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# Deconstructing the Dual City: Preservation and Tourism in La Habana Vieja

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VASSAR COLLEGE

# Deconstructing the Dual City: Preservation and Tourism in La Habana Vieja



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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies

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Leslie Offutt  
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# Chapter 1. Introduction

In my thesis, I explore the preservation of Havana's UNESCO World Heritage Site: Old Havana and its Fortifications and the reintroduction of tourism after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Though propelling Cuba into the global economy, the efforts to conserve the island's built and cultural heritage fueled the revolutionary's imperative to create a national Cuban identity and fund the social domestic programs promised by the revolution. Work to restore architectural heritage and market Havana's historic center as a tourist destination facilitated the creation of a distinct narrative of the Cuban experience. The expansion of tourism created a dual city within La Habana Vieja, as well as other historic Cuban sites.

While scholars and the global audience debate the contradictions inherent in Cuba's dual economy, the restoration of the colonial city contributes to the nationalism and pride essential to the perpetuation of the socialist political ideology. The city itself, which has survived colonial rule, independence, and the Revolution, is a monument to the ability of the Cuban people to survive and persevere. Though contradictions exist between the revolutionary ideology and the expansion of tourism, the conflicts between tourist and locals within Cuba are often reduced to a simplistic dichotomy between capitalism and socialism. However, that view privileges the assumption that only one ideology can prevail, echoing a limited Cold War perspective. In order to accurately unpack the complicated interaction between socialism and tourism, previous expectations must be adapted to the present Cuban reality: a post-Fidel, post-Special Period socialism that has transformed along with the continually changing global political economy.

In March 2012, along with forty other Vassar students and three professors, I visited Cuba for two weeks. As tourists, we experienced first hand most elements of the island's state-run tourism: hotels, transportation, restaurants, and our own trained tour guide. In Havana,

the spatial boundaries between tourists and locals felt exaggerated by two distinct currencies. With a representative from the Office of the City Historian, we toured Old Havana, the historical center of the city. The line between what had been restored and what had been left untouched was apparent aesthetically, through the cobblestones on the street, the aesthetic appearance of the buildings themselves, and the amount of trash lining the street. Having never before noticed the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation, while traveling in Cuba I heard the term dropped frequently by tour guides in Havana, Trinidad, and Cienfuegos. Questions about the stark divide I witnessed throughout my time on the island persuaded me to explore the history of restoration and the challenges facing Cuban socialism as the nation enters the global economy.

As a young American born after the Cold War and with a clear memory of Elián González on my TV screen, I have become increasingly aware of my own limitations as a subject of capitalist discourse. My pre-travel perception of Cuba was shaped by the anti-Cuban rhetoric of the United States and conceptions of Fidel Castro as a dictator. In reading what I have written, I urge the reader to look beyond the antagonistic relationship of Cuba and the United States.

Researching Cuba proves challenging for a number of reasons. Internet resources within Cuba are limited, and thus important newspapers like *Granma* proved inaccessible after 1992. Few voices can extend beyond the island, outside of the official statements made by the government. Ignoring the U.S. embargo against Cuba is impossible; claims regarding the blockade are included in most press articles published. Even if not explicitly mentioned, the possible political motivation behind media and academic work must be acknowledged.

My analysis begins in the 1990s, as Fidel Castro announced the initiation of a Special Period. Determining finite dates for the end of the Special Period is difficult. In an

introduction to her edited collection of essays about Cuba in the 1990s, Ariana Hernández-Reguant commented that the Cuban government had yet to formally end the Special Period. In both 2001 and 2005, Castro suggested that the Special Period was ongoing.<sup>1</sup> However, many scholars present Cuba as transitioning out of the Special Period. With the election of Raúl Castro in 2008, remarkably shifts in policy have occurred. While some refer primarily to the 1990s as the Special Period, others mark its end as late as 2006.<sup>2</sup> I refer to present Cuba as post-Special Period since the beginning of Raúl Castro's presidency, in order to acknowledge the changes that have occurred since the early 1990s. However, confusion among scholars over the true end to the Special Period reflects larger uncertainty about the economic, social, and political direction the country is moving.

The work of G.J. Ashworth helped shape my own thinking about tourism within the historic city. His publications, often co-authored with J.E. Tunbridge, provided in depth analysis of the formulation of heritage in urban spaces. In order to better understand Cuba's urban geography, I frequently turned to Joseph L. Scarpaci, especially his books *Plazas and Barrios* (2005) and *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (2002) co-authored by Roberto Segre and Mario Coyula. Additionally, Scarpaci's numerous articles explored the complicated layers of heritage and tourism in the Cuban capital. His critical analysis of the restoration efforts and current model of urban planning greatly influenced my own complex perspectives of the dual city. Almost every additional publication cited Scarpaci, suggesting the influence of Scarpaci's voice in conversations about Havana, both on and off the island.

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<sup>1</sup> Ariana Hernández-Reguant, "Writing the Special Period: An Introduction," in *Cuba in the Special Period: Culture and Ideology in the 1990s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1; Philip Brenner, Marguerite Rose Jiménez, John M. Kirk, and William M. LeoGrande, "Appendix," in *A Contemporary Cuba Reader: Reinventing the Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008) 398.

Due to limitations of length and time, my own analysis fails to address the racial and ethnic divisions present in contemporary Havana. However, I encourage the reader to turn to *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha: An ethnography of racial meanings* (2011) by L. Kaifa Roland and *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989* (2011) edited by Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield. Both treat the complicated question of Cuban identity in the face of tourism.

Urban tourism has recently become a popular field of study recently, within both tourism-focused and urban-focused disciplines. However with few exceptions, the relationship between tourism and planning in socialist countries remains relatively unexplored.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Cuba's interest in tourism has been a critical part of its economic "rebirth," and thus received a fair amount of academic attention. In writing this thesis, I turned to such sources in addition to as many documents and websites produced by the Office of the City Historian of Havana as I could find access to.

My thesis begins with an introduction to La Habana Vieja. I offer a brief historical overview as well as discuss the processes of restoration during the Special Period and the reintroduction of tourism as a strategy to combat the deep economic crisis following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

I continue in the third chapter, where I consider how the preservation and restoration of the colonial core, as well as the expansion of international tourism serve to perpetuate a distinct Cuban narrative, and the ways in which the institutions enacting La Habana Vieja's transformation have become part of the narrative.

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<sup>3</sup> Jesús M. González, Eduardo Salinas, Enrique Navarro, Antoni A. Artigues, Ricardo Remond, Ismael Yrigo, Maité Echarri and Yanira Arias, "The City of Varadero (Cuba) and the Urban Constriction of a Tourist Enclave," *Urban Affairs Review* 50:2 (2014) 215.



In the fourth chapter, I address the characterization of Havana as a dual city divided between tourist and host. In introducing the inhabited experience of the city, I evaluate the effect of the CUC as well as the effectiveness of the 'two city' metaphor within La Habana Vieja.

In the fifth chapter, I conclude that while the economy operates within a dichotomy, reducing La Habana Vieja to a simplistic dualism negates the complexities of all urban transformations and the multiplicity of factors constructing the present reality of La Habana Vieja.

The future is unclear for La Habana Vieja, as well as for the rest of Cuba. As the Cuban government continues to enact legislation aimed at decreasing economic inequalities and global attitudes towards the island continue to shift, the charismatic leaders who embodied the Revolution and pursued the restoration of Havana's historic center approach retirement. The Cuban revolution has transformed since its triumph in 1959 and the implications of current reforms cannot yet be determined.

# Chapter 2. The Transformation of La Habana Vieja

## The History of Havana

In 1514, Spanish explorers founded San Cristóbal de la Habana on the southwestern shore of Cuba. Five years later, the settlers moved the city to its present location on the Carenas Port on the northern coast of the island. Positioned strategically, the settlement became a vital point on the transatlantic route between Europe and North America.<sup>4</sup> During the second half of the sixteenth century, the Spanish built three fortifications to protect La Habana: Real Fuerza, Tres Reyes del Morro, and San Salvador de la Punta.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the colonial period, the city evolved in an organized grid pattern with houses constructed around five central squares and the city was further fortified.<sup>6</sup> A wall, *intramuros*, was constructed in the mid-eighteenth century, enclosing the fifty thousand inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> The introduction and popularity of sugar in the late eighteenth century prompted the development of Havana as an essential port, commercializing the colonial center.<sup>8</sup> Over the next century, the city grew beyond the limits of the wall, eventually leading to the wall's destruction in 1863. Havana's urban population reached 170 thousand inhabitants by 1870 in a built area of seven square kilometers. Cuba finally achieved independence from Spanish rule in 1898.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the city experienced extensive urban growth, especially to the west. Development spread along the seafront, establishing Centro Habana,

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<sup>4</sup> Nick Bailey, "The Challenge and Response to Global Tourism in the Post-modern Era: The Commodification, Reconfiguration and Mutual Transformation of Habana Vieja, Cuba," *Urban Studies Journal* 45: 5-6 (2008) 1082.

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Colantonio and Robert B. Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development in the Socialist State: Havana during the 'Special Period'* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006) 65.

<sup>6</sup> Bailey, "The Challenge and Response," 1082.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *Una Experiencia Singular: Valoraciones sobre El Modelo De Gestion Integral de La Habana Vieja, Patrimonio De La Humanidad* (A Singular Experience: Appraisals of the Integral Management Model of Old Havana, World Heritage Site) (Havana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, 2006) 13.

<sup>8</sup> Chase, Michelle. "The Country and the City in the Cuban Revolution," *Colombia Internacional* 73 (2011) 125.

and low-density housing expanded to the suburbs of El Vedado and Miramar, introducing a variety of architectures: Art Nouveau, Art Deco and modernism. The construction of a seafront wall, La Malecón, began in 1901. Havana's growth mirrored the configurations of other Latin American cities, with government offices and commercial business inhabiting the colonial core as a growing population of urban poor lived within improvised housing just beyond the city's limits.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly, American tourists frequented Havana, becoming notorious visitors to their own southern "playground."<sup>10</sup> Hotels and high-rises were built to sustain the influx of tourists. Development extended to the east of the city, across the bay, connected by a newly constructed tunnel. By the 1950s, Havana had established a reputation as one of the most modern cities in the Caribbean. Skyscrapers and post-war period cars characterized the Cuban city. The primarily American-owned sugar sector increased the cultural influence of consumerism on the capital city. Some Cuban leaders eagerly endorsed the "Floridazation" of the island, while others strongly discouraged the US's overwhelming presence. At midcentury, the future of the city seemed clear: continued urban growth, either through industrialization or through the increasing growth of the service sector.<sup>11</sup> Prior to 1959, Havana bustled with high densities, tourism, and political corruption.

The triumph of the revolution in 1959 transformed Havana both physically and symbolically, as the new government promised to reduce the spatial disparities between the urban and rural populations. Government policies after 1959 encouraged "a minimum of urbanization and a maximum of ruralization."<sup>12</sup> Rather than follow the global trend of urban modernization and increasing differentiation between urban and rural society, the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> L. Kaifa Roland, "Tourism and the commodification of Cubanidad," *Tourist Studies* 10:3 (2010) 14.

<sup>11</sup> Chase, "The Country and the City," 126.

<sup>12</sup> Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield, "Introduction," in *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) 3.

revolutionary government emphasized increasing facilities and expanding social services in rural Cuba. Fidel Castro had characterized Havana as “an overdeveloped capital in a completely underdeveloped country,” and rural Cuba, especially the Sierra Maestra as the setting of revolutionary organization and activity, came to be seen as a site of “transformative power” for the Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Yet Havana remained undeniably the cultural and political heart of the island.<sup>14</sup>

Castro attempted early in his government to transform the bourgeois *habanero* culture. In efforts to deter processes of super-urbanization, Castro publicly condemned the rampant corruption in the city while praising hardworking agrarian labor. In the late 1950s, one-fifth of the Cuban population lived in Havana.<sup>15</sup> Prior to the revolution’s success, Havana had been the center of industrial production and was the sole location for higher education opportunities.<sup>16</sup> The revolutionary government began to implement policies such as the Agrarian reform early on to increase the allure of rural life.<sup>17</sup> The government shifted resources that had previously been limited to urban areas to the rest of the island, specifically healthcare and education resources.<sup>18</sup>

## The Inscription and Restoration of La Habana Vieja

The task of preserving Havana’s historic architecture began twenty-five years before the revolution succeeded. In 1935, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring became the first City Historian of Havana.<sup>19</sup> In his role, Roig de Leuchsenring acted defensively, working as an advocate for the

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<sup>13</sup> Chase, “The Country and the City,” 127.

<sup>14</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 107.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba under Castro* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 151.

<sup>16</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Eckstein, *Back from the Future*, 152.

<sup>18</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Toft, “Old Havana as an Exemplary Case of World Heritage Protection,” *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 3:1 (2011) 34.

protection of La Habana Vieja from future destruction.<sup>20</sup> A decade later, the Cuban government designated Old Havana “a protected zone.”<sup>21</sup> Yet few restorative or protective efforts were made. In 1967, Roig’s assistant, Eusebio Leal Spengler, was promoted to City Historian. When Leal took office, La Habana Vieja faced a demographic shift in its residents, in addition to decaying infrastructure and crime. Havana’s citizens and government developed negative views towards the historic center as the conditions of the buildings and streets deteriorated, forcing Leal to act as a persuasive advocate for its architectural beauty and unique value. Leal first undertook the restoration of the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, which ultimately became the City Museum of Havana.<sup>22</sup> The completion of the project drew international attention, leading to a beneficial partnership in 1976 between the Cuban Ministry of Culture and the regional United Nations Development program, which provided US\$1 million over five years, helping to establish the National Center of Conservation, Restoration, and Museology (Centro Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museología or CENCREM) in the early 1980s and elevate the international prominence of Havana.<sup>23</sup> In the following years, the National Assembly of State passed two acts calling for the protection of cultural heritage and establishing the Ministry of Culture.<sup>24</sup>

By the 1980s, Havana appeared a different city than its former republican self. Although Leal had begun a few rehabilitation projects and garnered some international interest, the Cuban government neglected the historic center, instead focusing attention on building housing developments and factories on the outskirts.<sup>25</sup> La Habana Vieja exhibited extreme

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<sup>20</sup> Juliet Barclay, “Havana’s Renaissance,” *Cuba Absolutely*, February 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Toft, “Old Havana as an Exemplary Case,” 34.

<sup>22</sup> Barclay, “Havana’s Renaissance.”

<sup>23</sup> Toft, “Old Havana as an Exemplary Case,” 35.

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *Una Experiencia Singular*, vii; Fornet Gil, “Twenty-five years,” 205.

<sup>25</sup> Sheila R. Foster, “From Harlem to Havana: Sustainable Urban Development,” *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* 16 (2003) 783-831 and Moore, John, “Havana’s architecture a mix of crumbling, shining new,” *The Associated Press*, September 5, 1998.

poverty and poor living conditions for its 74,000 residents.<sup>26</sup> Though subject to decades of abandonment, unlike more developed cities, Havana was spared the historically destructive waves of redevelopment experienced by European and American cities.<sup>27</sup> In 1981, Leal authored the first five-year plan for the restoration of La Habana Vieja. The government pledged ten million dollars to the project and UNESCO contributed two hundred thousand dollars.<sup>28</sup> Leal applied to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (WHC) to designate Old Havana a site of international cultural value and in 1982, “Old Havana and its System of Fortresses” was added to the list.<sup>29</sup> The WHC set spatial limitations, incorporating the colonial center within the walled remains, the network of fortresses, and a portion of Las Murallas neighborhood built in the 19th century.<sup>30</sup> The site covered 2.14 square kilometers and includes 900 important works of architecture among a total of approximately 4,000 buildings.<sup>31</sup> With new international support, the Office of the City Historian of Havana began drafting plans for the restoration and protection of the historic center.<sup>32</sup> In 1985, an American reporter commented:

Along the oceanfront boulevard in downtown Havana workmen are scraping the facades of colonial style buildings, getting them ready for fresh coats of paint. Heavy Russian paving machines are resurfacing some of the streets and new traffic signals are being

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<sup>26</sup> David Adams, “Reviving Havana,” *St. Petersburg Times*, September 10, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Bailey, “The Challenge and Response,” 1083.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Spruce up is giving Old Havana its old sparkle,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1985.

<sup>29</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *A Singular Experience*, ix. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945 after World War II. In 1972, UNESCO established the World Heritage Convention (WHC), responsible for a list of World Heritage Sites in which participation nations could nominate sites within their territories for “outstanding universal value.” The list includes sites for both cultural and natural recognition (G.F. Araoz, “World-Heritage Historic Urban Landscapes: Defining and Protecting Authenticity,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 39:2 (2008) 35).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph L. Scarpaci, Roberto Segre and Mario Coyula, *Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 314.

<sup>31</sup> Juliet Barclay, “Castro’s Revolution of Restoration,” *The Independent*, December 12, 1990.

<sup>32</sup> Fornet Gil, “Twenty-five years,” 305.

installed. After years of neglect, the Cuban capital, a gray and dreary shadow of what is said to have once been the most beautiful city in the Caribbean, is getting a facelift.<sup>33</sup>

The Office initiated efforts to beautify the Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de Armas and principal streets: Mercaderes, Tacón, and Obispo.<sup>34</sup> The foreign press remarked on the limitations of the project: “paint...of poor quality...in short supply.” Visitors called the aging architecture “decrepit and crowded.”<sup>35</sup> Alongside internal efforts to rehabilitate the dilapidated center, an international campaign hoped to save and protect Plaza Vieja, a project begun by UNESCO’s Director General in 1982.<sup>36</sup> The Office began restoration of the square in 1985, but the economic crisis following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 disrupted any hope for further government funding and the project was halted.<sup>37</sup>

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Cuban economy nearly collapsed, raising practical questions about the future of socialism on the island. Previously, the Cuban government relied on trade and subsidies from the Soviet Union in order to sustain its economy. From 1989 to 1993, the Gross Domestic Product fell 34.8%, consumption decreased by 30%, and individual caloric intake declined 40%.<sup>38</sup> In the early 1990s, Cuba was plagued by fuel shortages, diminished production, and new questions about the future of the revolution in the post-Soviet era.<sup>39</sup> On July 26, 1990, Fidel Castro announced the onset of a ‘Special Period in a Time of Peace,’ officially recognizing the need for rationing and economic changes.<sup>40</sup> The economic

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph B. Treaster, “Havana, long gray, getting a facelift,” *The New York Times*, June 23, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> Natalie Kaiser, “La Habana es La Habana: Tourism, heritage, and symbolic space in Havana, Cuba,” (Master’s thesis, McGill University, 2010) 90.

<sup>35</sup> William R. Long, “Restoration, Refurbishing, New Paint Adding Sparkle to Drab Havana,” *Los Angeles Times* April 20, 1986.

<sup>36</sup> Fornet Gil, “Twenty-five years,” 305.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Cynthia Benzing, “Cuba-Is the ‘Special Period’ Really Over?” *International Advances in Economic Research* 11 (2005) 70.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Brenner et al, “Appendix,” 394.

crisis distracted Cuban leadership from any restoration projects until 1993, when Jonathon Glancey, a British reporter, toured Old Havana with a Cuban conservationist. As they made their way through the historic sector, a building collapsed. A week later, he wrote:

To say that Havana is collapsing is to state the obvious. It is even more obvious when the building you are about to enter falls down in front of you. One moment Victor Marín, one of the city's leading architectural conservationists, is reciting the faded glories of the arcaded 18th century merchant's house that occupies the north-west corner of Plaza Vieja, one of the oldest and most elegant squares in the Americas. The next, the building crumbles and falls as quickly and quietly as a house of cards.

The same day, a second building collapsed along the Malecón. Glancey's article called international attention to the country's inability to maintain its architectural infrastructure.<sup>41</sup> Glancey blamed trade sanctions imposed by the United States for pressuring the retraction of international funds aimed towards improving Plaza Vieja.

Following the building's collapse, the Cuban government issued Decree 143, changing the administrative structure of the Office of the City Historian and making the Office directly subordinate to the Council of State rather than the Municipality of Havana. Under this decree, the Office gained new financial parameters and could seek international investments for rehabilitation projects. The law specified a Priority Zone for Conservation within La Habana Vieja.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, with newfound authority, the Office created its own enterprise system aimed at expanding tourism: Habaguanex S.A.<sup>43</sup> Habaguanex maintained a unique status on the island as one of the few Cuban companies able to manage dollar-operated facilities, yet not required to forward profits to the central legislative body of the State, the National Assembly. Habaguanex maintains the ability to negotiate directly with foreign investors, instead of operating through the Ministry of Foreign Investments. With significant fiscal autonomy and

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<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Glancey, "Walls came tumbling down," *The Independent* October 20, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, "Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral," *Plan Maestro para la Revitalización Integral de la Habana Vieja*, June 2011, 35.

<sup>43</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *A Singular Experience*, 48.



ability to work independent of the centralized decision-making processes, Habaguanex has substantial influence in socialist Cuba.<sup>44</sup> New companies were formed, further delegating the responsibilities of new tourism: Fénix and Aurea Real Estate Companies, San Cristóbal Travel Agency, Puerto de Carena Construction Company, La Begoña, and Monuments Restoration.<sup>45</sup>

Habaguanex oversaw the restoration of buildings and subsequent creation of bars, restaurants, and hotels for tourist consumption.<sup>46</sup> The Office of the City Historian remained the main shareholder, thus retaining power over the company with the City Historian himself, Leal, as Habaguanex's CEO.<sup>47</sup> The First Master Plan for the Integral Rehabilitation of Old Havana in 1994 guaranteed to preserve "social and spatial balance" in the historical core.<sup>48</sup> Following the expansion of the Office's authority, work began on restoring structurally weak buildings and dilapidated public spaces. Habaguanex focused on Calle Obispo, the pedestrian boulevard Prado, and four major plazas: San Francisco, Vieja, Catedral, and Armas (Appendix A).<sup>49</sup> Seeking foreign investors, Habaguanex organized joint-stock ventures with specific projects, often working with for-profit European companies and non-profit organizations devoted to the preservation of historic architecture.<sup>50</sup> New Cuban laws made tourist ventures attractive to non-Cuban investors. A new foreign investment stipulation, Law 77 passed in 1995, mandated that payments to Cuban workers be made in the national currency, not the

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph L. Scarpaci, "Reshaping Havana Vieja: Revitalization, Historic Preservation, and Restructuring in the Socialist City," *Urban Geography* 21:8 (2000) 728.

<sup>45</sup> Scarpaci et al, *Havana: Two Faces*, 342.

<sup>46</sup> Bailey, "The Challenge and Response," 1088.

<sup>47</sup> Scarpaci, "Reshaping Havana Vieja," 728; Toft, "Old Havana as an Exemplary Case," 38.

<sup>48</sup> Fornet Gil, "Twenty-five years," 307.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph L. Scarpaci, "Urban Heritage, Representation and Planning: Comparative Approaches in Habana Vieja and Trinidad, Cuba," in *On Location: Heritage Cities and Sites*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2001) 77.

<sup>50</sup> Scarpaci, "Reshaping Havana Vieja," 732.

convertible peso thus offering cheap labor to any foreign partners.<sup>51</sup> Though the island cautiously and selectively reopened to the external world economy and invited international



Figure 1 and 2: Plaza Vieja before restoration  
(Source: *Para No Olvidar*, Eusebio Leal Spengler)



Figure 3: Plaza Vieja after restoration  
(Source: *Para No Olvidar*)

tourism, Cuba still retained control over the process of restoration and maintained a limitation on investment. First, Habaguanex embarked on the transformation of the former Lonja del Comercio building into a new office complex, a \$13 million project financed by Habaguanex and a Spanish firm, Argentaria, which was completed on July 31, 1996.<sup>52</sup> One of the most important projects was the rehabilitation of Plaza Vieja, where Glancey had witnessed Teniente Rey 60 collapse before his eyes

in 1993. The mid-sixteenth century square once housed a thriving market. In the age of the automobile, an underground parking garage had been built below the plaza, raising the plaza itself about a meter above street level. The Office of the City Historian demolished the garage and

<sup>51</sup> Joseph L. Scarpaci, "Winners and losers in restoring Old Havana," in *Cuba in Transition*, 10, Papers and Proceedings of the 10th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, University of Texas (2000) 293.

<sup>52</sup> Pascal Fletcher, "Old Havana seeks new look: Cuba's decaying capital is turning to western developers to restore its former glory," *Financial Times* August 31, 1996: 3.

renovated the public square.<sup>53</sup>

In 1995, the Council of Ministers approved Agreement 2951, which distinguished a designated zone for tourist development within La Habana Vieja.<sup>54</sup> Renovation began on



Figure 4: Restoration work  
(Source: *Para No Olvidar*)

Hotel Saratoga in 1998. Financed partly by a joint British-Lebanese company, the hotel was remade into a luxury destination.<sup>55</sup> The façade was stabilized and retained, while the building's interior was destroyed.<sup>56</sup> Controversy arose from the restoration of another project, Hotel Parque Central, funded by a Dutch operation, Golden Tulip. The firm conducted a design competition, eventually choosing the work of a Spanish architect.

Cuban architects expressed their

frustration with the design, which called for the destruction of most of the structure and little reference to the locational context within the city of Havana.<sup>57</sup>

The Office continued to complete significant restorations in La Habana Vieja throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The renovation visibly transformed the historic center and impacted the local community in a variety of ways. Leal described the Office's dedication to

Figure 5: Restoration work  
(Source: *Para No Olvidar*)



<sup>53</sup> Fornet Gil, "Twenty-five years," 307.

<sup>54</sup> Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, "Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral," 35.

<sup>55</sup> Bailey, "The Challenge and Response," 1089.

<sup>56</sup> Scarpaci, "Winners and losers," 293.

<sup>57</sup> Bailey, "The Challenge and Response," 1090; Scarpaci, "Reshaping Havana Vieja," 731.

the quality of life in the *barrio*,

We have brought life back to every neighborhood in all aspects, as a worthy place to live where schools, cultural institutions, and health facilities proliferate. Resurrecting what once seemed to be lifeless provokes confused looks at such a romantic crusade. And even if it were that way, we would not feign ignorance nor feel ashamed of being romantics in an age defined by apocalyptic events. Our work projects other forms of hope: that which is born from recovering memory, from dreams shared by many to create a new order.<sup>58</sup>

The neighborhood rehabilitation has led to the establishment of social and education

programs for the community. In 2001, Leal estimated that a third of the profits gained by



Figure 6 (left): Convent of Belén before restoration  
Figure 7 (right): Convent of Belén after restoration  
(Source: *Para No Olvidar*)

tourism in the neighborhood are

reinvested in community development

projects, including renovations of public

schools, building a public library, and

providing parks for local children. The

1718 Convent of Belén was transformed

into a care center for the elderly.<sup>59</sup>

The rehabilitation of La Habana

Vieja continues to remain the central goal

of the Office of the City Historian. The presence of international investment and the Office's

ability to act unilaterally were clear departures pre-Special Period restoration efforts. With

dramatic shifts in funding and methodology, the Office of the City Historian received great

acclaim for the transformation undertaken.<sup>60</sup> In 2006, Herman van Hooff, director of

UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Culture in Latin American and Caribbean, released a bilingual

book detailing and appraising the tremendous restoration efforts of Office of the City

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Scarpaci, "Urban Heritage, Representation, and Planning," 76.

<sup>59</sup> Adams, "Reviving Havana."

<sup>60</sup> Orlando Matos, "Cuba: Old Havana heritage Site Restoration wins Applause," *Global Information Network* (New York) October 24, 2006.

Historian. In reviewing the work of the Office's processes, Van Hooff deemed the experience "profitable in social terms" for the neighborhood. Van Hooff cited the Office's commitment to building temporary residences for displaced families, maintenance of housing conditions, and careful planning as contributing to the wellbeing of inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> Van Hooff commended Cuba's model enterprise system, which allowed for a unique international support opportunity. The book concludes with a plea for further aid and investment for the remaining two-thirds of Old Havana that had yet to be restored.

In addition to garnering international support for the restoration process, the Office also carried out its own media campaign to gain local support for the admittedly disruptive process of rehabilitation. In 1996, the Office began distributing *Opus Habana*, as well as operating its own radio station, Habana Radio: "the voice of Cuban heritage." The Office even established its own publishing house, Editorial Boloña.<sup>62</sup> Along with other efforts to integrate the community into the ongoing restoration efforts, the Office began offering a workshop, Taller San Isidro, teaching the practice of restoring old buildings. In 2001, Leal conducted Rutas y Andares, walks for residents to learn about the history and preservation of their *barrio*.<sup>63</sup> The introduction of restoration programs also offered employment opportunities for local inhabitants. As of 2000, the reconstruction projects of La Habana Vieja employed three thousand construction workers, many of who lived in the neighborhood itself.<sup>64</sup>

As the Office of the City Historian and its leader, Leal, revived La Habana Vieja with the application of foreign currency and dramatic institutional restructuring, the Cuban

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<sup>61</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *Una Experiencia Singular: Valoraciones sobre El Modelo De Gestion Integral de La Habana Vieja, Patrimonio De La Humanidad* (Havana: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, 2006) 155.

<sup>62</sup> Habana Radio, "Habana radio: La voz del patrimonio cubano," [www.habanaradio.cu](http://www.habanaradio.cu).

<sup>63</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *A Singular Experience*, 62.

<sup>64</sup> Scarpaci, "Reshaping Habana Vieja," 728.

government concurrently sought tourism as a temporary, and now more permanent, solution to the economic crisis of the Special Period.

## The Reintroduction of Tourism as a Strategy

Tourism was not completely absent after 1959, however the expansion in the 1990s proved a remarkable shift from prior tourist ventures. Tourism was first formally identified as a central development strategy in Havana in the Second Five Year Plan (1981-85), with La Habana Vieja as the focal point.<sup>65</sup> In 1989, Fidel Castro spoke of plans to develop tourism in Cuba:

We have been developing tourism throughout the country. We also want to promote tourism in this province, not only in this city, which has many attractions as an old city with many architectural treasures that we must cherish and preserve [and] ...has been declared a patrimony of mankind by the UNESCO...We are going to study ways to [words indistinct] source of foreign exchange income. We will take advantage of its attitude and...we will combine domestic use and international tourism. We have not made any final decision on this, but we are thinking of ways for this project to become a kind of gold mine through which the country can obtain foreign exchange.<sup>66</sup>

While the tourism industry remained under State control, the Cuban government established its first autonomous state enterprise, Cubanacan S.A., in 1987 in order to enhance the managerial tourism infrastructure on the island.<sup>67</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union heightened the demand for a source of foreign currency. Andrea Colantonio and Robert B. Potter, in their book *Urban Tourism and Development in the Socialist State: Havana during the 'Special Period,'* assert that tourism was initially sought as a temporary solution, until 1994, when it became a “driving economic force” leading Cuba out of its economic crisis.<sup>68</sup> The same year, the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) was established in order to support the state

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<sup>65</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 109.

<sup>66</sup> Fidel Castro. Speech, Sancti Spiritus Province, Cuba on May 7, 1989 reported by Pzequiel Perez Martin in “Inauguration of 500 Social and Economic Works,” *Havana International Service*, May 8, 1989. Retrieved from Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1989/19890506-1.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Victoria Carty. “Capitalist Measures within a Socialist Model: A commodity chains analysis of the emerging Cuban tourism industry,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 34:67 (2009) 169.

<sup>68</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 4.

run tourism enterprises. Under the umbrella of MINTUR, many state agencies thrived: five hotel chains; a transportation company; a chain of retail stores, Caracol; two travel agencies, Cubatur and Cubanacan Viajes; and Formatur, an institution developed for the instruction and training of the tourism workforce.<sup>69</sup> The number of foreign visitors on the island increased from 340,100 visitors in 1990 to over a million in 1996.<sup>70</sup> By 1997, tourism replaced sugar as the country's largest industry. As the number of tourists dramatically increased, Cuba built accommodations to meet the demand of new visitors. In 1990, only 3,122 hotel rooms were available for tourist accommodation in Havana. By 2001, that figure had quadrupled.<sup>71</sup> In 1990, the industry employed just 52,000 workers. In 2000, the tourism industry supported 100,000 employees. The government continued to pursue joint ventures as the primary means of funding the expansion of tourist infrastructure.<sup>72</sup>

Cuba appealed directly to niches in the tourism market, developing programs for eco-tourism, beach tourism, education tourism, heritage tourism, architectural and cultural tourism, and health tourism.<sup>73</sup> Havana reestablished itself as the center of international tourism, already outfitted with needed facilities, proximity to beaches, and rich colonial heritage.<sup>74</sup> The Cuban government also promoted the development of Varadero, a 22-kilometer peninsula, well known for its beaches.<sup>75</sup> As the nation's capital, Havana also remained the sole entry point for visitors with José Martí International Airport.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Carty, "Capitalist Measures within a Socialist Model," 170-171.

<sup>70</sup> Colantonio and Potter, *Urban Tourism and Development*, 38.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>73</sup> Florence E. Babb, "Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 30:1 (2011) 54.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Louis Taylor and Linda McGlynn, "International tourism in Cuba: Can capitalism be used to save socialism?" *Futures* 41:6 (2009) 408.

<sup>75</sup> Philip Peters, "International Tourism: The New Engine of the Cuban Economy" *Lexington Institute*, December 2002, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



Similar to other less developed countries, the Cuban government sought the inscription of UNESCO World Heritage Sites as a means of promoting the cultural assets of the island on a global stage and appealing to international tourists.<sup>77</sup> After La Habana Vieja in 1982, Trinidad and the nearby Valley de los Ingenios was inscribed in 1988. After the onset of the Special Period, five more heritage sites were recognized along with two natural landscapes: San Pedro de la Roca Castle in Santiago de Cuba, 1997; the Viñales Valley, 1999; Desembarco del Granma National Park, 1999; the Archeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations in



Figure 8 : A map of Cuba's 9 UNESCO World Heritage Sites  
Yellow/Cultural, Green/Natural (Source: whc.unesco.org)

the South-East of Cuba, 2000; Alejandro de Humboldt National Park, 2001; the Urban Historic Centre of Cienfuegos, 2005; and the Historic Centre of

Camagüey, 2008.<sup>78</sup> Currently a total of nine inscribed sites attract tourists who seek an exploration of Cuban heritage. The island's strong UNESCO World Heritage presence distinguishes Cuba as a country of cultural and historical significance within the Caribbean and Latin America. Cuba's effort to assert its heritage also reflects a deliberate expansion from pre-revolutionary tourism, typically characterized by resorts, beaches, and corruption. The reintroduction of tourism during the Special Period reestablished the presence of resorts along

<sup>77</sup> Currently, approximately sixty percent of all UNESCO World Heritage Sites are located within 'less-developed' countries (Dillon J. Timothy and Gyan P. Nyaupane, *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World: A Regional Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2000) 6).

<sup>78</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Convention, "Cuba," Accessed April 2, 2014. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/CU/>.



the island's coast, yet the development occurred alongside efforts to diversify the island's tourist market.

Law 77, in 1995, reopened the door for foreign financiers in Cuba. The ruling allowed for a few types of arrangements, all of which involved the presence of the Cuban government in some capacity. Under this legislation, the Cuban government taxed foreign investors on net income and employee wages.<sup>79</sup> Labor arrangements operate through a state employment agency, which retains the responsibility of hiring, firing, and paying all employees. Foreign investors directly pay the wage bill to the state agency in hard currency, and then employees receive their wages in local currency from the State, allowing the government substantial gains in the process.<sup>80</sup>

While reliant on foreign direct investment for the growth of the tourist industry, the Cuban government has changed its policies towards joint ventures since their emergence during the Special Period. Major international hotel chains on the island include Sol Meliá, Iberostar, Barceló, Sofital and Sandals.<sup>81</sup> Cuba's attitude towards foreign investors immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union could be characterized as liberal and welcoming. By 1999, most investment came from Spain, Canada and Italy. However, during the early 2000s the government entered a more conservative period, retrenching and canceling investment agreements. As a result, by 2001, overall investment had decreased significantly and the primary sources of investment shifted from Europe to Latin America, primarily Venezuela.

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Feinberg, "The New Cuban Economy: What Roles for Foreign Investment," *Latin America Initiative at Brookings*, December 2012, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 41.

The number of joint ventures continued to decline as the government centralized the economy further.<sup>82</sup>

Many critics of the socialist government highlight the inherent conflict in promoting capitalist investment in order to further the goals of the revolution. Fidel Castro himself relayed similar concerns at a speech in 1995:

The unquestionable elements of capitalism introduced into our country have also brought along that system's harmful and alienating problems...Wide-scale tourism, the de-penalization of convertible currency holdings, institutions that sell these currencies, are all measures that become unavoidable but that also carry an inevitable cost...The struggle that the party and government will have to undertake against these trends before they turn into a cancer that devours our ethics and revolutionary spirit will have to be a colossal one.<sup>83</sup>

Though the government demonstrated reservations, Cuba has emerged as the second most popular tourist destination in the Caribbean, suggesting the Revolution's success at harnessing international capital and strategically implementing tourism as a viable source of hard currency.<sup>84</sup> The Special Period incited an intensification of the restoration process of La Habana Vieja as well as the resurgence of tourism throughout the island, both reliant on the support of international enterprises. As the island expanded its tourist infrastructure, the rehabilitation of historic Havana became inextricably linked to the growing tourist economy, which as a result influenced the process of restoration itself. Foreign investment, hoping for future returns, developed properties with the incoming hard currency holding tourist population in mind, rather than Cuban inhabitants. With centralized control under Leal in La

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<sup>82</sup> Emilio Morales, "Joint Ventures are the Big Question in Up-dating the Cuban Model," trans. Joseph L. Scarpaci (The Havana Consulting Group), *The Cuban Economy*, October 29, 2013, <http://thecubaneconomy.com/articles/tag/joint-ventures/>.

<sup>83</sup> Fidel Castro, "Fidel Castro Speaks at Moncada Ceremony," *Havana Radio and Television Networks*, July 26, 1995.

<sup>84</sup> Jesús M. González, Eduardo Salinas, Enrique Navarro, Antoni A. Artigues, Ricardo Remond, Ismael Yrigo, Maité Echarri and Yanira Arias, "The City of Varadero (Cuba) and the Urban Constriction of a Tourist Enclave," *Urban Affairs Review* 50:2 (2014) 216.

Habana Vieja, and within the national government in MINTUR, Cuban leadership has the ability to affect all decisions, from the beginning stages of planning to the ultimate execution and maintenance.

## Chapter 3. Presenting a Narrative

### Constructing Heritage

The restoration of La Habana Vieja perpetuates a specific narrative of Cuban history and the revolution's ability to transform the historic center into spaces that offer social services, recreation and housing for the Cuban people, as well as tourist facilities for international visitors. In all acts of preservation and tourism, agencies, companies and employees project certain accounts of the past and present to the public. Within Havana, the constructed narrative is directed towards two public audiences: international tourists and the Cuban people, following the distinction created by the Cuban government with its first attempts to expand tourism and promote the Cuban identity.

Every site developed for tourism relays a particular narrative or set of narratives, whether overtly or discreetly. In Stephen Page's *Urban Tourism*, the creation of a narrative is presented as "place-marketing," a term that is gaining recognition within tourism and marketing discourses. Tourism suggests an economic interaction, the consumption of a particular product or a specific city or place, and thus the efforts of urban management to advertise features of the place results in the production of a certain images and understandings of that place. Place-marketing operates as an extension of the processes of urban management and planning by public authorities, who analyze the market and evaluate competitors in order to increase the economic viability of place-based tourism.<sup>85</sup>

In the marketing of a cultural and historical destination, governments and investors contribute to the establishment of a particular heritage. One academic in the field of heritage planning, Gregory J. Ashworth, defines heritage as encompassing both the present value

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<sup>85</sup> Stephen Page, *Urban Tourism* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 194.

derived from the past as well as the audience for whom the inheritance is designated.<sup>86</sup> Aylin Orbasli reiterates the importance of both previous and contemporary uses, adding that heritage is “accumulated” over time.<sup>87</sup> Though heritage often suggests a physical vestige of the past and the contemporary interpretation of that inherited relic, heritage can also be intangible.<sup>88</sup> When applied to the urban setting, heritage invites the complexity of urban history, inclusive of the social, economic, and political pasts of the city, in addition to the material heritage of the built environment. In another work, along with his colleague J.E. Tunbridge, Ashworth introduced the “heritage product,” the understanding that heritage can be culturally constructed and consumed by interested patrons.<sup>89</sup> The heritage product demands a series of preferences be heard and choices be made in order to adapt the past to current demands<sup>90</sup>. Ashworth explained an essential incompatibility in the “fundamental reality” that the visitor, though fascinated by the built heritage and culture of the past, remains “a citizen of the present,” with expectations guided by contemporary life.

In their creation and development, cultural sites strive to be authentic. In 1994, the Nara Document on Authenticity offered further elaboration on the understanding of authenticity within UNESCO’s heritage list:

In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the culture of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.

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<sup>86</sup> G.J. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge, *The Tourist-Historic City: Retrospect and Prospect of Managing the Heritage City* (London: Belhaven, 1990) 25.

<sup>87</sup> Aylin Orbasli, *Tourists in Historic Towns: Urban Conservation and Heritage Management* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2000) 12.

<sup>88</sup> J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as Resource in Conflict* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 1996) 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

The document continued by suggesting the responsibility for the management of cultural heritage belongs, firstly, to the culture from which it comes, and subsequently to the community, that maintains it.<sup>91</sup> UNESCO fails to clarify, to *whom* and *what* conservation should remain authentic or how a “collective memory of humanity” can be effectively negotiated and retold. The governing bodies responsible for the maintenance and rehabilitation of sites, which vary among each country and locality, maintain the responsibility of authentically representing the history and culture of the inscribed location. As memories and histories are intangible and subject to conflict with each other, the compilation of a collective memory can complicate the clear, concise and consumable narrative preferred by the tourism industry.

Heritage landscapes, in particular, are rich with history, culture, and stories. These sites typically provide tourists with “metanarratives” of nationhood to tourists, yet also relay local histories, in an attempt to distinguish the site as distinctive from other heritage sites. Regardless of the scale, local or national, and type of authority, the creation of a consumable heritage can oversimplify places and spaces into “idealized constructs of tradition and modernity,” although such attempts directly conflict with the plurality inherent in the meaning of heritage.<sup>92</sup> As “conduits between the past and the present,” heritage sites accentuate the positive attributes of a place or people, and glaze over less-favorable narratives of the past. Ashworth argues that narrative formation is the final result of the tourist experience, an “interpretation of the local historical experience in so far as it can be related to, and

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<sup>91</sup> UNESCO. “Nara Document on Authenticity,” from Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention. Nara, Japan, November 1-6, 1994. <http://www.icomos.org/charters/nara-e.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Brian Graham, G.J. Ashworth, and J.E. Tunbridge, *The Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 57.

<sup>93</sup> Jillian M. Rickly-Boyd, “The Tourist Narrative,” *Tourist Studies* 9:3 (2009) 262.

incorporated in, the historical experience of the visitor.”<sup>93</sup> This understanding introduces the tourist as a participant in the creation and dissemination of the narrative.

In creating a narrative, especially within a centralized system, nationalism and tourism are deeply intertwined. Michael Pretes argues that countries needed to “produce a past” in order to demonstrate their own modernity and place within the global network of modern nation-states.<sup>94</sup> In establishing a clear past, the country’s history becomes part of its identity and culture. In the case of La Habana Vieja, the preservation of a colonial center by an ardently anti-colonial and anti-imperialist government raises questions about the treatment of colonialism and oppression, as the Cuban government transforms the site into a representation of its own revolutionary nationhood. In newly independent nations, Built heritage represents the former occupation of colonial power and at the same time, the raw material for the creation of national identity. However, these nations must decide how to communicate historical culture as belonging to the new nation, rather than past oppressors.<sup>95</sup> The process of preservation itself introduces a variety of choices, which suggest the motivations of the preservationist as well as the desired message of the restoration efforts. As the recognition and promotion of heritage has direct political implications, planners must act as negotiators between present populations and difficult pasts.<sup>96</sup>

## Crafting La Habana Vieja’s Narrative

Within a decentralized tourism industry, the fact that multiple actors and organizations contribute to creating a narrative and establishing a collective memory among a diverse group of interests can be challenging. In La Habana Vieja, tourism and preservation operate

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Pretes, “Tourism and nationalism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 30:1 (2003) ###.

<sup>95</sup> Joan C. Henderson, “Built Heritage and Colonial Cities,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 29:1 (2002) 254.

<sup>96</sup> Alan Middleton, “Informal traders and planners in the regeneration of historic city centres: the case of Quito, Ecuador,” *Progress in Planning* 59:2 (2003) 72.

synchronously, within the centralized organization of the Cuban government.

Preservationists, architects, and construction workers work within the framework of a Master Plan created by the Office of the City Historian, under the ultimate authority of the State. As the leader of the Office, Leal's influential role is crucial in the crafting of La Habana Vieja's narrative. In 1996, Juliet Barclay, former Head of Design for the Directorate of Cultural Heritage within the Office, interviewed Leal. Leal described Old Havana as "a place to be lived in, not only a place to be looked at." When asked about his intentions to reconcile the demands of tourism with the life of Cuban residents, Leal answered:

Tourism has double significance. It provides an opening to the world, a chance to hear other voices, to break down insulation and the blockade. Tourism draws us closer to other people, to other forms of living, dressing, thinking and feeling, and that is good. Its second significance is economic: tourism is an indispensable part of our economic strategy and is important to the country. We must reconcile tourism with the preservation of the city. We must respect Cuban ecology and Cuban history, and the development of tourism must work within this context.<sup>97</sup>

From the beginning of the government's reemphasis on tourism, Leal has articulated that La Habana Vieja will continue to be inhabited. The Office continually reiterates its dedication to the Cuban people and their needs in addition to the growing demands of tourism. The Office's and by extension the national government's devotion to the residents of La Habana Vieja has become part of the narrative of the historic core. The Office has remained committed to its citizenry.

Habaguanex's tourist map (Appendix B) showcases the attractions and opportunities available to international visitors. The map lists twenty hotels, more than seventy choices for eating, and other services available to tourists. Most attractions are located between the four main squares, surrounding which most restoration efforts have been focused.

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<sup>97</sup> Juliet Barclay. "Renewing Old Havana: Transformation and Conservation in Historic Environments," *Places* 8:1 (1992) 68.



UNESCO describes Old Havana and its Fortification System online:

Havana was founded in 1519 by the Spanish. By the 17th century, it had become one of the Caribbean's main centres for ship-building. Although it is today a sprawling metropolis of 2 million inhabitants, its old centre retains an interesting mix of Baroque and neoclassical monuments, and a homogenous ensemble of private houses with arcades, balconies, wrought-iron gates and internal courtyards.<sup>98</sup>

Typical of similar Latin American colonial centers, descriptions of La Habana Vieja include the details of the Spanish conquest, subsequent expansion and the variety of architectural styles employed throughout the district. While the historical significance permeates most rhetoric, explanations of the past are merged with elements of present Cuban culture and the contemporary experience of Cubans living within the restored core. On its website, Havana Tour Company introduces Havana as “a city that has morphed its face over five centuries of architectural design... a virtual time machine of methods and techniques.” An advertisement for a walking tour continues:

Old Havana has many sights and sounds to captivate the inquisitive traveller. These include Plaza de Armas (the oldest square in Havana and the site of the city's foundation), El Templete (the oldest neo-classical building in Havana), La Catedral San Cristobal de la Habana and the Museo de la Revolución. However for most visitors, the excitement of being part of the commotion of daily streetlife is the number one highlight. So, put on your walking shoes and soak up the atmosphere of this lively, excitable city.<sup>99</sup>

Havana Tour Company acknowledges the site's history while emphasizing the livelihood that remains as the site continues to be inhabited, even through the presence of preservation and tourism. Eusebio Leal employed similar rhetoric at a lecture in New York City in May 2012. As he overviewed important architectural works, he highlighted the livelihood and vitality of

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<sup>98</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Convention, “Old Havana and its Fortification System,” *World Heritage List*, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/204>.

<sup>99</sup> Havana Tour Company, “Old Havana Walking Tour,” Accessed April 3, 2014, <http://havanatourcompany.com/our-tours/old-havana-walking-tour/>.

the historic city. He emphatically announced his gratitude “for all Cubans” for their contributions to the rehabilitation.<sup>100</sup>

As La Habana Vieja’s primary strategist, Leal has become recognized for his visionary contributions beyond the island, and as a result Leal himself has become part of the narrative of the historic center. Leal boasts a website with his name, a television show produced by his office, *Andar La Habana*, appearances on the Office’s radio show, as well as frequent interviews and lectures to international associations.<sup>101</sup> With Leal as a powerful voice within and outside of Cuba, the restoration process has also drawn a significant amount of international attention, promoting revolutionary Cuba’s ability to rehabilitate the beauty of its colonial core not only as a site for the expansion of tourism, but also as a means of increasing the quality of life for Cuban residents.



Figure 9: Interior of Palacio del Marqués Hotel  
(Source: [www.solwayscuba.com](http://www.solwayscuba.com))

In an episode of *Andar La Habana*, Leal explained the significance of the Palace of Marqués de San Felipe y Santiago de Bejucal and the combination of contemporary and colonial artistic elements throughout the restoration work.<sup>102</sup> The Office converted the building into a hotel,

which opened in 2010. The hotel’s website describes it as follows:

Palacio del Marqués de San Felipe y Santiago de Bejucal is a 5-star hotel boasting an elegant yet minimalistic interior that blends perfectly with the baroque style of its façade.

<sup>100</sup> Eusebio Leal Spengler, “Eusebio Leal and the Restoration of Old Havana.” Lecture, New York Public Library, New York, May 15, 2012, <http://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/eusebio-leal-and-restoration-old-havana>.

<sup>101</sup> Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, “Eusebio Leal Spengler,” Accessed April 7, 2014, [www.eusebioleal.cu](http://www.eusebioleal.cu).

<sup>102</sup> Audiovisuales de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana, “Hotel San Felipe y Santiago: ‘El azúcar reunion estas piedras,’” *Andar La Habana*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a67XPob8JO8>.

The hotel is centrally located on San Francisco de Asis Square, just a few steps from fabulous restaurants and exciting nightlife.<sup>103</sup>

The description combines the allure of modern luxury with the historical architecture of the building and access to contemporary Cuban culture, in food and entertainment. Ruth Behar, anthropologist and writer, introduced and popularized the notion of ‘Buena Vista Socialization,’ a unique combination of pre-revolutionary elements with others promoting the Revolution itself, an apt term for the way such restored tourist facilities tout the allure of comfort in an environment evoking past grandeur.<sup>104</sup>

As Leal guided the viewer through a tour of the Palacio del Marqués, he described all of changes and additions to the building as “made in Cuba, demonstrating the infinite capacity, the great imagination, the creative power and the capacity to construct a beautiful utopia, which is the restoration of the city.”<sup>105</sup> While the original structures reflect the Spanish colonial presence, their restored state reflects modern Cuba. Leal explains the rehabilitation as a process enacted by the Cuban population, with materials produced domestically, in order to generate economic resources to be reinvested into the future of the country. Along with his persuasive rhetoric about Cuba’s capacity to apply substantial change to the built environment, Leal asserts that utopia is not a fantasy, but rather a noble aspiration, which he works to fulfill under the leadership of the national government.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Palacio del Marqués de San Felipe y Santiago de Bejucal Hotel, “Welcome to Palacio del Marqués de San Felipe y Santiago de Bejucal, Havana, Cuba,” <http://hotelmarchesdesanfelipe.com/>.

<sup>104</sup> González et al, “The City of Varadero,” 215.

<sup>105</sup> Translated by the author, *Todo es techo en Cuba, demostrando la infinita capacidad de solución, la gran imaginación, el poder creativo, la capacidad de dar solución para construir una hermosa utopía, que es la restauración de la ciudad.*

<sup>106</sup> Audiovisuales de OHCH, “Hotel San Felipe y Santiago.”

# Chapter 4. The Dual City

## A Theoretical Framework

The “unified” narrative of La Habana Vieja carefully crafted by the Office of the City Historian masks a world divided in two parts: tourist and local. The establishment of a dual currency has exacerbated economic inequality while restoration practices have reinstated spatial disparities, forming two distinct spaces of interaction: a dual city. According to Eva T. van Kempen, the concept of the dual city suggests socio-spatial divisions within an urban environment in which people are separated by different economies, inhabit different parts of the city, and belong to different social groups. Instead of a singular city, two distinct urban realities emerge which only share the name of the city and certain public spaces.<sup>107</sup> Scholars attribute the creation of a dual city to the restructuring of the economy, and following social polarization.<sup>108</sup> Peter Marcuse offered more formulations of the same metaphor:

Most frequently, it is used as a description of the increasing polarization of society between rich and poor, haves and have nots. The formulations vary—‘dual city’, ‘two cities’, ‘city of light and city of darkness’, a ‘two-class-society’, ‘dualism in the city’, or by analogy, ‘formal and informal sectors’, ‘sunbelt and snowbelt’—but the thrust is the same... The formulations and the focus of the ‘dual city’ differentiation differ, but they share a reference to a division of society (the country, the city, the economy) into two parts, one doing well, one doing poorly, and make an implicit call for the inequality to be evened out with the benefits of a prosperity at the upper end shared with those excluded from them at the lower end.<sup>109</sup>

Within a centrally planned system, in which all means of production are public and the state-organized economy is firmly linked to regional planning, the growth of dual cities in Cuba departs from the traditional understanding of the concept. Yet, the “duality of the

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<sup>107</sup> Eva T. van Kempen, “The Dual City and the Poor: Social Polarization, Social Segregation and Life Chances,” *Urban Studies* 31 (1994) 997.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 998, 1011.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Marcuse, “‘Dual city’: a muddy metaphor for a quartered city,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13:4 (1989) 697-698.

economy” conflicts with the seemingly simplistic construction of central planning.<sup>110</sup> The introduction of hard currency restructured the Cuban economy, creating two separate economic systems. Along with a new economy, a new population emerged. The influx of international visitors, though transitory, upset the standing social order and introduced a populace with different interests, political affiliations, and cultural identities. With a centralized planning system, Cuba differs from its Caribbean neighbors, which exhibit disorganized urban growth, expanding shantytowns, and lack of sufficient infrastructure for the local population. However, though central planning theoretically prevents the unintended growth and development, decisions of the government often favor capital from international investments.<sup>111</sup> Scholars attribute the creation of tourism apartheid and dual cities to the dual currency.<sup>112</sup>

## Tourism “Apartheid”

With the tourism encouraged by the Special Period, the state established a strong separation between Cuban citizens and the new visitors. Cubans were banned from tourist hotels and resorts. The regulations aimed to “stop foreigners’ contamination with un-revolutionary values.”<sup>113</sup> The government warned its citizens to be “vigilant against all acts or attitudes injurious to the interests of the state.”<sup>114</sup> A recent analysis of Cuba’s tourism “apartheid” highlighted the misuse of the term. The reference to apartheid misconstrues policies as segregationist, while the policies were enacted to support the domestic socio-

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<sup>110</sup> González et al, “The City of Varadero,” 215.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>112</sup> Carty, “Capitalist Measures within a Socialist Model,” 185.

<sup>113</sup> Isambard Wilkinson Madrid, “Castro isolates Cubans with ‘tourism apartheid,’” *The Daily Telegraph*, London, February 22, 2005; David Rennie, “Cuban tourism creates ‘apartheid,’” *The Gazette*, Montreal, June 9, 2002.

<sup>114</sup> Madrid, “Castro isolates Cubans.”

economic agenda by the introduction of a market economy system.<sup>115</sup> Yet the use of the phrase continues as a means of characterizing the separation between international tourists and the Cuban people.

Although laws prohibiting Cubans from accessing hotels and other tourist accommodations were abolished in 2008 after Raúl Castro assumed the presidency, some argue an unofficial ban remains and the change was simply symbolic.<sup>116</sup> Yoani Sanchez, a well-known Cuban anti-government blogger, published a post online in 2011, “Tourist Apartheid Persists in Cuba,” about her own experiences of discrimination.<sup>117</sup> While formal restrictions may have subsided, financial limitations deter the majority of Cubans from enjoying the offerings of the tourist industry. Only a minority of Cubans has the means necessary to travel.<sup>118</sup> In 2008, one reporter found a single night at a boutique hotel to cost almost \$400. A cheaper option still charged \$213. At the time, Cuban state workers earned an average of only \$19 each month, not nearly enough to afford even modest tourist accommodations.<sup>119</sup> In addition to monetary restrictions, the persistent separation between tourists and Cubans can be attributed to the creation of an additional form of currency specifically for foreign investment and the tourist industry.

## Dual Currencies, Dual Economies

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and ensuing economic consequences in the early 1990s, the Cuban government investigated new alternatives to rebuild the economy. The value

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<sup>115</sup> Julie Mazzei, “Negotiating domestic socialism with global capitalism: So-called tourist apartheid in Cuba,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45:1-2 (2012) 92.

<sup>116</sup> Manuel Roig-Franzia, “Cuba repeals ban on its citizens staying in hotels on island,” *The Washington Post*, April 1, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/31/AR2008033100703.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Yoani Sanchez, “Tourist Apartheid Persists in Cuba,” *Huffington Post*, November 7, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yoani-sanchez/tourist-apartheid-persist\\_b\\_1078950.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yoani-sanchez/tourist-apartheid-persist_b_1078950.html).

<sup>118</sup> Agence France-Presse, “‘Tourism apartheid’ ends in Cuba as hotels open doors to all,” *Edmonton Journal (Alberta)*, April 1, 2008.

<sup>119</sup> Roig-Franzia, “Cuba repeals ban on its citizens staying in hotels on island.”

of the Cuban peso decreased tremendously. During the worst part of the crisis in 1993, one Cuban peso equaled only one American cent. As temporary relief, the government legalized the use of the dollar in 1993, which had been circulating within informal markets in Cuba. This was then followed the next year by the creation of the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC).<sup>120</sup>



Figure 10: Above, 11 Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) and below, 100 National Peso Bill (Source: netssa.com)

With two currencies, the CUC and the peso, two segmented economies developed concurrently. The tourist sector, inclusive of foreign investment, tourists, and tourist infrastructure, began to operate in CUC while the State economy still used the peso.<sup>121</sup> By 2001, foreign currency comprised more than half of the total amount of money in circulation in Cuba. As a result, the CUC economy has developed into a

significant force within the Cuban economy and thus retains substantial influence over Cuba's policy decisions.<sup>122</sup> In 2012, the CUC, which maintains a fixed value to the U.S. dollar, was valued at twenty-four Cuban pesos.<sup>123</sup> Most of the domestic economy operates in pesos, but, with the increasing weight of the CUC and the growing number of tourists, an informal economy is growing.

In spatial terms, this manifests itself in a divided historic center, operating under separate economies. The system of dual economies institutionalizes divisions between tourist and local Cubans. The tourist city is characterized by an international population,

<sup>120</sup> Posada, "Dual Currency System," 45.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. As a result of the creation of the CUC, the government pursued the 'de-dollarization' of the island, in an effort to reclaim 'monetary sovereignty' and reduce the presence of the American economy. However, while dollars have less presence in the Cuban market, the CUC remains fixed to the dollar, and thus still retains some dependence on the American economy.

<sup>123</sup> "The deal's off," *The Economist*, March 24, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21550421>.

rehabilitated facilities, and the opening of the Cuban economy to the global marketplace, while the Cuban experience of La Habana Vieja is lived in pesos, within a centralized economy and decaying structures.

## Tourists and Cubans: Separations between Economies and Place

Within La Habana Vieja, aesthetic demarcations based on restoration and decay suggest a physical border between the residential and tourist zones. Rehabilitation efforts first began around the five central colonial plazas and extended to tourist attractions, such as hotels, monuments and new museums. In its 2011 Master Plan for the Integral Revitalization of Old Havana (PEDI), the Office of the City Historian created a map delineating current land uses within the historic center (Appendix C). This map showcases segments developed for different purposes as constituting only a portion of the site, while residential, non-commercial areas comprise almost half of the delineated historical center.<sup>124</sup> Habaguanex's map (Appendix B) similarly demonstrates the concentration of tourist attractions within the mid-eastern section of La Habana Vieja.

While rehabilitated buildings have captured great attention, advertising their modern, comfortable facilities, many historical structures in La Habana Vieja remain untouched. In 2003, 4.4% of Havana's entire population resided in La Habana Vieja.<sup>125</sup> Of the approximately 85,000 residents, planners agreed that ideally only half should remain. Excessive crowding worsens problems of older and structurally weakened buildings.<sup>126</sup> In 2001, UNESCO reported an average of two buildings collapsed every three days.<sup>127</sup> Residents faced poorly

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<sup>124</sup> Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, "Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral," *Plan Maestro para la Revitalización Integral de la Habana Vieja*, June 2011.

<sup>125</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *A Singular Experience*, 23.

<sup>126</sup> Scarpaci, "Reshaping Habana Vieja," 732.

<sup>127</sup> UNESCO LA HABANA, *A Singular Experience*, 38.



constructed buildings and water supply irregularities.<sup>128</sup> The same study revealed that buildings faced roof deterioration, cracked walls and sinking floors and a fifth of households had no toilet.<sup>129</sup> With the Office's ability to act as Old Havana's housing authority, many residents have been displaced by attractive foreign investment offers. Displacement, devised to combat overpopulation and redevelopment of housing into hotels, relocates residents of La Habana Vieja to public housing across the bay.<sup>130</sup>

Despite foreign investment into restoration projects and the presence of increased numbers of tourists bringing an increased amount of hard currency, local *habaneros* have lacked access to adequate repairs. In order to reinvent their own homes and create much needed space, many Cuban households have built *barbacoas*, or improvised split-levels. In 2003, 51% of the buildings within the UNESCO boundaries exhibited *barbacoas* negatively impacting the structure. This "self-built" transformation expands the spatial potential of Spanish colonial architecture, which typically exhibits twelve to fourteen feet tall ceilings and can be divided horizontally to provide more floor space.<sup>131</sup>

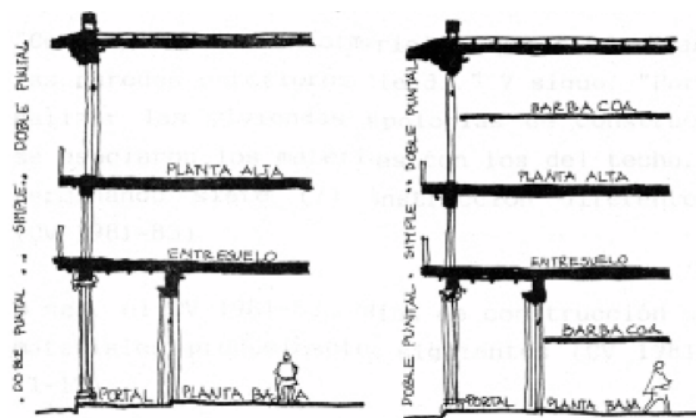


Figure 11: A Drawing of Barbacoas  
(Source: Mesías González and Morales Menocal, 1984)

In *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Ruinas*, which tells the story of Cubans living in ruined buildings, a Cuban writer critiqued the government's inability to provide adequate housing repairs and policies restricting Cubans from repairing their own homes:

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>130</sup> Scarpaci, "Winners and losers," 295-296.

<sup>131</sup> Patricio del Real and Joseph L. Scarpaci, "Barbacoas: Havana's New Inward Frontier," in Eds. Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield, *Havana, Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) 67.

If in your private space you cannot rebuild what has fallen down, then you cannot do it any place else...this private failure precedes public failure...Let the buildings collapse, but you cannot change anything. And I think that has been the most important contribution of the revolution to urban thinking. The idea that nothing can be restored. Nothing can be repaired. Then the country cannot be repaired.<sup>132</sup>

Because the Office of the City Historian retains authority over La Habana Vieja, individual citizens are not permitted to alter the structures they inhabit. The physical tension of the aging frames of colonial structures and the added weight of the improvised floor speaks to the larger tension between national preservation concerns and the immediate housing demands of the Cuban population.<sup>133</sup> These structures remain both informal and illegal, neither sanctioned by the government nor built by professional.<sup>134</sup> The large presence of *barbacoas* reveals the Office of the City Historian's inability to meet the demands of both residents and tourists equally as well as the differences between visitors interacting with the restored city and Cubans interacting with the unrestored in the same neighborhood.

While the government created a specific task force, the Group for the Integrated Development of the Capital, in order to analyze the living conditions within the capital and neighborhood development teams or *Talleres de Transformación Integral del Barrio*, communities lack the access to capital necessary to restore and repair at the rate the tourist-dominated zone is being repaired and restored.<sup>135</sup> Financial investment in the restoration of hotels can promise future profits, while renovations of ill-maintained housing structures offer little financial reward. Although the "lived" nature of La Habana Vieja is presented to tourists

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<sup>132</sup> Habana: Arte Nuevo de Hacer Ruinas, directed by Florian Borchmeyer (Berlin; Raros Media: 2007), Film.

<sup>133</sup> Del Real and Scarpaci, "Barbacoas," 68.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>135</sup> Ruth Miller, "Housing Policy, Neighborhood, Development, and Civic Participation in Cuba: The Social Microbrigade of Santa Clara," *The Urban Fringe*, September 20, 2012, <http://ced.berkeley.edu/bpj/2012/09/housing-policy-neighborhood-development-and-civic-participation-in-cuba-the-social-microbrigade-of-santa-clara/>.

and the global audience as one of its most promising features, citizens must compete among foreign investors and tourists for repairs and lack the autonomy to augment their own homes to fit their needs safely. This inability creates a physical distinction between tourist and non-tourist spaces in La Habana Vieja: restored and unrestored.

## Between Two Currencies: The Limitations of the Dual City

Scholars admit the restrictions of the dual city metaphor. Van Kempen finds the definition of the dual city an oversimplification of the complicated processes of urban transformation.<sup>136</sup> Marcuse agrees, calling the concept “muddy” and listing its many flaws, including imprecision in definition.<sup>137</sup> He ultimately concludes:

The reality is neither one of duality nor of arbitrary plurality; there are definable, structural differences, along definable lines of cleavage, with definable inter-relationships, among groups and the individuals that belong to them. The task of defining these differences is hardly an easy one. The dual city metaphor hinders the task.<sup>138</sup>

While Marcuse concedes that the strict institutionalization of separations, for example in South African apartheid or the European quarters in colonies, may allow for a literal description of ‘two cities,’ he concludes that most uses of the concept fail to demonstrate such a strict divide.<sup>139</sup>

Yet, Cuba presents an interesting context, in which two completely separate currencies form two distinct economies, and thus strong divisions between tourists and locals. While La Habana Vieja may have fit within Marcuse’s definition of a literal separation in the 1990s, as tourism and the CUC became permanent fixtures, divisions have become less distinct over time. The CUC, maintained at a higher value than the national peso, is the only available

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<sup>136</sup> Van Kempen, “The Dual City and the Poor,” 997.

<sup>137</sup> Marcuse, “Dual City,” 699.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 700.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 699.

currency to foreigners. However, as tourism has expanded and more Cubans have begun to work within the industry, the CUC's importance to Cubans increased. Workers in the tourist sector can earn CUCs on the job, while public sector employees are paid in pesos.<sup>140</sup> The increasing divide has perpetuated inequality and created an informal tourist economy shaped by the desire for the higher-valued currency.<sup>141</sup> The term *jinitismo* emerged at the beginning of the Special Period to signify the introduction of an informal economy in which Cubans attempted to gain hard currency by "hustling for dollars" outside state regulated salary employment or selling sex to foreigners. Many Cubans who have not found employment within tourism attempt to benefit from the circulation of the CUC and seek non-regulated means of doing so.<sup>142</sup> Almost twenty-five years after the onset of the Special Period, tourism's permanence in the Cuban economy has encouraged the growth of this informal economy, operating between the two official currencies.

In order to properly prepare Cubans for the demands of tourism, the government established an education strategy, indicating Cuba's commitment to the future of the industry on the island. The tempting appeal of careers in tourism has marked a shift in Cuban society, in which access to bonuses from employers and tips from tourists in CUC draw educated professionals from other fields.<sup>143</sup> Adriana Echada, our tour-guide-in-training while traveling through Cuba is a case in point, having worked as an English teacher for seven years, before returning to school to pursue a more lucrative career as a tour guide. In 2001, an impressive 18% of the Cuban workforce was employed in tourism and 20% of the tourist workforce held

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<sup>140</sup> Posada, "Dual Currency System," 46.

<sup>141</sup> Art Padilla and Jerome L. McElroy, "Cuba and Caribbean tourism after Castro," *Annals of Tourism Research* 34:3 (2007).

<sup>142</sup> Alyssa Garcia, "Continuous Moral Economies: The State Regulation of Bodies and Sex Work in Cuba," *Sexualities* 13:2 (2010) 172.

<sup>143</sup> Pat Wood and Chandana Jayawardena, "Cuba: Hero of the Caribbean? A profile of its tourism education strategy," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 15:3 (2003) 152.

university degrees in another discipline such as medicine, science or teaching. With the increasing desire for work in the industry, the government established a new undergraduate degree in tourism in 2002.<sup>144</sup> As Cuban tourism steadily increases, more Cubans are finding jobs within the industry. Many joint venture companies pay a portion of profits to a stimulus fund for employee bonuses, which serves as a means to inspire better job performance through offering access to hard currency.<sup>145</sup> The ability to earn CUCs rather than Cuban pesos has amplified income inequality in Cuba, as tourism employees can earn beyond the limits of the state wage.

Since 1959, the Cuban government has debated the use of monetary versus moral incentives. Employment in tourism, which can offer local Cubans access to hard currency and certain commodities available only to tourists, favors monetary incentivization. As Cubans gain entry into a global marketplace, inequities present in capitalism have seeped into Cuba's socialist model. CUCs now exist beyond the tourist economy, blurring once strong separations between the two currencies.

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<sup>144</sup> Wood and Jayawardena, "Hero of the Caribbean?" 153.

<sup>145</sup> Feinberg, "The New Cuban Economy," 39.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion: A Project Still Unfolding

John Hull Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells argue that “the mechanisms generating inequality are simply too complex and the resulting fragmentation too great to be any simple dichotomy.”<sup>146</sup> As tourism grows to be a more permanent fixture in the Cuban economy and the country continues to adapt to a post-Fidel, post-Special Period climate, borders separating the two spheres have weakened. However, academic discussions of the dual city created by tourism often reiterate the Cold War dichotomy, socialism versus capitalism. In my analysis, I urge critics to look beyond the Special Period and consider the implications of President Raúl Castro’s reforms. Although the changes introduced by Raúl have not impacted the autonomy of the Office of the City Historian, policies enacted during his tenure have brought rise to debates about the future of the Cuban revolution within and beyond the island. As the influential personalities of the Castro family near the end of their leadership and Leal approaches his own retirement, the future of La Habana Vieja is unclear.

### Post-Fidel Cuba

Raúl Castro Ruz, Fidel’s legal successor and younger brother, assumed provisional leadership of Cuba in 2006 and was formally elected President, two years later, when Fidel officially stepped down.<sup>147</sup> In efforts to “perfect” Cuban socialism, Raúl has enacted a variety of economy reforms and abolished former separationist policies.<sup>148</sup> Changes have been gradual. Cubans can buy and sell their homes for the first time since the early years of the Revolution, inviting questions about the future authority of the Office of the City Historian in

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<sup>146</sup> John Hull Mollenkopf and Manuel Castells, “Introduction,” in *Dual City: Restructuring New York* (New York: Russell Sage, 1991) 13.

<sup>147</sup> “Raul Castro is new president of Cuba,” *Caribbean Today*, March 1, 2008.

<sup>148</sup> Manuel Roig-Franzia, “Cuba Warns Foes that Recent Reforms Strengthen, Not Weaken, Socialism,” *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2008.

renovating and restoring the historic center.<sup>149</sup> The state's attitude towards travel and migration has also changed, allowing Cubans the ability to travel internationally and return to the island without "white cards," expensive exit permits, in 2013. The right to travel, previously reserved for international visitors, reflects the increasing individual economic rights of Cuban citizens.<sup>150</sup> Raúl has begun to encourage public participation in the process of economic decision-making, using debates and forums to generate enthusiasm among Cubans about the possibilities for the future. But, reforms have not yet been enacted in the political realm, which remains centralized, indicating Raúl's efforts to separate liberalization of the economy from liberalization in the political and social sphere.<sup>151</sup>

While changes have occurred, especially with respect to the economy, Raúl has indicated clearly that the government is not pursuing capitalism, but rather "is working towards the preservation and development in Cuba of a prosperous and sustainable socialist society."<sup>152</sup> The rhetoric of the Cuban government is changing as well. Traditionally, the American embargo was used as an excuse for Cuban hardships.<sup>153</sup> Raúl's policies have carefully distinguished between social and economic policy.<sup>154</sup> Yet, the culture of solidarity fostered by the Revolution persists, making increasing economic disparities unacceptable.<sup>155</sup> Critics argue that more substantial reforms are necessary to truly expand the Cuban economy, and that Cuba lacks the institutional necessities to adopt such reforms, such as a system for the

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>150</sup> Sweig and Bustamante, "Cuba after Communism."

<sup>151</sup> Lopez-Levy, "Change in Post-Fidel Cuba, 1.

<sup>152</sup> Raúl Castro, 2012 in "Recent Transformations in the Cuban Economy," 109.

<sup>153</sup> For example, in 1996, Fidel claimed the blockade as "the main obstacle for the country's economic development." (Fidel Castro. Speech, Havana, Cuba in September 1996, recorded by *Havana Tele Rebelde and Cubavision Networks* on September 21, 1996. Retrieved from Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1996/19960921.html>.)

<sup>154</sup> Arturo Lopez-Levy, "Change in Post-Fidel Cuba: Political Liberalization, Economic Reform, and Lessons for U.S. Policy," *New America Foundation*, May, 2011, 8.

<sup>155</sup> Camila Piñero Harnecker, "Cuba's New Socialism: Different Visions Shaping Current Changes," *Latin American Perspectives* 40:3 (2013) 119.

regularized rotation of power and assurances of property rights.<sup>156</sup> According to the Latin America Initiative at the Brookings Institute, decisions reached during Raúl's presidential tenure have "sent contradictory signals regarding foreign investment." The government has gained a reputation for stalling projects in fear of further compromising revolutionary values and national security.<sup>157</sup>

Raúl Castro was reelected in February 2013 for what is expected to be his last official five-year term.<sup>158</sup> He reiterated his elected duty "to defend, maintain and continue to perfect socialism, not destroy it."<sup>159</sup> With the end of Raúl's tenure in sight, the possibility of a post-Castro Cuba transforms any present dialogue regarding the conflicts between reform and revolution, as the nation approaches a future without the leadership of a member of the Castro family. More immediate change will come, as well. In recent years, Raúl has pledged the unification of the CUC and the peso and an announcement in the *Granma* in October 2013 suggested that the government would begin taking steps towards a unification of the two currencies, but the process may take up to three years to fully implement.<sup>160</sup> In March 2014, state companies were officially encouraged to begin preparing for the future unification.<sup>161</sup> Yet, the government has failed to reveal how the unification process will function and what the impacts will be. With inequality increasingly present between those who earn CUC and state employees paid in pesos, the unification of the two currencies will be unable to completely eradicate present differentiation. Additionally, the present arrangement, which relies on hard

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<sup>156</sup> Corrales, "Cuba's *Lineamientos*," 175.

<sup>157</sup> Latin America Initiative, 5.

<sup>158</sup> VOA News, "Raul Castro Reelected as Cuba's President," *Voice of America News*, February 24, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> RTTNews, "Raul Castro Re-elected Cuba's President," February 24, 2013.

<sup>160</sup> BBC, "Cuba to scrap two-currency system in latest reform," *BBC News, Latin America & Caribbean*, October 22, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-24627620>.

<sup>161</sup> Rosa Tania Valdes, "Cubans fret as government prepares currency unification," *Reuters*, March 17, 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/03/17/uk-cuba-reform-money-idUKBREA2G1CJ20140317>.



currency provided by foreign investors and the cheap Cuban labor force, results in favorable profits for foreign partners as well as the Cuban government. Unification will alter the current foreign investment strategy in ways not yet made clear.

## Possible Transitions

The Special Period lacks finite temporal definition, as mentioned in the introduction. Whether or not Cuba has moved beyond the Special Period, drastic changes have occurred since its onset in 1990. Yet, this uncertainty reflects a larger ambivalence about the future of the Cuban economy and the inevitable, but unclear, consequences for the tourism industry. As preservation and tourism are currently inextricably linked, changes to the financial structure of institutions would likely manifest in the physical spaces of La Habana Vieja.

As Cuba continues to reform its policies, global attitudes towards the island have altered. While the U.S. has maintained an embargo against Cuba since 1960, most of the world has embraced the island, recognizing the limitations of a Cold War consciousness. In October 2013, the United Nations General Assembly voted almost unanimously for the twenty-second time to demand the end of the U.S. blockade. Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, who offered the resolution, argued that the "essence" of the American policy towards Cuba has remain "unaltered" and "anchored in the Cold War," despite global political shifts which have occurred in the past two decades.<sup>162</sup> Julia Sweig writes,

In 2018, when [Miguel] Díaz-Canel takes the reins, Cuba in all likelihood will continue to defy post-Cold War American fantasies even as it moves further away from its orthodox socialist past. For the remaining members of Cuba's founding revolutionary generation, such a delicate transformation provides a last opportunity to shape their legacy. For Cubans born after 1991, the coming years may offer a chance to begin leaving behind the state of prolonged ideological and economic limbo in which they were raised.

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<sup>162</sup> BBC, "Cuba to scrap two-currency system in latest reform," *BBC News, Latin America & Caribbean*, October 22, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-24627620>.

Sweig challenges Obama to be the president who shifts the American debate about Cuba beyond the conversation of the embargo and challenge the “well-entrenched bureaucrats, national security ideologues, and pro-embargo voices” that persistently dominate the anti-Cuban rhetoric in the United States. Sweig adds that any cooperation between the two governments would benefit both American and Cuban populations.<sup>163</sup> As the Revolution’s imperatives shift in accordance with the transformation of the global political economy, the Cuban population itself has changed. The majority of Cubans today on the island and in the Diasporas, the Special Period served as the most decisive period in their memory, rather than past generations who prioritize the Revolution’s triumph in 1959.<sup>164</sup>

If the U.S. government abolished its embargo, the Cuban economy would certainly alter. The reinstatement of a relationship between the U.S. and Cuba may return American tourists to their former Caribbean playground, transforming the tourist economy on the island and introducing a new source of investment for the further expansion of tourist infrastructure. However, U.S.-Cuba relations depend on a variety of indeterminable factors in both countries: who the future leadership will be, how attitudes of citizens will change, and the future of the global political economy.

## The Future of La Habana Vieja

As the national and global contexts alter, the Office of the City Historian continues to work towards the making of an integrative space, in which tourists can enjoy the cultural heritage of the city and locals can be ensured a better quality of life. In its most recent Master Plan (2011), the Office pledged to work towards cultural, social, economic, and environmental

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<sup>163</sup> Julia E Sweig and Michael Bustamante, “Cuba after Communism: The economic reforms that are transforming the island,” *Foreign Affairs* 92:4 (2013) <http://www.cfr.org/cuba/cuba-after-communism/p30991>.

<sup>164</sup> Piñero, Harnecker, “Cuba’s New Socialism,” 6.

sustainability.<sup>165</sup> Specifically, the Office emphasized increasing citizen participation, supporting local identity, recognizing and assisting vulnerable groups, increasing economic diversity, and creating better access to transportation.<sup>166</sup> In this document, the Office admits both the benefits and costs of tourism in La Habana Vieja, and presents plans to create a more cohesive site, meeting the needs of both tourists and Cuban residents.

The Office of the City Historian is approaching a transition of its own, the inevitable retirement of its charismatic leader, Eusebio Leal Spengler. Leal, who pioneered the initial restorations, has become the face of La Habana Vieja and an important personality within Cuba. Although the impact of such a transition cannot yet be determined, as a position of significant authority and autonomy, any future leader will greatly impact La Habana Vieja.

The Latin America Initiative at the Brookings Institute offered recommendations to help return La Habana Vieja to “its former glory, reborn not as an entrepôt for the transshipment of precious metals and African slaves, but this time as a cultural-historical destination for tourists from around the world” and assist Cuba in profiting from the increasing number of tourists predicted in the next decade. Among its recommendations, the Initiative suggests offering better compensation to actors and musicians to allow for “a vibrant showcase city”; designating retail space for local artisans and designers instead of international brands; liberalizing the terms of foreign investment; and allowing space for more innovative international cooperation.<sup>167</sup>

Even if American policies remain antagonistic towards Cuba, tourism will grow substantially and continue to drive the Cuban economy.<sup>168</sup> The permanence of tourism as well as the dissolution of the dual currency system will alter the contemporary experience of La

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<sup>165</sup> Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, “Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral,” 41.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>167</sup> Feinberg, “The New Cuban Economy,” 42.

<sup>168</sup> Peters, “International Tourism,” 14.

Habana Vieja. Whether the Cuban government imposes liberalizing reforms of the economy or returns to the revolutionary construction of a centralized system, the complexities of La Habana Vieja extend beyond the simplistic notion of a dichotomy, which forces an understanding that only two experiences can exist. The dualistic approach merges internationalism, tourism, capitalism, and hard currency into a single force against the socialist revolution.

Although the narrative presented by the Cuban tourism agencies and organizations presents an idealized version of the historic center, reducing La Habana Vieja to a single narrative or two opposing realities masks the complex forces present in the creation of this inhabited tourist space. Yet, as the Cuban Revolution approaches the celebration of sixty-one years since its inception, the future of La Habana Vieja cannot be determined. The spatial relationships between tourist and local spaces will continue to transform as the Revolution continues to adapt to the permanence the tourist economy, now imperative to its survival.

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# Appendices

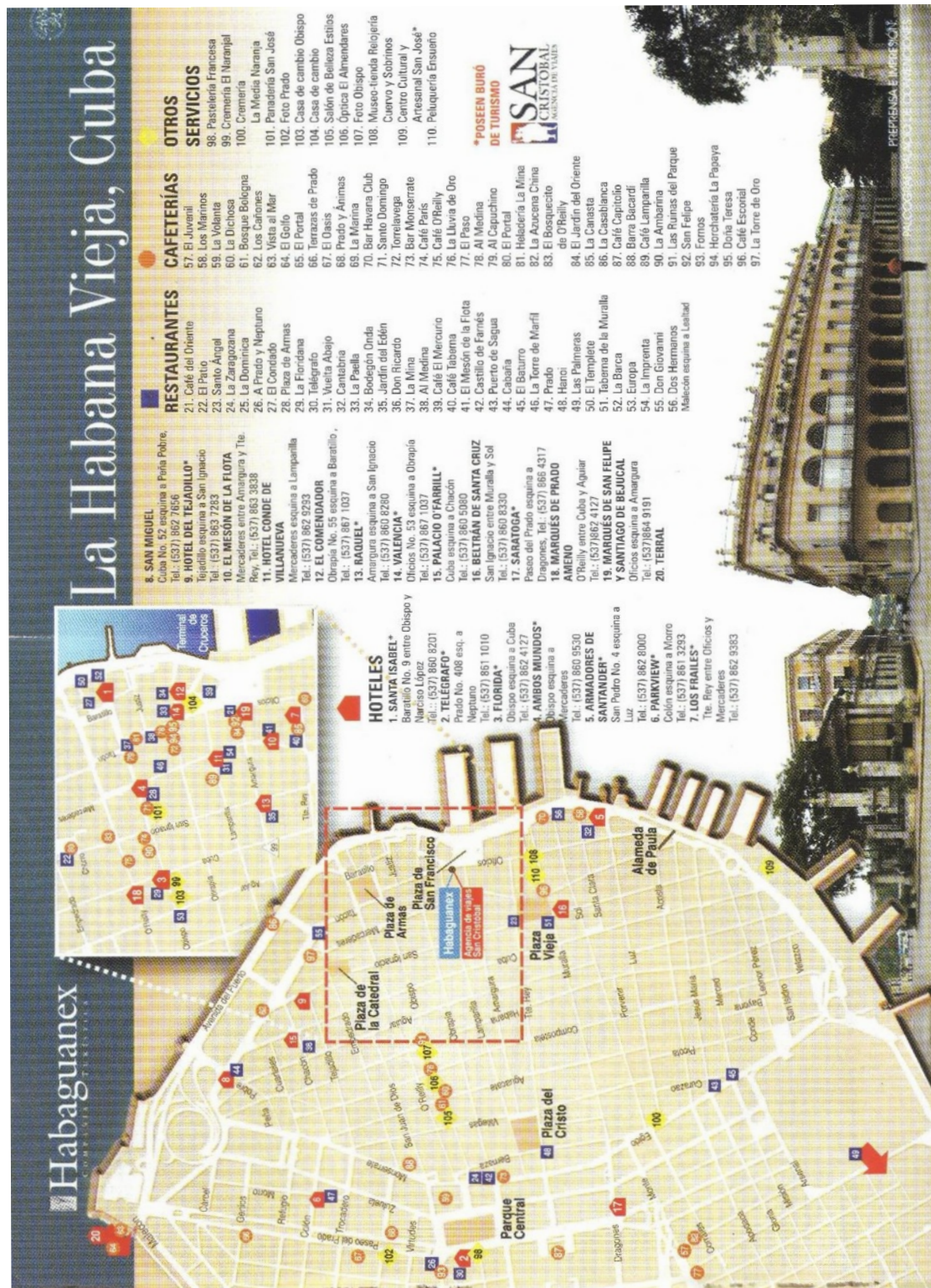
## Appendix A: Map of Main Plazas in La Habana Vieja



Source: Eusebio Leal Spengler, *Para No Olvidar*



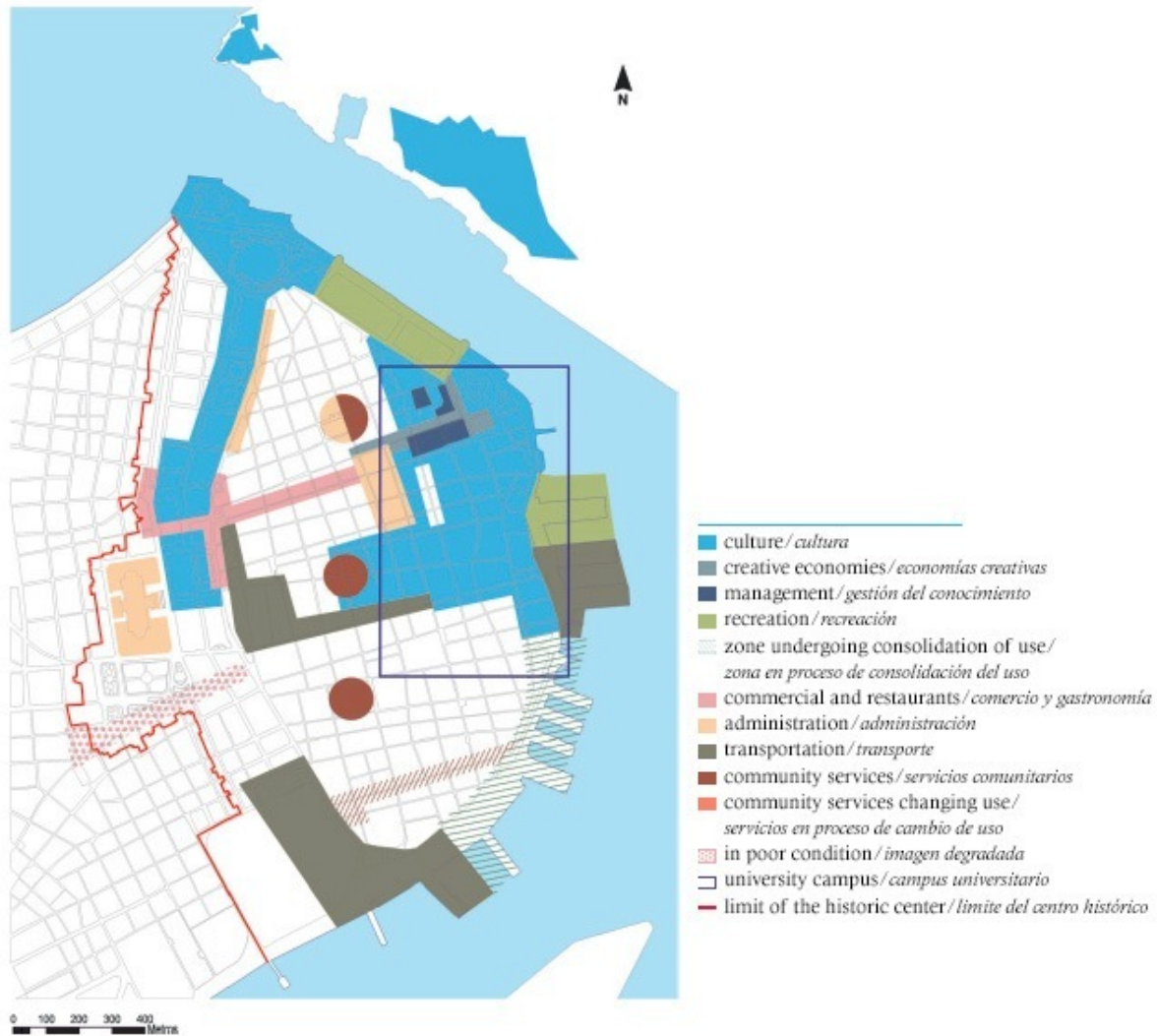
## Appendix B: Map of La Habana Vieja, Habaguanex



Source: Interamerican Network of Academies of Science

## Appendix C: Predominant Functions in La Habana Vieja

**Predominant Functions / Funciones Predominantes**



Source: Oficina del historiador de la ciudad de La Habana,  
*Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral* (translated by the author)