future in order to present future strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. These facts have to be taken into account by the government, urban planners and architects of the city in order to keep heritage and control the further development of the city.

1.4. Methodology: Periodization

We will use Milton Santos' (1926- 2001) methodology of space analysis through time focusing on a historical study. Santos (1997: 49- 50) states that space is in a permanent process of transformation based on the different definition and re-definition that society makes on form, function, structure in time, and the relations among them. During the 20th century in Havana we affirm that tourism had defined and re-defined form, function, structure differently in three particular stages of time: From 1933 to 1958 as Cuba was highly influenced by the U.S. in contrast to the previous Spanish occupation; the revolution times from 1959 to 1993, as a communist system was implemented and Tourism sector decay; and finally, the re- opening of Cuba to foreign investment after the fall of the Soviet Union.

2. THE U.S. IN CUBA

By the beginning of 20th century, Havana was a flourishing city; the master plan of the French architect Jean- Nicholas Forestier (1861- 1930) was becoming a reality² (Figure 2.1). Trade and sugar industry attracted thousand of Spaniards every year³. City's population has increase from 250.000 in 1898 to more than half a million in 1925⁴. The city stood under heavy European influence, the demolishing of the walls gave room to promenades and neoclassic or neobarroque public buildings (Figure 2.2). A Creole and Spanish bourgeoisie owned the sugar and tobacco trade which was the base of the economy. Culture was strongly Caribbean; it could be seen in the street life, or in music played by expontaneous musicians outdoors.



2. Dictator Gerardo Machado and Minister of Public Works, Carlos Miguel de Céspedes, decided to turn Havana into the Paris of the Caribbean. They invited a team of French architects and urban planners headed by J.C.N. Forestier to develop a master plan for the city.

3. Segre, R. Coyula, M. Scarpaci, J.L. 1997. Havana, Two faces of the Antillean Metropolis, Wiley p 53

4. Segre, Roberto, 2002. Havana from Tacón to Forestier, Article in: «Planning Latin America's capital cities 1850- 1950», Routledge, London pp 194- 195.

Figure 2.1 Aerial view of Old Havana and the «Ring» buildings. From the plan by J.C.N. Forestier, 1925-1929. Drawing by Francisco Bedoya.

Source: Segre, Roberto, 2002. Havana from Tacón to Forestier, Article in: «Planning Latin America's capital cities 1850- 1950», Routledge, London. P. 200.



Figure 2.2 Lonja del comercio building 1909
Source: Photo by Juan Yunda, 2004

After Cuban wars for independence from 1868 to 1895 and the Spanish- American war of 1898 the United States gain control over the former Spanish colonies in the Caribbean. Although the U.S. did not annex Cuba, they gained control over the economy and politics of the island. U.S. investors bought land in ruins after the war, and took over almost three- quarters of the Cuban sugar business. Former independence leaders led the country until 1933. During the Republic times, several modernization processes were set in motion, but there was massive political opposition to leaders like Machado who declared himself dictator after finishing his term. Although the U.S. had a high influence in Cuba, city space and culture remained more European and Caribbean. This went on until the 1950s when Batista came to power as dictator (Segre et al., 1997: 75). Tourism businesses had been increasing over those years and this lucrative scenario attracted to Havana Mafia figures like Mayer Lansky, «Lucky» Luciano or Santos Traficante. After the years of the Prohibition in the U.S., gangsters started to invest in tourism sector. They turned cities into gambling paradises; they started by building casinos and hotels; afterwards, they managed prostitution and drug dealing for tourism costumers. It was a lucrative business; gangsters like Lansky started to invest on Miami and then expanded to Las Vegas. As Batista came to power in Cuba, gangsters found a proper political scenario in Cuba to expand their business into Havana (Segre et al., 1997: 74). The city then became part of the triangle of «sin» with Las Vegas and Miami; and also joined the tourism multinational firm axis with Miami and San Juan in Puerto Rico.



Figure 2.3 View of Hotel Habana Libre and Vedado skyscrapers
Source: Tuengler; Bodd 2007. Havana, The Sleeping Beauty. Jovis Verlag, Berlin. P. 86- 87



Figure 2.4 View from Fifth Avenue (Quinta Avenida) in Miramar

Source: Segre, R. Coyula, M. Scarpaci, J.L. 1997. Havana, Two faces of the Antillean Metropolis, Wiley. P. 78

By 1939 as mobs' investment started to come to Havana, the modern architecture and urbanism reached the island. Joseph Lluís Sert, by the time president of the CIAM⁵ visited Havana invited to make an urban plan for the city. The CIAM and the international modern architects used to look at Latin America and other developing countries as experimental lands for their ideas. Sert and a new generation of Cuban modern architects gave form to tourism in Havana; they built hotels, casinos, and night clubs often owned by American mobsters. Buildings like Hotel Nacional (1930), Habana Hilton (1958) or the apartment high-rises in Vedado started to change Havana landscape (Figure 2.3). The new residential neighborhood Miramar was designed to host the American way of life (fig 2.4); wide streets and air conditioning replaced former Caribbean culture of street life. Sert's master plan reflected the upcoming changes, the uprising of the old center, replacing the inner courts by parking lots. In the seafront, an island of hotel, leisure and casinos, was proposed, following strictly the modern principles of separation of functions and car-based city (Figure 2.5).

Following Santos' ideas, space can be understood considering the action and reaction among forms, function and structure (Santos, 1997). It is clear that space in Havana changed in the period 1933- 1959. These changes can be understood seeing this interaction in Santos' methodology. Forms were being altered because a new structure in economy was introduced; high foreign investment came suddenly to the tourism sector. This caused a change in function; big trade buildings like Lonja del Comercio (1909) in old Havana were no longer city crowns (Figure 2.2); instead, by the 50s hotels were competing in luxury and height. Structure in society changed in these days, the city was no longer own by the Spanish and Creole bourgeoisie, who based their income on trade with sugar and tobacco; new owners were American mobsters who wanted another image for Havana, no longer fancy European, more towards an American urban sprawl. Segre pointed out this change:

«The Hispanic flavor of the Antillean capital city became progressively diluted though the spread of US-like single family houses, increasingly located farther away from the city center as result of improved roads. A fictitious aura of rapid progress invaded the life-style and replaced the slow Caribbean rhythm of Havana. Street life diminished and even disappeared in some quarters as air-conditioning beckoned folks into cooler buildings». (Segre et al., 1997: 75)

5. Le Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), or International Congress of Modern Architecture, was a series of international conferences of modern architects founded in 1928 and disbanded in 1959.



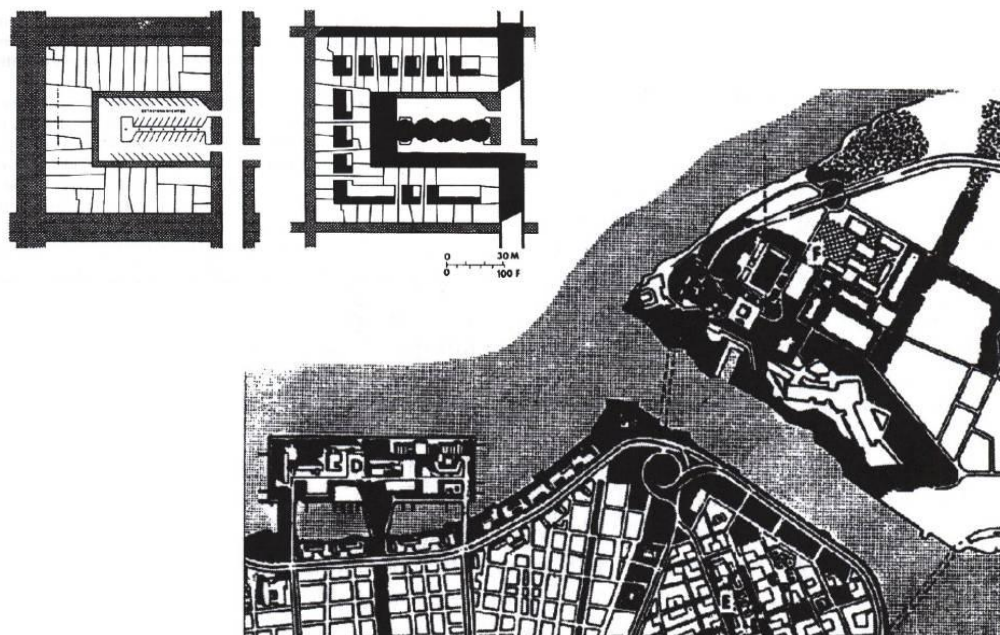


Figure 2.5 Master Plan from J.L. Sert. Left: City block design for Havana. Right: Artificial island with hotels, casinos and shopping centers set just on the Malecon
Source: Segre, R. Coyula, M. Scarpaci, J.L., 1997. *Havana, Two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, Wiley. P. 81

Still every action has a reaction. 75% of sugar revenues were going to the U.S. pockets. Tourism only benefited high people in government and a pro-American middle-upper class. This caused a strong social segregation. Havana might have been doing well economically, but population in land was starving, the fluctuations in sugar market made unemployment high. In Cuba there was only little industrialization (Segre et al., 1997: 87), in the countryside the income was based only on agriculture. Tourism services were now the base in Havana. This caused a weak economy that derived in social problems. The reaction ended up with a revolution that changed every aspect of Havana structures and stopped abruptly the process of time.

3. THE REVOLUTION



The Revolution on January 1st brought with it a socialist system aiming to reduce the contradiction between rich and poor, and to nationalize Havana's most profitable properties which were owned by foreigners. Fidel Castro was saying a clear «no» to the inherent «miamization» (Segre et al., 1997) of Havana, very much encouraged during the previous period. The coming to power of Fidel Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba was translated in immediate disruption of diplomatic and trade relationship with US followed by a quick fall of the tourism industry. The centrally planned economy as well as the nationalization of private property and business, tourist hotels and facilities included, had practically derailed all the multimillion dollar investments by tourist companies and organized crime. As a response, in 1962, The United States imposed The Embargo against Cuba restricting drastically all American imports from and exports to Cuba. The country had to reorientate fast towards the help which USSR was actually eager to give.

In 1959 the new regime inherited an impressive cultural patrimony covering city's architectural history. This heritage had an important cultural and utilitarian value and was highlighting the presence of a broad middle and upper-class (most of the times of foreign origin) that could afford to keep their houses in good condition. The new revolutionary government decided as well the expropriation of these private properties. Therefore, there were no more investments in maintenance and renovation and striking cases of neglect and abuse started to occur. Once with the disappearance of the real estate speculation and the drastic diminishing of tourism, two main consequences arose: on one hand, a total preservation of the existent architectural heritage and

streets' layout, and on the other hand, the disappearance of gambling, organized crime, prostitution and drugs and all related money.

The shift from capitalism to communism brought, nevertheless, changes in the spatial configuration of the city. The policy of improving social services and public housing gave birth to the further expansion of the city. Although the New Center of Habana del Este was never realized, the new housing projects in this area have brought to Havana a piece of «inheritance» that all the communist countries share: the high-rise structures designed according to the modernistic vision of the capitalist system. This definitely represented a paradox because the socialist ideology failed to produce new characteristic images and was translated in forms similar to those proposed by the CIAM movement in the 1930's.

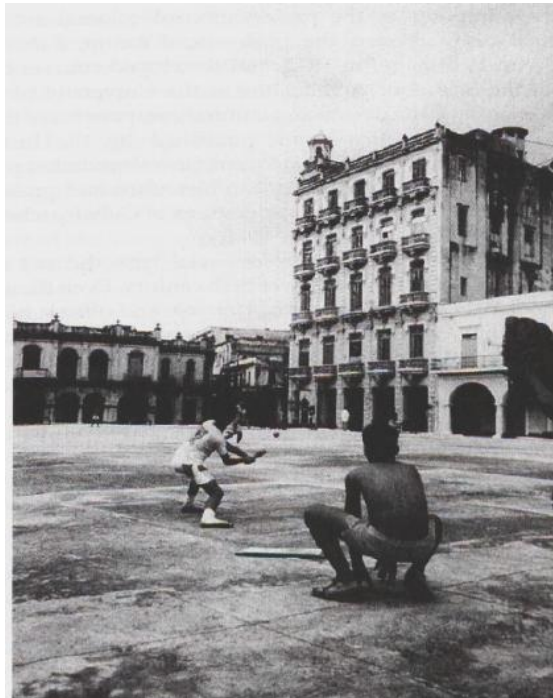


Figure 3.1 «Rudosidades» in Plaza Vieja An elevated concrete slab on top of a parking garage—demolition 1995 Photograph by Joseph L. Scarpaci in (Segre et al, 1997. P. 295)

In the state- controlled egalitarian system, no symbols such as giant shopping centers, banks, insurance companies and up- scale condominiums were to appear. As Segre (1997: 281) stated: *«Instead of disrupting the built form with commercial and civil monuments, continuity has prevailed.»*

In the existing city, the forms were not to change, only their content. Sometimes small interventions were added. (Figure 3.1) Nevertheless, the form of the city «in its quality of form-content», as Milton Santos (1986) states, «is being permanently altered». Changes in land use and function of the buildings were the tools used to reshape «the content» - the social space of the city. A large population was relocated in different parts of the city. Because of the egalitarian socialist system, shanty towns were gradually eradicated and social segregation was successfully diminished. There was no extreme poverty anymore.

In 1997, Segre (1997: 183) was quoting Lopez Castaneda (1963): *«(...)housing is the social mirror of the city. If monuments define outstanding elements of the cultural landscape, then the residential stock reflects the contradictions of the city.»*

The price paid for this social security has brought, however, some restrictions related with control of the state upon social life. Society's changes were visible in the disappearance of public life freedom and in a certain reservation to inhabit the public space. Habaneros preferred to meet now in private places and left deserted the streets and squares of the city.





Due to the afore mentioned factors, the historic parts of the city remained unchanged at the level of form (although their importance also diminished) and this fact represented a new chance for Havana. In 1982 Havana Vieja became a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was subjected to a programme of preservation and renovation on a long time period. Although this programme and some others organized at national level were doing the best to preserve and restaurate

Havana's built heritage, only Habana Vieja as a main touristic place has been totally rehabilitated, while the large architectural patrimony of the city is still in a state of decay. Lacking a defined status of ownership and protection, buildings are «consumed», used by diverse tenants without any right to interfere in the maintenance of their dwellings. These forms show the process of stagnation, of «museification» (Segre et al., 1997) inherent to a state- controlled economy which is taking care of everything in an artificial way.

4. THE OPENING

When in 1989 the Soviet Union and the eastern socialist bloc collapsed, Cuba lost all the major support it was constantly receiving (70% of its trade was with URSS). (Segre et al., 1997: 218) New sources of money had to be found as well as ways to replace the shortage of primary goods. One of the first initiatives was to open the market for dollars and foreign investments, and to create the legal framework for a free- market economy.

Tourism was, and continues to be, a promising salvation for the island. Havana represents the main attraction point; its architectural beauty and attractive beaches as well as its intriguing history and Afro-Cuban culture provide a complete exotic experience. As a proof, between 1990 and 1995 the number of tourist arrivals to Cuba has doubled and the trend kept rising. In 2005, there was an estimative number of 2,500,000 visitors. (Figure 4.1) According to Roberto Segre et al. (1997: 267), in 1992 the room capacity in Cuba has increased by 40% compared with the number of rooms in 1991, and important joint ventures have invested in brand new 5- star hotels and tourist complexes. Cuba seems to have understood its advantages as an important provider of services. The so called categories of eco-tourism and health-tourism represent part of a sustainable alternative for developing tourism.

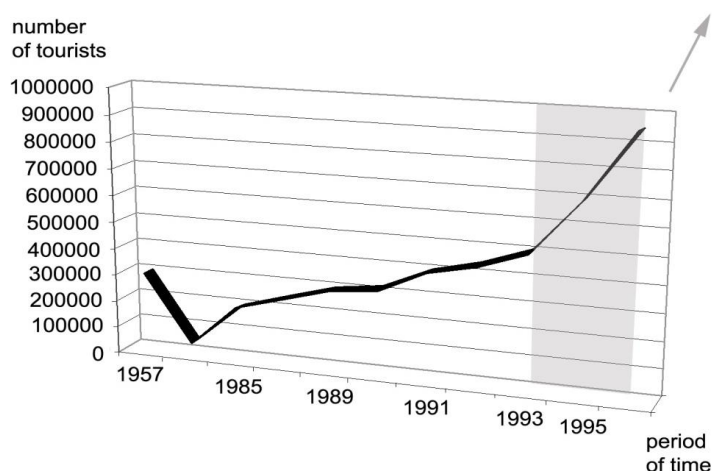


Figure 4.1 Tourist arrivals to Cuba. Emphasize on the rising trend from the 1990's untill nowadays
 Source: Segre, R, Coyulo, M, Scarpaci, J.L., 1997. Havana - Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis, Wiley, England.

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Havana is advertising itself again as a touristic city and is constantly increasing its capacity in tourist rooms and tourist facilities. The contradiction lies, as before, in the American period, in this desired image compared with the reality of daily lives. Streets are filled with poverty, prostitution, shabby buildings and begging, and black market activities proliferate. Public transport has been decimated and the most common way to travel is the bicycle. Since the change to the Special Period⁶ in 1993, living conditions have become worse each year. The «frantic search for the dollar» and the «new free-market wave» (Segre et al., 1997: 315) have changed the daily lives of habaneros as well as the policies of the state institutions. «The rush for new opportunity» is rapidly translated in the reconfiguration of city space. Urban design and planning departments have to face the challenge to keep the pace with the frenzy of building and the rapid change of functions in the city.

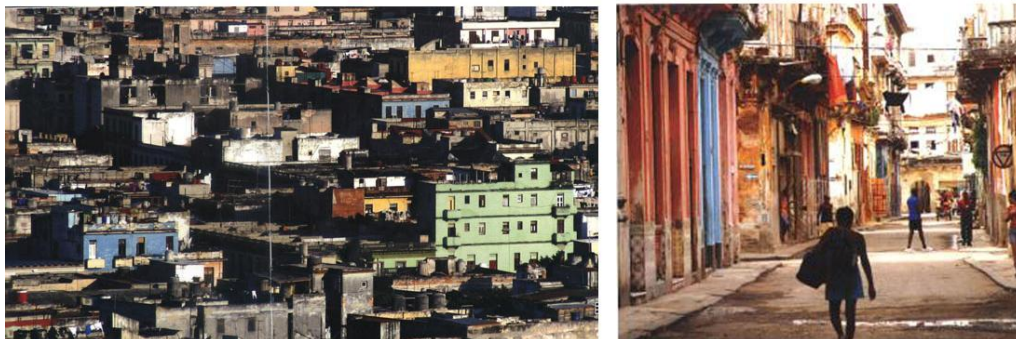
In fact Cuba's economy can be characterized as a dual one (second contradiction). On one hand, there is the old centralized state-run and nationalized part based on the meager pesos which is making life miserable to most of the ordinary people. Because of this, there is generalized poverty, a lack of infrastructure and goods which are generating important black market activities.

On the other hand, there is the US dollar – the symbol of a market oriented, privatized economy - which is in fact subsidizing the existent old system. Once with the opening of the market, foreign investments started to appear. One of their preferred targets is tourism. Joint ventures are reviving Havana's tourist industry and the Spanish capital is playing again an important role. Therefore, new hotels, clubs, casinos and foreign retail firms are springing up across the city. This is not a bad thing in itself but the rapid pace at which everything is happening is threatening to disequilibrate the city even more.

The dollar which is entering Havana's economy directly from tourist services brings secondary negative sides. Because habaneros who work in this field are not anymore forbidden to possess foreign currency, they can charge tourists for their different services in dollars. The direct consequence is that the people who are selling goods and services for tourists have a direct access to dollars and therefore can afford better living standards. In this way the social structure is also starting to change; a powerful capitalist class is arising little by little. Society has to face the transition from an egalitarian system to one in which the gap between poor and rich becomes important.

The second category of «services» which are developing owing to the dollar is represented by money launders, prostitution, begging and street crime.

Therefore, two simultaneous images coexist in the city. The first, with unrenovated houses and poor streets (Figure 4.2), belongs to the pesos while the glamorous image with new hotels, night clubs, casinos and cabarets as well as rehabilitated touristic sights is generated by the dollar.



6 According to Segre «Periodo Especial en el Tiempo de Paz» meant a set of five strategies implemented by the Cuban Government in order to cope with the critical situation. This included seeking out foreign investment through joint projects, implementing market strategies, rationalising consumer goods and public utilities. (p. 215)

*Figure 4.2 Unrenovated buildings, poor streets and poverty in present Havana
Source: Tüngler, B, Alonso, G, Visscher, 2007. Havana : the sleeping beauty. Jovis, Berlin*

One could sum up the entire structure of touristic Havana today. The actors involved are part of the political and economical system and segments of society. The most important elements in this process, the tourists, are the consumers. To attract them, foreign developers are building a new tourist infrastructure. Indirectly, the foreign retail firms selling in dollars are also contributing to the mechanism bringing to Havana lots of advertisement and glamorous shops which are

changing completely the atmosphere of some neighborhoods. The local government has encouraged these initiatives by fostering laws for foreign investment but the political system eroded by bureaucracy and corruption is not able to control the consequences of these actions; neither are the professionals, urban planners and designers. Fed by tourism, informal services and illegal activities provided by small sellers and money launders grow rapidly; prostitution proliferates, as well as increasing crime rates.

5. CONCLUSION

Havana, despite its restless history, was a flourishing city until 1958. The Spanish and the sugar aristocracy have enriched the city with colonial mansions and Eclectic palaces. Then, during the American Period, creative Art Deco and Modern buildings have contributed to the further prosperity of the city. Nevertheless, Havana became unique among Latin-American cities because from 1959 onwards its skyline changed little and the streets, blocks and houses remained in the same place. (Figure 5.1) Stagnation could be sensed in its urban heritage. The year 1993 has marked the reopening of the island and since then a period of transition has begun. (Figure 5.2)



Figure 5.1 Aerial view. Existing delapidated colonial and modern buildings

Source: Tüngler, B, Alonso, G, Visscher, 2007. Havana: the sleeping beauty. Jovis, Berlin

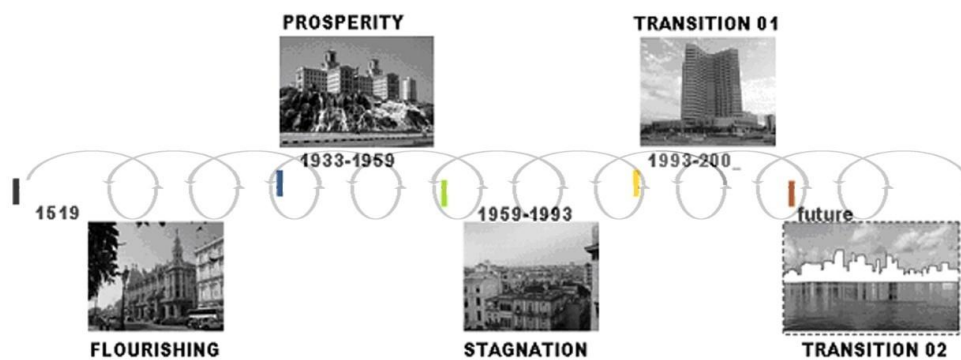


Figure 5.2 Space-time process

Now how is the future urban development of Havana going to be?

From the space analysis through time we could see that a prolonged stagnation due to the lack of free market activities is resulting in few possibilities to regenerate poor infrastructure and old technology. On the other hand, the quick drastic changes, the rapid capital injection in too many projects at once can also unbalance the city. We can conclude that neither of these extremes is doing well to the city.

The study made of the American period can give us some clues about the present situation. Processes are similar. *Mercantile capitalism* metamorphosed itself into nowadays *worldwide capitalism*. But what can be predicted watching the past? Will Havana experience another wave of rapid growth as it happened in the 1930's? Will another «Vedado» appear? Will the city expand even further with a rapid growth of population and with an important change of scale?

The last century represented a period of continuous political and economical transition in which rapid changes have transformed the spatial configuration of the city very fast, as never before. Today the globalization process could influence the transformation of the city into a modern, placeless skyline with high rise offices, retail and tourist complexes. (Figure 5.3) Cuba has begun to receive support from other Latin-American countries, China and the European Union, so it is hard to predict the influences this new kind of imperialism will have on the city.



Figure 5.3 Future Scenario. A strip of high-rise office buildings, luxury hotels and condominiums would reshape the waterfront

A second scenario would be the utopian ideal of restoring Havana, managing to preserve all the existent patrimony. The outcome will nevertheless depend on foreign investments, city politics and foreign support. And this will result in another problem: keeping the balance, between the power of money and the power of residents of Havana to decide for their city. In both cases as Segre (Segre et al., 1997: 327) was arguing «*only by reviving the economy, guaranteeing modest levels of individual well-being, and orchestrating some aspect of the city new private initiatives towards a common goal, will the shining face of Havana's streets and plazas reappear*». Real changes will only appear when the society will be ready to comprehend the new process and react accordingly.

The most important contradiction of this period in Havana lies in a cyclic mechanism which is developing as follows: first, foreign capital is attracted to Havana by the new free market economy and its advantageous circumstances. The city's architectural treasures are generators of tourism and, in return, tourism represents a chance for the city. But in the rush for new opportunities the invested money starts to reshape city's forms and content dramatically. Speculators and real-estate developers are waiting eagerly to retake Havana's state-owned land after more than 45 years. Developments in form of high-rise condominiums and hotels can be seen everywhere and profit is the most important word. At this point chance may turn into threat. The spatial configuration of the city might be changed so drastically that the very reason for tourism is disappearing. The danger lies in this state of transition from communism to a new socialism or to capitalism (it is impossible to predict) in which state structures are weak and corrupted. Therefore, there are less restrictions and everything is possible. As transition can be defined as «a state of instability with uncertain outcome» (Blau, Rupnik, 2007: 9) we can understand why the evidence of wild, «illegal» building is so evident in the ex-communists states and we can predict what could also happen with Havana.

Havana's vocation as a touristic center is supported by its strengths. Nowadays, when cities worldwide are competing with each other and city-marketing plays a key role in economy and politics, Havana could have a tremendous advantage: a strong identity and unique attractiveness



for worldwide tourism. New opportunities could arise in case the U.S. *embargo* is abolished. Its strategic position and incredible island landscape would make the city very attractive to U.S. tourism industry. On the other hand, the raised questions are underlying threats: would the spatial planning techniques cope with the market economy? Will Havana continue the process of «*miamization*» stopped in 1959? Will it lose its charm and cultural heritage? How can we judge if Havana's tourism represents a chance or threat?

This is a problem of «organized complexity» (Jacobs, 1992: 434) which could be answered just in a further, extended research.

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