Spanish Colonialism and the impact of Old Havana's World Heritage status

Abstract

Old Havana is undergoing a restoration project which focusses on preserving the historic character of the district. In order to fund this process, the parties managing the restoration process focus on transforming the district by commodifying tourist facilities and services. The restoration attempts of managing parties have earned the district its World Heritage status. However, the focus of maintaining its historic value stands in the way of the well-being of the residents of Old Havana. Next to this, the development of Old Havana knows a history of exploitation and has impacted a larger portion of the population in negative ways. The negative implications that have come from the formation of Old Havana and the cost of maintaining the historical value of the district at the expense of local residents should therefore be considered when assigning World Heritage status to a site, place or building.

Keywords:

World Heritage Site, colonial architecture, Havana, Spanish settlement, restoration, native population

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Introduction

This thesis will research the colonial district of Havana and its ongoing restoration project. From an economic perspective, the restoration of Old Havana has been a successful one (ESRI, 2019). The restoration project that started in 1981 has put Cuba on the map and helped resuscitate its economy with an influx of tourists every year, partly due to its acquired World Heritage Site status (UNESCO,2021). Old Havana owes its beauty and recognition as a world heritage site to the capital's city historian, Eusebio Leal Spengler. In the span of five decades, Eusebio Leal transformed its colonial core from a crumbling slum to one of the most acknowledged restoration works in the Americas (Rathbone, 2020).

Colonial architecture in the Caribbean has been praised for its aesthetic value and governments try their best to preserve as much of these buildings because they are attractive for tourism. In the case of Old Havana, this means keeping its World Heritage status. However, this could have a backwards effect on other aspects, since it has become the priority of the parties involved in managing the city to maintain the historic character of Old Havana. It is interesting to look thoroughly and investigate to what degree does acquiring a World Heritage status have a positive effect on the population of Havana. My thesis will aim to answer the question: What is the cost of maintaining the World Heritage status of Old Havana?

What differentiates this thesis to any previous work done on the heritage of Havana is that this thesis tries to establish a link between the past and the present. This link will hopefully make people more aware of the built heritage of Havana, making it easier to reflect on the use and role of its buildings throughout time. The results of this research could create a new discourse on the way people should think about colonial architecture.

This research will investigate the way in which colonial forces developed their settlement in Havana in the 18th century. We will look at the political side of the development and the result in its physical form. Which rules were applied and how did this affect the local/indigenous residents of the island? Even though there may be only a few significant indigenous structures left throughout Cuba, there was a large population of natives residing around the bay of Havana during the colonial period (Oliva, 2021). This research will also explore indigenous building traditions, cultural traditions, and relationships to determine how these factors may have influenced the development of colonial buildings in Havana.

Spanish settlements were adapted to resist the external forces of the tropical climate. Ultimately this lead to an architecture that was given shape by influences such as climate, material, but also the relationship between colonizer and the colonized and the existing knowledge of the Taíno population. As was concluded by Jiat-Hwee Chang and Anthony D. King in their previous work on the British Empire, they stated that tropical architecture is not a result of the 'acclimatization' of modern architecture to the tropics. It rather sees a longer history where its planning principles, spatial configurations and environmental technologies were formed by medical and racial discourses, biopolitics and the political economy of colonialism (Chang & King, 2011).

The first chapter of the history thesis will attempt to give an accurate description of the situation of Havana before its construction. It will mainly focus on the people that were in Cuba during the colonial period and the relationship that they had with each other. Which communities of actors were there during the Spanish occupation of Cuba and what role did they have in the formation of Havana? The second chapter will try to map out the development of Havana in its early years, taking into consideration the impact of design decisions on the inhabitants of Havana. What was the goal and

function of the Havana in the 18th century? How did this affect the structure of the city? In what way were different socio-ethnic groups affected by this?

The third chapter will delve into the present and talk about the restoration of the district of Old Havana that has been ongoing since the late 20th century. Which parties are managing this process and how are they doing this? Which interests lie in the reconstruction of the district? How is this affecting its users in the present day? Finally, the conclusion will sum up the impact that the construction of Old Havana has had on its citizens, and weigh out the positive and negative side of acquiring a World Heritage status in the case of Old Havana.

Chapter 1:

According to historians, Cuba's native inhabitants originated from South America (Scarpaci et al, 1997). It is uncertain when the natives migrated to Cuba, as most of America's recorded history starts after the arrival of the first Spanish settlers in 1494 (Columbus, 1925). Prior knowledge of America's history was passed on by the natives through folklore (las Casas, 1542). However Segre(1978) estimated that there were between 50 and 300 thousand natives occupying the island, and the Cuban Institute of Geodesy and Cartography measured that approximately 112 thousand natives were living on the island by the time the Spanish had arrived (ICGC, 1979).

While it is now recognized that there were different groups of natives living in Central and South America, the general term used when talking about American natives is the term "Indian". This is because when Christopher Columbus first arrived at La Hispaniola, the island now recognized as Haiti and the Dominican republic, he was unaware of the existence of the continent of America. He imagined that by sailing across the ocean on the western side of Europe he would arrive in India. Therefore when he met the natives of South America Columbus thought that he had encountered Indians (Columbus, 1925).

Joseph L. Scarpaci has stated that there were three different groups of natives living in Cuba by the end of the 15th century (Scarpaci et al, 1997). The oldest of them were the "Guanahatabeyes". These were related to the natives in La Hispaniola, and were recognized as being the most unmaterialistic. Scarpaci goes on to describe the Guanahatabeyes as cave dwellers, hunters and gatherers, living off of turtles, fish and plants. They resided on the western end of the island and were a minority within the natives, counting up to approximately 10 percent of the total population. This group of American natives would be the least present in the settlement of Havana, as they would keep mostly to themselves and rarely interacted with other groups(Gott, 2004). The second group of natives were the "Siboneyes". Similar to the Guanahatabeyes they were cave dwellers, but after some point began to form villages along coasts and rivers (Scarpaci et al, 1997). Originally nomadic, the Siboneyes originated from the forests of Colombia and Venezuela and travelled from the Orinoco delta up the island chain by canoe. While some would settle on the smaller islands a large group of Siboneyes would end up in Cuba, and were spread out throughout the whole island.

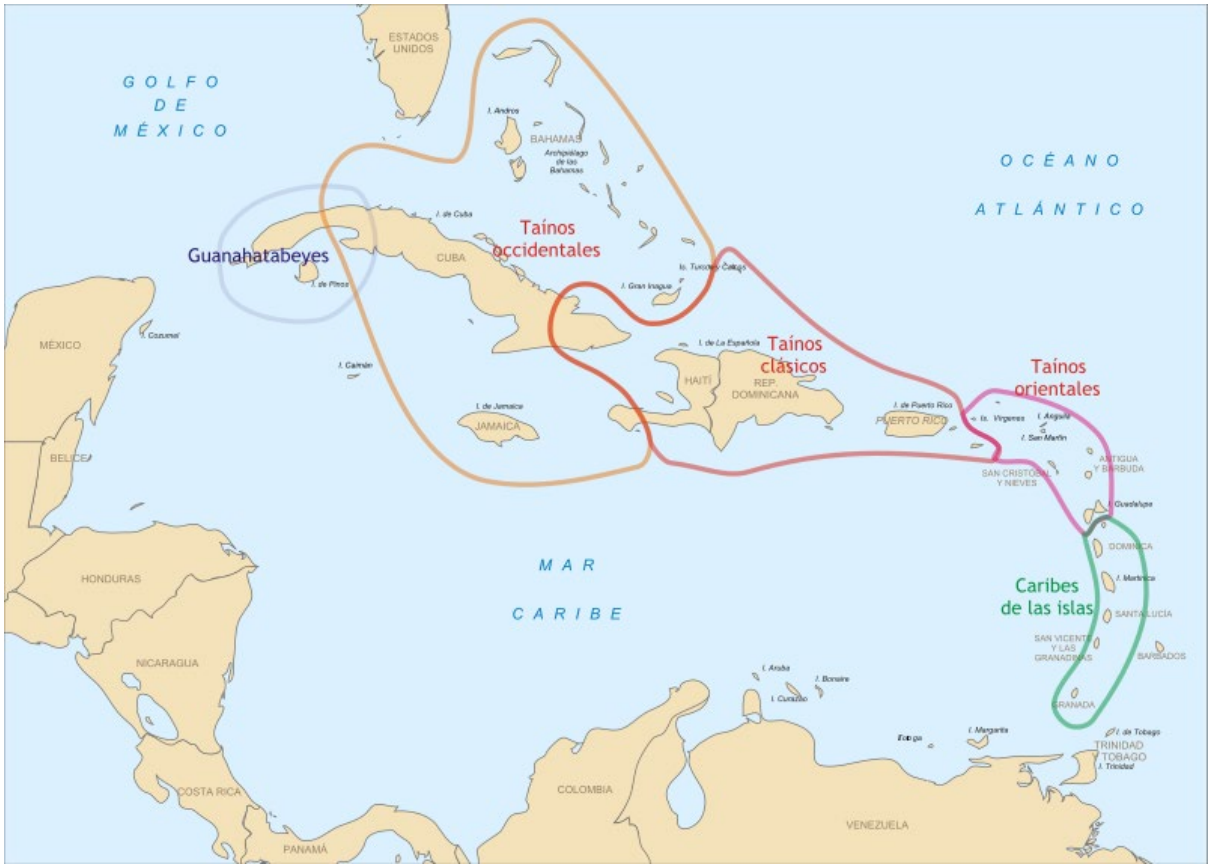

Figure 1: Distribution of the indigenous population of the Caribbean before the arrival of the Spanish. Retrieved from: Saber Ver No. 21 (dedicado al arte taíno), April 1995, p. 19.:

The third group of natives was the largest in numbers and the most advanced. Known as the "Taínos", this group of natives originated from the same place as the Siboneyes and resided mainly in the eastern and central part of the island. The Taínos would prefer to settle on higher elevations with fertile soil and drinkable water nearby, but would also settle on the mouths of rivers and coasts (Scarpaci et al, 1997). They practiced agriculture and would modify the landscape to farm. Similar to European culture at the time the Taínos had a hierarchical system, based around a single leader who ruled over a village. Taíno rulers would only be male and were called "caciques" (Gott, 2004).

In another similar way to European forces the Taínos would force other groups into servitude, and so the Siboneyes would co-live with the Taínos and assume a servant role. Therefore slavery wasn't introduced to the island by the Spanish, but was already practiced among the natives themselves. This would not happen in the same fashion as the Europeans but rather took place in the form of an agreement between the two groups, given the fact that American natives did not seem hostile towards each other. Bartolomé de las Casas, a priest who recorded his experience in the Caribbean during the colonial era, also described the Siboneyes as "a most simple and gentle kind of people" (las Casas, 1542).

The villages built by the Taínos were also known as "yucayeques". They were often located next to rivers and coasts, as they could use them to obtain water, fish, bathe, and travel. A yucayeque would consist of one or multiple squares surrounded by houses (Soraluce, 2003). The squares were called "batey" by the Taínos and were not laid out on a specific grid but were based on a central "caney", a rectangular shaped structure which would house the cacique of the village. Columbus found that caneys would sometimes appropriate a collective function (Columbus, 1925). The caney would be

surrounded by smaller, circular structures known as “bohíos” (Scarpaci et al, 1997). Bohíos would house multiple people and sometimes multiple families.

Figure 2: Indigenous "caney" and "bohío"and the configuration of Taíno villages, also known as "yucayeques". Retrieved from: Soraluce, J.R. (2003). El Bohío Cubano, Arquitecturas de Cubierta Vegetal en el Caribe. El Pajar. Cuaderno de Etnografía Canaria. II Époc

The natives had to deal with a harsh environment. With the seasonal hurricanes and tropical storms most of the indigenous homes would be swept away, and sometimes complete villages would have to be reconstructed. Some people argue that this is one of the reasons why Cuba’s development before the arrival of the Spanish went slow, and why most of the yucayeques were kept small and consisted of no more than fifteen houses (Gott, 2004). However Columbus had described in his diary that he had encountered a yucayeque of up to fifty homes in which there lived a population of approximately a thousand natives (Colón, 1964).

Both bohíos and caneys were made with reeds or branches which were tied close together with vines. These make up the walls of the structure and would be then roofed up with guano, the leaves of a specific type of palm tree (Soraluce, 2003). The floors would mainly be made up of rammed earth but would sometimes consist of a raised wooden floor on pitchforks for swampy or moist ground. The Taínos called these structures barbecues (Soraluce, 2001). The main difference between the caney and the bohío were the size and shape of the structures. Caneys were larger and had a front porch, and would be made up of better materials such as wood from palm trees (Soraluce, 2003). The Taínos also decorated their homes with statues and left a vent on top through which smoke could escape (las Casas, 1542). The Spanish described these homes at first as well constructed and pleasant, some of which even resided in them during the first decades of the colonial period (Gott, 2004). However they would quickly move and construct their own towns and houses when a large number of white settlers also started to venture into the island.

The white population came mainly from Spain, but also from Canary Islands and the rest of Europe. They stayed within their communities and made sure their children married to the same ethnicity. They came in as settlers and farmers and later took control of the country’s commerce, trade and

industry (Gott, 2004). A great majority of Cuba's elite families are of white origin. The first wave of white settlers where Spanish, and arrived to Cuba in 1492 alongside Christopher Columbus. Their sole intention was to explore and report on their findings of the land, and had little to no interest in colonizing the island. The Taínos had a neutral stance towards the white settlers at first, and even let the early explorers reside within their villages in exchange for some form of payment (Soraluce, 2001).

In 1511, Diego de Velasquez launched an expedition to conquer Cuba. He was then residing in La Hispaniola and departed from there towards the eastern coast of Cuba, settling in what is now the harbour of Baracoa (Gott, 2004). Gold deposits in Cuba proved more bountiful than other Caribbean islands such as Puerto Rico and la Hispaniola, and Cuba's natives were put to work. This alongside brutal treatment from the Spanish and the diseases that they carried over from Europe caused the rapid decrease in population of the Taínos. La Mina which was close to Havana was an important gold mine at the time (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

The trace old indigenous blood that runs through most of the people of Cuba is rarely acknowledged. Although the opposite has been proven, many Cuban historians tend to state that the indigenous race has been wiped out in the early years of the Spanish conquest, through the mass murder of indigenous people and the fusion with Spanish settlers. Richard Gott argues that this is not the case, as many Taínos survived in official reserves and mountain settlements, and even cohabited with blacks. Bohíos are also to be found in abandoned settlements and its style and shape resurrected in vernacular architecture or touristic places (Gott, 2004). A large part of Cuba's population is also mulatto, meaning of black and white ancestry. It is not sure however how much of the mulatto population descends from black or indigenous ancestry.

With the speculation that there was more gold to be found on the mainland, the first generation of conquistadores left off to Mexico, Peru and Florida and left behind a small population of older men and women who were now at war with the indigenous people. The indigenous population had become hostile since Diego de Velasquez' conquest in 1511, and a number of massacres took place. After the public murder of Hatuey and Caguax, two Taíno caciques, the indigenous population assumed a more passive role and either served the Spanish settlers in the mines, plantations or within their homes, or ran off to mountainous terrain (Gott, 2004).

The Taínos and Siboneyes hid in the mountains and would seldom come out to rebel. They lived in 'fugitive towns' together with other groups, who were brought in as slaves by the Spanish. Among them were black slaves, but also Moors, who were occupying the southern part of the Iberian peninsula at the time (Puig, 1947). These were Muslims who were forced into Catholicism, and it became illegal for them to travel to the Americas as free men, according to the Law of the Indies imposed by the Crown of Spain (Paredes, 1681). However, it is very likely that there was a large group of Moors residing in Cuba, since the style and architecture on early colonial buildings resembled that of Moorish architecture (Weiss, 1972).

Figure 3: Casa castellón, Moorish building in the historical center of Havana. Retrieved from: Prat Puig, F., García Santana Alicia, & Barcelona (Spain : Province). Diputación Provincial. (1995). El pre barroco en cuba : una escuela criolla de arquitectura morisca. Barcelona.

The labour provided by the indigenous people was not enough for the Spanish, and so the first generation of black slaves was brought in the 16th century to work on the gold and copper mines, and later tobacco (Scarpaci et al, 1997). In the 18th and 19th most of them lived and worked on the sugar plantations, and others were kept as domestic slaves. Black slaves were marked with a hot iron and were sent off to work on the plantations, and there was a much larger quantity of men than black women. This created a lot of tension within the community. There were also the 'free men of colour', who were not slaves but were employed as labourers and artisans or sometimes independent merchants. A lot of intermarriage took place in the underclass, which created the Creole and mulatto element in Cuban society (Gott, 2004).

Throughout most of Cuba's history more than half of the population was largely back, the majority of them being slaves. The black/white ratio changed after Spanish authorities attempted to 'whiten' the population by promoting the immigration of whites, and after the importing of slaves became more and more difficult after its abolishment in 1886 (Suchliki, 1997). In 1899 the population was 67% white and 33% 'colored' including Chinese (Scarpaci et al, 1997). Due to increasing demand for labour a large Chinese population also migrated to Cuba, a total of 48,000 migrated between 1847 and 1860(Niddrie, 1971). Due to intermarriage and out-migration there is now a relative low percentage of pure Chinese. There is still a well-preserved Chinese cemetery in Havana.

This chapter has attempted to give a clear description of the different groups and ethnicities that resided in Cuba during the colonial period. These were the people present on the island when the city of Havana was first established in 1519 and developed until the end of the Spanish conquest in 1898 (Scarpaci et al, 1997). As has been discussed in this chapter, the Spanish and the indigenous population

had a brief neutral relationship until the Spanish desire to exploit the island led to the enslavement and massacre of its native people. Due to the lack of labour available on the island, different ethnicities such as Africans, Arabs and Chinese were brought in as labourers and slaves by the Spanish. In the next chapter we will discuss how the Spanish occupation and the relationship between them and other ethnicities developed further along with the development of Havana, hopefully establishing to what extent the city had been of service or disservice to its diverse population.

Chapter 2:

In the colonial era, settlements were called "villas", of which seven were founded between 1500 and 1515 during the conquering expedition led by Diego Velasquez (Gott, 2004). The amount of villas which were founded had to do with the Spanish belief in Christianity and so the number represented the presence and power of the Church in the island (Paredes, 1681). The Spanish would settle their villas next to fresh sources of water or indigenous villages, so that they could have a large amount of people nearby who they could put into labour (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

Havana was the 5th villa and was first founded in 1514 on the southern coast (Scarpaci et al, 1997). After the discovery of a large body of water located on the northern coast of the island, Velasquez decided to relocate Havana next to it in 1519. The body of water was a bay which was only accessible by sea through a very narrow corridor and was connected to the Florida Strait, which carried the Florida Current. The bay of Havana as we know it today, provided the Spanish settlers with an incredible natural defence from tropical storms and invaders, but also enabled easy access to the Florida Current which made voyages to Central America and Europe considerably shorter. The prosperity that Havana experienced during the colonial period was solely due to its strategic position as 'Key to the New World' (Gott, 2004).

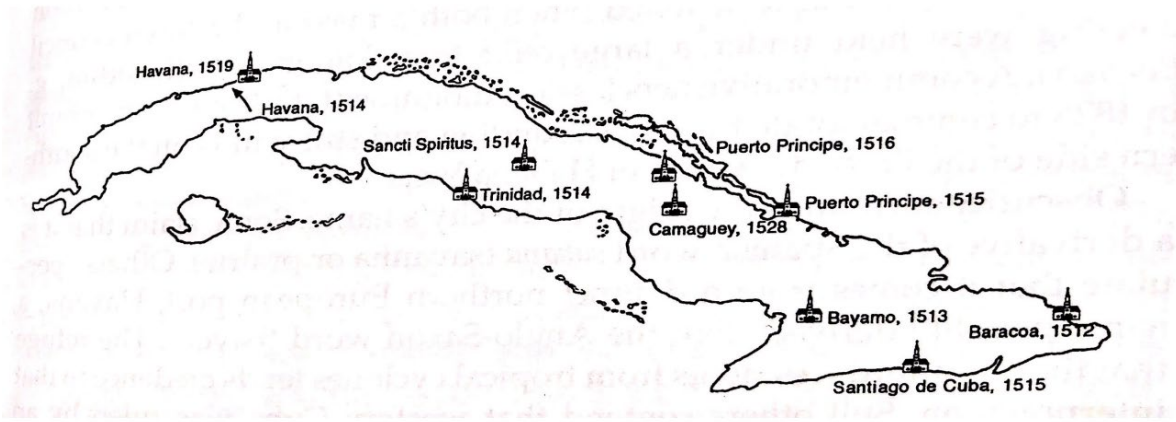

Figure 4: Distribution of settlements on Cuba, displaying the relocation of Havana t the northern coast. Retrieved from: - Scarpaci, J. L., Segre, R., & Coyula, M. (1997). Havana : two faces of the antillean metropolis (Rev.). University of North Carolina Press.

Havana was relocated a second time. On the northern side of the island, it started along the shore of a river now called Almendares. This would become a fresh water supply for the city of Havana. However the area was vulnerable to rising seas and the harbour was unsheltered. The settlement relocated again a few kilometres east on the flat cape of what is now Havana Bay. The Almendares river was then directed to the villa (Scarpaci et al, 1997). According to stories and legends, the location of the city was sanctioned during a council meeting that took place under a large ceiba tree, native to the tropical areas of the Americas. El Templete was built in 1828 to commemorate the founding of the

city, it is now located on the southern side of one of the city's five plazas. The name Havana is believed to derive from the English word 'haven', since the bay provided the harbour with protection, but others believe it is due to the name of the cacique who resided on the western side of Cuba: Habaguanex (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

Figure 5: El templete accompanied by a large ceiba tree. Retrieved from: -Weiss Joaquín E. (1979). La arquitectura colonial cubana. Letras Cubanas.

The first structures of Havana consisted of vegetable-covered huts which were much like the indigenous bateys and bohíos. At first the Spanish settlers had no issue with building these structures, but later discovered the negative side of constructing houses with palm roofs. Fire would easily spread on such constructions, would not be stable enough to withstand a strong tropical storm, and insects and parasites would nestle within the roof, causing illness among the Spanish population (Soraluce, 2003). In order to control the livelihood of the white residents in Cuba and the rest of the Americas, a settlement policy was created and was put into action between 1500 and 1525. This was known as the Law of the Indies (Paredes, 1681). For the development of cities in the Americas, a guideline was provided which entailed the requirements for constructing a well-functioning city (Solano, 1997).

At the beginning of the conquest the Spanish had no interest in residing in Cuba for a long time, and therefore built simple bohíos or bought them from Taínos. In order to keep the newly founded villas stable, the sale of houses and even bohíos was prohibited for up to four years after they were built (Soraluce, 2003). This forced the settlers to stay longer but also to construct better dwellings. The villa of Havana was then distributed into lots, which ordered its streets and squares, and everyone was ordered to build their house as best as they could. Land speculation also became illegal, so settlers had to either live on or develop the lot that was given to them. Public buildings were made of stone and domestic houses were made of wood and straw (las Casas, 1542). Domestic houses still resembled the Taíno caney, but were constructed stronger and more delicate than the bohío, and were oriented

as single-family homes instead of collective houses. They also added windows and wooden doors, and divided the interior into rooms (Soraluce, 2003). The evolution from the bohío to the Cuban colonial house begins.

Figure 6: Bohío built with wooden boards. The Spanish settlers started modifying the traditional Taíno homes by adding windows and doors. Retrieved from: Soraluce, J.R. (2003). El Bohío Cubano, Arquitecturas de Cubierta Vegetal en el Caribe. El Pajar. Cuaderno de Etnografía Canaria. II Época *(de A Coruna), p. 144-147*

The settlers would adhere to the new imposed laws, but would not follow it religiously, as was the case in la Havana. An example of this is the distribution of its plazas, which are supposed to house the main public functions of the city: the Church, the town council and the military barracks. According to the Laws of the Indies, each American city had to consist of one central plaza which was located at the center of the city (Paredes, 1681). The plots in Havana were distributed in such a way that the main public functions of the city did not fit into one central square. Therefore, its public functions were distributed across five plazas of which none of them were located at the centre. Plaza de Armas held military institutions and was placed along the waterfront, as it would act as an extra defensive line from naval attacks. Plaza de la Catedral held the church and religious institutions, whereas commercial activities were placed around Plaza Vieja. Foreign trade was held on Plaza de San Francisco and is also situated along the waterfront which made it a fast access point for traders coming in by ship (Segre, 1994).

Figure 7: Map of Havana in 1898 highlighting its five plazas. Edited image, retrieved from:Map of Havana. (1898). [Map]. https://en.astelus.com/cuba-maps/old-havana-map/

In the mid-sixteenth century, Havana acquired a more important role in the process of colonization as it became the main port connecting Europe to America, instead of Santo Domingo in la Hispaniola (Kubler et al, 1959). In order to provide extra protection, fortifications were built on the city as well as on the adjoining peninsulas of Yucatán and Florida. The three fortresses of Morro, Punta and Fuerza were built on Havana along the narrow waterway that led to the bay.

Even though the city was heavily fortified, Havana was merely the size of a small port town. Rapid development was needed were Havana to function properly as a gateway to the rest of the Americas (Scarpaci et al, 1997). A lot of labour was required, of which Spanish hands were not enough. The indigenous population did not live among the Spanish settlers in Havana, and would reside in bohíos scattered throughout the bay (Soraluce, 2003). The Spanish wanted an easy way to round up as many "Indians" for whenever they needed labour, whether it was on construction, raising cattle, mining, and later the production of sugar and tobacco. During this period, the grouping of natives in "Indian towns" began, in order to avoid the dispersed habitat. Some indigenous women also married a white man and would live in the city, though they would mostly remain within the walls of the household (Solano, 1997).

Aside from indigenous women living within the quarters of their white husband, the indigenous and Spanish people did not intermingle. The massacre and hunting of the Taínos and the public execution of its rulers, as mentioned in the previous chapter, existed in the subconscious of the indigenous people. The Spanish settlers feared the possibility of unexpected revenge at the same time, so both groups have resorted to their own, unless the Spanish required hard labour (Gott, 2004). Residential segregation took place in the form of the Spanish settling around the plaza and the indigenous population settling behind the Spanish.

A description of Havana in 1560 presents it as: "A population of straw houses and cedar boards, surrounded by a double wall of prickly pears, provided with the most rudimentary furniture and lit with tallow candles" (Cuevas, 2001). Havana at this moment was not the beautiful romantic city most people think about, as its unlit streets and prostitution set a criminal atmosphere (Scarpaci et al, 1997). Even though the city needed to develop quickly there were not enough building materials to go around. Most of the buildings were still made up of guano leaves and wooden boards. Since lime and bricks were scarce at the time, the materials would be reserved for important buildings such as churches, fortresses, the mayor's house and the houses of rich and illustrious Spaniards (Soraluce, 2003).

At the time, the only masonry buildings in Havana were the Mayor City Church and the fortresses. Towards the center of the island, in Camaguey, the manufacturing of bricks and tiles began and would supply most of the colony (Soraluce, 2003). In 1573, To promote the use of these materials, the Crown prohibited the construction of bohíos and roofs made up of guano in a newer version of the Laws of the Indies. "It is prohibited to build or rebuild straw, guano or wood houses in the city, under penalty of demolition. But it is allowed to use whatever material you want in your partitions and divisions and to make wooden overhangs (porches) in the air" (Paredes, 1681). This also applied to the neighboring indigenous population, to which they responded by constructing mud houses. Natives who had escaped the reach of the Spanish settlers and lived on the mountains still resorted to building bohíos (Soraluce, 2003).

The masonry and factory works that would give rise to colonial architecture spread slowly. One of the oldest surviving plans of Havana shows us a city in formation, with incipient streets made up of rectangular masonry houses, while inside the blocks there is an agglomeration of shacks and small cabins or bohíos. Masonry buildings adopted the style of Greek, Roman and Italian architecture, as well as styles from other European kingdoms. These styles were adapted to better fit the Cuban setting, but today intellectuals are debating whether this has evolved into a "Cuban" or "Havanan" style (Weiss, 1996 ; Amaral, 1994). Buildings became more stable as better materials became available. In 1620, a royal decree was enacted that allowed the free cutting of mahogany, oak and guayacan. This resulted in mass deforestation around Havana, which also brought down indigenous settlements during the process (Marrero, 1981).

Figure 8: Oldest existing plans of Havana. Retrieved from: -Soraluce, J.R. (2003). El Bohío Cubano, Arquitecturas de Cubierta Vegetal en el Caribe. El Pajar. Cuaderno de Etnografía Canaria. II Época (de A Coruna), p. 144-147

As was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a sudden appearance of Moorish construction. It is suggested that this is the result of Andalusian, Canarian Moorish labor arriving on the island. Even though it was illegal for the Moors to travel to America, there are signs that some builders have managed to get to Havana (Soraluce, 2001). Besides that, there was a strong Moorish architectural tradition in Andalusia and the Canary islands. Soraluce believes that the constructive systems from these regions were transplanted here. What is interesting to note is that the Moorish style of building, with its technique known as “white carpentry”, was abandoned in the Iberian peninsula in the 15th century but lived on in the Spanish colony (Puig, 1947). This was probably because it was quick to learn and economically profitable in America, and therefore easily assimilated by the local workforce. There are several Moorish-style buildings found throughout Old Havana today, from temples to important buildings to houses (Guzman et al, 1992).

The production of sugar and tobacco emerged, and provided Havana with much profit. It started to develop public parks, promenades and neighborhoods for the elite, the first one of them being ‘Cerro’. After Haiti’s revolution in 1793, large amounts of slaves were imported to Havana to work on the plantations. By the end of 1815, the city counted up to 600k inhabitants and became the world leader in sugar production. Slavery was abolished by Spain in 1845, but was still practiced in Cuba. African slaves lived among their masters in “casa-almacenes” (Scarpaci et al, 1997). These buildings consisted of a ground level with a store and a chamber for the slaves, and an upper floor or “piano noble” where the master would live. Most of the buildings wuld be designed this way, since it was common for white, Creole (half white, half African), and middle class “habaneros” to own several slaves. Black mistresses and bastards were also kept within the settlers’ homes (Weiss, 1972). Today, such slaves quarters are still present in some Havanan homes and have a similar purpose as in the past. It houses lower class citizens, working as maids or servants, who stay in the house throughout the week to cook and clean for the owners of the house.

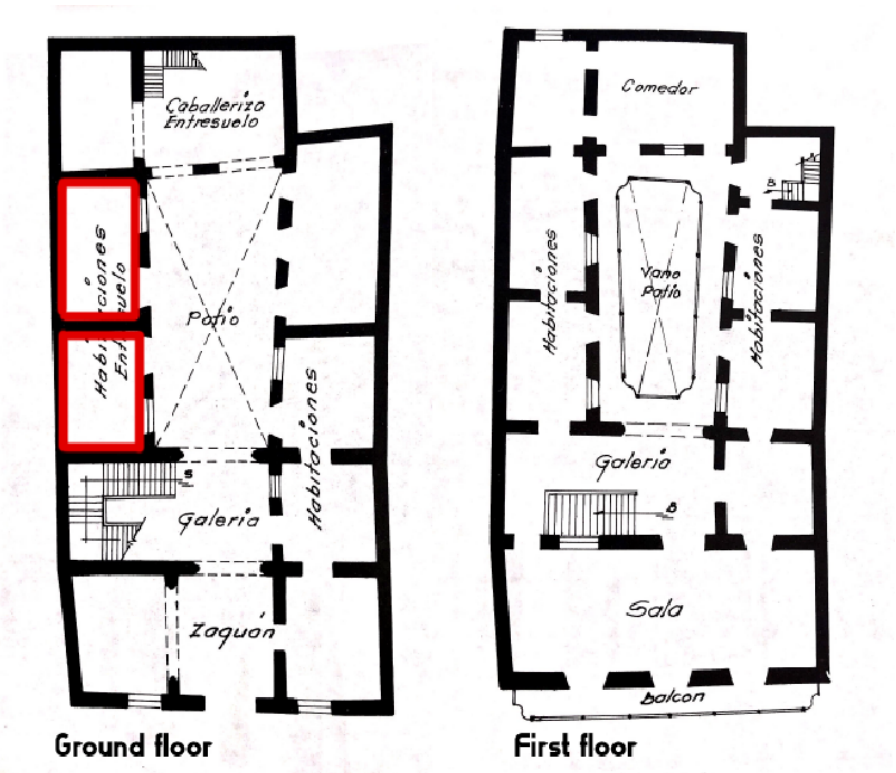

Figure 9: Example of a "casa-almacen" house in Cuba. The slaves' quarters are highlighted in red. Retrieved from: -Weiss Joaquín E. (1979). La arquitectura colonial cubana. Letras Cubanas.

As Havana gained more influence, the need for protection became bigger. Havana was sacked by the French in 1555 and occupied by the English in 1762. The indigenous people were not exempt from fighting and were forced to battle for the Spanish settlers, or for whichever European power that had control of their territory (Scarpaci et al, 1997). By the end of 1767, a protective wall surrounding what is now Old Havana was finished. This provided protection from the south and from land attacks. However, the city started densifying within its walls which resulted in street congestion, bad circulation and bad public hygiene (Chateloin, 1989). The core of Havana suffered from infectious diseases and epidemics, such as the cholera outbreak from 1833. A portion of the population spread outside the city walls because of this and out of fear of pirate attacks (Marrero, 1956). The walls proved useless, and were ultimately taken down in 1860.

Havana became a center for export, services and commercial banking. New customs arrived with the prosperity of the city which came from the sugar and tobacco trade. The Law of Indies brought up the implementation of portals along the ground level of buildings surrounding the plazas. Though it provided comfort for passers-by with a shaded space, it indirectly excluded social classes from places (Aruca, 1985). The portals became a status symbol, and created an atmosphere of “no entry” for the lower social classes. Café’s and theaters were built and the elite would flaunt their status in carriage strolls. Elite women were only allowed to go outside on a carriage, and would remain home for the rest of the day experiencing Havana through their balconies. Rich would meet in the plazas, and the lower classes met outside the city walls. Plazas remained plain, as it allowed space to host events or to showcase the city’s military prowess. The plan of the plazas was also a strategic way for the Crown to watch over its disciples (Le Riverend, 1992). According to Segre, Havana’s use of space can be characterized as distinctly gendered, spatially defined and class-specific (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

With the Haitian revolution of 1793, a revolutionary atmosphere emerged within the black population in Spanish America. Havana’s administration attempted to push this back by excluding Creoles from any source of powers. This is why public military drills became important to control Havana’s population. As was seen with the shape of its plazas, further methods to control the population took place in the form of urban works. An example of this was the extension and widening of one of Havana’s main avenues, Carlos III. This, according to Scarpaci, was purely symbolic rather than practical: “It marked an authoritarian stamp of colonial power across the Havana landscape”(Scarpaci et al, 1997).

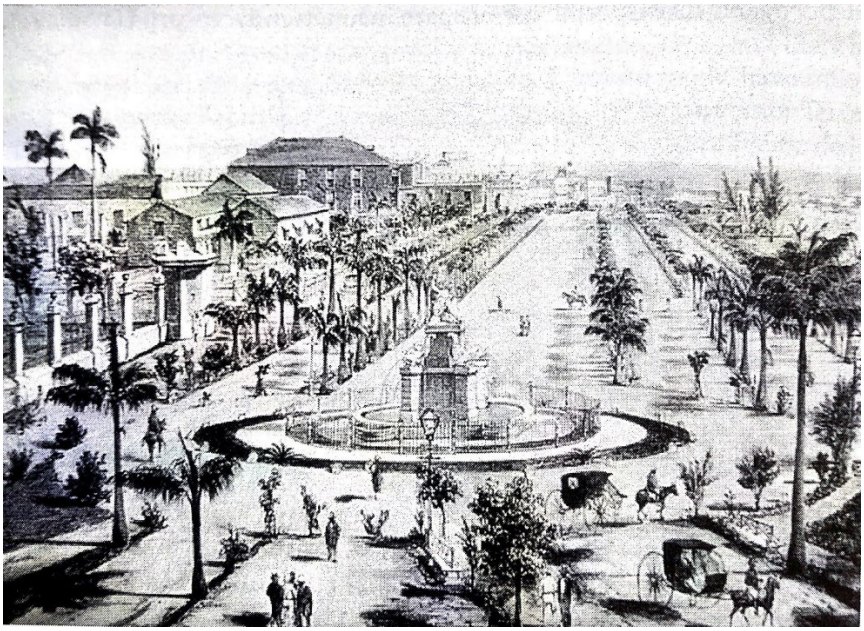

Figure 10: A view of Carlos III avenue in colonial Havana. Retrieved from: -Scarpaci, J. L., Segre, R., & Coyula, M. (1997). *Havana : two faces of the antillean metropolis* (Rev.). University of North Carolina.

By the end of the 19th century, Old Havana started to crumble. Havana being a sugar producing economy meant that a big share of the working population was seasonally unemployed. The result of this was a large migration from the countryside to the city. Slums and shanties started to form around the city's edge, and some sought refuge in the dilapidated buildings within the colonial district. Park et al (1925) describes this as the low-income invasion of the colonial core. The dilapidated buildings would remain property of the low-income population and would be inherited by their children (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

This chapter entails the processes and laws that were implemented on Havana and its citizens and ultimately led to the Old Havana we see today. After the independence of Cuba in 1895, Old Havana lost its status as economic and political centre of the city. Old Havana acquired throughout its colonial period a number of negative attributes: it was prone to flooding , low-lying, close to industrial zones and was overwhelmed by the stench of the bay. Commercial establishments opted to reside outside the colonial district due to its poor conditions (Aruca, 1985). Furthermore, as government buildings required expansion, and since there was no space left around the inner city's plazas, a ring of important buildings was built around Old Havana (Scarpaci et al, 1997). The district was left unattended throughout most of the 20th century until a budget was assigned to the rehabilitation of the historic centre in 1981 (Plan Maestro de la Habana, 2019). In the final chapter we will discuss the state of Old Havana in the present and how it is being managed, the factors that play a role in its management and the repercussions for its citizens.

Chapter 3:

Old Havana has been malfunctioning since the Cuban independence of 1898, and its residents have been suffering from poor living conditions. According to Scarpaci(1997), Old Havana has been suffering from land speculation, densification and physical decay. Furthermore, despite its tropical location it is not a very green place. Most of the green spaces are in the well-off neighbourhoods outside of the colonial district. Another example of the city's malfunctioning is the unavailability of health care services to a large portion of the population. There are five health medical centres only on the northern part of the district, which is the touristic area of Old Havana. All of this in mind, it is not surprising that the colonial district has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the city (Scarpaci et al, 1997).

Two factors play a key role in the situation of Old Havana. One of them is the way in which in which the Spanish settlers had designed and laid out the urban fabric of the district. The second one is the reaction of the Cuban government after the sudden increase of tourists coming to Cuba following the recognition of Old Havana as a World Heritage Site in 1982 (UNESCO, 2021). Both of these elements will be discussed further in this chapter.

Old Havana was built with climatic factors in mind, but those of the hot-dry lands of Southern Spain and not those of the tropics (Tablada et al, 2009). Additionally, the Islamic influence of the Moors gave much of the houses an introverted character. Even though these buildings have been adapted over time, for example by implementing higher ceilings and taller windows to promote natural ventilation, the district maintains the same urban structure. This is the most significant factor which affects the climate of the colonial city. The narrow streets and compact structure obstructs the flow of wind, which is crucial to achieve thermal comfort by passive means in the humid setting of Havana (Blocken et al, 2008).

The compact urban fabric of the city can be explained by the way in which the Spanish settlers had developed their plots. During the colonial period, each citizen of Havana had been assigned a plot which was narrow in shape. Each plot started off as having a considerable amount of open space. As

the city grew, land owners developed their plots further. As it was common in Spain to have private open spaces in the form of courtyards, the plots slowly developed until they had become completely enclosed. An illustration of this is shown in the following figure provided by Tablada (2009).

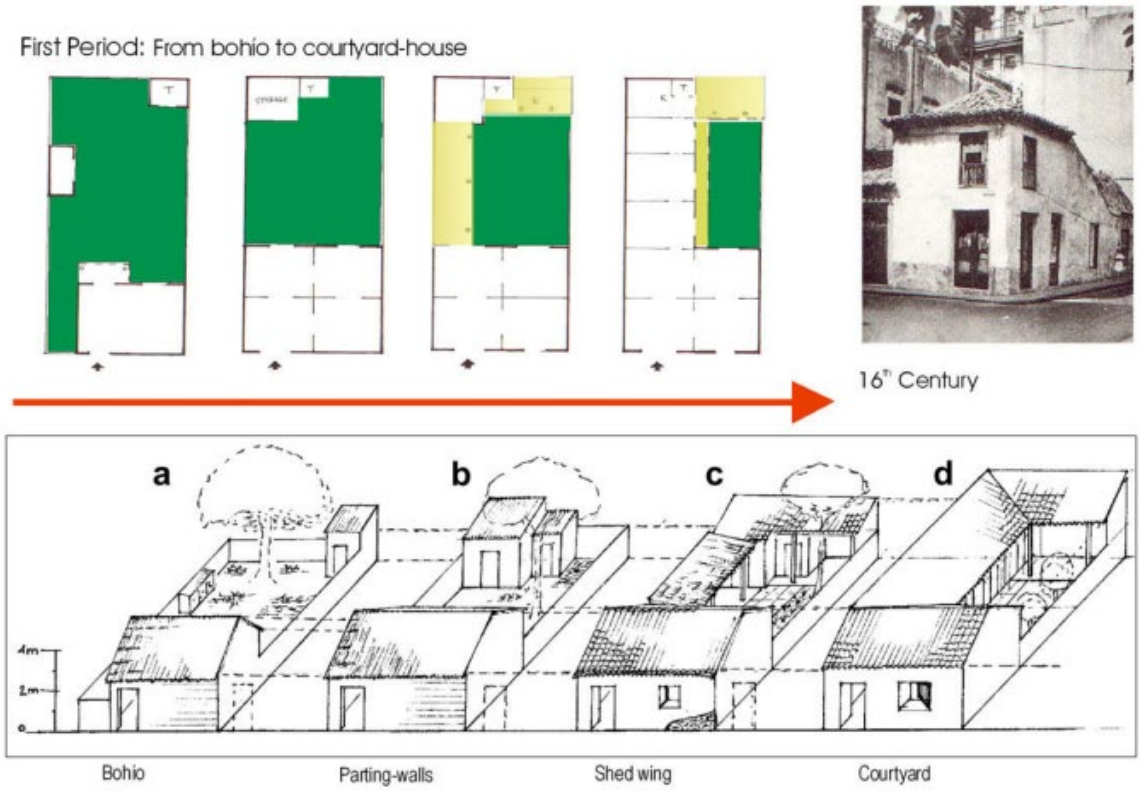

Figure 11: Evolution of colonial housing in relation to open space. Retrieved from: -Tablada, A., De Troyer, F., Blocken, B. J. E., Carmeliet, J. E., & Verschure, H. (2009). On natural ventilation and thermal comfort in compact urban environments – the old havana

Open space within the building is important for the locals of Havana. Public open spaces in the colonial core such as the plazas are mostly directed towards tourists. Due to discrimination and the unavailability of locals to afford the services provided in them they are often discouraged to make use of these public open spaces (Scarpaci, 2000). Therefore the only open spaces available for locals are the inner courtyards of the buildings they reside in. The shape of these courtyards is often not optimal due to the elongated shape of the buildings in Old Havana. On average, the land occupation in buildings is high and the open space within the plot is only 15%-20% (Tablada et al, 2009). This is detrimental for the thermal comfort of these buildings, since natural ventilation is often the only strategy for thermal comfort. Most citizens of Havana do not have the luxury to afford air conditioning.

Since present building regulations do not contain any thermal or ventilation requirements (Tablada et al, 2009), and the availability of open space in the colonial core is limited for a large portion of the local population, many middle-class citizens move out to less dense neighbourhoods. Out of fear of possibly the district's world heritage status, a lot of these buildings are not demolished and rebuilt to better service its users (Scarpaci, 2000). Usually a lot of these buildings which house lower-income citizens are left unattended because restoration projects such as these do not generate profit (Sassen, 2013). Over time, the lack of maintenance has led to many vacant plots, ruined buildings and buildings which have been rendered uninhabitable. Subsequently, low-income families move to these buildings and densification takes place, resulting in even poorer living conditions (Tablada et al, 2009). We can conclude that this is an indirect result of the protection of the colonial buildings of Havana.

In the span of twenty years, the number of visitors coming to Cuba increased from just twenty-five thousand to two million (Scarpaci, 1998). The recognition of the district as a World Heritage Site became the driving force in the number of tourists coming to the city. The government of Cuba uses their sudden increase of tourism to remedy the tattered fabric of its built environment. This is attempted by commodifying their heritage in the form of restaurants, museums, gift shops and hotels. Gott(2004) argues, that commodifying heritage tourism in developing countries where hard currency is needed, can create tension within the local community. As is the case in Old Havana, most of the built environment that is being restored marks a time during the colonial period when Cuba was deeply exploited. Furthermore, due to the large amount of cruise ships docking in the bay of Havana it has become one of the most contaminated bodies of water in the Caribbean (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000, 245-247).

The process of restoration in Old Havana takes place in two forms: in the form of joint-venture deals with foreign investors or direct intervention by Habaguanex, S. A. The second one is a state company founded by the city's historian, Esuebio Leal Spengler (Scarpaci, 2000). It has been founded in the early nineties after Old Havana earned its World Heritage status to facilitate the process of historic preservation and the refurbishing of old buildings and public works. The process was slow and before the creation of Habaguanex, more historic buildings were collapsing than being restored.

Development projects concentrate heavily on the touristic areas of Old Havana, which are located around the Plazas by the waterfront and the northeastern corner of the district. These projects are the most profitable, and it is Habaguanex' primary responsibility is to generate dollars (Burr, 1990). Eusebio Leal remarks in an interview that his goal is to collect enough resources to fully restore the old district, and that this focus on tourism and connections with foreign investors will allow them to buy more cheaply the materials needed to renovate these buildings (Snow, 2000). However Scarpaci suspects that a large portion of the revenues gained by Habaguanex go directly into sustaining the socialist establishment of Cuba and not the refurbishment of historic buildings (Scarpaci, 2000). Additionally, it has already been shown that the company is rarely interested in projects that are directed towards the betterment of the livelihood of the citizens of Old Havana.

It can be argued that Habaguanex offers new job opportunities for local residents. So far it has employed 3000 construction workers, most of them being residents of Old Habana. However, since it is a commercial enterprise, it has a different legal relationship to Cuban workers (Scarpaci, 2000). According to Article 33.4, Chapter XI, Labor System, of Law 77, the Foreign Investment Act, "payments to Cuban workers are made in national currency which much be obtained beforehand from convertible currency". The argument for this is that Cuban education has been paid for by the state, and that Cuban residents receive free health care and pay relatively little for housing. However Cuban pesos have a very low value, and so a Cuban worker does not benefit from the economic multipliers that foreign workers in Havana do (Burr, 1999). In a way, Habaguanex employs Cuban workers to save money.

Habaguanex has managed to gain much profit from its endeavours. In the year 2002, its revenues approached 200 million dollars (Burr, 1999). However the local residents experience very little of this, and it is especially the case for low-income residents. Kapcia mentions that even though there have been efforts to increase the amount of parking space in the colonial core, it is focused on economic areas for tourism and does not include areas where dilapidation and poverty are taking place (Kapcia, 1998). A large proportion of the projects realised by Habaguanex involves repurposing buildings to create commercial enterprises, such as shops and cafés, which most of the local residents cannot afford, who earn 170 dollars in a year on average (Gott, 2004).

Habaguanex has also been restoring “vacant” buildings into houses which are too expensive for the average Cuban. A process of gentrification has been taking place in Old Havana, and the gentrifying group is made up of foreigners coming from Latin America, North America, and Western Europe (Scarpaci, 2000). The residents of Old Havana which were residing in these “vacant” buildings are pushed out and have to relocate to Eastern Havana, the poorest district of the city. A study in 2001 has shown that at least 200 official residents have been displaced by Habaguanex (Segre, 2001). This is not counting the numerous illegal squatters residing in Old Havana.

Figure 12: Example of seemingly vacant buildings in Old Havana. Often these buildings are squatted for low-income families. Retrieved from: Lewin, B. U. T. E. A. K. T. (2018, 12 december). How Havana is collapsing, building by building. USA TODAY

Lastly, the process of restoring old Havana through joint-venture deals and through Habaguanex has had implications for Cuban professionals. The control of investments through foreign parties eliminate the opportunity of Cuban designers, planners and architects to participate in the restructuring of the city. Investors resort to popular western architects who would give them the path of least resistance (Scarpaci, 2000). The problem is that most of these designers do not have any direct connection with Havana and are unfamiliar with the setting. The result is uncultured, bad design. Restructuring in Old Havana also takes place without consulting its citizens and professionals, even though it is encouraged by social scientists (Collado et al, 1996).

Conclusion

This research has explored the nature and origins of the formation of Old Havana, and the people that have taken part in its development and have been excluded from it. Havana was at first an outpost for Spanish travellers set out to explore the Americas, but after realizing its strategic position on the continent, it assumed a primary role in the process of occupying and exploiting the resources and people of these territories. After years of intermarrying and assimilating with European culture, the indigenous trace of Cuba has disappeared. Cubans have become desensitised about the fact that the true inhabitants of the island, the Taínos, Siboneyes and Guanahatabeyes, did not have the opportunity to develop on their own. Their culture and methods of building were taken over by European traditions which did not fit in the Cuban setting. This now has consequences for the present inhabitants of Old Havana, who are mostly living under less than desirable conditions.

The Havana that is seen today is inherently a product of an invading force. While Old Havana has acquired a World Heritage status and it has helped strengthen its economy with a constant flow of tourists every year, it is not a representative image of the life of Cubans but of a relatively small population of Wester European settlers. A much larger number of African and native lives were exploited for the functioning of the city in the colonial era. Next to the visual and tangible aspect on which UNESCO bases their criteria for the inscription of World Heritage sites, a less tangible aspect should be considered, such as the history of such sites and how it has impacted people in negative ways.

The World Heritage status of Old Havana stands in the way of the well-being of its inhabitants. In short, the people who benefit from Havana acquiring such a status are tourists, as the government will attempt its best to fit into the criteria of a historical city whilst commodifying services for visitors in order to fund and maintain the colonial district. Meanwhile, local residents are being neglected and have to live in overcrowded buildings which are last in line for restoration. Slowly but surely, the district's last Cuban residents will have to move out and Old Havana will become solely an attraction for foreigners and tourists. This is a scenario which is similar to Spanish-occupied Havana. Some could argue that a process of modern colonization is taking place.

This research has shown that Havana has been used to service foreigners and not its local people, and this is a characteristic that has remained the same until the present. Unfortunately, the World Heritage status of Old Havana adds to the problematic situation. Were Old Havana able to develop freely, its citizens would certainly have better homes, services and livelihood. These are the costs of assigning such a status to a place like Old Havana, and governments or managing parties should consider whether the economic outcome of this benefits the city and its people, and ultimately Cuba.

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