University of Massachusetts Amherst

2007

Reimagining Old Havana: World Heritage and the Production of Scale in Late Socialist Cuba

Matthew J. Hill, *University of Massachusetts - Amherst*

Deciphering
Its Scales, Spaces and Subjects
the Global

Edited by Saskia Sassen

Contents

Peterson, Marina. 2003. "World in a weekend": Public concerts and the emergence of a transnational urban space. *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15(2):121–39.

———. 2005. *Sounding the city: Public concerts and civic belonging in Los Angeles.* Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago.

Sassen, Saskia. n.d. Scaling State City. PowerPoint presentation.

———. 1998. *Globalization and its discontents: Essays on the new mobility of people and money.* New York: Free Press.

———. 2000. *Cities in a world economy,* 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

———. 2001. *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo,* 2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2003. The repositioning of citizenship: Emergent subjects and spaces for politics. *New Centennial Review* 3(2):41–66.

Scott, Allen J. 2000. *The cultural economy of cities.* London: Sage.

Soja, Edward W. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Thompson, Emily. 2002. Wiring the world: Acoustical engineers and the empire of sound in the motion picture industry, 1927–1930. In Veit Erlman, ed., *Hearing cultures: Essays on sound, listening and modernity,* 191–210. Oxford: Berg.

Torgovnick, Marianna. 1990. *Gone primitive: Savage intellects, modern lives.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Von Eschen, Penny M. 2004. *Satchmo blows up the world: Jazz ambassadors play the Cold War.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warshawski, Morrie. n.d. *Going international: Case statement.* Washington, DC: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

Whitt, J. Allen. 1987. Mozart in the metropolis: The arts coalition and the urban growth machine. *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 23(1):15–36.

CHAPTER 3

Reimagining Old Havana
World Heritage and the Production of Scale in Late Socialist Cuba

MATTHEW J. HILL

If ... urban entrepreneurialism ... is embedded in a framework of zero-sum inter-urban competition for resources, jobs, and capital, then even the most resolute and avant-garde municipal socialists will find themselves, in the end, playing the capitalist game and performing as agents for the very processes that they are trying to resist (Harvey 1989a).

In October 1993 the Colegio Santo Angel, an eighteenth-century merchant's house recognized by the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), collapsed in a pile of dust while awaiting restoration. The implosion nearly killed a British journalist as well as a leading Cuban conservationist who was extemporizing at that moment on the past glories of the 'Colonial Williamsburg-style structure (see Glancey 1993, p. 22; Scarpaci 2000, p. 727). Fortunately, no one died in the incident, as the building had been previously declared uninhabitable and evacuated. The collapse of the Colegio and of a second building that fell victim to torrential rains later that evening were not unusual occurrences in Old Havana. Official documents suggest that two such cave-ins take place every three days due to age, heavy rains, and a lack of adequate maintenance (Rodríguez Alomá and Alina Ochoa Alomá 1997, p. 86). But the loss of a building with a top-level protection category located in an internationally recognized plaza made its demise

noteworthy. The fate of the Colegio was a direct result of another collapse — the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which in turn dried up state funding for restoration work in the Old City. Restoration work that had begun in 1989 was halted in 1991 due to a lack of financing and the prioritizing of other projects in the Old City. In the intervening two-year period, the Colegio was cannibalized by vandals in search of scarce building materials. Theft combined with a partially exposed roof and heavy rains contributed to its ultimate demise (see Sansen 2000, pt. 2, p. 66).

The collapse of the Colegio reverberated to the highest levels of government. Over the preceding fifteen years, the Cuban state had dedicated considerable technical, legislative, and financial resources to the restoration of the Plaza Vieja. Moreover, it had invested substantial political capital, including a promise to UNESCO's director general that the "Cuban people would work tirelessly to rescue and revalorize the Plaza Vieja" as part of Cuban National and World Patrimony (UNESCO 1983, p. 6). As images of the collapsed structure spread across European newswires, the state was placed in a difficult position. Since state parties to the World Heritage Convention are legally required to protect designated properties in their territory, the collapse potentially threatened Old Havana's World Heritage status.

Faced with this impasse, it is rumored that President Fidel Castro summoned the historian of the city, Eusebio Leal, to his office for a meeting, asking what could be done to hasten the restoration work in the Old City. Leal purportedly suggested that if the state would allow him to operate the state-owned restaurants and hotels in Old Havana, he would use the money to fix up the Old City. In the aftermath of this conversation, it is said that Cuba's highest government echelon passed a decree (Decree Law 143) transforming the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH) from a provincial-level cultural institution into a decentralized state agency subordinated directly to the Cuban Council of State. The OHCH was also granted the legal power to commercially redevelop state properties in the historic center and to tax state companies operating in the zone. This legal measure was to enable the OHCH to act as its own investor, thereby allowing it to self-finance the rehabilitation of the historic center. This was the first time that a quasi-independent government agency was granted such absolute control over a tract of urban territory. The scope of its authority encompassed not only the public administration and financial management of the district, but decisions about zoning, land use, housing, and practically every public investment.

The collapse of the Colegio is significant because it prompted the reorganization of a series of social relationships and thus, intersecting geographical scales, that led to the globalization of Old Havana. By glo-

balization I refer to processes of capitalist expansion, the flows of international capital, tourists, commodities, and information technology that more readily situate Old Havana in relation to these forms of circulation rather than to the context of the Cuban nation-state. I argue that these flows are not the evolutionary byproduct of transformations in the nature of markets and capital taking place on a planetary scale, but the contingent outcome of a dialectical process that operates at multiple levels simultaneously. Moreover, I suggest that heritage is one means of producing new articulations between disparate spatial scales that ultimately constitute a global project.

It is within the context of this global project that the significance of the Colegio can be read at each of these interlocking spatial scales. At the local level, its facades form part of a cultural frame that structure the way in which residents and visitors experience and understand the plaza (and Old Havana) as a place. At the national level, the Colegio is one of a series of protected properties that taken together constitute the identity of the nation by defining its national culture or patrimony. In the wake of the Colegio's collapse, and the state's unbundling of Old Havana, it also comes to comprise part of a series of internationalized zones that are officially known as "zones of high significance for tourism" and unofficially as "islands of capitalism." By promoting commercial activity within these zones, the state seeks to accumulate the hard currency needed to maintain its allocative power, and to further the socialist project in a post-socialist world.[1] Finally, at the global level, the Colegio is a concrete instance of the assemblage of heritage objects through which UNESCO's global geography of World Heritage cities and sites is comprised. Through the particular experience of the Colegio and its immediate environment, the Plaza Vieja, the cosmopolitan observer can experience and know the "universal history of humankind," and through it, the "common humanity" that comprises the world as a community. Through the intersection of these scales (local, national, global) a new dynamic of capital investment is created.

Heritage Preservation as Scale-Making

In the Cuban context, where the revolution interrupted the speculative processes of modernization and urban renewal that remade other Latin American cities in the 1960s and 1970s, colonial architecture emerged as a global economic resource in the late socialist period. It included "built forms," comprising both "building types" such as houses, temples, and meeting places created to enclose human activity and defined but "open spaces" such as plazas, streets, or markets (Low 1990, p. 454). At the same time, these colonial forms could be remolded to create a landscape or set of

symbols whose circulation is mediated by a range of institutionally located heritage actors (e.g., architects, developers, urban planners, nongovernmental organizations) (Schein 1997, p. 660; Zukin 1995, p. 265). Looking at globalization as situated in this way prevents treating it as a universal process that remakes place in a uniform manner regardless of historical context and geographic location. Rather, it turns attention to specific locational strategies, institutional linkages, and place-making projects that are realized in particular times and places with the symbolic resources of the built urban form (Tsing 2000).

I see these linkages being constructed through scale-making practices that create articulations between different communities or groups of cultural producers like urban conservationists, government bureaucrats, and global heritage actors. By *scale making*, I refer to the ways these groups seek to imagine or represent space in ways that advance their particular interests and turn these representations into a dominant mode of seeing or knowing the world. Moreover, through this renegotiation, territories get reinserted into new networks which shift the coordination and control of those territories (Dicken, Kelly, Olds, Yeung 2001, p. 97) This process of representing space is a highly charged process in which the producers and readers of space construct and negotiate conflicting representations. Finally, the power and coherence of a particular vision or representation of space can be strengthened by linking it up to the visions set forth by other scale-making projects, whether global or local (Jones 1998; cf. Cox 1998). The constructed nature of scale does not mean then that scales are purely representational. It is in the embeddedness of these representations in material social relations, which are set in flux by globalization, that scales become meaningful (Kelly 1999, p. 381).

Rebuilding the Colegio, Conjuring Scale

Three years after the Colegio's collapse, the piles of rubble, rebar, and cement block had been cleared, and plans were initiated to construct a replica of the original merchant's house from the ground up. At the same time, the protection category of the original structure had been downgraded, allowing for several commercial modifications: the construction of an additional floor, the use of contemporary materials such as modern bathroom fixtures, and the introduction of a restaurant, outdoor café, and gift shop. The colonial-era house — used in the republican period as a school for orphans and during the revolution as public housing — was now restored with hard currency for service as a luxury apartment hotel. Where thirty-six families, many of them rural migrants, once lived in crowded flats as *usufructuarios gratuitos* (rent-free leaseholders), eleven European

nationals, including a tourism agent and director of an art school, now resided in large, air-conditioned rental apartments. Meanwhile, the building's former rural residents were relocated to shelters (*albergues*), temporary dwellings, or replacement housing in East Havana.[2]

The urban conservationists who ultimately rebuilt a replica of the original Colegio Santo Angel conjured up an image of a colonial building situated in the midst of an eighteenth-century plaza — in lieu of a run-down block of tenement houses surrounding a modern underground parking structure. The power of this representation was strengthened by linking it to UNESCO's vision of a world of global heritage objects of outstanding universal significance, preserved in the name of the world community. Other representations of space that were excluded in the process were those of plaza residents, who lost access to the plaza as a public space and, in some instances, to their homes, which were expropriated for use as tourist hotels, restaurants, and shops. Scale making then is also the conflicted process in which competing groups present alternative ways of knowing or apprehending space and attempt to normalize these ways of knowing through institutional practices such as urban conservation. As in the case of the Plaza Vieja, the power of scale-making projects can be enhanced by linking them up with other, more extensive scale-making projects. In fact, the most powerful scale-making projects are those that create productive linkages, no matter how tentative, with other scale-making projects, such as the linkage between World Heritage and the local conservation movement in Old Havana.

UNESCO and the Global Heritage Grid

It is true that, in many countries, remarkable efforts have already been made to protect those monuments which are endangered; and there is no nation today which is not proud of its artistic heritage and conscious of the importance of that heritage in its cultural life. But UNESCO, which … is called upon to ensure the conservation and protection of the world's heritage of works of art and monuments, had a duty to take its own steps to bring these national efforts into a world-wide scheme, and to show the key role that may be played in the cultural formation of contemporary man [sic] by communion with the works produced, through the centuries, in the various centers of civilization which cover the surface of the globe like so many volcanos of history. — UNESCO General Director René Maheu[3]

Having defined globalization in terms of the articulations between various scale-making projects, I turn to the role of UNESCO and its global

project to incorporate the cultural and natural heritage sites of the world into a kind of global imaginary that binds places of outstanding universal significance into a geographic space or circuit that I name the *global heritage grid*. In the case of Old Havana, this global project articulates with the aims of the Cuban socialist state that, in the late socialist context, seeks to use tourism as a means of generating hard currency. Finally, the dreams of UNESCO and the socialist state articulate with those of urban conservationists whose primary concern is to salvage historically significant buildings and architectural styles considered to be important markers of national identity. In the course of over three decades, the interests of these different groups converged in Old Havana, transforming the state from a primary financier of urban conservation to a beneficiary of that process and urban conservationists from a class of political outsiders to a managerial class. This section explores the way UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and its global vision of uniting the planet through a shared cultural heritage linked up with this more local-level process.

UNESCO's vision of World Heritage is set forth in a variety of contexts, including the World Heritage Convention, the operational guidelines for the implementation of the convention, and the public pronouncements of UNESCO's director general and the World Heritage Committee.[4] Taken together, these international legal texts and public statements comprise the discourse of World Heritage. The network of cultural and natural heritage sites that are subsequently conjured into existence through this discourse become the symbolic glue through which the idea of humankind's belonging to a cosmopolitan community is cemented (Turtinen 2000). This discourse consists of a set of norms and categories that define what counts as global heritage, the procedures and practices for protecting that heritage, and the system of governance for monitoring, assessing, and propagating information about that heritage.

A key concept is UNESCO's notion of *outstanding universal value*. Outstanding universal value is a fuzzy construct based on an eclectic assortment of values including masterpieces of human genius, important interchanges of human values, unique testimonies to cultural tradition, outstanding examples of buildings and landscapes, and, tautologically, even ideas "that possess outstanding universal value (UNESCO 2005:19). What is significant in this assemblage of criteria is their "high cultural orientation," that is, the "school mediated, academy supervised idiom" (Gellner 1983, p. 55) of letters, fine art, and material culture that is evident in UNESCO's emphasis on masterpieces, monumental arts, civilizations, and artistic works of outstanding universal significance.[5] In particular, the notion of outstanding universal value is dependent on an enlightenment notion of universal history, with its teleological assumptions about human

reason, progress, and perfectibility. This idea of a single global viewpoint through which all human history can be understood is in keeping with UNESCO's mission of creating solidarity by promoting an awareness of the unity of humankind. Yet it is also constitutive of a master narrative in which heritage properties are situated within an evolutionary framework in which human history can be considered to unfold in stages. World Heritage exists then within a geography of imagination that seeks to disembed heritage sites "from former times and spaces in nations" and to reembed them in a global framework that ties them to an "evolutionary history of humankind" (Turtinen 2000, p. 19). In the post-colonial context of the Americas, this evolutionary history is actually the history of European economic expansion and conquest, a history that has been written by Europe, and later "by those who have adopted Europe's history as their own" (Asad 1987, p. 604).

Seeing Old Havana as a part of UNESCO's global heritage grid requires an act of conjuring spatial scale. If we think of scale as a "spatial dimensionality necessary for a particular type of view" (Tsing 2000, p. 120), we can easily see how scale is brought into being through the discourse of World Heritage. This is clearly evident in a 1983 speech delivered by UNESCO's director general in the context of UNESCO's international campaign to save the Plaza Vieja (Rigol and González 1983). In the context of that speech, the director general looked beyond the weeds, crumbling tenements, collapsed buildings, and modern parking structure that rose out of the center of the plaza to see a space that was "one of the most representative architectural works" to emerge from the encounter of many cultures — Spanish, African, and indigenous — in the crucible of the Antilles (ibid.: p. 7). The plaza he envisioned was an idealized nineteenth-century square, when the plaza "remained the center of the city" and a "new type of spot in the Americas" — a spot set aside for social life — and a product of "the first attempt at urban planning in this part of the world" (ibid.). It is this idealized plaza that, together with Old Havana, for him represented a "mosaic" of all the Spanish Colonial cities that served as "milestones in the saga of the Americas" and part of a "single history": that of humanity (ibid., p. 8). Through his speech, the director general then lifted an aging plaza, which had gone through a continuous process of transformation over four centuries, out of its contemporary surroundings. In so doing, he fixed the identity of the plaza in terms of a nineteenth-century square that fit into a universal narrative about a particular moment of world history making: the Spanish conquest. Subsequent transformations that failed to fit with this idealized image were either dismissed as inauthentic accretions, or read out of the field of vision altogether.

Contrary to popular belief, UNESCO provides little in the way of financial resources to support urban conservation in places such as Old Havana — a costly process with a price tag that could easily run into the billions of dollars. In the Cuban case, this financial support amounted to a million-dollar loan to create a laboratory and training facility for technical specialists, scholarships to study restoration abroad, and technical assessors to evaluate the restoration process. Far more importantly, what UNESCO provides are the norms and categories through which the built environment is reimagined as belonging to the global heritage grid and the technical training and expertise necessary for nationals to realize these categorizations in local settings. The fact that World Heritage, on the surface of things, is a highly depoliticized discourse about civilizations that have disappeared enabled UNESCO to make these categorizations in Cuba, where outside political intervention is strictly controlled. The colonial past was also ultimately perceived as a safer past than its republican counterpart, a period associated with political corruption, economic underdevelopment, and foreign domination at the hands of an imperial power, the United States (cf. Pérez 1986). As the following section attempts to show, the Cuban state used these UNESCO categorizations in different ways in response to the contingencies of particular historical moments. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the state was more concerned with consolidating the identity of the revolution, urban patrimony together with museums served an important pedagogical function. In the 1990s, when the state's concern shifted to the attraction of hard-currency resources required to sustain a socialist project, World Heritage provided the brand that helped in the marketing of Old Havana as a global tourist destination.

Late Socialism and Shifting Scale of Governance

To provide an example of this shift in official attitudes about conservation, consider the words of a prominent Cuban conservationist whom I interviewed in the late 1990s:

> In the 1960s, when someone spoke of saving Old Havana it seemed crazy (parecía una locura); Old Havana was so old, it was necessary to think in terms of the future. What were we going to save? What kind of thing was it? It was the house where a colonizer, a slave trader, an exploiter once lived. On the contrary, we had to create a new house where there were no slaves; that is, in terms of the political discourse [of the period]. I remember at the University [of Havana] there were professors who said that the Capitolio had to be demolished, because this architecture possessed no value...[M]any of the professors of

architecture in the seventies, who were formed in the fifties and saw eclecticism as an evil, also saw colonial architecture as an evil. In due time, these [attitudes] coincided with the new political attitude (el nuevo concepto político), which viewed the architecture of all these periods as bad architecture since they coincided with bad [historical] periods.[6]

In other words, the Cuban revolution was fashioned in terms not of saving the past but of a radical break with the past, which was associated with a panoply of social injustices, including colonialism, slavery, and exploitation. By contrast, the future was seen as an arena of possibility, one in which "scientifically designed schemes for production and social life" would replace received tradition (Scott 1998, p. 94). This took the territorial form of massive industrial, transportation, and housing projects aimed at urbanizing the countryside while relocating the disenfranchised in Havana and Santiago de Cuba — squatters, slum dwellers, and shanty-town residents — to newly constructed socialist housing blocs on the urban fringe (cf. Butterworth 1976; Eckstein 1981, 1994; Hardoy and Acosta 1973). The futurist ideology of the revolutionary reformers is illustrated in this passage by the radical call, on the part of a number of prominent revolutionary architects, for the destruction of an Old Havana landmark, the Capitolio — the former state capital completed under the republican reign of dictator Gerardo Machado (1924–1933).[7]

The shift from a futurist to a past orientation was generated in part through the efforts of an iconoclastic group of urban conservationists who participated in international conferences on historic cities in the former Soviet bloc and the European meetings of international heritage organizations like UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Originally, they consisted of a small group of architects and historians who worked together on the National Monuments Commission (1963–1976) with little budget or recognition. They spent a majority of their time identifying, cataloging, and studying historic buildings and preventing them from being demolished by local governing bodies known as Juntas de Coordinación, Ejecución e Inspección (Soviets for Coordination, Inspection and Execution or JUCEI). According to an architect who served on the commission, these early restoration efforts were isolated affairs that focused on colonial buildings that were the oldest and most affected by the passage of time—military fortresses, government palaces, and palatial mansions, structures that were considered important because they were tied to an important figure or architectural style in Cuban history. As a result of these efforts, this architect noted, "The work of restoration began to gain ground. There was a growing awareness on the part of

the authorities and the population that didn't exist in the beginning...that there were values that had to be preserved, ... places that were very valuable that we had to conserve, protect, and restore."[8]

This growing recognition on the part of government leaders led to the passage of the first two heritage laws enacted by the Cuban National Assembly: the National Cultural Heritage Law and the National Monument Law (1977). These laws established a registry of historic landmarks together with extensive guidelines for their protection and safeguarding. A year later, the National Monuments Commission declared the part of Old Havana contained inside the old city walls to be a national monument. This was in keeping with international trends that expanded the concept of historic preservation from isolated monuments to encompass entire building ensembles.[9] Taking advantage of the visit of the UNESCO director general to Old Havana in 1982, the Ministry of Culture decided to expand the area of the historic district. In its application to UNESCO for World Heritage recognition, the ministry included the old walled city as well as a zone of early republican expansion outside the Old City's walls. Apart from these legal enactments and redefinitions of the historic center, what is significant in this period is that the Cuban state committed the first dedicated budget, in two five-year plans, to the restoration of the historic center. Moreover, this money was funneled through the municipal government to two organizations: the UNESCO-financed National Center for Conservation, Restoration, and Museum Science (CENCRM) and the OHCH. Together, they became the institutional embodiment of restoration in the socialist period.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state's interest in generating hard currency through tourism transformed its relationship to Old Havana and the international recognition garnered by the World Heritage designation. Ironically, heritage was now looked at not only as a source of national pride but also as a resource for furthering the imperatives of the socialist project in a radically reorganized world. This shift was captured in an interview with a conservationist about the importance of the UNESCO designation for the country in the post-Soviet context:

> Th[e] concept [of patrimony] today is tied to the local sense of pride and the interests of many cities. I was in Porto (Portugal) two years ago and the mayor had a plan: Porto, World Patrimony! And when Porto was declared World Patrimony, the event was like a party. What's behind all of this? It agrees with the mayor [of Porto] that his city be declared World Patrimony, because this is a type of prestige, a merit, the possibility to attract more tourism, ... to sell more books. [T]his opens the possibility for the University to say, come to Porto

to study architecture because Porto is World Patrimony. I believe that the World Patrimony [designation] has been converted into a kind of small flag of identity. At the local level, people have begun to make a certain kind of business out of it.[10]

The conservationist's comments show how the world heritage designation extended beyond a limited concern with national identity to encompass the economic concerns of the late socialist state in an age of increasing interurban competition. It also suggests the way the World Heritage designation provided Old Havana with the kind of cultural cache needed to enhance its reputation as an international tourist destination.

In this context, the conservationists initially empowered by the socialist state to conserve the historic center became the conduits needed to transform Old Havana into a global tourist destination. This is because they developed a level of technical and administrative expertise that ultimately made them the only actors capable of carrying out this transformation. To capitalize on Old Havana's global heritage status, the socialist state then engineered the unbundling (Sassen 2000) of Old Havana, creating a new political institutional framework and special regulatory environment in the historic district that would permit a heightened dynamic of investment (dinámica inversionista) between the global and the local (Rodríguez Alomá and Ochoa Alomá 1999, p. 34). This uncoupling was carried out through the creation of a new legal regime and system of financial regulation that transferred the location of regulatory functions and territorial administration downward from the central government to a local conservation agency, the OHCH. The latter was granted the unusual powers to self-finance the restoration of the historic center and to regulate its territory on behalf of the socialist state. By shifting the scale of urban governance from the centralized state to this local entity, the socialist leadership sought to enhance its capacity to "mobilize and coordinate transnational capital investment" in Old Havana (Brenner 1998, p. 20).[11] This process of institutional rescaling in turn is tied to the effort to reorganize the space of Old Havana in ways that provide a platform for foreign investment while producing a spatial logic that differs from the rest of the city.[12]

Urban Conservationists and the Production of Local Scale

Though UNESCO scans the globe for heritage objects to add to its network of World Heritage sites, these sites are not merely found. They have to be constructed, cultivated, tailored, and ultimately produced as transcendental cultural landscapes. This work is done not by UNESCO or the state but by local-level actors, who in the case of Old Havana I see as a group of prominent urban conservationists. Urban conservationists are involved

on a day-to-day basis in doing the work of heritage. This involves bounding, setting apart, and marking the built environment so that it can be known and recognized as a heritage object. The material with which they work is the built urban form, and the product of their work is what I call a *heritage landscape.* As I hope to show in this section, this process of representing an urban locality as a heritage landscape has the paradoxical effect of turning it into a translocality — a highly internationalized border zone that gets more articulated with "global political, economic and social arenas" than the national context (Little 2004, p. 78). This is evident from the international hotel chains, high-speed computer connections, flows of tourists, and global brand names (e.g., Benetton, Paul & Shark) that increasingly define Old Havana as an urban landscape in stark contrast to the rest of the city.

By *urban conservationists,* I refer to architects, art historians, and social scientists who share an aesthetic interest in preserving historic buildings, architectural styles, and aging inner-city districts (Deckha 2000). As a social class they are rich in cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) — the skills and abilities acquired from family and educational systems that can be used to enhance a position of power, prestige, and influence (Berger 1986, p. 1446). They have trained at the state's most prominent architectural and liberal arts institutions, have had the privilege of traveling abroad, and under UNESCO's auspices have studied preservation in prestigious European centers such as Rome. In this respect, they are a highly internationalized class. Their access to computers with high-speed Internet communications and exposure to outside heritage specialists keep them abreast of constantly evolving heritage trends, declarations, and charters. On a local level, they sit on local UNESCO commissions and ICOMOS chapters as well as on national and local commissions and planning boards. As a group, they are also a tight-knit class that celebrates one another's architectural accomplishments while memorializing the lives of deceased members in solemn ceremonies.

The work of these conservationists consists of conjuring up a particular type of view of the local as a colonial city center or historic landscape. This is not a small task, since new construction has continuously been superimposed on Old Havana's colonial architecture through a process of building over a four-century period. This raises the question of what constitutes the *colonial,* since the majority of colonial houses up to the early nineteenth century consisted of simple, often crude, single-story structures occupied by the poor and working classes rather than the palatial mansions that today are celebrated as the colonial (cf. Venegas 2002, p. 15). Moreover, these simple artisan houses were subsequently demolished or expanded to accommodate nineteenth-century urban growth, while the palaces were

often subdivided for use as *ciudadelas* or *solares* — a form of collective housing for the urban poor with shared sanitary services surrounding an inner courtyard or passageway. The task of recuperating the colonial past is thus complicated by a process of continuous erasure and overwriting that characterizes Old Havana as a kind of urban palimpsest (Schein 1997, p. 662). Against this background, constructing the colonial or historic landscape entails a reorganization of the frame of the viewer so that the built urban form can be perceived as a transcendental entity known as *cultural patrimony.*

To see how this operates in practice, let us return to the Plaza Vieja with which this chapter opened. Reconstructing an image of the colonial in the Plaza Vieja, as suggested earlier, was complicated by a complex history of use and reuse and by republican-era transformations to the appearance of the square: the construction of a modern parking structure that elevated the surface of the square, eclectic and neoclassical republican-era buildings that dramatically altered its morphology, and dilapidated and partially collapsed *ciudadelas* that changed its former elite residential function. In addition to these modern accretions, a further hurdle to restoring the colonial hinged on the relative placelessness of the Plaza Vieja. As one conservationist said to me, "This isn't a Plaza where you had a church, a military fortress, or an important palace." This absence of monumental architecture further complicated efforts to recreate the image of the colonial past in the Plaza Vieja.

In light of these challenges, conservationists set out to restore the Plaza Vieja to its early nineteenth-century form, a golden age prior to the construction of the Cristina Market (1832), a covered market for vendors of meat and produce, considered to have hastened the plaza's decline. This image was reconstructed from the lithographs, engravings, and traveler accounts of European artists — renderings that presented an image of the plaza surrounded by shaded porticos and covered balconies of the resident *hacendado* class. In keeping with these historic allusions, the 1982 proposal for the redevelopment of the Plaza Vieja called for things like the removal of contemporary additions and modifications, the uniform installation of fan-shaped stained-glass windows and original carpentry, and the restoration of balconies, iron work, tile roofs, and original facades. What such growing regulation of "color, form and ornament" (Herzfeld 1991, p. 12) points to is an attempt to overcome the "progressive disarticulation of the urban landscape" as the city grows, replacing it with a uniform idea of the colonial city as a "governing norm" (Geertz 1989, p. 293). This is evident, for instance, in a series of architectural renderings that illustrate how to transform neoclassical facades into colonial surfaces through the introduction of Persian blinds and fan-shaped windows (Capablanca 1983, p. 27). Partially collapsed buildings were also to be reconstructed following

these standardized design codes, producing an idea of a colonial landscape that in effect was a contemporary product of the architect's imagination.

But the most dramatic form of local conjuring involved proposals to eliminate the underground parking structure and amphitheater. One of the architects who opposed this action argued that it amounted to trying to turn back the clock to the way the plaza once was. She argued that it was a form of historicism violating a bedrock principle of conservation: modifications to the built environment should not be removed. She compared this proposal to the well-intentioned architects from the 1930s, who in attempting to give Old Havana's most prominent monument, the Palace of the Captains General, a more baroque appearance radically altered its appearance, removing a colorful stucco outer layer to expose the building's underlying gray limestone. Apart from the issue of historicism, a debate surged around the costs of demolishing the parking structure and the possible use of the space for other purposes. After fifteen years, the proponents of the demolition won out over contrary proposals (Galeano and Fornet Gil 1998, p. 11). The eventual demolition of the plaza — a noisy, dusty process that lasted for two years — produced a gaping hole, which was eventually filled with hundreds of truckloads of topsoil and was covered with polished cobblestones. Then in the center of the square, a working fountain made of Italian marble was put in place, encircled by a ten-foot-high iron fence to keep neighborhood youth from bathing in its waters.

Like the colors, ornaments, and design codes used to create an image of the colonial in the Plaza Vieja, features such as the fountain are instrumental in constructing an image of the colonial in the Plaza Vieja. One architect's criticism of the fountain — that it represents only one of many images of the plaza depicted in historical engravings and is thus of questionable patrimonial value — overlooks an important point: The fountain operates together with the other framing devices in the plaza to discipline the field of vision of the viewer. Rather than seeing a landscape of disarticulated building styles (e.g., baroque, eclectic, neoclassical) and references to diverse historical epochs (e.g., colonial, republican, revolutionary), the fountain together with these design codes operates to suture the viewer into a particular symbolic register, relegating those elements that fail to fit into the frame into the background.[13]

In the process of reconstructing the image of the plaza in terms of an idealized colonial square, the plaza is transformed from a lived space — where residents once gathered to listen to music, children rode bikes and played games of pick-up baseball, and the elderly paused to sit and enjoy the breeze from the harbor — to a primarily observed or tourist space. The reorganization of space so that it can be observed from the perspective of an outsider viewer is accomplished by tour guides who quickly usher

tourists through the square, showing them what to see while narrating how they should see it. Other techniques include the introduction of many viewing points, like balconies from which tourists can gaze down on the square, and a camera obscura mounted on the roof of the plaza's tallest building, through which tourists are afforded a panorama of the plaza. The panorama operates here as a kind of mirror image of the Panopticon, training the viewer to see the surroundings as part of a "disciplined order of things" (Boyer 1994, p. 253). This disciplining is further supported by a mounted placard at the entrance to the square, depicting enlarged reproductions of the original eighteenth-century engravings of the square by various European traveler-artists and life-sized cutouts of Spanish colonial troupes, dressed in signature red-and-white uniforms and playing fifes and drums. In short, this is a locale in which the image of the colonial is constructed out of codes and practices that instruct the viewer in the art of seeing and knowing urban space.

Conclusion

Over a lunchtime conversation during a 2006 conference on colonial architecture in Old Havana, a group of architects debated the merits of the reproduction of the Colegio Santo Angel that now sits on the exact spot where the dilapidated tenement once sat before its 1993 implosion. One of the architects lamented the fact that an opportunity had been lost in building a replica of the original structure rather than a modern structure, which would have given Cuban architects a chance to design something new. Intellectually, this argument was compelling. But it overlooked the fact that a modern structure would have disrupted the frame of the viewer and the constructed colonial image that has transformed the Plaza Vieja into a tourist square. In building a copy of the Santo Angel, in many respects more perfect than the original, conservationists are doing the work of cultivating a local landscape that meets the expectation of what most tourists come to see — an authentic colonial plaza from the nineteenth century. Ironically, the Colegio and the gated marble fountain are two of the most photographed structures in the Plaza Vieja today, along with the last remaining unrestored tenement that somehow speaks to the visitors' search for the authentic in this highly cultivated landscape.

Over the past decade, geographers have increasingly pointed out that spatial scales are best understood not as static, fixed, or ontological entities that exist in some kind of preordained hierarchical framework but are produced as the "contingent outcome" of the practices of human agents (Marston 2000, p. 220). In exploring this constructivist notion of scale, I have suggested that heritage preservation is one such contingent form of scale making that can be used to understand the operation of the global

in peripheral places like late socialist Cuba. Globalization can then be understood as a dynamic and scalar process in which different projects of scale making articulate in the context of particular historical conjunctures — such as the intersection of World Heritage, late socialism, and urban conservation. In this respect, scaling is actively produced in response to changing historical situations. Moreover, it is the conjuncture of multiple interlocking scales that combine to produce the global. Globalization then is not something that takes place in a top-down fashion — by global forces that impact the local — rather, it is the outcome of global projects that link up with projects at other spatial scales to achieve their efficacy. In the case of Old Havana, the outcome of these intersections is determined just as much by local needs as global processes.

I have argued then that urban conservationists are involved in constructing Old Havana as a distinctive type of place. Though this place is connected to UNESCO's global heritage grid through the discourse of World Heritage, it is also produced as a unique landscape, giving it a place-specific advantage over other Caribbean destinations. The process of creating place ironically involves practices of bounding, separating off, and fixing the identity of Old Havana as a space that is distinct from other parts of Havana, as well as masking elements that disrupt the image of the colonial city. If the project of UNESCO and World Heritage then is ultimately about creating a global heritage grid, the project of urban conservationists is about creating a local place that ultimately opens outward to capture global flows. It is the production of this locality, an idealized Spanish colonial town, that is ultimately used to create linkages with the global.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Verdery (1995, p. 75–6) describes *allocative power* as the socialist bureaucracy's drive to maximize its capacity to allocate scarce goods and resources.

2. For a further discussion of the restoration plan and fate of the Colegio's former inhabitants, see Sansen (2000, pt. 2, 66–73).

3. UNESCO (1970, p. 22).

4. For the World Heritage Convention, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/. For the Operational guidelines, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines.

5. The source of this ambiguity is immediately evident in examining the criteria used by UNESCO's operational guidelines to define outstanding universal value. In the case of cultural heritage properties, these criteria require that a property meet one or more of the following: (1) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; (2) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning, or landscape design; (3) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization, living or disappeared; (4) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape that illustrates significant stages in human history; (5) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea use that is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; (6) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (The committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria). (UNESCO 2005, p. 19).

6. Anonymous informant in Old Havana, interview by author, July 18, 1999.

7. This anti-traditional perspective is also discussed by urbanist Joseph Scarpaci (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002, p. 300), who notes, "A growing political class in Cuba consisting of the urban proletariat and farmers gave the Revolution a pragmatic approach — one more concerned about satisfying immediate needs and less about inheriting contaminated bourgeois values, including architectural ones."

8. Anonymous informant in Old Havana, interview by author, May 30, 2006.

9. Significant in this regard was the Charter of Venice (1963). See http://www.icomos.org/venice_charter.html.

10. Anonymous informant in Old Havana, interview by author, July 18, 1999.

11. This shift in the geographical scale of governance is in keeping with studies that tie the globalization of capital with the rescaling of state territorial power in ways that privilege both sub- and supranational forms of territorial organization over the national scale (Brenner 1998; Marston 2000, p. 227).

12. While this revitalization strategy parallels place-based, consumption-driven revitalization schemes in European and North American cities—with their focus on the creation of festival marketplaces, restored waterfront districts, shopping centers, and entertainment complexes (cf. Harvey 1989a, 1989b)—its trajectory is shaped by political factors that are specific to Cuban state socialism.

13. Film critic Kaja Silverman (1983, p. 200) defines *suture* as "that moment when the subject inserts itself into the symbolic register in the guise of the signifier, and in so doing gains meaning at the expense of being." In cine-

matic terms, it is the moment in which the being of the spectator is authored by a frame that is constructed by the other, which in this case are those involved in constructing the tourist gaze.

Works Cited

Asad, Talal. 1987. Are there histories of people without Europe? A review article. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29(3):594–607.

Berger, B. 1986. Taste and domination: A review of Bourdieu's distinction. *American Journal of Sociology* 91:1445–53.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste.* Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Boyer, M. Christine. 1994. *City of collective memory: Its historical imagery and architectural elements.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Brenner, Neil. 1998. Global cities, global states: Global city formation and state territorial restructuring in contemporary Europe. *Review of International Political Economy* 5(1):1–37.

Butterworth, Douglas. 1980. *The people of Buena Ventura: Relocation of slum dwellers in postrevolutionary Cuba.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Capablanaca, Enrique. 1983. La Plaza Vieja. Propuesta de restauración. Arquitectura/Cuba 355–56 (1–2): 22–31.Habana: Ministerio de Cultura.

Cox, Kevin. 1998. Spaces of engagement, spaces of dependence and the politics of scale, or: Looking for local politics. *Political Geography* 17(1):1–23.

Deckha, Nitin. 2000. Repacking the inner city: Historic preservation, community development, and the emergent cultural quarter in London. Ph.D. diss., Rice University, Houston.

Eckstein, Susan. 1981. The debourgeoisement of Cuban cities. In I.L. Horowitz, *Cuban communism*, 4th ed., 119–140. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

———. 1994. *Back from the future: Cuba under Castro.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Galeano Mastrángelo, Ivonne, and Pablo Fornet Gil. 1998. La Plaza Vieja, 1982–1997: Una imagen que se transforma. Habana: CENCREM.

Geertz, Clifford. 1989. Toutes directions: Reading the signs in urban sprawl. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21:291–306.

Gellner, Ernst. 1983. *Nations and nationalism.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Glancey, Jonathon. 1993. Walls came tumbling down. *Independent*, October 20, Architecture Section, p. 22.

Hardoy, Jorge Enrique, and Maruja Acosta. 1973. *Urban reform in revolutionary Cuba.* Trans. Mal Bochner. New Haven, CT: Antilles Research Program, Yale University.

Harvey, David. 1989a. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography* 71B:3–17.

———. 1989b. *The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of cultural change.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Herzfeld, Michael. 1991. *A place in history: Social and monumental time in a Cretan town.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Jones, Katherine T. 1998. Scale as epistemology. *Political Geography* 17(1):25–8.

Kelly, Philip F. 1999. The geographies and politics of globalization. *Progress in Human Geography* 23(3):379–400.

Low, Setha. 1990. The Built Environment and Spatial Form. *Annual Review of Anthropology.* Vol. 19: 453–505.

Little, Walter E. 2004. *Mayas in the marketplace: Tourism, globalization and cultural identity.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Marston, Sallie A. 2000. The social construction of scale. *Progress in Human Geography* 24(2):219–42.

Pérez, Louis A. 1986. *Cuba under the Platt Amendment, 1902–1934.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Rigol, Isabel and Nancy Gonzalez. 1983. *La Plaza Vieja.* Habana: ECIGRAF.

Rodríguez Alomá, Patricia, and Alina Ochoa Alomá. 1999. *Desafío de una utopía: una estrategia integral para le gestión de salvaguardia de la habana vieja. Ciudad City* Vol. 4. Habana Vieja: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana.

———. 1997. *Plan de desarrollo integral avance.* Habana Vieja: Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana.

Sansen, Marjan. 2000. *The renovation process in Old Havana, Cuba: Case-study the Old Square.* M.A. thesis, Catholic University Louvain.

Sassen, Saskia. 2000. Spatialities and temporalities of the global: Elements for a theorization. *Public Culture* 30:215–32.

Scarpaci, Joseph L. 2000. Reshaping Habana Vieja: Revitalization, historic preservation, and restructuring in the socialist city. *Urban Geography* 21(8): 659–69.

Scarpaci, Joseph L., Roberto Segre, and Mario Coyula. 2002. *Havana: Two faces of the Antillean metropolis.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Schein, Richard. 1997. The place of landscape: A conceptual framework for interpreting the American scene. *Annals of American Geographers* 87(4):660–80.

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Silverman, Kaja. 1983. *The subject of semiotics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsing, Anna. 2000. The global situation. *Cultural Anthropology* 15(3):327–60.

Turtinen, Jan. 2000. *Globalising heritage: On UNESCO and the transnational construction of a world heritage.* Stockholm: Stockholm Center for Organization Research.

UNESCO. 1970. *Protection of mankind's cultural heritage.* Rennes: Imprimeries Oberthur.

———. 1983. *Boletín UNESCO* 91, Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO. Paris: UNESCO.

———. 2002. The World Heritage Convention, http://www.unesco.org/whc.

———. 2005. *Operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.* Intergovernmental Committeee for the Protection of the World and Cultural Natural Heritage. WHC.05/2 (February 2005). Paris: World Heritage Center.

Venegas, Carlos. 2002. La vivienda colonial Habanera. *Arquitectura y Urbanismo.* Habana: Ministerio de Cultura. 23(22):14–31.

Verdery, Katherine. 1991. *National ideology under socialism: Identity and cultural politics in Ceauşescu's Romania.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zukin, Sharon. 1995. *The cultures of cities.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.