CITY OF PARKS

The Dematerialization of the Blockade + the Frugality of Means

Mónica Angeliz Marrero Ciuró | AHST 6110 | Roser Gray | 11.28.17

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The Dematerialization of the Blockade + the Frugality of Means

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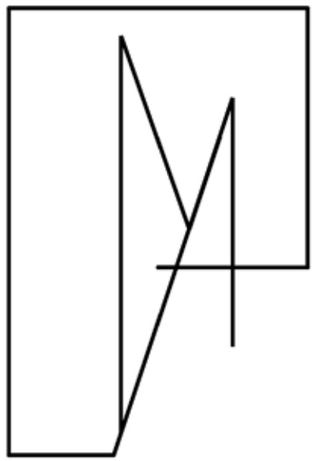
An architecture thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture at Tulane University.



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To my parents, Antonio Marrero Vera, and Luz M. Ciuró Pereira, thanks for believing in me, for supporting me through my adventurous life and for teaching me that my dreams may become a reality if I fight hard enough for them.

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Many times I asked myself: what can I do? This is my response to that question.
2 Timothy 4:17

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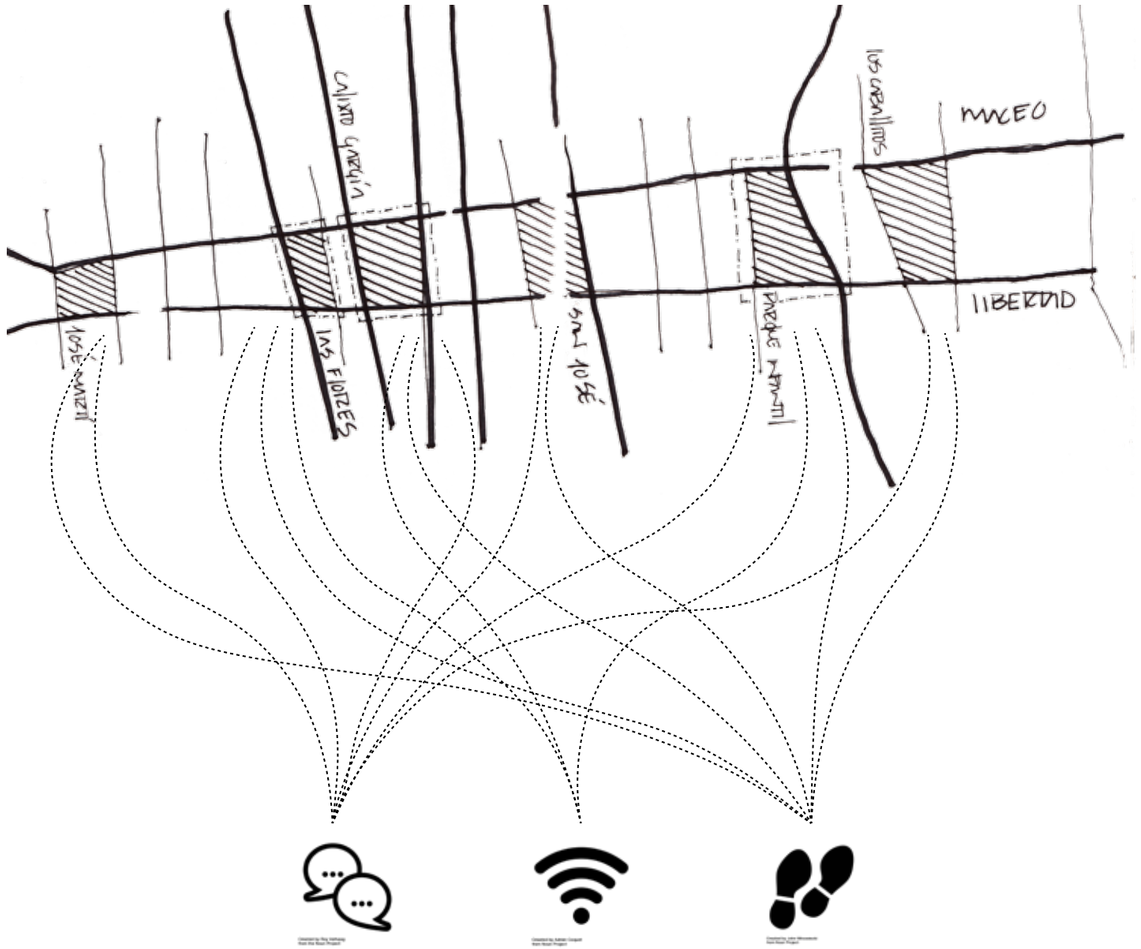

Figure 01 | What are the uses allowed|promoted in public spaces by their current planning?

ABSTRACT ::

For some countries, terror has been an inherent concept in the formation and transformation of their urban condition. 1959 marked a turning point in the history of the Cuban territory. With the coup of the Cuban Revolution and the beginning of the Castro dominance, a control over the territory and the urban fabric became in effect alongside the exercise of political power. The display of control on the built environment was the tool used to impose the new political system across the island at a faster rate.

In response to the frugality consequential of the new political system, a survival phenomenon spontaneously arose as Cuban families struggled with the economic models of the island. Many have had to develop a second means of income by either growing and selling produce or livestock. Urban and rural conditions present a different set of challenges that can potentially be addressed and engaged through architecture, urbanism, and the public realm.

Holguin, the capital city of the Province of Holguin, is further known as “the city of parks/plazas”. The inhabitation of these public spaces have experienced a fast paced transformation within the last 3-4 years, much due to recent public accessibility to the internet. Parks have become places of interaction, of connection and reconnection, not only at a personal, but a virtual scale. This phenomenon have made people take a stand and reclaim their city.

Although, Holguin’s parks/plazas are being refurbished, planning deficencies evidence a lack of engagement to the changes that society is experimenting by the porosity of the blockade. Public spaces that respond to their actual flux of information, and the interaction of the different spontaneous phenomena coexisting in Cuban territory is required in order to provide healthy communities that aid its people to achieve a better quality of life as the country keeps transitioning. In a metaphysical way, architecture is the bonding element that facilitates the regeneration of healthy environments through community engagement.

THESIS STATEMENT ::

Historically, some political systems have utilized urbanism and the public realm as tools for propelling political agendas. Through a Public Interest Design approach, architectural strategies premised on tactical urbanism and social engagement have the potential of reclaiming public space from the grasp of agents of power, and return it to the communities for their betterment.

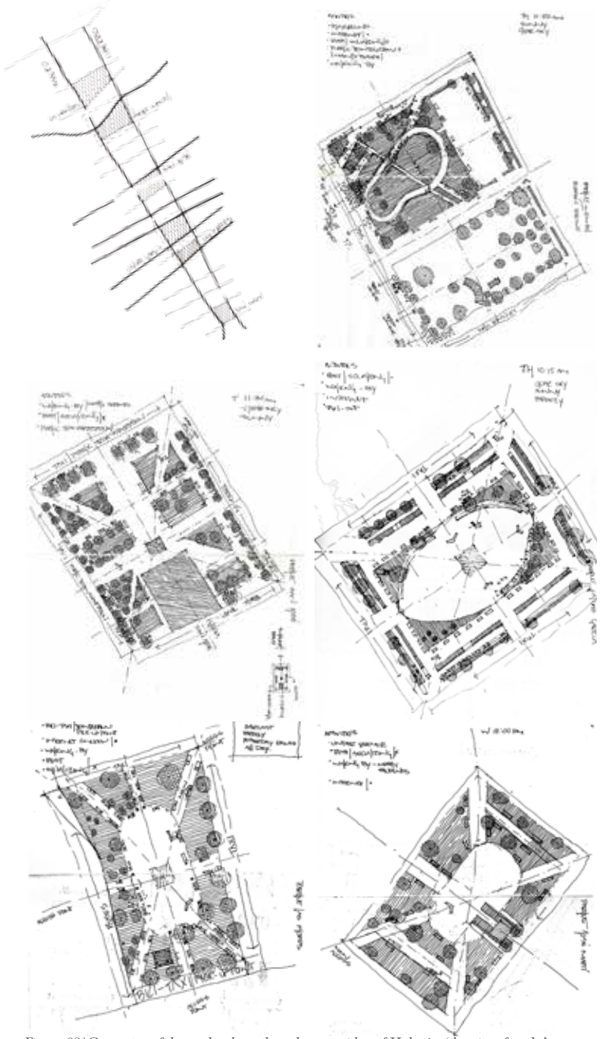

Figure 02|Geometry of the parks along the urban corridor of Holguín, 'the city of parks'.

THESIS ESSAY

"In order to create, one must first question everything." - E.Gray

INTRODUCTION

"The city isn't only an architectural assembly, it can be understood as a complex ecosystem with functions and relations where human activity is conceived and developed."
- Giovana Merola Rosciano[1]

Since the early stages of life in community public space have been a place of flux of information, goods, and culture. It had the capability of supporting society as a form of living, through the development of culture and economy. In a theoretical sense, public space can be understood as a place of production. With the evolution of politics and the formal structure of urban cities, terror has been an inherent concept in the formation and transformation of their condition. Public space have been used as a tool to propel political agendas across territories. Agents of power have transformed the role of public space from a place of production, to a place to exert control over its population. Such has been the case of Cuba in its different time periods: the colonial, the republic, and the revolution.

With the implementation of each new political regime, the way Cubans live and occupy their cities is radically transformed. The development of informal economies consequential of socio-political phenomena has resulted in an everyday urbanism to which public space haven't been able to respond. However, the emergence of the digital realm, and the slow liberation from a restrictive political regime, has altered the way people are claiming the urban space. This creates an opportunity to develop urban responses that adapt to people needs, and to redeploy public space as a place of social, cultural, and economic production.

This investigation aims to understand the socio-political, and the socio-economical phenomena of Cuba, and it's effects on the formation and transformation of public space. By understanding present phenomena and urban life, public spaces can be tranformed. Through a Public Interest Design approach, architectural strategies premised on tactical urbanism and social engagement have the potential of reclaiming public space from the grasp of agents of power, and return it to the communities for their betterment.

Figure 03| General Calixto Garcia Park, Old Main Square at night.

Figure 04| Park of the Flowers + commercial hub at noon.

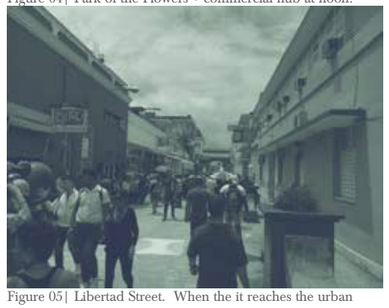
Figure 05| Libertad Street. When the it reaches the urban center + its commercial hub, it transforms into a pedestrian street.

PUBLIC SPACE AND ITS HISTORICAL ROLE IN URBAN PLANNING

Public space is the heart of society and place making. Once humans started to organize in a formal structure, a distinction between the private and the public spheres organically developed. Those common spaces where spaces of production, of sustenance, and vitality. Reciprocal to the evolution of society, these shared spaces transformed, reflecting the values and belief of the population, and fulfilling different needs within the community they served. In Latin American countries, these spaces were places of ritual making and entertainment, mostly in the form of sports. All activities taking place in the commons had a religious connotation, for the indians the connection between nature and humankind was explored and experience through public space. In the case of Europe, the public sphere transformed along the growth and complexity of society, as spaces of civic, and political character.

> "The Greek cities created at the drawing board of urban planner Hippodamus first gave the Attic democracy its form. The city layout consisted of separate egalitarian lots, which were structured by a network of streets on a rectangular grid, with special communally maintained gathering places, such as the natural harbor and the marketplace excluded from it. [...] Public space only gained its complex meaning and form through formal and communal use. The space was completed only though its usage. Spaces of civic and political character, the theater, the agora and the stoa, all served specific purposes for the people. The public space structured the life in society, around the city and thus, the formalization of the urban fabric."[2]

The public space is ubiquitous to the development of cities and society. In the 1490s with the conquest of the New World, new settlements used public space as ground zero. From the public space, the roman cardo and decumanus were projected and the base of the urban grid of the new settlement was laid out. This was true for every new settlement of the Spanish Crown as per the Laws of the Indies established in 1523, a series of laws that regulated the urban layout, social, economic, and political life of territories conquered by the Spanish Crown.[3] Aside from the main square, civic buildings, churches, and marketplace were to be situated within the limits of a public space to allow for public life to take place around the main institutional buildings. Therefore, political power was exercised and dispersed across the urban fabric through the display of control around the public space.

Figure 06| Political Propaganda :: "The fight for justice must not stop". Photo by Author. 2015.

Figure 07| Political Propaganda :: "Either free forever, or forever fighting for our freedom".

Figure 08| Political Propaganda :: "Until victory always".

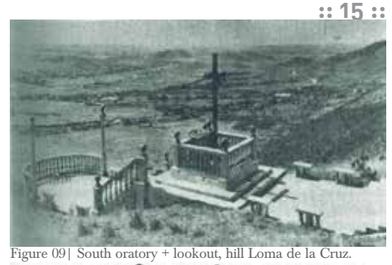
Figure 09| South oratory + lookout, hill Loma de la Cruz.

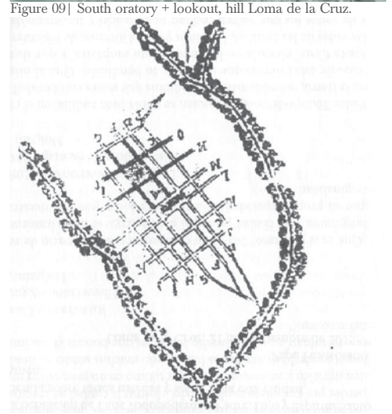
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Figure 11| View of Holguín from the hill Loma de la Cruz, 2017.

PUBLIC SPACE AND ITS ROLE IN EASTERN CUBA'S URBAN PLANNING + ECONOMY

City of Parks: Urban Planning + Public Space

1. Plaza: A space within the urban network that serves as a point of gathering and public concentration.[4]
2. Park: A vegetated space of public character that serves a recreational purpose within the urban fabric. [5]

Christopher Columbus disembarked in Gibara, Province of Holguín, Cuba in 1942 proclaiming it was "the most beautiful land that human eyes had ever seen."[6] Holguín is located in the North-East of the island, and it's the fourth largest province in Cuba, followed by Habana, Santiago de Cuba, and Camagüey. It's capital city, Holguín is mostly known as the 'City of Parks' given its particular urban fabric. Along it's urban main corridor, six parks were developed between the city's most prominent geographic formation, the hill 'Loma de la Cruz' and the point of convergence of the rivers 'Jigüe' and 'Marañón'. These parks excercised a specific function that supported the growth and development of the city and its people. As every Spanish Colony, the urban plan of Holguín was dictated by the Laws of the Indies, but the way the urban condition developed with the growth of the city in its specific geographical context evidence the role of public space in the cultural identity of its people.

The social, economic,and political history of Holguín is

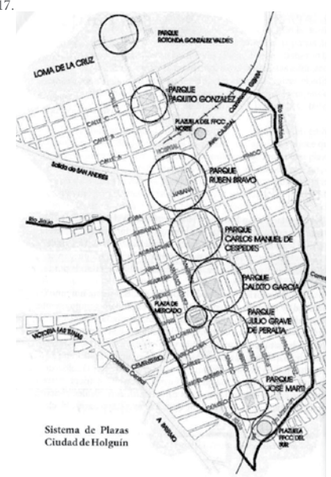

Figure 12| Present day Holguín.

intrinsically intertwined to the development of its parks. Therefore, it is possible to understand how the role of these public spaces have transformed during the different political periods of the island. The parks offer a physical recount of the country's political and socio-economic history that is relevant to study in a time when its structures have become porous. Just as in other eras, this condition is starting to transform the way people understand and occupy the public spaces. When understanding this phenomenon, a question arises as whether in a inverted action, public space can play a role in the transformation of urban life as it does in the cultural identity of the people of Holguin.

Understanding the history and complexity of the socio-economics in Cuba, it is relevant to look at the historic roles of public space as supporting elements to life in community, as the very essence of society. These places have the potential of being active participants in the betterment of communities by highlighting their character as prime spaces for social interaction while addressing the current needs of its people translated into informal conditions in urban life. "Redefining public space and improving the functionality of undervalued or degraded places to serve multiple purpose is ever more critical to the ecology of a successful metropolis."[7] This is an opportunity to respond to the everydayness of public life in Holguín, of learning from the struggles and collective experience of its people by redefining and reappropriating public space and put it not in service of agents of power, but of its people.

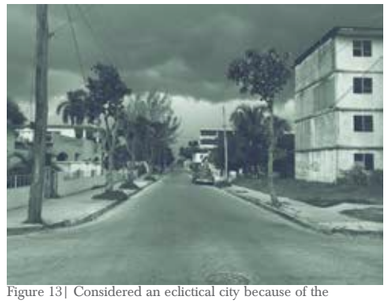

Figure 13| Considered an eclictical city because of the coexisting architectural styles, present day Holguín looks like its frozen in time.

Figure 14| Libertad Street, one of the two main urban arteries that stitch together the network of parks of Holguín.

City of Parks: Special Period + Informal (Cultural) Economies

The current socio-economic situation of Cuba is directly proportional to its political condition. The United States embargo against Cuba was exerted in the 1960s with the objective of imposing economic sanctions in the hope that it would trigger a political reaction. By commercially, economically, and financially isolating Cuba, the government of the U.S. hoped to provoke an overruling of the recently implemented communist structure. "The Cuba embargo is considered a "model embargo" in its thoroughness. It has virtually denied Cuba access to the U.S. import and export markets, and it has often interfered with access to worldwide markets as well."[8] Before

the embargo, U.S. and Cuba had a tight economic relation, and most of the trade done by Cuba was in fact, with the U.S. Cuba's relied heavily on trading and imported goods, so after the coup of the Cuban Revolution, and the implementation of the U.S. embargo, Cuba had to rely on countries which shared the communist structure of the island. It found its best ally in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, with the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc in 1991, Cuba's economy struggled which led to a period of scarcity and crisis. What eventually became know as the Special Period tarnished the island, giving a way for informal economies to take place.

The unavailability of food, supplies, and the dissparity between wages and the cost of living in the island, triggered a subcultural phenomena as a means of making amends that would transform society and urban life at large. Those years, known as the Special Period are still embedded in Cuban's collective memory as a dark time full of suffering and uncertainty. The informal economies that led to the spontaneous development of a subcultural phenomenon during tha time became the norm, and are now embedded in the Cuban culture.

The island's dual currency presents another set of challenges for the people, aiding the process of normalization of the informal economies, which moving forward will be called cultural economies, developed across the island. The principal currency is the Cuban Peso (CUP). This is the currency in which all employees are paid. The CUP is the currency used for the supplies that address basic necessities. Concurrent to the CUP is the Cuban Convertible (CUC). This is used in all items that are considered luxurious such as personal hygiene products, apparel, and internet access. In order to provide some context, the current exchange rate is 24 CUP equals 1 CUC/USD, and the average salary of a Cuban worker is 20 CUP/USD a month.

The Special Period and the resulting limitations of the dual currency accentuated people's inaccessibility to foods, and goods. This contributed to most of the population recurring to a second means of income to sustain their families by either growing and selling produce or livestock, which represented a different series of challenges for both urban and rural conditions, and which would transform the urban dynamics of the island. On one hand, the rural areas provide the

Figure 15| Gross inflation-adjusted wages, 1989-2009 (CUP).

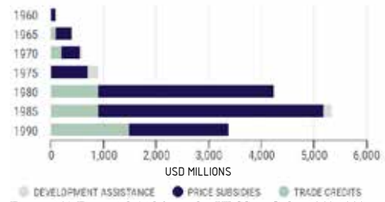

Figure 16| Financial Aid from the URSS to Cuba 1960-1990.

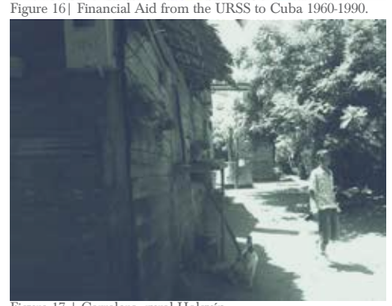

Figure 17 | Carralero, rural Holguín.

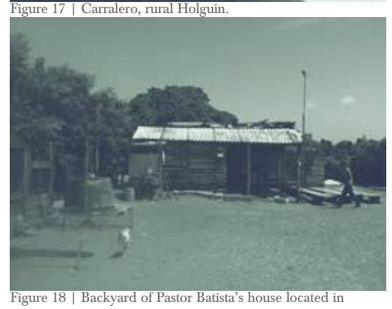

Figure 18 | Backyard of Pastor Batista's house located in Carralero, rural Holguín.

land volume to enable these systems, nonetheless, the remote locations require people to spend money in order to conduct business in a competitive manner in the urban center of the city. On the other hand, people that live in the urban setting, don't have the land required to develop these businesses, making them stretch every square inch of property for this purpose.

Rooftops have been redeployed into banyards, where people grow pig and chicken livestock. Backyards (where available) have been transformed into fish ponds, and orchards to grow as much produce as can be. Once the products are ready to sell there are different models in which people conduct negotiations. Some own a mobile establishment and they locate themselves in a spot during the day. Others have a bike which they adapt in order to carry their products and they oscillate through the residential streets announcing their contents. Others wait for every Sunday when 'La Feria', the equivalent of a farmer's market, takes place, often people living in the city go to the rural areas to buy produce, and resell them in 'La Feria' at a higher price for profit. Experiencing this phenomenon, as well as the extent that people go in order to overcome these challenges inevitably raises questions about how urban/public spaces can generate conditions that allow, promote, and facilitate these business models to occur. After all, in a country where people depend on multiple sources of income in order to sustain their family structure, architecture should become an agent for spatial and experiential resources in which individual sellers capitalize on and interact with.

During the Special Period the public space was no longer a place of production that supported the social, cultural, and economic development of the city, but a tool to propoel de ideals of the revolution. With beginning of the Castro dominance, a control over the territory and the urban fabric became in effect alongside the exercise of political power. The parks have been reduced to leisure spaces devoted to the beautification of the city. Therefore, people relied on their properties and on the streets, far from the city's main urban corridor, to developed these business models. A paradigm that shifted urban life in Holgín. Parks were no longer supporters of life in society, but leftover spaces that would permanently be embedded in the collective memory of its people.

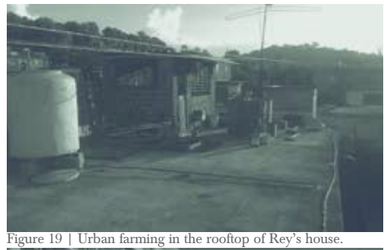

Figure 19 | Urban farming in the rooftop of Rey's house.

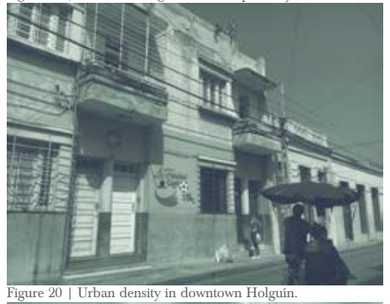

Figure 20 | Urban density in downtown Holguín.

Figure 21 | Urban density in Reparto Zayas, Holguín.

City of Parks: The City + Its Parks

The history of Holguín and its urban condition took a turn in 1959 with the coup of the Cuban Revolution. The display of control on the built environment was the tool used to impose the new political system across the island at a faster rate. The newly imposed political and economic structure employed public space as a place to excercise control by limiting the activities taking place in the parks. It is the government, who still control what happens in the parks, when does it happen, and how. Much of these activities are of political nature, propaganda celebrating the revolution and perpetuating its ideas. The parks, once beaming with commercial and social activities have been reduced to a scar in the urban fabric, a phisical reminder of its history, and the control of agents of power.

Morphologically, the parks support the urban dynamics of the city responding to a predominantly pedestrian culture, a mix-use context including institutional, commercial, cultural, and business buildings, and its history. They share a set of geometric elements that establish a physical relation between all of them. Circulation axes are articulated between North and South, East and West, Northeast and Southwest, and Northwest and Southeast. These axes allow for a more open park that responds to the pedestrian character of the city, and allow for easier and shorter paths of travel. All of the parks have a statue honoring heroes and/or martyrs of the independence wars, a visual reminder of the city's past, and a constant presence of power within the public space. All of them are vegetated at various degrees, establishing a differentiation between the typology of the park, and the typology of the plaza, alongside the main building which they would historically respond and/or support as an accesory. Lastly, the perimeter of the parks which are in themselves an emodiment of control by limiting the access for public transportation such as taxis, and tourist cars and banning the access of more popular methods of transportation such as bicitaxis or horse carriages.

The inhabitation of these public spaces have experienced a fast paced transformation within the last 3-4 years, much due to recent public accessibility to the internet. Parks have become places of interaction, of connection and reconnection, not only at a personal, but a virtual scale. This phenomenon have made people take a stand

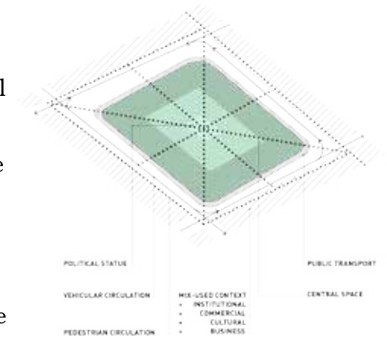

Figure 22 | Anatomy of a park.

Figure 23 | General Calixto García Park, Old Main Square, 1930s.

Figure 24 | Street Façade, General Calixto García Park, Old Main Square.

Figure 25 | Occupancy. General Calixto García Park, Old Main Square.

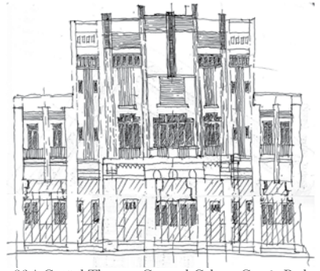

Figure 26 | Guiñol Theater, General Calixto García Park, Old Main Square.

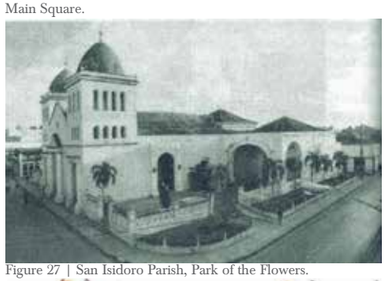

Figure 27 | San Isidoro Parish, Park of the Flowers.

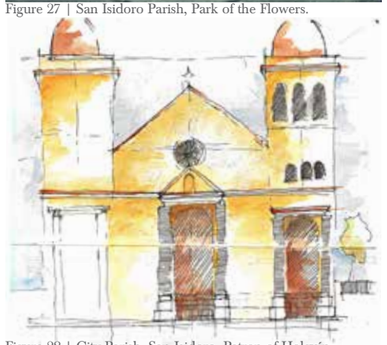

Figure 28 | City Parish, San Isidoro, Patron of Holguin.

28 65

LEISURE | SOCIAL INTERNET

Figure 29 | Geometry + Occupancy. Julio Grave de Peralta Park, Park of the Flowers.

and reclaim their city. With internet accessibility limited to public space, there's also control of the virtual public realm. The coexistence of the dual condition of internet availability in parks provide a physical evidence of the transformation of the function and occupancy of these parks when the city and its population are going through a transition period. However, just as important as it is to understand the contemporary conditions of this site, it is to understand the changes that these parks have undergone historically, and how these transformations have affected the function and occupation of these spaces.

01 General Calixto García Park, Old Plaza de Armas (Main Square)

The Old Main Square is the nucleus of the city, this is the first space laid out of the urban grid from which the street system projects and the urban center of the city is born as established by the Law of the Indies of 1523. Because of this, the square was given a cultural symbolism, where markets, theaters and other social functions took place. It has the largest area of all the parks as per the Law of Indies which required a minimum ratio of 1:1.5 in order to serve these different purposes.[9] During the independence war its function transitioned into a political hub, and act of display of control over the urban fabric, especially the social spaces of the city. After the wars, its function returned to be the center of the social life of Holguin, by being surrounded by the most important commercial, cultural, and social institutions.

The large dimension of the park and its presence in the collective memory of the people, have led this to be the main hub for different annual events. Carnivals, festivals, fairs of different time frames evidence the importance of this space for the culture and social life of its people. However, it's large proportions, sense of scale, and lack of shading makes this park one of the least inhabitated parks in the urban corridor during daytime.

02 Julio Grave de Peralta Park, Park of the Flowers, Old San Isidoro Plaza

San Isidoro is the Patron of Holguín, a church under the same name was built by the Spanish crown as part of the original urban grid of the city. According to the Law of Indies, the urban layout required two initial plazas: the main square from which the urban grid would be laid out, and the parish plaza. It was Built in 1720 to give access to San Isidoro Parish, the Patron of Holguín. " As per the Law of the indies, each church had to have a plaza as an act of reverence."[10] During the independence wars it became a prominent space for politics and social events.

In present times, during the day, this park is the most concurred of all the parks within the main urban corridor. The vegetation as well as the height of the surrounding buildings provide human comfort. The proportions of the park doesn't make it feel as an intimidating as scale of the Old main square. Located at the end of the commercial boulevard, a pedestrian street, this park becomes a destination for both locals and tourists.

03 Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Park, Old San José Plaza

This park was developed as part of the first expansion of the city. It was originally conceived as part of a religious complex that would comprise of a church, its plaza and a convent for the Franciscan Order of the catholic church, but the Spanish government didn't approve of it because of the size of the population at the time.[11] Eventually, after the Independence wars, a church and a park were in fact built without the leadership of the Franciscan Order. The park became a space for a marketplace, turning the park from its solely religious purpose to commercial hub. During the independence wars the church completely lost its religious character, since it was the tallest building of the city, it was then transformed into a military building.[12] This was a display of the physical embodiment of the agents of power exercising their control over its people through the urban fabric and its public space.

In present times, this park still has a strong religious connotation since the church is actually embedded in the plaza unlike the case of the San Isidoro Plaza where the church is located right across the street. Commercial and institutional buildings surrounding

Figure 30 | San José Church, early 1900s. Per regulations established in the Law of Indies of 1523, every church should have its own plaza as a symbol of veneration.

Figure 31 | San José Church.

77

LEISURE | SOCIAL

Figure 32 | Geometry + Occupancy. San José Park.

the park activate it and it is mainly used as a social hub and sometimes it hosts musical event promoted by the cultural institutions of the city. This park is set to be next one to obtain a wireless connection, therefore, its occupation and function may shift in the near future.

Figure 33 | José Martí Park, early 1900s.

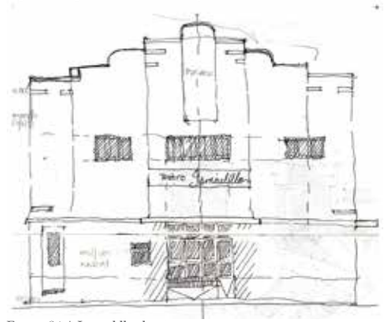

Figure 34 | Ismaelillo theater.

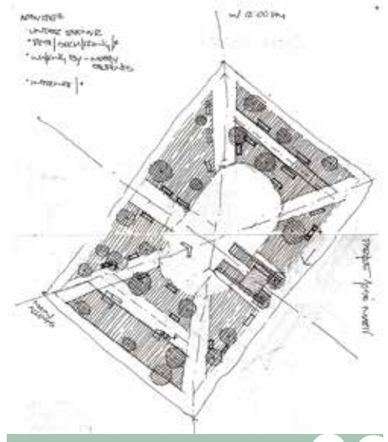

Figure 35 | Geometry + Occupancy. José Martí Park.

Figure 36 | Rubén Bravo Children's Park, Old Mantilla plaza.

04 José Martí Park, Old Campo Santo

This park was conceptualized as a cemetery. Before its second expansion, this location was considered the outskirts of the city, therefore it was the best location because of health concerns.[13] The people started protesting this use and low income families started getting settled in the surrounding areas of the lot. The proposed use wasn't fruitful, so it was redeveloped into a healthcare institution.

In present times, the original structure of the hospital still occupies half of the overall lot and it's now a geriatric nursing home. However, what was considered the courtyard of the hospital was opened up for public activity. This park is located close to the limit of the urban fabric were one of the main train station is located. Therefore, it character is more industrial, and it's not as active as the other parks along the main urban corridor.

05 Rubén bravo Children's Park, Old Mantilla Plaza

This park was the last one developed during the colonial period as a recreational area for the military barracks located nearby. The design responded to a garden, an oasis for the soldiers living adjacent to the lot.[14] During the independence wars its character drastically changed as it was used as a horse stable for the military which affected its vegetation and overall appearance. After the independence wars ended, it was transformed into a children's park, function that performs to this day. Eventually this park became an educational hub, surrounded by institutions of different levels, including a school focused on special education.

In present times the park is divided in two sections. One is fenced out and functions as a children's playground and a zoo, whereas the other half is open to the public. The park functions as the

main bus hub, so it's one of the most active parks. Its also the first park on the main urban corridor with internet accessibility, therefore, all neighborhoods located at the Northern of the city come to this park to obtain access. This is the most dissimilar park of the corridor, probably due to the nature of it's original conception, it doesn't bear any ressemblence to the rest of the parks.

06 Paquito González Park

This was an informal recreational hub for everybody entering or exiting the city as another principal train station is located in its surroundings. The park is located in the skirts of the hill 'Loma de la Cruz' the main geographic formation of the city, it's symbol and attraction located 843 ft above sea level.[15] "Everyone who comes to Holguin for the first time and doesn't reach the top of the Loma de la Cruz, hasn't really come to Holguin."[16] The park was developed into a children's playground, serving it's inmediate context. Even though this is an area of tourist and local traffic, it is situated in a mainly residential area.

In present times, the park is in the process of being redeveloped. However, adjacent educational institutions use it as a location for holding their physical education classes. Even though it's unknown if the redevelopment would affect the playground, this park will certainly strengthen the interconnective network that gives Holguin its characteristic urban condition.

Although, Holguin's parks/plazas are being refurbished, the grasp of agents of powers over the public space, as well as planning deficencies evidence a lack of engagement to the changes that society is experimenting by the porosity of the blockade. Public spaces that respond to their actual flux of information, and the interaction of the different spontaneous phenomena coexisting in Cuban territory is required in order to provide healthy communities that aid its people to achieve a better quality of life as the country keeps transitioning. The recent public accessibility to the World Wide Web in selective public spaces, have allowed people to experience the city and its public spaces in a new manner. This phenomenon gives a way for their redevelopment, responding to the cultural economies and social

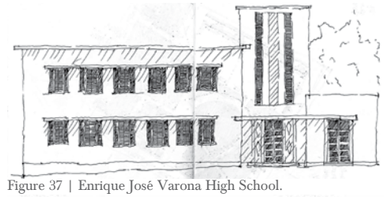

Figure 37 | Enrique José Varona High School.

Figure 38 | Geometry + Occupancy. Rubén Bravo Children's Park.

Figure 39 | Playground, Paquito Gonzáles Park, 2012.

Figure 40 | Playground, Paquito Gonzáles Park, 2017.

phenomena that aim to generate a new understanding of the parks, not only as spaces of connectivity and information, but as spaces of production at various levels.

PUBLIC SPACE AND ITS IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY CUBA

Virtual Reality of the Public Space

The inhabitation of Holguin's parks have experienced a fast paced transformation within the last 3-4 years. The porosity of the blockade created an opportunity for the people to experience the island's architecture, and more so the public space, in a different way. The role of the urban fabric as a display of the communist, and socialist propaganda has been dissolving, much due to recent public accessibility to telecommunication systems. Cubans were introduced to an unprecedented level of apparent freedom. Wireless telecommunication services were established in these public spaces giving everybody a platform to connect and reconnect in a controlled manner. The government still excercises power over the public space by controlling how, when and where are these services available, and obtaining profit from them. Even though these services are provided at incredibly high rates, this phenomenon have made people to take a stand and reclaim their city. "[...] communication and information exchanges through social media and interactive communication devices have played a very important role in moulding collective action."[16] Parks have become places of interaction, of connection and reconnection, not only at a personal, but at a virtual scale.

The World Wide Web has gotten people to reappropriate the parks, and have given a new function to the public spaces. Mobile devices have become the new public sub-strate in the urban fabric. As the city is experienced by moving through its urban main corridor from park to park, it's evident which ones have access to the internet and which not because of the volume of the people claiming the space. In relation to the exercise of control of governments in the public space, it can be argued that the internet has become the new public space because there is not an evident sense of surveillance, and people are experiencing an unprecedented sense of autonomy within

Figure 41 | Privately owned urban market.

Figure 42 | Mobile urban market.

Figure 43 | Mobile vendor.

realm. This present an opportunity for digital technologies to continue to play a emergent role in the urban design strategies.

Design As Social Enhancer

"The city, macle of conflict and solidarity, stability and dynamism, connection and distance, appears in the material form of public space." - Manuel De Solà-Morales[17]

The use of public space evolves in proportion to the evolution of a place and the circumstances of society. Therefore, public spaces should have the capability of programmatic expansion, contraction and transformation in order to perpetuate the relevance of these spaces within the urban fabric. Public space is a basic necessity in the urban life and the life in community. In Holguín, the accessibility to the internet has attracted people to the public spaces. Because of this, the population is experiencing the city in a new and unprecedented way. Now that the vitality of the parks is being reestablished by the current conditions, which historically has triggered a transformation in the physical aspects and the function of these spaces, it is relevant to explore what else can these parks do in order to support communities, and their need of finding a second means of income through cultural economies. "Common space is produced through collective inventiveness, which is either triggered by everyday urgent needs or is unleashed in the effervescence of collective experiments".[18] Understanding public spaces and public interventions as an open system, an element that is integral to the vitality and function of the city as a whole is important when moving forward with the redefinition and reappropriation of the public space.

Holguín's parks should focus on the social, cultural, and economic production of space. They should encourage social interaction, new, innovative, and spontaneous uses of the space and negotiation. The publicness of public space is not defined by it physical qualities, or the agents of power exercising control over these spaces, but on the activities and processes that take place in them. Jan Gehl, in his book *Life between Buildings* organizes the use of public spaces into three categories: necessary activities, optional activities, and

Figure 44 | Mobile vendor in the farmer's market.

Figure 45 | La Feria (farmer's market) take place every Sunday. Vendors go to the rural areas were they can buy the produce at cheaper prices and resell them in the city for profit.

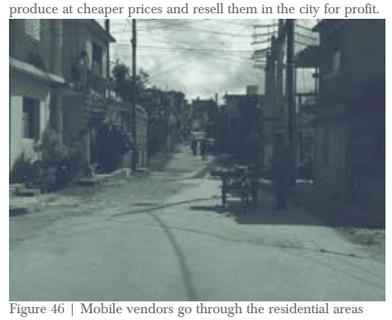
Figure 46 | Mobile vendors go through the residential areas singing what they have in stock for people to go out and buy for the day's supper.

Figure 47 | Pedestrians moving along the streets and porticos of Downtown Holguín.

Figure 48 | Children going down the concrete slides located in the Rubén Bravo Children's Park.

Figure 49 | Holguín's Rural and Urban settings present different set of challenges to support the informal economy that the poeple have had to rely upon in response to the socio-political + socio economic situation of the island.

Figure 50 | Public spaces that respond to their actual flux of information, and the interaction of the different spontaneous phenomena coexisting in Cuban territory is required in order to provide healthy communities that aid its people to achieve a better quality of life as the country keeps transitioning.

social activities.[19] All these three categories organically develop in public spaces within the urban fabric, and should coexist in environments that promote and initiate spontaneous uses, encounters, and interactions. Even though architects and urban planners have no control in manipulating the activities that take place in public spaces, they have the capability of providing better experiential qualities that promote different forms of contact and creative inhabitation. By challenging any form of exercise of control over it and its use through a practice of shared production of goods and services has the potential of reclaiming public space from the grasp of agents of power. Such grasp is manifested in the control of the events taking place in the public space, the employment of public space as a place for political propaganda, and the limitation of spontaneous uses to develop. As a result, people have adapted to the city and its dynamics by taking this phenomena outside of the urban corridor, beyond the official spaces of social production in function of their needs. That's the everyday urbanism that needs to be design for in the form of public space allowing for people to regain control of their city and to use it to their benefit and development.

This can be achieved by activating not one, but all of the parks in a series of programmatic interventions. By creating a network that aims to engage community at different scales and broadening their impact in the social, economic, and cultural development of the city. Through the redevelopment of one of the parks as a main hub, and developing a series of satellite interventions to be inserted in the existing morphology of each park. Holguín's parks would then be transformed from a series of pockets within the main urban corridor, and into an active network working towards the development of society in all of its forms.

These series of interventions should aim to destabilize the physical form of control supported by the current morphologies of the park. Claiming the street, and bluring the edges of the public space would defy the control imposed through the institutional boundaries of the public space, and the control over what methods of transportations are allowed to access the primary streets which neglect affordable public transportation. Challenging the hierarchy of a centralized space would break up the scale and create an opportunity to emphisize the relationship of elements rejecting symmetry. The incorporation

of programmatic elements addresing cultural economies happening outside of the urban corridor, as well as current and spontaneous activities within would encourage stewardship and community involvement. Lastly, there's an opportunity to address the digital phenomena ocurring in Holguin's parks and provide more autonomy in the physical, as well as the virtural public space.

CONCLUSION

Historically, public spaces acted as supporting elements to society and the life in community. In Holguín, the socio-political, and socio-economic circumstances have reduced the identity of its parks to leisure spaces devoted to the beautification of the city. Stirring away from their historical role in the development and sustenance of the city and its people. The function, and physical aspects of these spaces shifted as the country transitioned historically from one period to another. Holguin's parks/plazas have become unresponsive and are not supporting the needs of the people, or the changes that the society is experimenting by the porosity of the blockade. If the intrinsic connection between these spaces to their immediate context, more specifically to the institutions they were meant to support has debilitated, there's an opportunity to completely separate them and give the ensemble of parks it's own voice, an integrated identity in a way that address the needs of the people through a flux of information, goods, and culture.

The parks are the vital organs of the city. Acting as a backbone, these parks define not only Holguin's urban character, but its cultural and social growth through a series of pockets in its main urban corridor. Providing new ways in which these parks could be used, has given new meaning to them, initiating a revitalization process on their relevance and impact in the communities. By understanding the parks as a network, the activation of the main urban corridor as a whole, would allow to reclaim Holguin's public space and urban dynamics from the grasp of agents of power, and return it to the communities for their betterment.

Creating an integral relation between the parks is achieved by defining a series of strategies to be implemented throughout the main urban corridor as a revitalization process in the the heart of the city

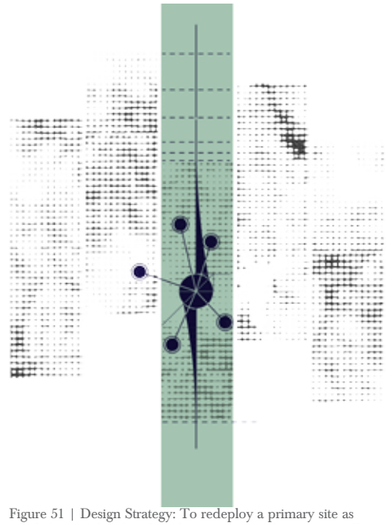

Figure 51 | Design Strategy: To redeploy a primary site as a hub for social, cultural, and economic production, as well as activating the rest of the parks by developing a satellite intervention to be inserted in the existing morphology of each park.

that can be translated and adapted to satelite interventions within the existing fabric of the rest of the parks, creating a network accessible to adjacent neighborhoods an promoting a sense of community stewardship. The existing morpholy of the parks have given a way for the excercise of control over the territory, thus, these set of strategies should challenge the concepts of boundary, symmetry, scale, and hierarchy that are so promoninent in the display of power.

With future generations in mind an understanding of what are the potentials for growth, transformation and relevance of these public spaces in this time, and how they might be relevant as the country moves forward, can be generated. "Designing in a way that doesn't segregate and exclude, but rather assembles, socializes, and eventually politicizes."[20] The parks, embedded into the collective memory and cultural identity of Holguín have the potential to support its people and adjacent communities in a healthy, educational and profitable way. Public space should be the result of the interconnectivity and interaction of a society in motion. In a metaphysical way, architecture, as a social and cultural strategy, is the bonding element that facilitates the regeneration of healthy environments through productive interaction and spontaneous encounters.

"Rather than speaking for them, we - artists, theorists, designers [...] - can help these citizens and residents develop their own capacity to speak openly and become visible." - Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée[21]

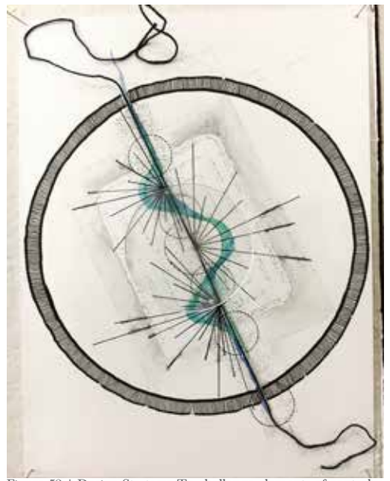

Figure 52 | Design Strategy: To challenge elements of control through defying institutional boundaries, rejecting symmetry, breaking up scale, challenging hierarchy, incorporating programmatic elements, and providing more autonomy in the physical, as well as the virtual public space.

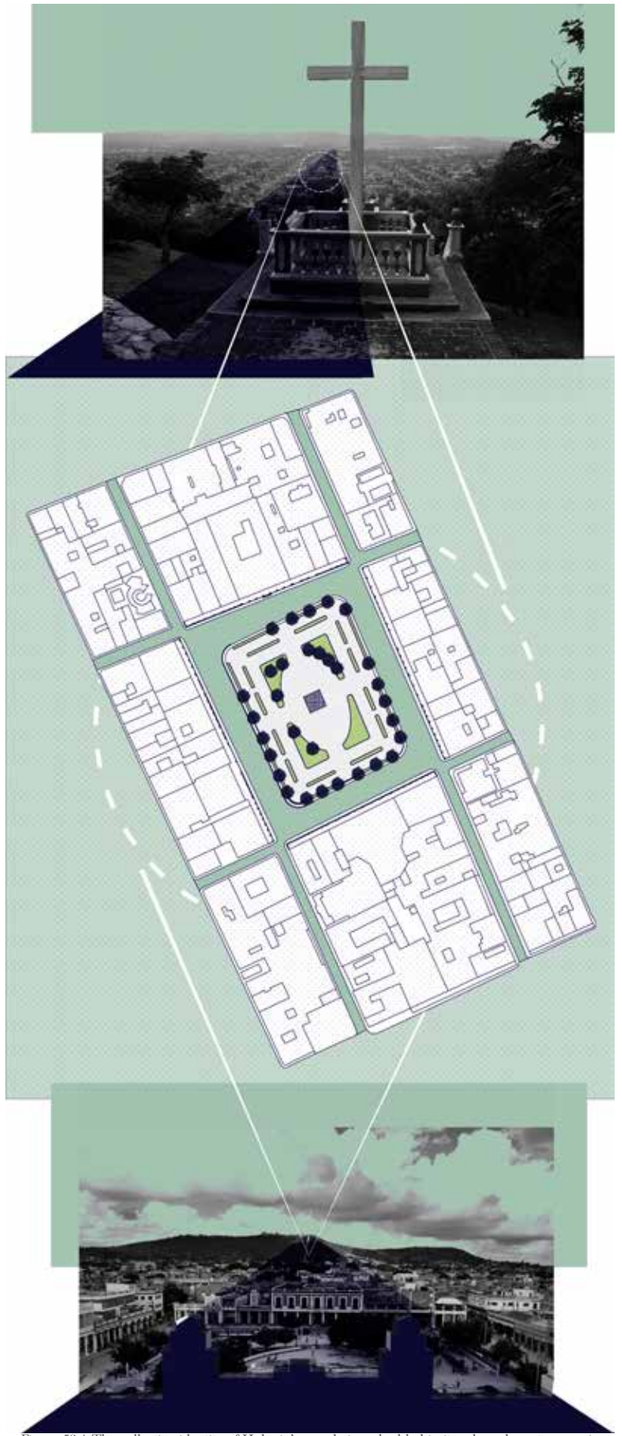

Figure 53 | The collective identity of Holguin's people is embedded in its urban character, a series of public spaces conforming a main urban corridor in an axis starting with the hill "Loma de la Cruz" and ending where the two rivers meet.

CASE STUDIES . PRECEDENTS . INSPIRATION

Figure 54 | (From top left to bottom right) 01 :: Street Vendor in Holguin, Cuba. 02 :: Net Linz, OK Center for Contemporary Art. 03 :: (Overlay) Entry at the International Horticulture Expo 2019. 04 :: Layers of Need. 05 :: Parque Calixto Garcia. 06 :: Cage of Trans(il)ience. Collage by author.

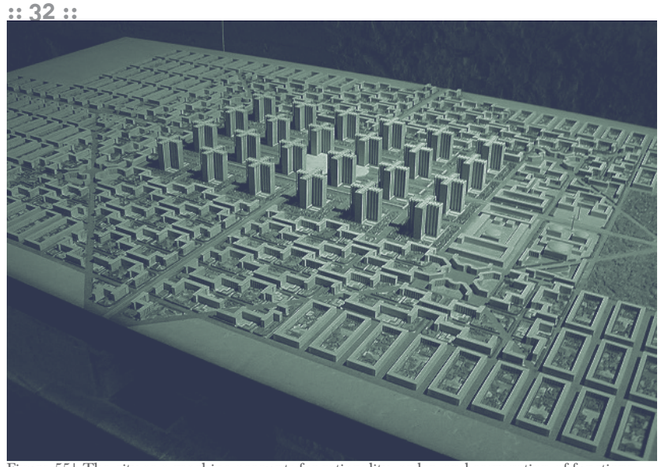

Figure 55| The city as a machine accounts for rationality, order, and segregation of functions.

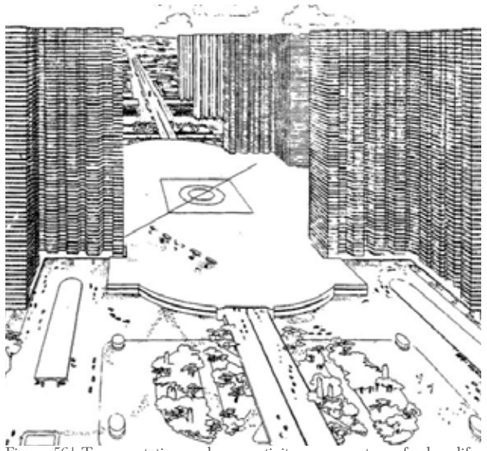

Figure 56| Transportation and connectivity as generators of urban life.

Project :: Ville Radieuse
Architect :: Le Corbusier
Location :: N|A

The Radiant city is the master plan for an ideal city developed by Le Corbusier in the 1920s. In it, Le Corbusier explores the revolutionary ideas that fueled the modernist movement during the 20th century. Responding to new means of transportation with the invention of the automobile, the radiant city aims to segregate functions within the urban. By employing industrial methods of mass production, he seeks to achieve higher urban density on a smaller footprint. This would ultimately allow for an abundance of sunlight and green space, missing elements in cities of high density at the time.

Le Corbusier understood the city as a living machine, claiming that a functionalist urbanism based on rationality, order, and segregation of functions would result in social improvement. Even though Le Corbusier accounted for both, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, moving along the different strata would be inefficient in a predominantly pedestrian society. On the other hand, parks are conceived as in-between areas providing recreational spaces accessible throughout the city. By merging both, the accessibility of the public sphere and an opportunity of overlaping functions at strategic moments, lies an opportunity to create a more flexible, and accessible urbanism.

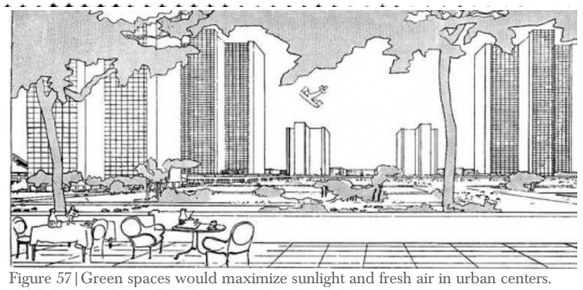

Figure 57|Green spaces would maximize sunlight and fresh air in urban centers.

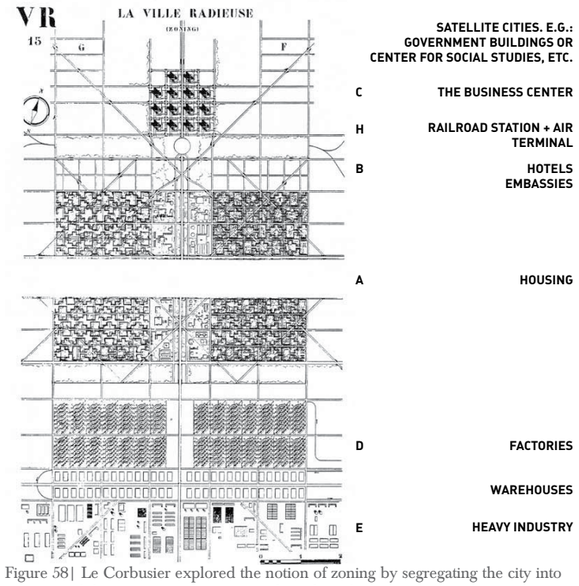

Figure 58| Le Corbusier explored the notion of zoning by segregating the city into commercial, business, entertainment and residential areas.

Figure 59 | Letchworth, Hertfordshire. First garden city, built in 1903.

Figure 60 | Welwyn, Hertforshire. Second garden city, built in 1920.

Project :: Garden Cities of To-Morrow
Architect :: Ebenezer Howard
Location :: N|A

Ebenezer Howard recognized the disparities and challenges of city , and country living. In response, he proposed the creation of the Garden City model, which would be a hybrid between both lifestyles. The satellite towns would be of limited size up to 32,000 inhabitants, and surrounded by a belt of farming/agricultural land that would provide for a cooperative society.

As a diagram, he proposes that the town would be of radial shape with a series of rings housing a specific function for the development of community. The core of the town would be parks, and public spaces. The outer rings, he proposes, are production spaces of different nature that allows for the development of jobs, at the same time that provides sustenance for the community.

Howard proposes production spaces within the urban fabric to create a cooperative model of living. By locating it in the outer ring of the garden city, as a counter part of the inner rings which house the public spaces, he shows a value of these space in the development of society. Understanding the growth of these garden cities as a potential cluster, gives a way for a network to be created in order to generate a sense of community at a greater scale.

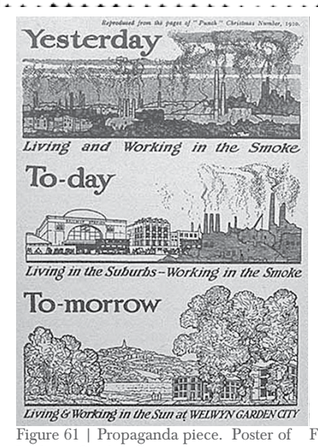

Figure 61 | Propaganda piece. Poster of Welwyn Garden City.

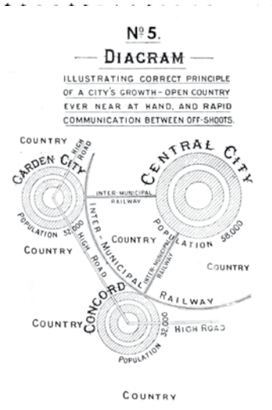

Figure 62 | Diagram of growth forming a network of cooperativism.

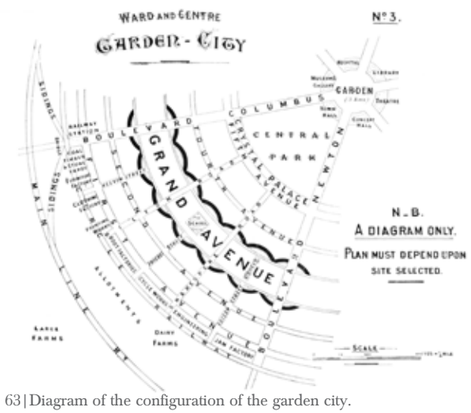

Figure 63|Diagram of the configuration of the garden city.

Figure 64| The architects aim to derive organic forms from the inmediate context.

Figure 65| The project was said to be too presemptuous, and thus halted.

Project :: Escuelas Nacionales de Arte
Architect :: R. Porro + V. Garatti + R. Gottardi
Location :: La Habana, Cuba

The National Art Schools is one of the most recognized architectural gems of Cuba. Fidel Castro and Che Guevara envisioned the schools as the materialization the revolution's vision. However, the construction was halted with the accusation of being too presumptuous. In the last few years, the National Art Schools have resurfaced as an architectural icon in the history of Cuba and the revolution, thus a government effort has emerged to bring this project into completion.

The chosen site was the former Havana Country Club, a symbol of wealth. The architects drew inspiration from the immediate context of each school, resulting in organic forms constructed with bricks and terracota tiles.The Catalan Vault was employed as a primary architectural element and a political commentary. The architectural language was in contrast with the international style, the architectural symbol of capitalism at the time of revolution.

In order to understand the utopian visions of the revolution it is essential to study its approach to architecture and its evolution. All desicions had a symbolic significance from site selection, to materiality, and form. Architecture was clearly understood as a means to phisically convey the goals towards which the revolution was aspiring.

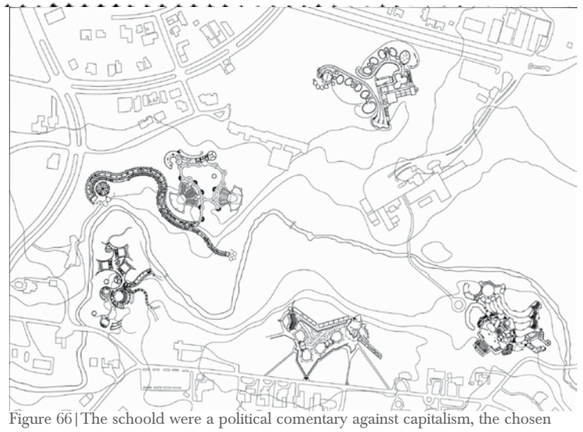

Figure 66|The schoold were a political comentary against capitalism, the chosen site, the Havana Country Club, was one of the primary symbols of capitalism in the island.

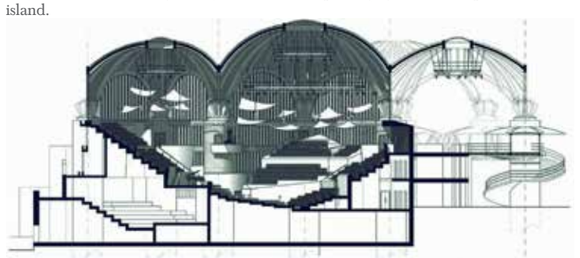

Figure 67| The maretials employed were the primary construction materials in Cuba after the U.S. embargo. Achieving the organic forms of the project with these materials would become a propagando for the revolution.

"Cuba will count as having the most beautiful academy of arts in the world." - Fidel Castro (1961)

Figure 68| Steel umbrella-like structures act as a canopy for the performance space.

Project :: Pabellón Alberto Mestre
Architect :: Unkown
Location :: Holguín, Cuba

The Alberto Mestre Pavilion is mostly recognized for being the headqueartes of the Hermanos Saiz Association |AHS| in Holguín, an organization that promotes arts and culture within the Cuban youth. The pavilion is composed of a stage with three steel structures that provide shade, and shelter for the public and artist during the different events sponsored by the AHS, as well as a building which provides permanent offices for its growth and development. Even though it is considered a public space, the pavilion is fenced off and could only be accessed during one of the programmed events.

The steel structures provide a rare view within the urban fabric of Holguín. During the economic crisis known as the Special Period, which resulted from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, palm wood and masonry became the main architectural materials to be employed. Therefore, steel is rarely seen nowadays, but its employment and versatility is clearly stated with the canopies of the Pavilion and worth to look at in relationship to the normative material expression of Cuba's architectural mosaic.

Figure 69| Mainly use for cultural events adressed to the youth, the space is otherwise unaccessible.

Figure 70|The pavilion is set to be demolished in the near furture.

Figure 71| Children are important members of society, therefore, playgrounds are important elements in public space. Thijsselplein playground, 1950.

Figure 75| Sandit and play objects, archetypes exploration.

Figure 76| Materials employed responded to the frugality of the post-war years.

Figure 77| Pure forms and a myriad of scales alluded to the imaginative quality of children's play.

Project :: The City as Playground
Architect :: Aldo Van Eyck
Location :: Amsterdam, Netherlands

In the post-war years Aldo Van Eyck worked with the Amsterdam's Department of Public Works developing public playgrounds throughout the city. What began as an experiment aknowledging children as important as any member of society gave a way to developing a network of 700 playgrounds. These series of interventions in the public space would altered urban dynamics in Amsterdam by giving children their own recognizable domain in the city.

Van Eyck managed to create a web of integrated spaces throughout the urban fabric in an attempt to achieve a democratic, playful, and informal urban life. He did so through an open compositional strategy indentifying a series of elements to be present in each playground, a series of constants that were to be organized through the careful study of the specifities of each site. He used pure geometric shapes an emphasized the relation between the elemts to address the human scale in regards to the urban.

The relevance of these interventions lie in studying the different scales of desicion making processes. It is also relevant to understand the strategy of identifying constants and variables in order to create a set of integrated nodal points identifyiable as a whole. Addressing human scale through geometry and compositional strategies is an intrinsic component to their success.

Figure 72| Dijkstraat playground, intervention in an underutilized lot, 1954.

Figure 73| Sumatroplanstoen playground, 1958.

Figure 74| Buskenblasertraat playground, intervention in a pre-existing public square, 1956.

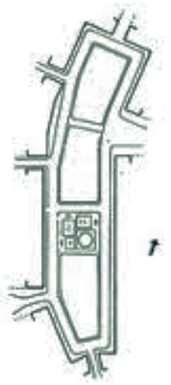

Figure 78| Context study.

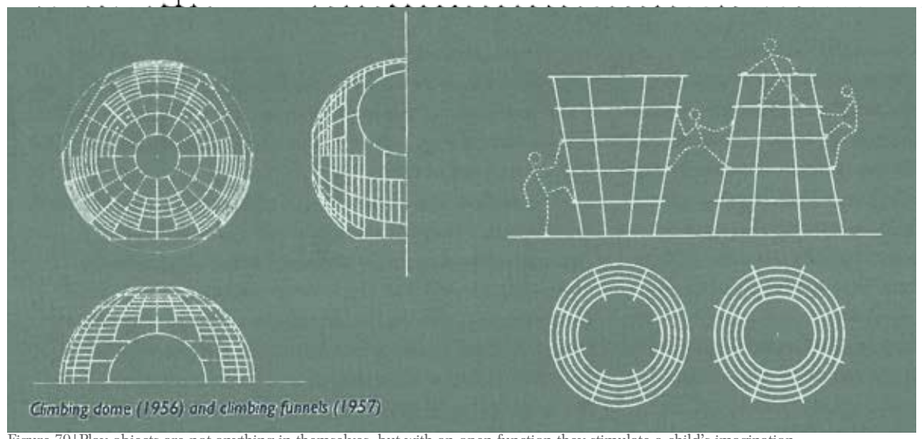

Figure 79|Play objects are not anything in themselves, but with an open function they stimulate a child's imagination.

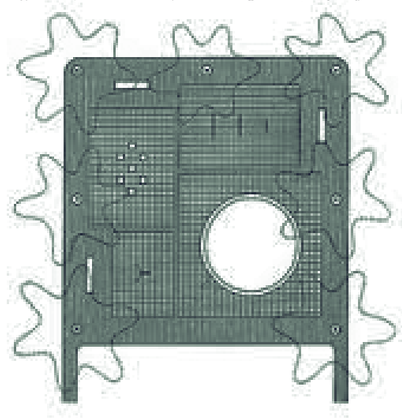

Figure 80| Zaanhof playground, 1948.

Figure 81|The compositional strategies were employed to surface, benches, and the play objects alike.

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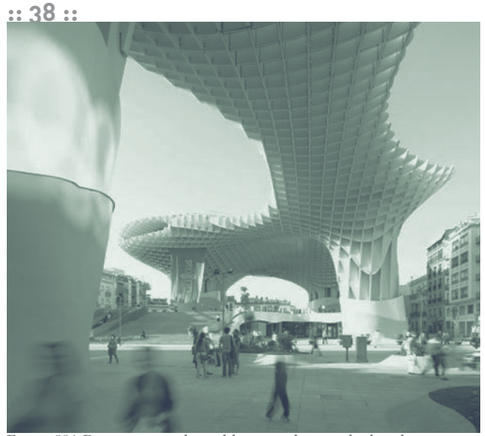

Figure 82| Programming the public space has resulted in the reactivation of the plaza La Encarnación.

Figure 83|Challenging the material constraints of wood, the structure has become a landmark for locals and tourists.

Figure 86|View from skywalk.

Figure 87|Political + cultural events take place in the redeveloped plaza.

Project :: Metropol Parasol
Architect :: J. Mayer H. Architects
Location :: Sevilla, Spain

The Metropol Parasol is located in plaza La Encarnación, the old site of a convent under the same name. After the convent was demolished, the empty lot with two adjacent squares became the town urban center. During its redevelopment, the excavation of an archeological discovery of Roman ruins halted construction. In response, the Sevilla City Council opened a call for proposals for an intervention on the site that addressed the character of its surroundings while creating a landmark for locals and tourists.

The winning proposal is a parametric wooden canopy supported by 6 structures that contrasts with the medieval language of Sevilla. The complex houses an archeology museum, a market space, a public square an elevated platform, and a skywalk at the top of the canopy. 'The mushroom', as it is known by locals, aims to activate the urban center through contrast, and a vertical occupation of the typically horizontal character of public space.

The versatility of the structure that responds to the history of the site showcases relevance of flexibility in open public spaces. Architecturally, it makes a statement not only through form, but through challenging the material constraints of wood. Also, it succesfully reinvents the typology of the canopy by allowing the entire structure to be habitable.

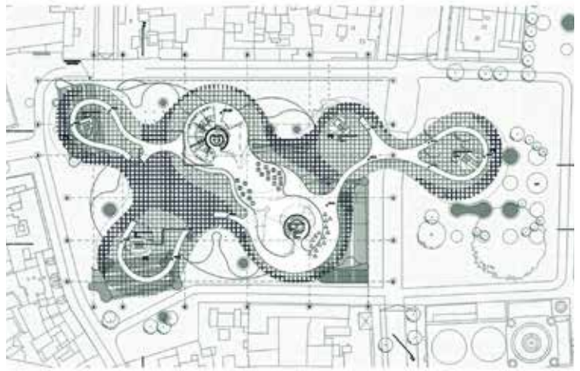

Figure 84|Site Plan showing the skywalk at the top of the structure.

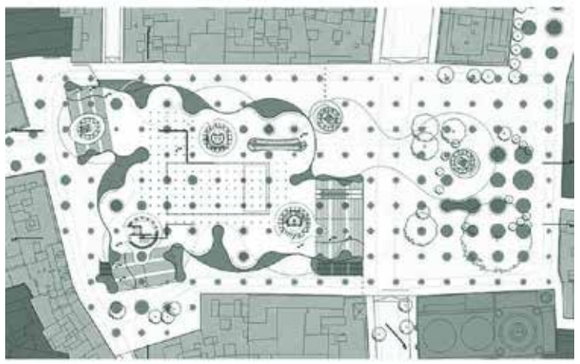

Figure 85|Floor plan showing the public space and vertical circulation.

Figure 88|The Mushroom it's a versatile structure that programmatically responds to the history of the site, and showcases the relevance of open public space in an urban center.

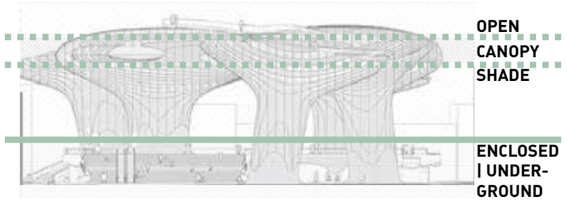

Figure 89|The canopy as a landmark creates different spatial qualities throughout the program.

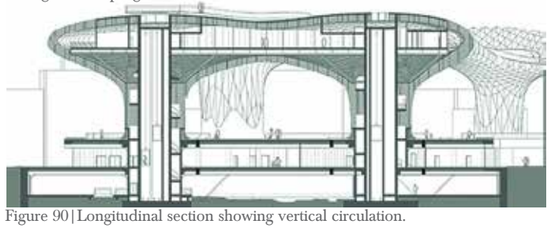

Figure 90|Longitudinal section showing vertical circulation.

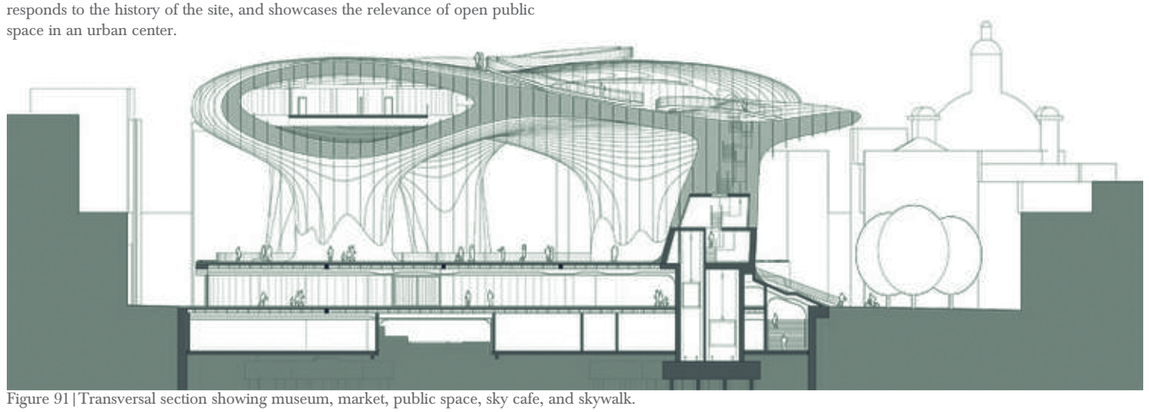

Figure 91|Transversal section showing museum, market, public space, sky cafe, and skywalk.

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Figure 92| Each 'flor-árbol' has a different program dictated by the content of its trunk. The petals, act as the unifying canopy that bring together each programmatic element.

Figure 93| Orquideorama is the main public|event space of the Medellín Botanical Gardens.

Figure 94| The structures explore the relationship between nature and architecture.

Project :: Orquideorama
Architect :: Plan:B + JPRCR Arquitectos
Location :: Medellín, Colombia

Orchideorama is a set of structures, a hybrid between a flower and a tree |flor-árbol|, that make up the main public|event space of the Medellín Botanical Gardens. Conceptually, the architects explored the relationship between architecture and living organisms aiming to create an environment that results from the symbiotic relationship of the two. This was achieved by creating a modular component that fosters spontaneous activities, as well as programmed events and exhibitions.

Each 'flor-árbol' is created by a hollow trunk, the character of the nucleus of the unit varies from exhibition spaces, butterfly houses, lightwells, and vegetation zones. A series of petals that grow from the trunk come together to form a canopy that filter light, providing shade and shelter on the space, at the same time that collects rainwater. Each module can be understood as an independent entity that can serve individual purposes, but the strength of this intervention lies in relationship of one another.

The employment of a module with independent programming components allows for flexibility. The scheme creates an open character that doesn't require hard edges in order to convey the different programs taking place. The relationsip of part to whole makes a dynamic result open for changes, expansion, and contraction of the scheme as a whole, but also of the differnt programmatic components.

Figure 95| Site Plan.

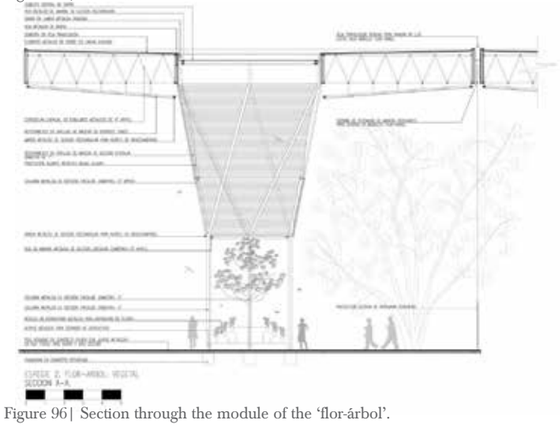

Figure 96| Section through the module of the 'flor-árbol'.

Figure 97| The canopy formed by the petals filters light at the same time that collects rainwater for watering plants.

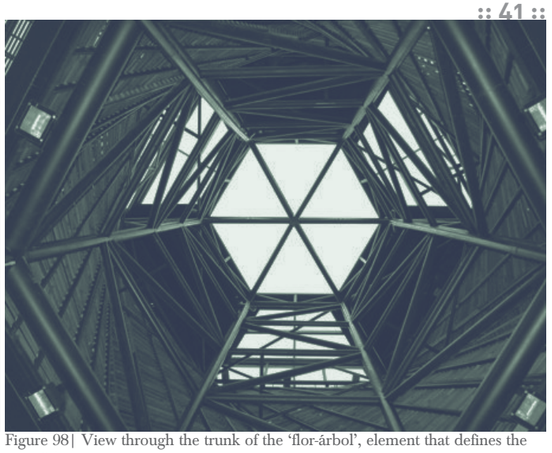

Figure 98| View through the trunk of the 'flor-árbol', element that defines the use of the space.

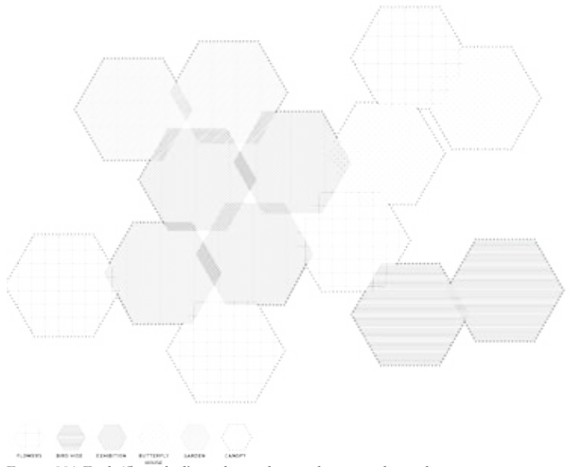

Figure 99| Each 'flor-árbol' can be understood as an independent entity, or as a part of a whole.

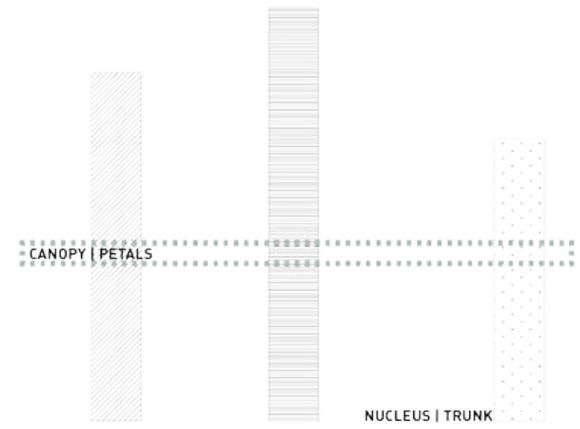

Figure 100| Each 'flor-árbol' is created by a hollow trunk that serves multiple purposes, and a series of perals that form an unifying canopy.

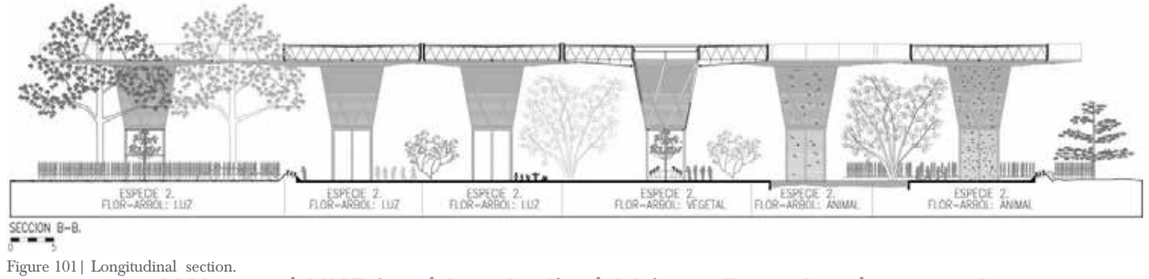

Figure 101| Longitudinal section.

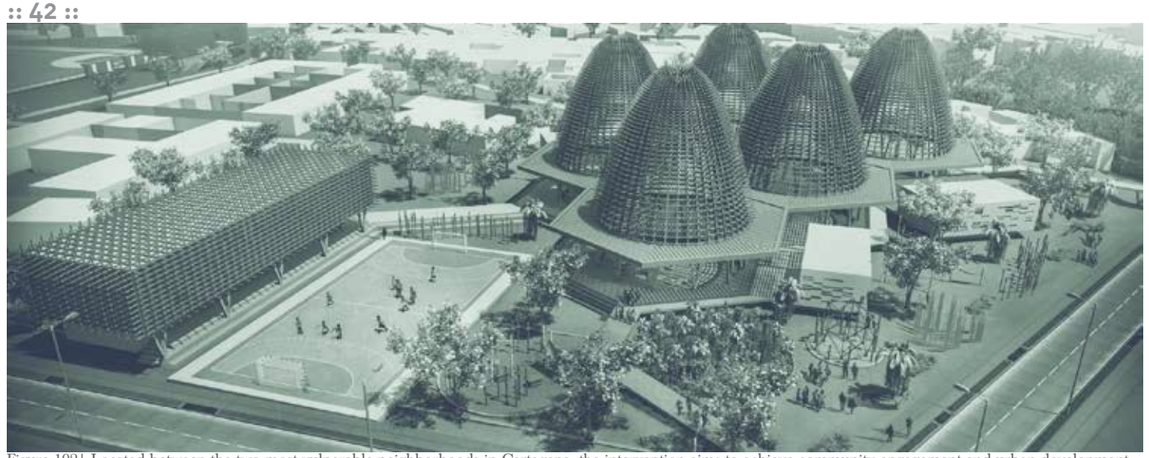

Figure 102| Located between the two most vulnerable neighborhoods in Cartagena, the intervention aims to achieve community engagement and urban development.

Project :: Barrios ConSentidos
Architect :: Giancarlo Mazzanti
Location :: Cartagena, Colombia

'Barrios ConSentidos' is part of broad effort that seeks to initiate social transformation through urbanism in Colombian cities. It is located between two of the most underdeveloped neighborhoods in Cartagena. The intervention aims to establish social interaction, develope sustainable practices, and advocate towards a better urbanism and its social and economic repercussions.

The scheme recognizes the public space as an integral component for social development through a proposal that encompasses multiple uses for social production and betterment. Aknowledging some of the uses and spontaneous activities that already took place on site, the architect proposed the merging of sports, culture, recreation, education, and economy in a single space in order to achieve an integral transformation.

There is an understanding and response to the public space as spaces of vital importance for the betterment of society, not only by being spaces of leisure, but by being spaces of production that contribute in community engagement and transformation. Dividing the project into nodes of activities by program adjacencies adresses the difference in logistics of the components. Through observation and analysis, proposed spaces need to respond to existing phenomena in order to truly engage society and achieve the intended goals.

Figure 103|Site Plan.

Figure 104|A mix-use proposal respondons to public space as a production, and social space.

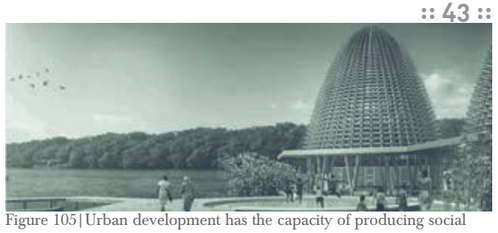

Figure 105|Urban development has the capacity of producing social betterment.

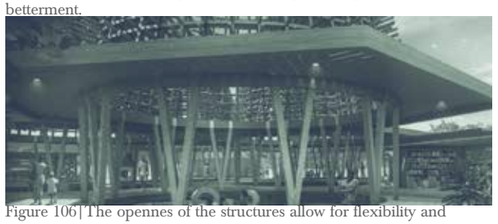

Figure 106|The opennes of the structures allow for flexibility and variation.

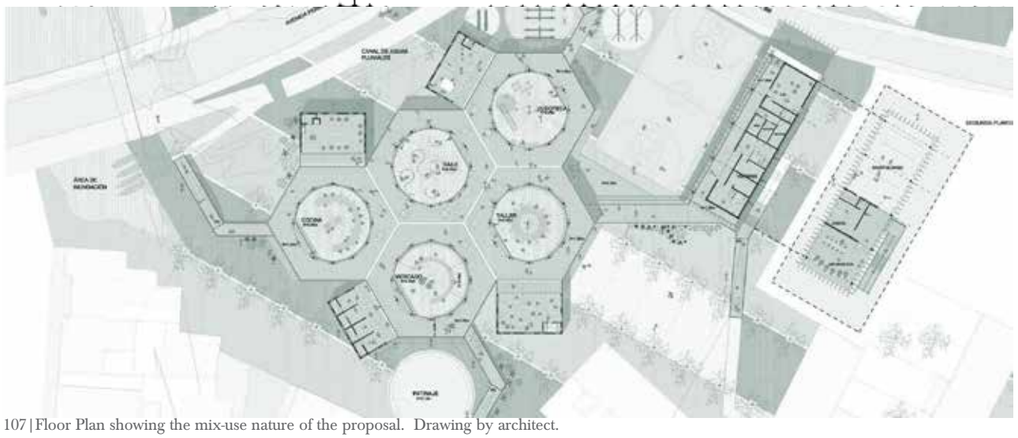

Figure 107|Floor Plan showing the mix-use nature of the proposal. Drawing by architect.

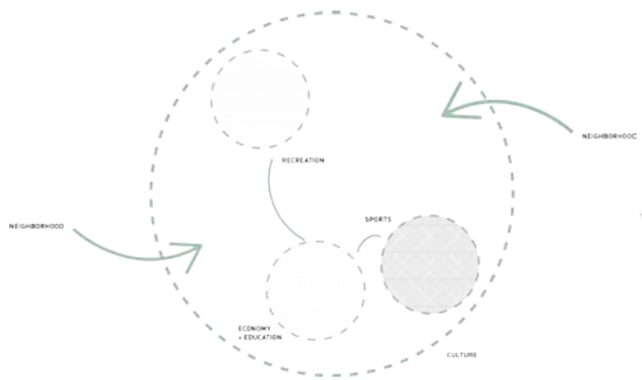

Figure 108| Dividing the project in nodes allow for the integration of different programmatic elements.

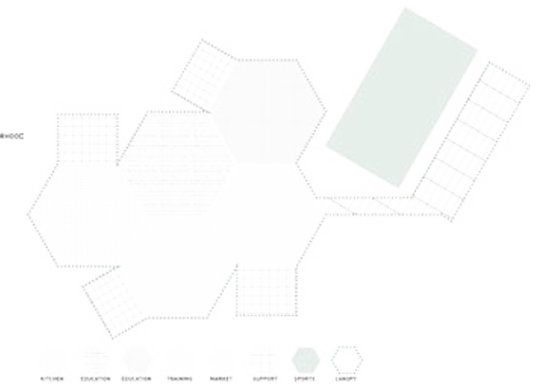

Figure 109|The merging of existing uses with new ones was proposed, in order to achieve an integral transformation of the site and the community.

“Periods of extreme breakdown can act as agents of physical change, crises produce new forms.” - M. Wigley

PROPOSAL :: PROGRAM

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

Economy has direct repercutions on urbanism, on the growth and development of a place. The dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, alongside de Cuban embargo imposed by the United States with its international ramifications, have shaped Cuba's economy since the 1990's. The Island's relied heavily on the importation of goods, therefore, an economic crisis affected the availability of foods, and people's accessibility to cover their most basic needs. As a response to this, a cultural economy developed. What's started as people growing their own produce on their balconies, and raising livestock on their rooftops, in an attempt to mediate the dissparity between wages and living costs on the island, became institutionalized in western Cuba. The 'left-over' spaces in the urban fabric of Havana started to fill up with community gardens and urban farms. This phenomenon had an impact in the urban fabric of the city, people started claiming their public space and became active participants in its development and evolution. This created a retroactive urbanism, highliting the need for a flexible urbanism that can adapt to time, to the formation and transformation of society. This however, was not the case of Holguín.

Modernist urbanism seeked to achieve social development through the segregation of activities, as well as the creation and isolation of urban taxonomies. In the contrary, this proposal seeks to explore ideas of programmatic integration, turning away from a functionalist urbanism towards an urbanism of the commons. This program proposal aims to develop a proactive approach to the ecological, social, and cultural economies of the island. The parks are no longer production spaces that aid in the formation and transformation of community. Therefore, deploying the parks into creative spaces, flexible enough to respond to the current needs of the people and the phenomena that takes place in the surrounding neighborhoods, can acommodate the potential of expansion, contraction and transformation. The cultural identity of the people of Holguín is rooted in the parks and their capacity of sustaining live and society. Therefore, these should evolve and transform in unison with its people in order to remain relevant spaces in the production of urban life.

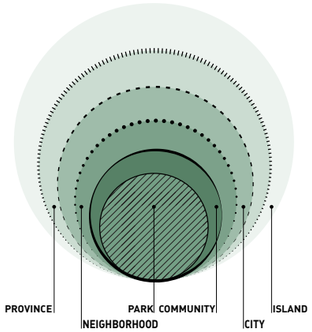

Figure 110|The parks have been an integral part in the evolution of the city, therefore, their redevelopment could have an impact in the betterment of society at a greater scale.

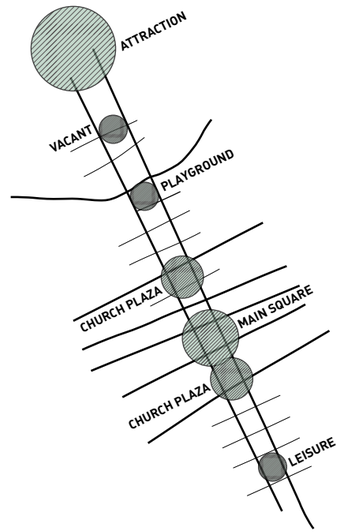

Figure 111|Each park has an indepenent character, acting as a series of pockets within the urban corridor.

QUALITATIVE PROGRAM

Figure 112|The coup of the Cuban Revolution and the transformation of public space as a tool of control led the main urban unit to shift from the parks to the neighborhood's streets. Public space that support cultural + social develpment should address + respond to the phenomena happening outside of its limits.

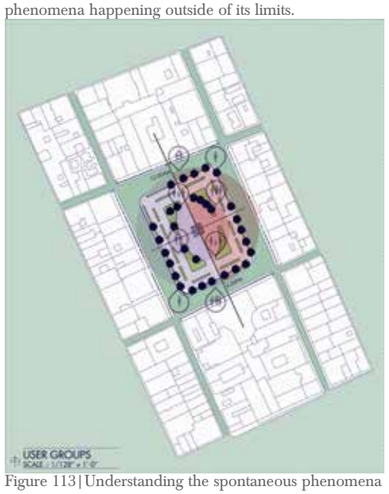

Figure 113|Understanding the spontaneous phenomena that are currently taking place on the public space is also important as they are social cues of what people need/want in the public space that serves them. An exaple of this is the kids playing around in the central space of the General Calixto Garcia Park.

The aim is to propose a mix-use urban space that takes into consideration not only the current uses of the public space of Holguín, but the informal and subcultural phenomena that takes place in the neighborhoods, embracing the fluctuations and flexibility that they require.

Production

Spaces that respond to the cultural economies consequential of the economic crisis. Using Havana as a case study, where urban lots and Seed Houses were developed as production spaces to aid the development of society during the Special Perdiod. In addition, responding to phenomena taking place outside the urban corridor to facilitate accessibility in a primarily pedestrian culture.

:: Community Garden
:: Market
:: Mobile Vendors

Social + Cultural Engagement

Understanding urban public space as the prime space for social interaction. Through the study of current uses ranging from leisure, cultural events, to digital connectivity, as well as the development of new uses give a way for an integral transformation of the parks. Recently available digital technologies should play an emergent role in urban and social transformation.

:: Hardscape
:: Softscape
:: Gathering Nodes
:: Play Space

Contextual Response

An opportunity exists within the park in relation the the commercial activities in the immediate context to provide spaces that support adjacent restaurants and cafes. Challenging the institutional boundaries of public space, the intervention aims to support everyday urban life, as a space of cultural, and social production. In that way, a stronger relation between the park and its context would be created.

:: Eating Areas
:: Lounging Areas

Digital Revolution

Spaces that support and respond the digital flux of information, that promote the connection and reconnection at both a physical, and a virtual scale are of importance. Spaces that facilitate the process of obtaining access to the internet and to be able to maintain said access without the constraints of mobile devices, such as limited battery life. Accomodating a range of group sizes, is also of uttermost importance. Often families go together to public spaces in order to reach out to family members in another province within the island, or in the exterior.

:: Connectivity
:: Gathering nodes

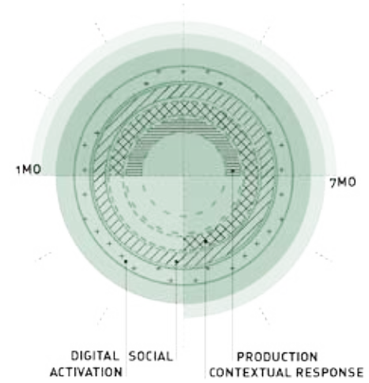

Figure 114|Proportion of program activation based on time of the day + time of the year.

Figure 115|Addressing the programmatic elements in the perimeter of the park, allow for a stronger programmatic relation to be achieved, thus blurring the institutional boundaries of public space.

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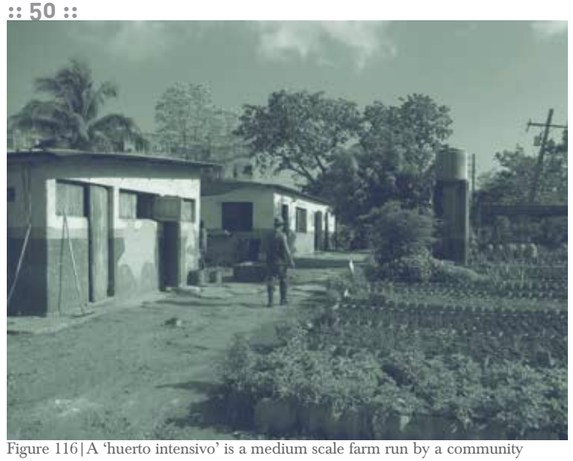


Figure 116|A 'huerto intensivo' is a medium scale farm run by a community collective. A small percentage of the profit goes to the government.

Figure 117|Work station and production spaces allow for the preparation anf selling of products.

Figure 118|Housing development behind the 'huerto intensivo'.

Project :: Huerto Intensivo Rotonda de Cojimar
Architect :: N|A
Location :: La Habana, Cuba

The Special Period is the term used to describe the Cuban phenomenon that followed the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc in THE 1990s. The economic and agricultural crisis led to food shortages and malnutrition. In the face of the crisis, the people of Havana started turning into architecture and then into the city and its urban fabric to create a solution to the problem. Families started growing produce and livestock in balconies, rooftops, and backyards, stretching every square foot of their property as possible. In response, the government created the Department of urban Agriculture in 1994, making the adaptation of urban unused land for agricultural endeavors not only legal, but free.

As a result of this phenomenon, urban gardens of different scales, and types coexist in the Habana urban fabric. Such is the case of the Huerto Intensivo Rotonda de Cojimar, this is an intensive cultuvation garden, a medium scale farm that often consists of an orchard, garden, animal pen, production spaces, market stands, and storage spaces and its run by a community collective. In this type of urban farm, nature in the form of agriculture and livestock come together with supporting structure to activate vacant urban land while supporting the socio-economics and political history of Cuba.

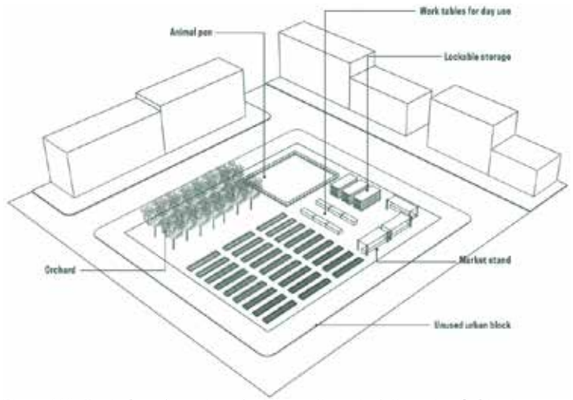


Figure 119|Typical configuration of a 'Huerto Intensivo' (Intensive Cultivation Garden).

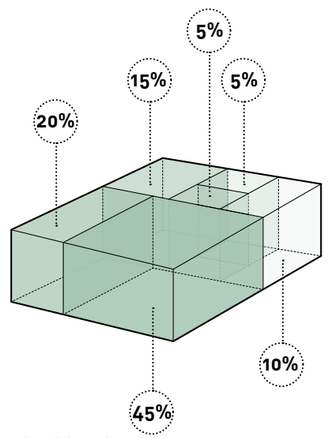


Figure 120|Program breakdown by percentages.

Figure 121|The proposal is an exploration of disengagement from the urban context.

Figure 122|Leisure spaces are connected through walkways.

Figure 123|Walkway is surrounded by nature.

Project :: The Garden of Forking Paths
Architect :: Beals + Lyon Architects
Location :: Santiago de Chile, Chile

The Garden of Forking Paths is a temporary installation that aims to celebrate the social identity of urban public spaces as spaces of leisure. It is a social commentary responding to the contemporary lucrative nature of public space in capitalists economies. Inspired by labyriths, spaces of leisure, encounters, and spontaneous activities are discovered as the user moves along the path, immersing itself in nature and the experiential aspects of architecture through public space.

Located in the heart of the Araucano park, the intervention addresses the programmability of public space. The intervention comprises a series of structures, that house different leisure activities, floating over a cornfield and interconnected by walkways. Through its language, the architects explored the ideas of discoverability and disengagement from the hectic nature of contemporary cities. It is a series of spaces that facilitate the re-engagement of the body to nature and contexts through procession and quiteness, challenging the continous flux of data and information that inundates everyday life.

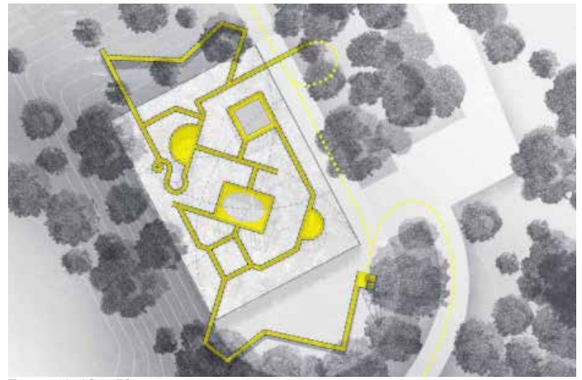


Figure 124|Site Plan.

Figure 125|Section through structures and walkways.

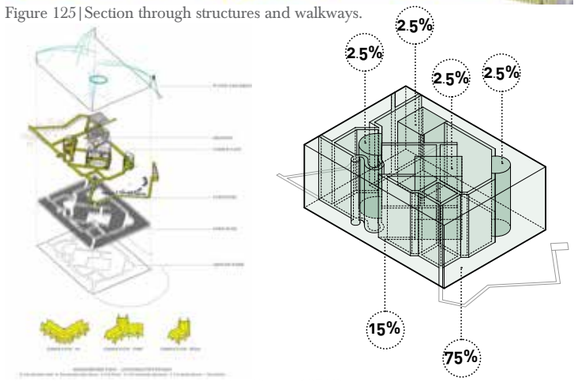


Figure 126|Exploded axonometric. Figure 127|Program breakdown by percentages.

Figure 128|Left-over urban spaces are re-activated through community engagement.

Figure 129|Studies of connectivity ensures practices of sustaintable urbanism and community betterment.

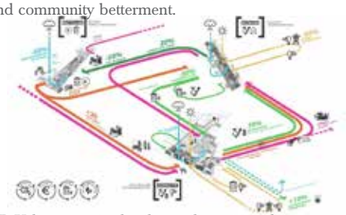


Figure 130|R-Urban aims to develop a close circuit between urban farming, ecological housing, and recycle + reuse lab.

Project :: R-Urban | Agrocité
Architect :: Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée
Location :: Colombes, France

R-Urban began as a research project of Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (AAA) understanding the city as a series of processes interralated with one another in order to succesfully achieve and sustain urban life. R-Urban, addresses "left-over" spaces within the urban fabric and re-activates them through a culture of collaboration and sharing that have an impact on the cultural economies of a community, neighborhood, city, and/or country. As a whole, it creates a locally closed circuit that works with and for the betterment of communities through processes of production and consumption.

Three unused urban loft were retrofitted to investigate these ideas through different programmatic elements that create a balance in the community. |1| Agrocité :: Urban Agriculture |2| EcoHab :: Ecological Housing |3| Recyclab :: Recycling + Reuse. These hubs are programed by socio-economic needs and are run by both social enterprises and local organizations . Agrocité is the urban agriculture hub that houses an experimental micro-farm, community garden, educational and training spaces, market, cultural event space as well as supporting program to ensure the operation of the hub. It's a local sustainable sourcing that generates production spaces for the consumption of the community.

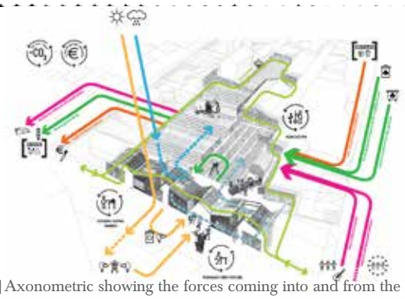


Figure 131|Axonometric showing the forces coming into and from the program.

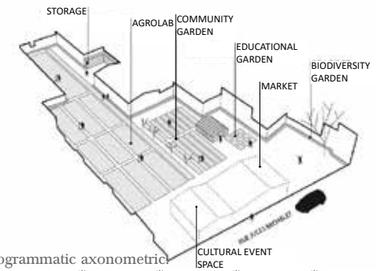


Figure 132|Programmatic axonometric.

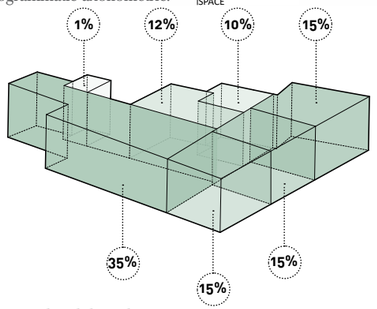


Figure 133|Program breakdown by percentages.

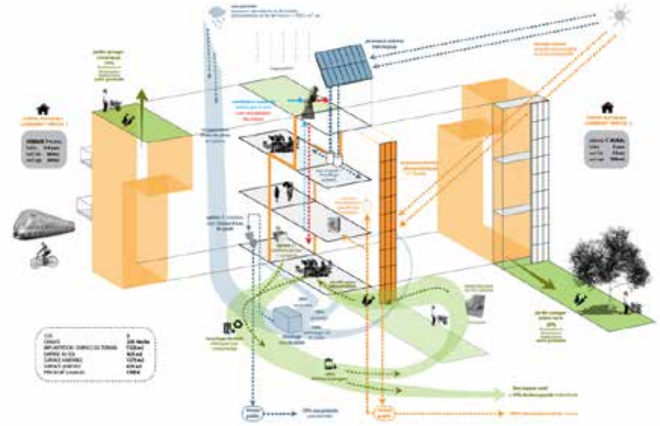


Figure 134|Ecohab combines housing, food cultivation, production spaces, and energy and water harvesting in order to create an autonomous community that plugs-in to the R-Urban circuit.

Figure 135|Diagram exploring cycles, and programmatic relationships in the city.

Figure 136|Through experimentation, the system can be replicated through European cities.

Project :: R-Urban | EcoHab
Architect :: Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée
Location :: Colombes, France

Ecohab is a cooperative eco-housing component of the R-Urban research project. It comprises a mix-use of housing, food cultivation, production spaces, and energy and water harvesting to be run in a cooperative effort. The aim is to achieve an autonomous community through cooperation and experimentation that could eventually be replicated around cities.

EcoHab should associate self-construction and experimentation of sustaintable practices of living. Through the combination of the housing typology with the taxonomies of urban agriculture, and furthermore, the sharing of services and spaces based on living patterns, this project plugs-in to the closed circuit that R-Urban aims to achieve. The proposal distance itself from modernist housing projects where the segregation of uses is said to be of uttermost importance in order to achieve a better quality of life, and proposes self-sufficient communities through programmatic overlays of spaces of living and production.

The proposal studies how housing projects can become active elements in the development of cities, and society. Through a scheme that requires cooperation in order to function, people become integral part in their own betterment. In that sense, it is a proactive method of sustaintable urbanism that aims to have an impact at a greater scale.

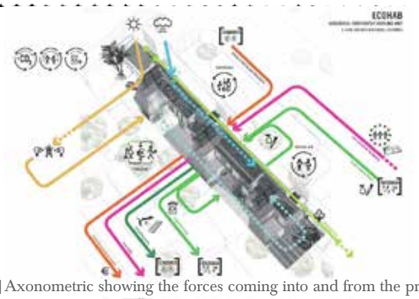


Figure 137|Axonometric showing the forces coming into and from the program.

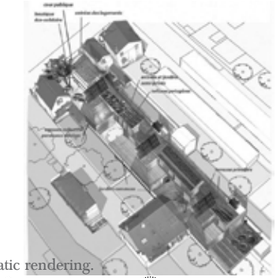


Figure 138|Programmatic rendering.

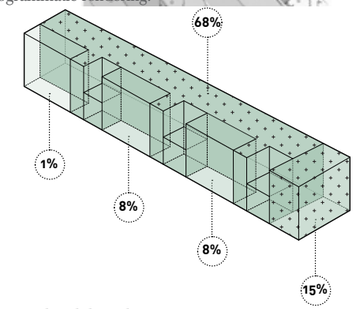


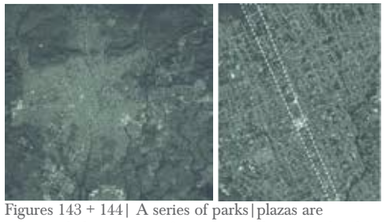
Figure 139|Program breakdown by percentages.

PROPOSAL ::
SITE SELECTION

Figure 140| General Calixto Garcia Park :: Old Main Square.

Figure 141| Holguín, located on the eastern side of the island, is the 4th largest province of Cuba.

Figure 142| The capital city of the province is also called Holguín. It is popularly known as the 'city of parks' for it's particular urban condition.



Figures 143 + 144| A series of parks|plazas are organized along an axis forming an urban corridor that crosses the city.

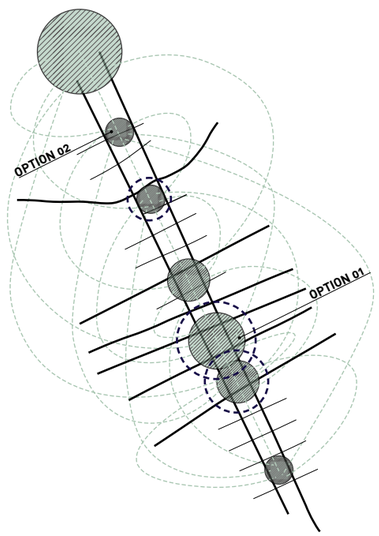


Figure 145| Parks as a network rather than independent pockets on the urban fabric. Internet availabilty in parks affect the number of users of these spaces.

SITE NARRATIVE

Holguin's parks are embedded in the collective memory, and cultural identity of its people. The parks are the vital organs of the city. Through history each of them have performed specific role in the sustenance of its people. Acting as a backbone, these parks define not only Holguin's urban character, but its cultural and social growth through a series of pockets in its main urban corridor. The recent public accessibility to the World Wide Web in selective public spaces, have allowed people to experience the city and its public spaces in a new manner. This phenomenon gives a way for their redevelopment, not only as spaces of connectivity and information, but as spaces of production at various levels. This can be achieved by activating not one, but all of the parks in a series of programmatic interventions creating a network (hub to sattelite relation) that aims to engage community at different scales and broadening their impact in the social, economic, and cultural development of the city.

THE HUB

Option 01 :: Calixto García Park

The Calixo García Park, also known as the old main square is the heart of the city. It is located in the historic downtown, it's central location makes it easily accessible to all surrounding neighborgoods. Adjacent buildings have the typical occupation of the historic downtown, a mixture of institutional, cultural, commerical and business spaces enhancing diversity of activities throught the day. It is one of the three parks that offer internet accessibility, which has a great impact on the occupancy of the park. Its geometry accomodates seasonal festivities and cultural celebrations. The prime use of this park is during nights, were families gather around the central space allowing for children to play while their parents watch and socialize in the periphery. This is when the park emanates vitality, a fresh air of social and cutural life.

Option 02 :: Paquito González Park

The Paquito González Park is located at the base of the hill 'Loma de la Cruz', the most visited attraction by locals and tourist on the city. It is located in the intersection of two neighborhoods, a former playground that responded to the residential character of its context it is currently a vacant lot of land. The symbolism of its location in regards the hill and the starting point to the axis that conforms the main urban corridor of the city, makes i a prime space for redevelopment and reengagement with the communities, and the historic downtown.

Figure 146| Entrance, Libertad St. The lot is split by a road that connects two neighborhoods.

Figure 147| The park is located at the base of the hill Loma de la Cruz, the most recognized attraction for both tourists + locals.

Figure 148| The lot is currently in disused + the playground has been removed, desactivating the park + disengaging it from the community.

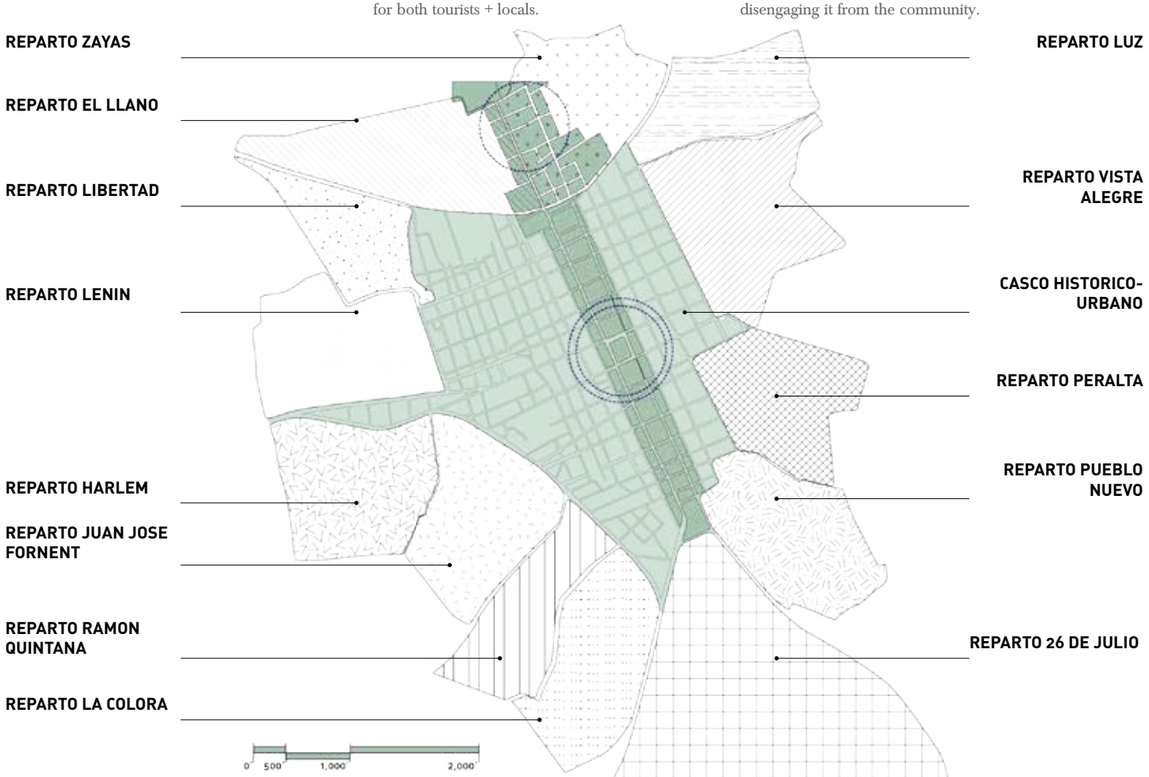


Figure 149| Site proposal for the hub. Neighborhoods surrounding the urban corrdidor formed by the parks and the principal streets of the city, Libertad + Maceo.

Figure 150| Aerial view of the historic downtown + the Calixto García park.

Figure 151| During the day, the park is barely occupied because of the lack of shading and the big proportions of the park.

Figure 152| The central space of the park is used durent festivals, and fairs.

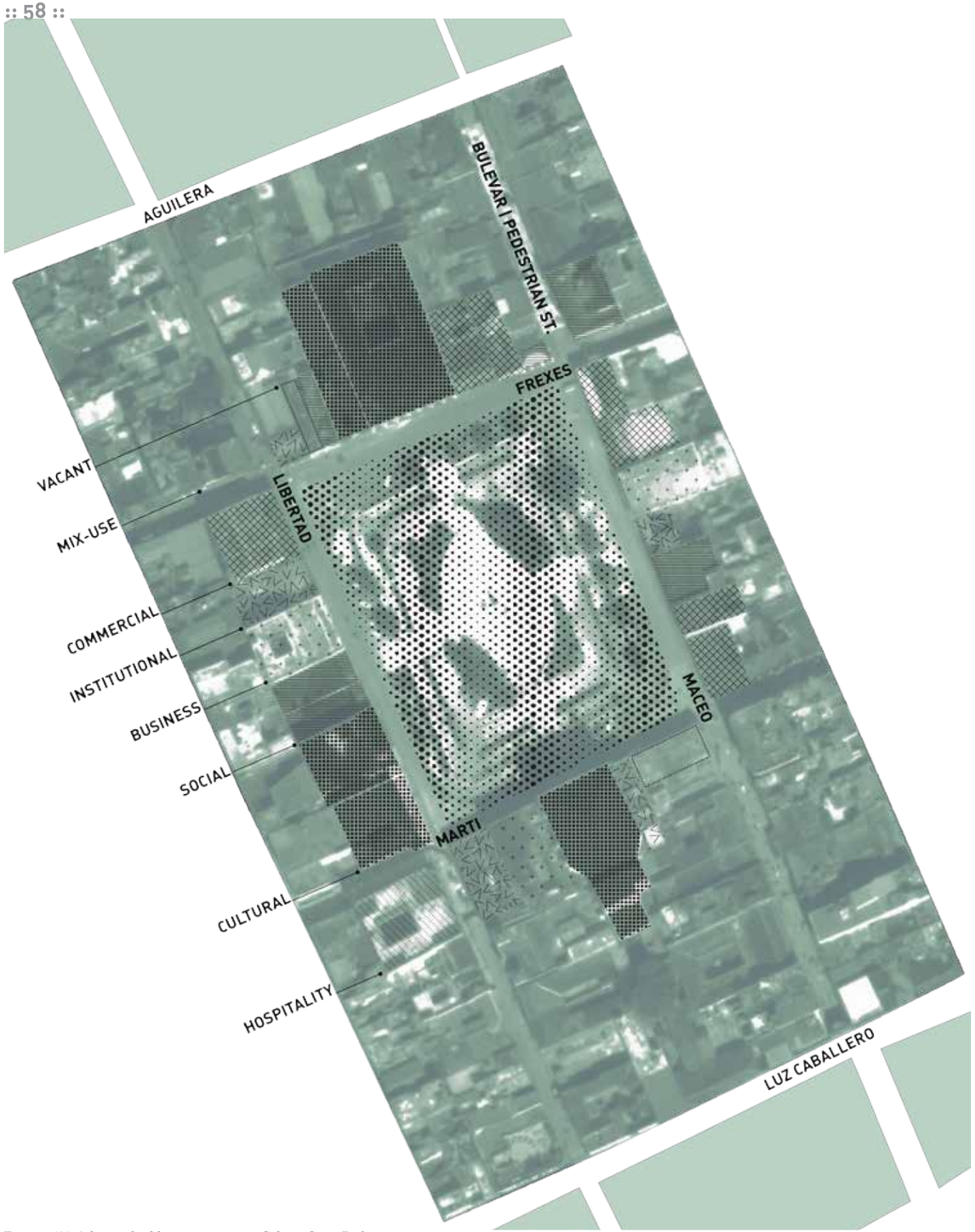


Figure 153| Adjacent buildings + programs, Calixto Garía Park.

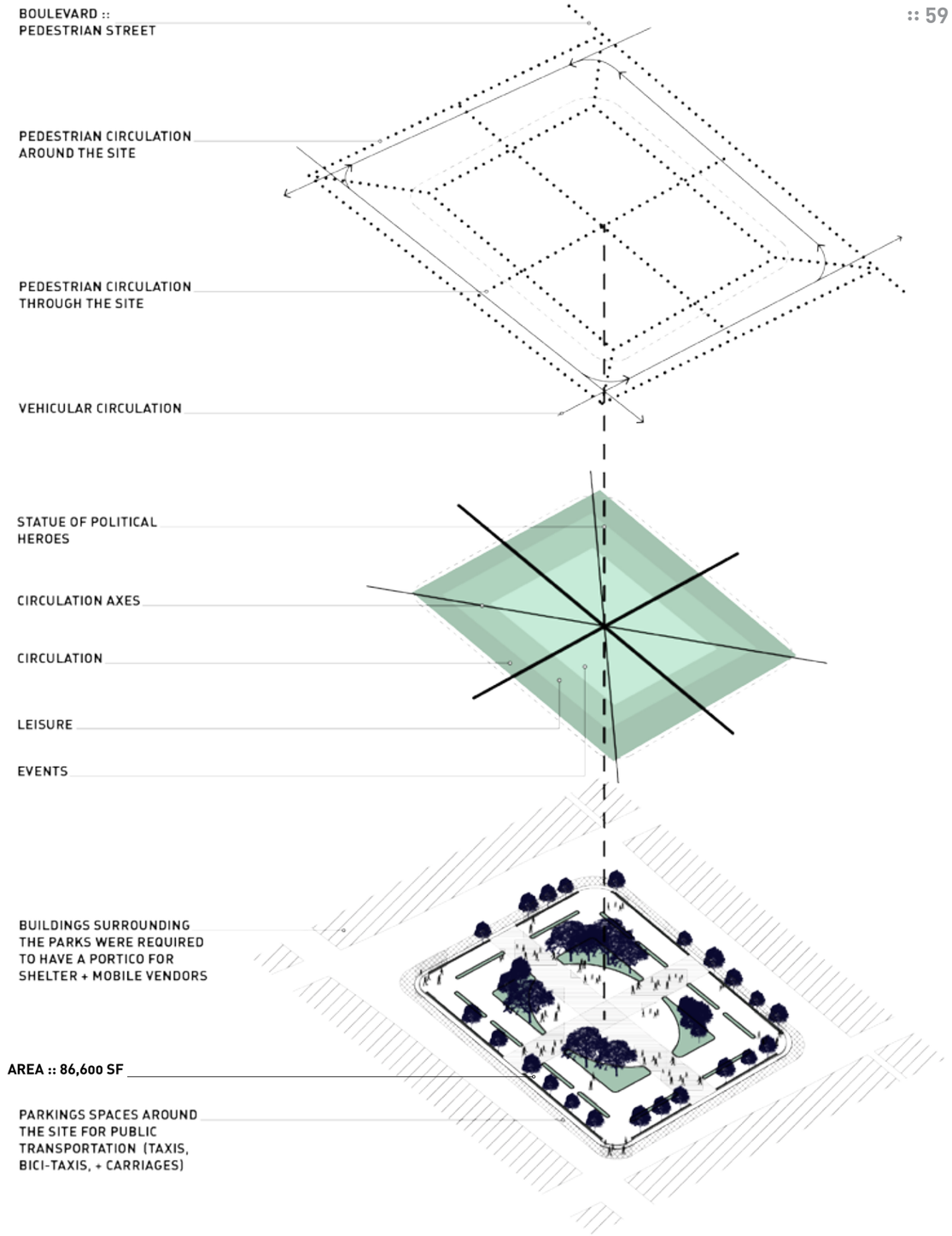


Figure 154| Exploded axonometric showing circulation paths around the site, geometry of the site, and existing conditions of the site.

Figure 155| Northeast street façade, Calixto Garía Park.

Figure 156| Northwest street façade, Calixto Garía Park.

Figure 157| Northwest street façade, Calixto Garía Park.

Figure 158| Southeast street façade, Calixto Garía Park.

M.Marrero | AHST 6110 | Proposal :: Site Selection | Advisor :: Roser Gray | 05.11.2018

PROPOSAL :: ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION

Figure 159| Axonometric.

Figure 160| Rendered Axonometric.

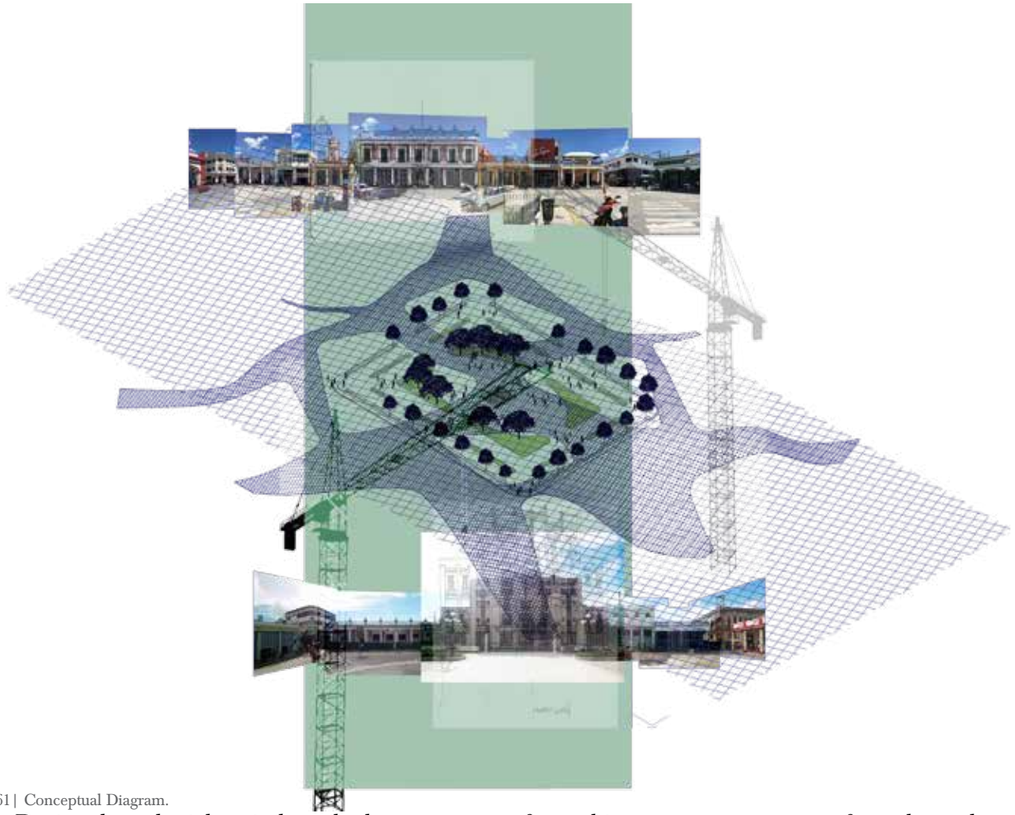


Figure 161| Conceptual Diagram.

During the colonial period of Cuba, a main urban corridor accompained by the developments of parks as a series of pockets within it supported the economic, cultural, and social growth of the city. After the coup of the Cuban Revolution, public space was transformed into a tool of control, displacing the urban unit from the parks to the neighborhood's streets. Consequential to the U.S. embargo, its internationational ramifications, and the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc, an economic crisis arose. Known as "The Special Period", it led to the development of informal economies, all taking place outside of the main urban condition. Thus, the house was transformed into a production space to support the commercial activities taking place in the neighborhood's streets.

In the last 3-4 years, the blockade has become porous, creating an opportunity for the reinstitution of the parks as the main urban unit. Much due to the public accessibility to the internet, parks are becoming once again places of interation, of connection and reconnection that's not supported by the existing contitions of the parks. One that accomodates the power dynamics of a dictatorial regime in its architectural language. Thus, proposing an intervention that moves away from these elements become important in the effort of creating democractic urban spaces that support the production of culture, and social dynamics in the urban. By defying the institutional boundaries of public space, challenging the scale and hierarchy of the existing condition, rejecting symmetry, incorporating programmatic elements, and developing a second skin responding to the digitial revolution taking place in the city, public space is then taken from the grasp of agent of powers and returned to the community for their betterment.

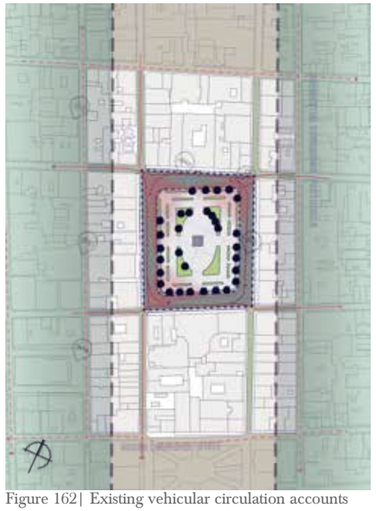


Figure 162| Existing vehicular circulation accounts for cars and taxis. Predominant local transportation methods are not allowed on primary streets.

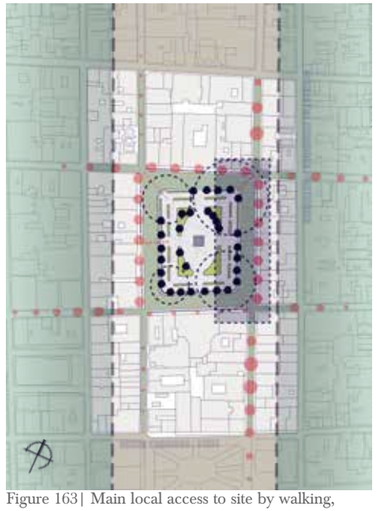


Figure 163| Main local access to site by walking, from secondary streets, and the boulevard (pedestrian street).

Figure 164| Movement accross the site is directly related to the programmatic elements of the immediate context.

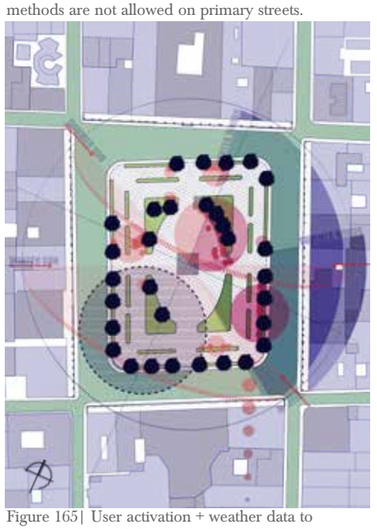


Figure 165| User activation + weather data to understand spatial dynamics during the day.

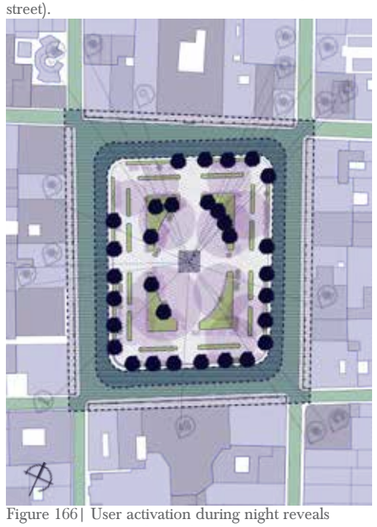


Figure 166| User activation during night reveals disparities between day and night conditions.

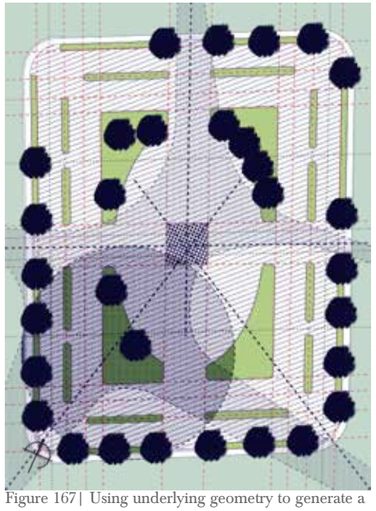


Figure 167| Using underlying geometry to generate a different architectural language opposing the exisiting.

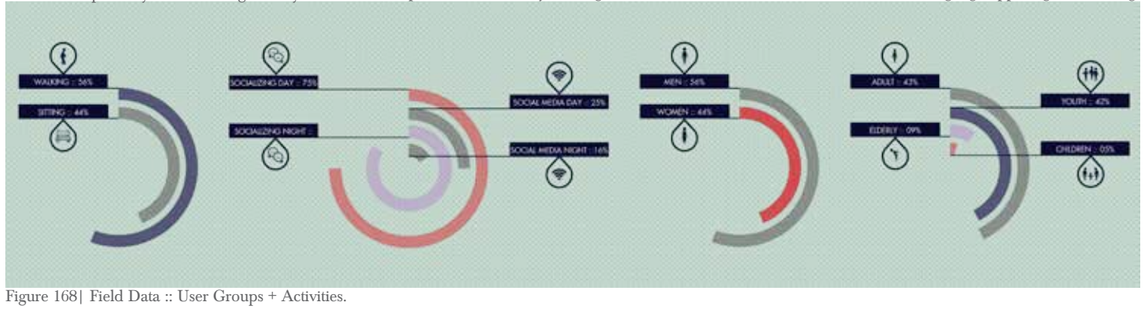


Figure 168| Field Data :: User Groups + Activities.

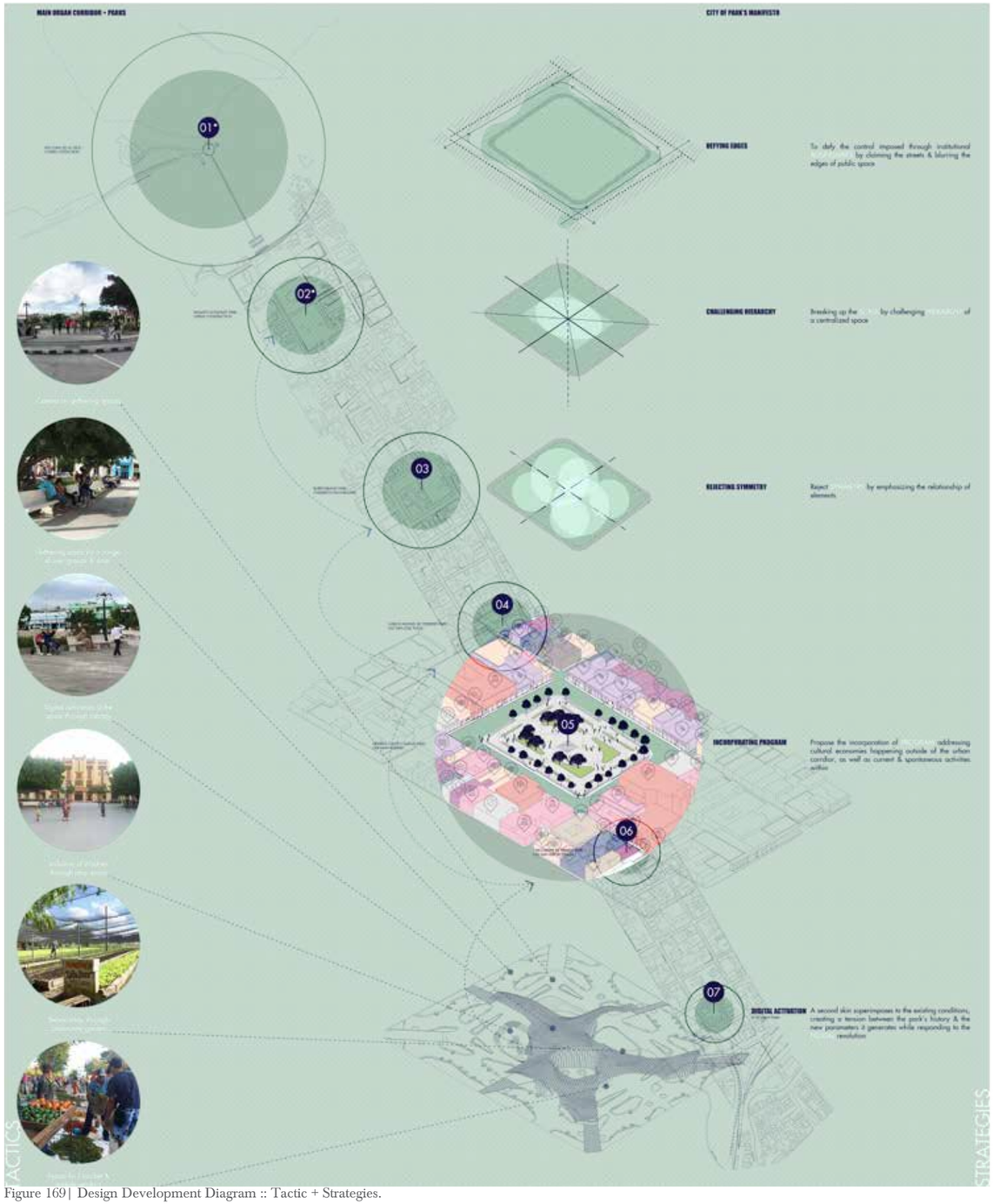


Figure 169| Design Development Diagram :: Tactic + Strategies.

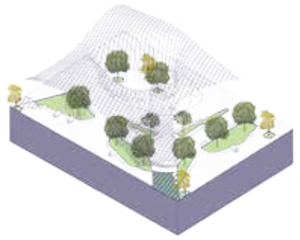


Figure 170| Axonometric :: Gathering Space.

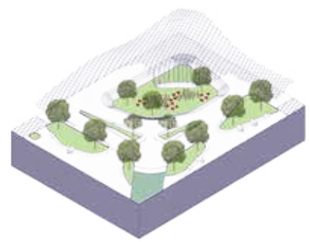


Figure 171| Axonometric :: Play Space.

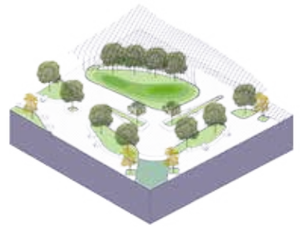


Figure 172| Axonometric :: Corner + Berm.

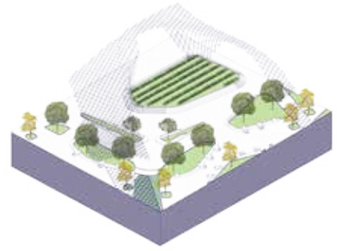


Figure 173| Axonometric :: Community Garden.

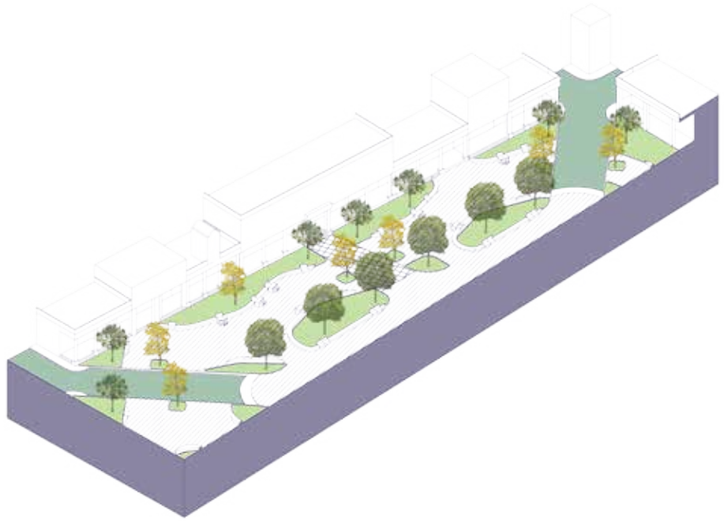


Figure 174| Axonometric :: Supporting Space to Commercial Activity.

Figure 175| Exploded Axonometric.

Figure 176| Plan.

Figure 177 | Section A-A. Section cut through berm + play space.

Figure 178 | Section B-B. Section cut through gathering space + community garden.

Figure 179 | Section C-C. Section cut through community garden + berm.

Figure 180 | Perspective :: Libertad Street. South-East Entrypoint.

Figure 181 | Perspective :: Gathering Space.

Figure 182 | Night Perspective:: Under Self-Illuminating Canopy

Figure 183 | Perspective :: 'La Periquera' Entrypoint

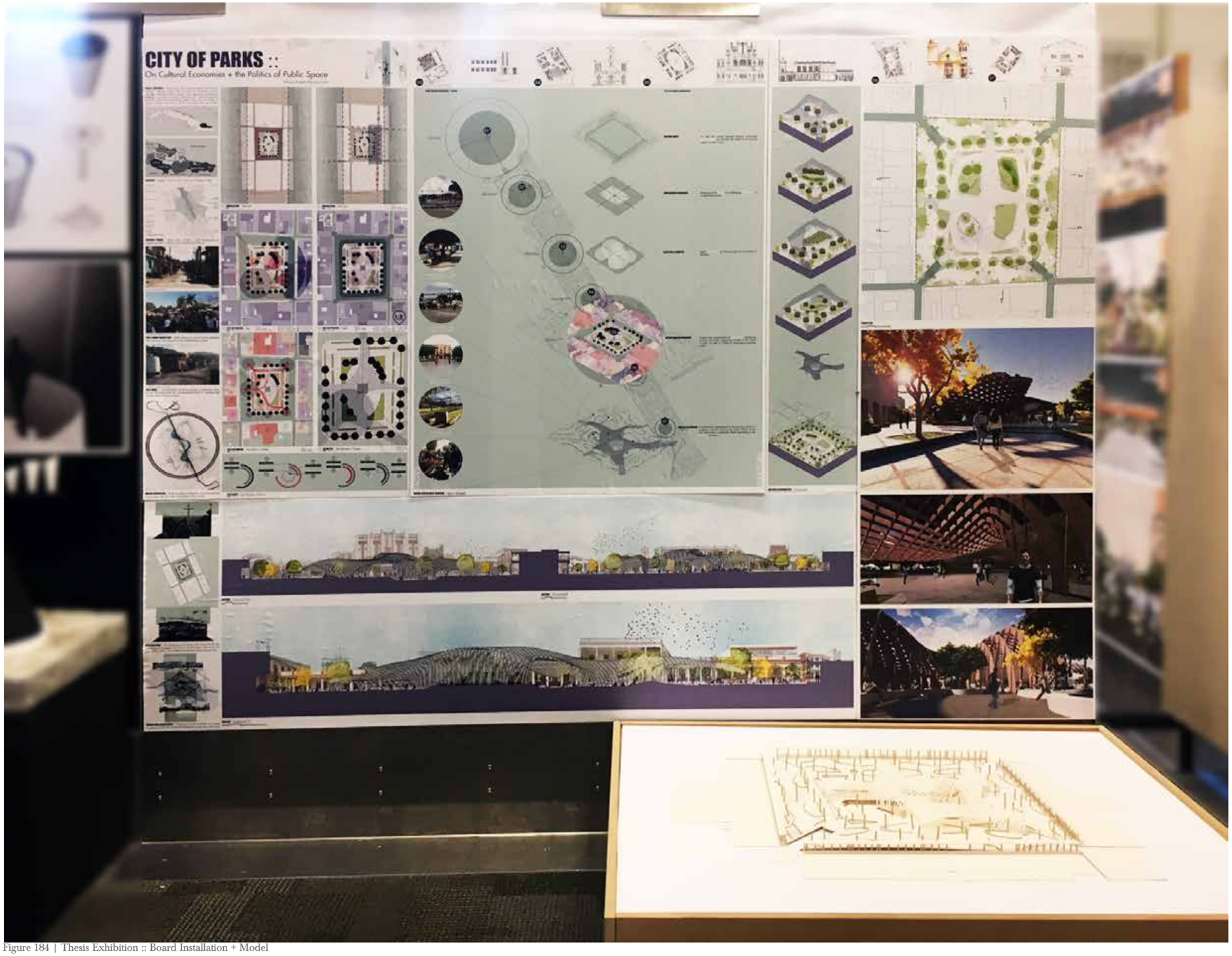


Figure 184 | Thesis Exhibition :: Board Installation + Model

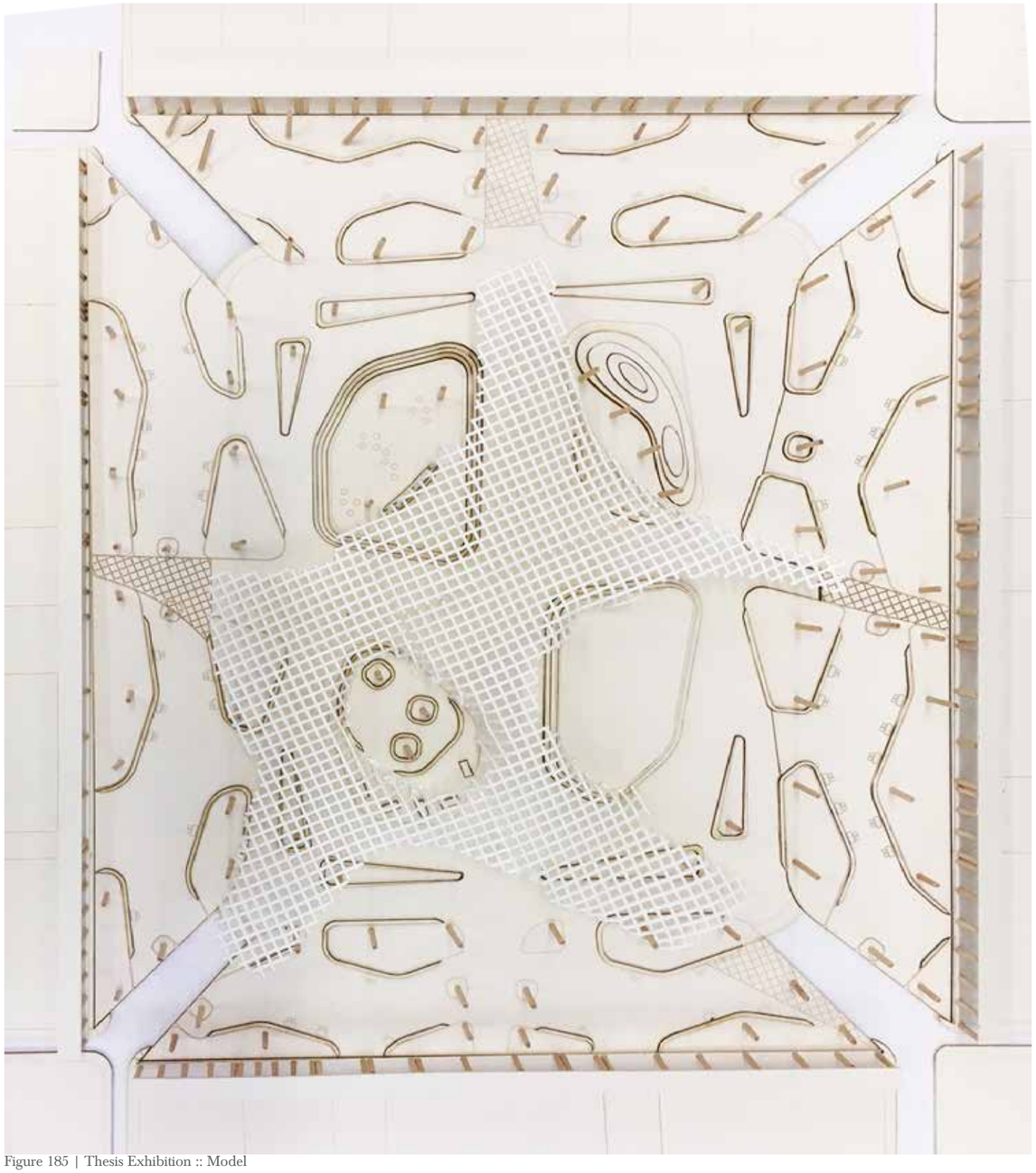


Figure 185 | Thesis Exhibition :: Model

ENDNOTES

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Chen, Caroline, James Rojas, Blaine Merker, Michael A. LaFond, Shin Aiba, Osamu Nishida, Erick Villagomez, and Michael Rios. *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*. Edited by Jeffrey Hou. New York, NY: Routledge, 2010.

De Solà-Morales, Manuel. "The impossible project of public space." Public Space. 2010. Accessed May 12, 2017. http://www.publicspace.org/en/text-library/eng/c006-l-impossible-projecte-de-l-espai-public.

De Solà-Morales starts this article by proposing the notion that in recent times the term "public space" has been given too broad of a meaning. By cataloguin spaces that have a collective notion of sociological, political and functional nature as public, he builds a clear framework upon which to build his argument. The author advocates for public spaces that are open to interpretation, spaces that realease any form of control (explicit or implicit) that limit the spontaneous uses and the public definition of an urban space. He criticizes the recent boom of public inerventions and what he calls "enclosed systems" as responses that can be infinetely replicated with a disregard of the sense of place, belonging, and human interaction proper of its context, but also as a part of the whole which is the network of elements the constitute urbanity.

One of the big takeaways from this reading is the notion of establishing a framework that somewhat limits the scope of an argument, especially when involving broad topics with multiple definitions such as "public" and "political". Also, the idea of understanding public spaces and public interventions as an open system, an element that is integral to the vitality and function of the city as a whole starts adressing how the quality of these spaces can affect negatively or positively the spontaneous activities that might take place. People and their creative uses of public spaces should be understood as an active element in the design and development of urbanity, just as much (if not more) than landscaping or architecture are.

Fuchs, Rudi, Lia Karsten, Liane Lefaivre, Anja Novak, Ingeborg De Rode, Erik Schmitz, and Francis Strauven. *Aldo Van Eyck: The Playgrounds and the City*. Edited by Liane Lefaivre and Ingeborg De Roode. Amsterdam, NL: Stedelijk Museum, 2002

Gehl, Jan. *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011.

In his book, Jan Gehl focuses on the many spontaneous uses that public spaces are given by their users. He argues that this myriad of activities are enhanced by the physical properties of public spaces. He promotes the analysis and understanding of the factors that influence the creative inhabitation of each space. Gehl organizes the use of public spaces into three categories: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities. In public spaces of poor quality only necessary activities occur, whereas in public spaces of high quality not only does necessary activities occur, but optional and social activities happen because the environment promotes and invite spontaneous uses, encounters, and interactions.

Gehl then goes into arguing that even though architects and urban planners have no control in manipulating the activities that take place in public spaces, they have the capability of providing better quality spaces that promote different forms of contact and creative inhabitation.

This reading promotes the understanding of spontaneous activities taking place in order to provide sensible spaces that not only allow, but promotes these phenomena to occur. This is essential when attempting to insert oneself in an international setting were cultural differences present a challenge. Observation and analysis not only of the current uses of public space, but what other phenomena are taking place in the urban setting that are not currently engaged, but could pontentially be addressed through the properties of public spaces is a mayor takeaway of this reading.

Hoidn, Barbara, ed. *Demo:polis - The Right to Public Space.* Zurich: Park Books, 2016

This book is a collection of essays that promote a multidisciplonary approach to the understanding of the urban phenomena concerning the public space. The authors address the intrinsic relationship between democracy and public space. In this scenario, democracy is not understood as a political system, but as the rights of people within the urban fabric. The notion of public space is then studied from a physical to a virtual character as a neutral zone where democracy is more about indivuals right than a political system in itself. The essays explore the process of designing public spaces with the notion of democracy in mind, and how these spaces serve the people not only socially, or programmatically, but politically as well.

One of the mayor takeways from this reading is how the inhabitation of public spaces is a political action in itself. Creative uses, spontaneous activitties, and social interactions communicate people stance through the appropiation of a piece of the urban fabric in a subversive manner. Even though these actions often denote a positive aspect, for some political systems this subversion might represent a threatening scenario. As the gestators of these spaces, architects and urban planners not only have to adress, but take a stance within this context, after all architecture and urbanism are inherently political actions as well.

Kaplowitz, *Donna R. Anatomy of a Failed Embargo: US Sanctions against Cuba*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998.

Leogrande, W. M., and J. M. Thomas. "Cuba's Quest for Economic Independence." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (2002): 340-41.

Lynch, Kevin. *The image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960.

Mould, Oliver. *Urban subversion and the Creative City*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Through his book, Mould analyzes and responds to what he calls the Creative City paradigm. The author understands the city as a capitalist entity in which the main form of control is through economic growth. He establishes that the capitalist model uses the Creative City paradigm as a medium to get a competitive edge creating a systematic form of creativity that inhibit the productivity and innovation that creative individuals may bring to the table. Creativity is then used as a tool of propaganda, a marketing strategy. He argues that another of the problemmatic consequences of this paradigm is that as a trend is spreading at a fast rate which affects the urban quality of cities by following a model rather than creating a system that responds to the urban network proper of each place. Mould, then extends an invitation to create subversive interventions that challenge those preconcieved notions

of the capitalist Creative City through an understanding of human ocupation of public spaces, activism and experimentation.

There are various forms of excircising control over the public space. Political systems tend to impose an explicit form control whereas other systems such as economical models, do so inadvertedly by promoting social and cultural participation through the label of 'creative city'. Urban subcultures offer cues for creating subversive spaces, analyzing how people not only inhabit public spaces, but how they understand the urban condition and the public space is key in promoting an urbanism that allows and promotes social cohesion and experimentation.

Pavel Vidal Alejandro, "Politica Monetaria y Doble Moneda", in Omar Everleny Perez et. al., *Miradas a la Economia Cubana, La Habana*. Editorial Caminos, 2009.

Peña Obregón, Ángela. *La Ciudad de los Parques*. 2nd ed. Holguín, Cuba: Ediciones Holguín, 2016.

Peña Obregón offers a thorough overview of the role of Holguin's parks in the conception, expansion and transformation of the city's urban fabric. The author also adresses the difference between the typology of the park and the plaza and how modernity was the pivoting point for for the refurbishment and renaming of these public spaces. She also addresses not only how these "green stains" in the urban fabric started to develop along the core of the city, but how as the city expanded in different directions, the urban language created by these public spaces was consciously carried through the new neighborhoods. This is evidence of the parks being embedded in the collective cultural identity. The author also explains the various uses that the parks were given through history and how each park had a different use and meaning for the people they served.

The colonial era's physical, social, and economic character of the parks of Holguín provide a layer of information that can be overlaid to the current situation of these public spaces in order to have a more thorough understanding of the impact of politics in the formation and transformation of the urban fabric. A shift in the political system of the island resulted the homogenization of public spaces that were once bursting with a myriad of activities. It also resulted in a shift in the public's physical involvement, participation, and activity within the public sphere, but not in the role of these spaces in the population's identity. This overview presents an opportunity to take cues from the history of these parks and their place in the collective memory in order to provide spaces that reclaim them for its people.

Scarpaci, Joseph Leonard., and Armando H. Portela. *Cuban Landscapes: Heritage, Memory, and Place*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2009.

Stavrides, Stavros. *Common Space: the City as Commons*. Edited by Massimo De Angelis. London, UK: Zed Books, 2016.

Starvrides begins this book by defining the urbanizing world as a setting for economic extraction. In this sense, the form of control excercised over the city is of economic nature, aiming to the generation of profit. The author then goes into exploring and advocating for an architecture of resistance, urban interventions that challenge the implicit form of control of the contemporary city. An introduction to the concept of "commoning", a term that differentiate shared spaces within within the public realm. Spaces of commoning are then areas lacking any agents of control, whereas economic, political, or architectural. Commoning deals more with sotial relations rather the physical relations, therefore understanding

spaces of commoning as a closed system, a defined space within an the open network that comprises the city is just as valid as the opposit. However, by adovating the openning of these spaces of shared values, goods, and interactions an approach that resist the current form of control predominant in the contemporary city is resisted.

It is important to consider the possibility of architecture being an active excercise of control. By over designing spaces, architects and urbanist can constraint the inhabitation, and shared use of public spaces, limiting creativity and spontaneous activities that are intrinsical to the development of healthy communities and the public realm. Because of this, the concept of spaces of commoning becomes relevant. It challenges preconcieved notions of public spaces and the role of architects and urbanist into creating spaces not only for the people (material) but for relationships (inmaterial) at various scales to be recognized and promoted. Architecture is then seen as generator of socio-spatial experiences at an urban scale.

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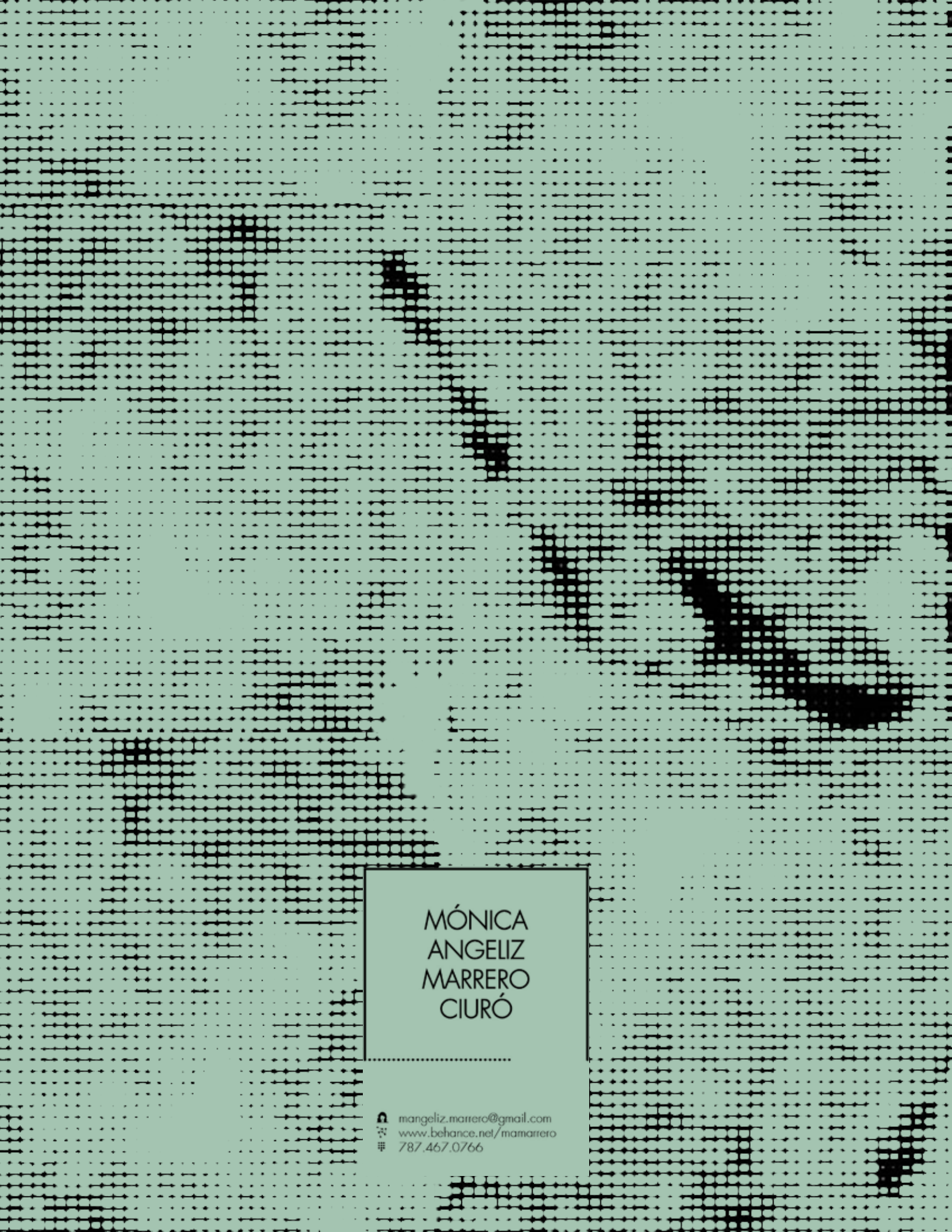
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