

UNDER ONE UMBRELLA: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN HAVANA, CUBA AS
THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL SERVICES AND ECONOMICS

by

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ABSTRACT

EMILY ISABEL DALLMEYER. Under one umbrella: historic preservation in Havana, Cuba as the link between social services and economics. (Under the direction of Dr. EMILY MAKÁŠ)

Traditionally, historic preservation focuses on the past, but a major challenge of historic preservation is working with buildings that are still in use. If a building continues to be used, it will continue to evolve. Thus, current daily life and the preservation of history are somewhat in competition. In Havana, Cuba, however, those two priorities actually support instead of compete with one another.

Through integrating the preservation of social infrastructure and the preservation of the built environment, Havana's Office of the City Historian (OCH) preserves the community including both people and place. The practice of preserving community is not historic preservation as it is commonly understood. The OCH accomplishes this integration in part by tying the delivery of necessary social services to preservation projects. Rehabilitation of historic buildings fosters cultural productions, houses medical services, provides job-training, and supports other social services in Old Havana.

Neither social services nor preservation are financially self-supporting, but through generating and reinvesting tourism revenues into these two programs, the OCH has created a network of projects that support and depend on one another. The tripartite system of preservation, social services and tourism can continue over time, growing as revenues grow.

This research seeks to elucidate the strengths and limitations of the OCH's historic preservation methodology. The autonomy of the OCH from the central

government and the OCH's close management of the historic district have been essential to its success. However, despite its achievements, the majority of the buildings and the residents of Old Havana have not been addressed. As of 2004, after roughly twenty-five years of work, two thirds of the buildings in Old Havana were still not rehabilitated and the decay is visible. As a result, living conditions of many residents are unsafe and unhealthy. In order to address the remaining needs of the historic zone during the lifetimes of the current residents, additional strategies should be employed. Potentially unpredictable social, political and financial impacts on Old Havana that result from increased exchange between the United States and Cuba could be better managed through an understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the OCH's work.

Through on site interviews, tours, self-directed exploration of the Havana as well as primary and secondary source reading, this research builds a foundation from which a new analysis can be made of the historic preservation program in Havana. Analytical drawings that recreate case study preservation projects and diagram the forces at work in Old Havana assist in supporting the results of the analysis. This exploration suggests that the OCH's prioritization of both social services and the built environment in Old Havana has contributed to positive outcomes for the residents and the buildings, but that a long-term solution to the current social and infrastructural problems of Old Havana must include additional decentralized elements that empower the population to maintain their own homes, foster additional non-state owned businesses and organizations that serve tourists and locals.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Culture, Community and Development

The Office of the City Historian in Havana, Cuba practices historic preservation as it supports the social and economic rehabilitation of Old Havana, the historic center of this five hundred year-old Caribbean capital city. The successes that the office has achieved are the result of the atypical autonomy that the office has from the central Cuban government as well as the comprehensive control the office exerts over the built environment and over the delivery of social services in the historic center. Despite the achievements of the office, there is pervasive decay throughout much of Old Havana. Based on the completed work to date as well as the challenges inherent in the urban fabric of Old Havana, the Office of the City Historian (OCH) will be unable to completely rehabilitate the historic center in service of the current population. A long-term solution to the current social and infrastructural problems of Old Havana should include additional decentralized elements that empower the population to maintain their own homes, foster additional non-state owned businesses that cater to tourists and locals, and allow non-state owned organizations to provide services to residents that the office cannot reach in a timely manner.¹

¹ Joseph Scarpaci, Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula, *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 344;
Rachel Carley, "In a New Era of Foreign Involvement, the Nation Struggles to Preserve its Historic Architecture." *Architectural Record*. (February 1997): 3;
Andrea Colantonio, Robert B. Potter, *Urban tourism and development in the socialist state: Havana during the 'special period'* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 221.



FIGURE 1: Wooden scaffolding frequently supports structurally failing balconies. The laundry hanging outside indicates that these homes are still occupied and the balconies are in use. Photograph by author.

Historic preservation in Havana is a pressing concern because of the decay that afflicts so much of the city. Damage due to neglect, the climate and overcrowding threatens people's homes, livelihoods and the buildings that are both important pieces of Cuban history and the backdrop for contemporary Cuban culture.² The OCH in Havana takes the pragmatic view that culture is an important development tool as well as the

² Joseph Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios: heritage tourism and globalization in the Latin American centro histórico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 185.

expression of Cuban identity. As a development tool cultural heritage can be marketed to pay for physical maintenance and social services for the local population. This clinical evaluation of culture is softened by the prioritization of social and economic rehabilitation of Old Havana as central elements of development rather than focusing solely on the built environment.³ Through the integration of preservation of social infrastructure with preservation of the built environment, the OCH preserves the community.

Merriam-Webster defines community as “a group of people who live in the same area (such as a city, town, or neighborhood)” or “a group of people who have the same interests, religion, race, etc.”⁴ The idea of community includes relationships and interdependencies that arise when people live in close proximity to each other and interact with each other on a daily basis. While overcrowding in Old Havana requires that some families be relocated, the OCH values the community that remains and attempts to support and reinforce the social infrastructures that are present. Instead of dividing its efforts to address social and physical issues separately, the OCH addresses both concurrently by tying the delivery of social services to preservation projects. Rehabilitation of historic buildings provides job-training, houses medical services, fosters cultural productions and supports other social services in Old Havana.⁵

Among professionals in the field, “preservation,” “conservation,” and “rehabilitation” are broadly used to mean physical interventions in the historic built

³ UNESCO and the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad. *Una Experiencia Singular valoraciones sobre el modelo de gestión integral de La Habana Vieja, Patrimonio de la Humanidad* (Spain: UNESCO, 2006), 50.

⁴ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community>. (accessed 3/27/2015).

⁵ Susan Kepecs, “Saving Old Havana,” *Archaeology Magazine* 55, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 1. Red de Oficinas del Historiador y del Conservador de las Ciudades Patrimoniales de Cuba, *Lucas y Simientes: territorio y gestión en cinco centros históricos cubanos* (Cuba: Ediciones Boloña, 2012), 74.

environment intended to both ensure a building's continued functionality, as well as to respect and retain evidence of its history. While the architectural heritage of Cuba is present in the design of spaces or the materials used in construction, the existing structures are important to preserve because they house or fund important social services. From one point of view, the appearance of the architecture of Old Havana could be considered irrelevant, except to the extent that it fosters tourism. The OCH maintains that architecture is valuable as the embodiment of their "national identity" and "inherited patrimony."⁶ This identity is not always well understood outside Cuba, potentially as a result of the lack of open exchange between Cuba and the United States (U.S.).

Ending the longstanding American opposition to Cuban policies, President Obama recently announced the reestablishment of diplomatic relations and plans to ease restrictions on commerce, transportation and banking. After more than fifty years of trade embargo and isolation from Cuba, the Obama administration argues that improved diplomatic relations and the resultant increase of exchange with and investment from the U.S. will affect more change than strict separation.⁷ Shortly after the announcement by Obama, tourist agencies reported dramatically increased number of inquiries about travelling to Cuba.⁸ Since the early 1990s tourism has developed into one of the most lucrative industries in Cuba.⁹ In Havana the revenues from tourism to fund historic preservation through Habaguanex, the tourism corporation owned and operated by the

⁶ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*, 50.

⁷ Roberta Rampton, "Obama Says Normalization Offers Best Chance to Influence Cuba." *Reuters* (December 19): 1.

⁸ Ben Fox, "Cuba Tourism Expected To Rise After Obama Change," *Huffington Post* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/22/cuba-tourism_n_6365884.html (accessed December 25, 2014).

⁹ Florence E. Babb, "Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris: Cuban Tourism in a Time of Globalisation." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* volume 30, issue 1 (2011): 50.

OCH.¹⁰ In turn, preservation of the historic fabric of the city supports the tourism industry: without the beautiful backdrop of Havana's architecture, people would not come to experience the city. While recent changes in U.S. policy have not yet affected Havana's built environment, future increases in tourism could increase the funding available to the OCH and more exchange between the U.S. and Cuba could have other impacts as well.¹¹

¹⁰ Red de Oficinas, *Luces y Simientes*, 87.

¹¹ Emily Dallmeyer, "Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?" (conference paper, 9th Savannah Symposium, The Architecture of Trade, February 6, 2015).



FIGURE 2: Map of the island of Cuba with Havana identified. Redrawn by author from www.googlemaps.com and Sanborn Map from the Library of Congress.

1.2 Old Havana in the Cuban Political Context

Today tourism is central to understanding Cuba's economy, but it played a minor role until relatively recently. Instead, Cuba's long history of colonial subservience and subsequent attempts to define itself as an independent country are the background that frame the 1959 Revolution and the specific context surrounding the OCH. After six years of armed revolt, Fidel Castro and his supporters succeeded in overthrowing Fulgencio Batista on January 1, 1959, but some scholars trace the roots of the Revolution back to Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain in the late 1800s.¹² The time period between 1902 and 1959 is considered the First Republican period of Cuba, when the

¹² Marifeli Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: origins course and legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

country was officially independent from Spain, but still tied to the U.S. through the Platt Amendment.¹³ Spain had ceded Cuba to the U.S. in 1898, and when the U.S. occupation of Cuba ended four years later, the Platt Amendment allowed Cuba's northern neighbor to retain rights to intervene in Cuba's affairs until the amendment was repealed in 1934.¹⁴ Even after the U.S.'s constitutional role in Cuba's affairs was rescinded, the U.S. still exercised a great deal of influence over Cuba politically and economically. While some Cubans welcomed the idea of having a powerful ally to support their political and economic goals, other Cubans chafed under this new version of subservience.¹⁵ Even the Cuban built environment bears evidence of the U.S.'s power and influence. For example, the design of the 1929 Capital building in Havana strongly references the Capitol building in Washington D.C., and is therefore seen as a symbol of American influence.¹⁶

The first Republican period was tumultuous for Cuba. Even after the Platt Amendment was repealed, Cuba was governed by a series of presidents supported by the U.S. Some presidents were elected by popular vote, while several won control through military coups and their administrations varied from effective management of the country to violent repression of dissent. The latter describes the regime of Fulgencio Batista who seized power through a military coup shortly before the presidential election of 1952. High levels of poverty and malnutrition in rural areas as well as extensive American

¹³ Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 24.

¹⁴ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 7.

¹⁵ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 9.

¹⁶ Rachel Carley, *Cuba: 400 years of architectural heritage* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1997), 147.

Olga Rodríguez Falcón, "Out with the New, In with the Old: Architecture and Nation," *Hispanic Research Journal* 10, no. 5 (December 2009): 441 – 442.

influence in industry, crime and tourism marked the 1950s; this made many Cubans ready for change promised by Fidel Castro and the Revolution.¹⁷

Shortly after the 1959 Revolution, Castro's new government gained popular support because of the official goals to reduce poverty and increase access to education, housing and healthcare. While concerned with establishing a Cuban way forward, the Revolutionary regime was more intent upon combating the negative legacies of history, rather than cherishing the patrimony handed down during hundreds of years of subjugation. Originally, the revolutionary movement was not communist, and Che Guevara's concept of a "New Man" motivated by moral concerns, not capitalism seems to epitomize the revolutionary government's idealistic but pragmatic priorities.¹⁸ There is a great deal of debate about the moment when the revolution became communist, but after several years without a formal designation, Fidel Castro declared Cuba communist in 1961.¹⁹

In pursuit of income equality, the revolutionary government instituted agrarian reform, confiscating properties in excess of one thousand acres and nationalizing much of the agricultural industry.²⁰ Private businesses were outlawed and women were welcomed into new sectors in the workplace.²¹ Several education programs targeted underserved demographics: 1961 was declared the Year of Literacy and two hundred fifty thousand Cubans traveled to all parts of Cuba increasing the literacy rate from forty percent to

¹⁷ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 57;
Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 34.

¹⁸ Joseph Scarpaci, et al, *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 325;
Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 41, 53.

¹⁹ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 3.

²⁰ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 64.

²¹ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 142 – 143.

virtually one hundred percent.²² In addition, domestic workers and prostitutes were offered job training because both professions were determined to be illegal, as they both represented class oppression in the eyes of the revolutionary government. One program provided for women from rural areas to travel to Havana in order to receive job training for one year. Upon returning to their villages, many of these young women became economic drivers and community organizers in roles that were not open to them prior to their education.²³ These and other programs made it seem as though the revolutionary government was fulfilling its promises to build a new, fairer Cuba.

The spirit of volunteerism and self-help fueled optimism in Cuba.²⁴ The government was providing jobs, increasing wages, and controlling rents as well as utilities at affordable levels.²⁵ Community organizations like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and the Federation of Cuban Women, were purportedly intended to aid in the organization of subsets of the community, like small neighborhoods or women to organize themselves in order to better serve everyone. However, these organizations took on a darker role when members began to inform on their neighbors' potentially counterrevolutionary ideas and actions. For several years in the 1960s, people of all types, including religious believers, homosexuals, criminals, and homeless people, were defined as counterrevolutionary and sent to labor camps in the country for re-education.²⁶ These camps were eventually shut down because of protests at their brutality. However, the suspicion and retaliation towards counterrevolutionary ideas and actions

²² Richard Gott, *Cuba: a new history* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 189.

Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 50.

²³ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 147.

²⁴ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 48.

²⁵ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 9.

²⁶ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 146 - 147

did not end with the closure of the camps. Unfortunately for many Cubans, in exchange for social and economic change, they were forced to conform to a narrow definition of a good Revolutionary.

In addition to neighbors watching and reporting on neighbors, urban areas in general were viewed as bourgeoisie and therefore more likely to be counterrevolutionary. Pre-Revolution, residents of Havana had better access to education, decent housing and healthcare.²⁷ In an attempt to balance this historic advantage enjoyed by urban dwellers, the revolutionary government resources were focused more on suburban and rural developments. For example, in the Havana suburbs José Antonio Echeverría University was constructed to increase access to education and the Cienfuegos housing development was built on the East side of the Havana Bay to address some of the severe overcrowding in the city. Throughout the countryside schools, medical facilities and housing were built in order to increase access to these basic services, while similar investment was not made in Old Havana.²⁸ As a result of this non-urban focus Havana and its historic center suffered from neglect and continued decay.

²⁷ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 29.

²⁸ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 48.

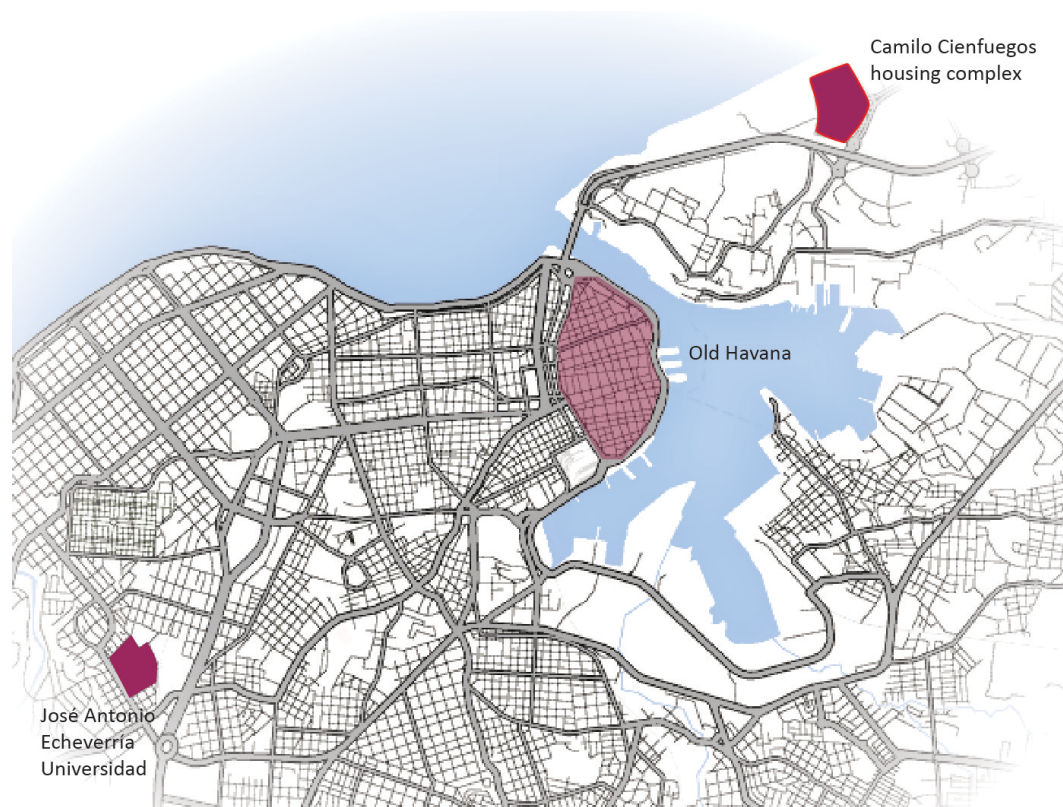


FIGURE 3: Map of Havana, José Antonio Echeverría University and Camilo Cienfuegos housing complex. Modified by author from www.googlemaps.com.

If the 1960s were the idealist experimental era of the Revolution, the 1970s could be defined as the period of intensified relationship with the Soviet Union and the 1980s were marked by market reforms and a relatively high standard of life for Cubans.²⁹ The 1980s also witnessed the beginning of increased investment into historic preservation by the central government. After needs perceived to be more acute had been addressed, the Cuban government was ready to expend resources to restore and rehabilitate urban, historic structures. With revolutionary ideas firmly entrenched in the culture, a view of Cuban identity that included more of the long history of the island could coexist with new

²⁹ Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*; Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*.

revolutionary values. Prior to the 1980s, the OCH had concentrated mostly on scholarly work and research, but was able to begin intensive interventions in the historic core soon after Old Havana and the fortifications were declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. This was the jumping off point for how the office combined preservation, community and economics.

1.3 Existing Research on Preservation, Old Havana and the OCH

Though a comprehensive analysis of the work of the OCH is lacking, its three-part strategy of tourism, preservation and social services, its history and its future is referenced in many different sources. There are some particularly relevant critical publications, though these tend to be shorter articles or book chapters that introduce issue without deep exploration. This thesis draws on these sources as well as others that range from analyses on Cuba's politics, economics and history, which do not reference the built environment, to sources that focus exclusively on historic preservation with no mention of Cuba. The first-hand interviews supported by Spanish and English language scholarship focus more on the OCH and connect the two ends of the literature spectrum. The full range of topics is important to establish a framework for analysis of the intersection of Havana, historic preservation, social issues, and economics.

Several works that explore Cuba's history since colonization, through the 1959 Revolution, and up to their publication, describe the forces that have shaped the OCH. In her detailed and in depth analysis of the social, political and economic forces at work in Cuba between 1898 and 1992, Marifeli Pérez-Stable only refers to the built environment in terms of statistics that reveal the quality of life of the occupants.³⁰ Aviva Chomsky

³⁰ Pérez Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*.

explores more varied themes like music, race and literature in addition to the political and economic context that led to and then resulted from the Revolution.³¹ Richard Gott's more comprehensive account begins at the time of colonization, but his book, *Cuba: a new history*, does not include as much description of the social and economic impacts of the Revolution as the first two authors.³² All three of these sources, as well as additional narrower articles, are important to examine political and social patterns within Cuba, but none explore the impact of those patterns on the built environment of Old Havana. The work of the OCH exists within the boundaries created by political forces, and the social services provided by the OCH deal with issues created by the historical context. Therefore, understanding the nuances of the history is key to understanding the OCH.

At the other end of the literature spectrum are relatively general sources regarding the field of historic preservation. These works include the theoretical underpinnings and brief history of the Euro-American approach to historic preservation, as well as concise touches on approaches of non-Euro-American societies. Authors Robert Stipe, Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, Ilene R. Tyler, James Marston Fitch, John Stubbs and Emily Makaš all offer valuable information about the field.³³ Stipe's generalizations about the American system of historic preservation are surprisingly apt for the Cuban system or other contexts when a few specific terms are replaced with more general words. Tyler et

³¹ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*

³² Gott, *Cuba: a new history*

³³ Robert Stipe, *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-first Century*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003);

Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, Ilene R. Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009);

John Stubbs, *Time honored: a global view of architectural conservation: parameters, theory, & evolution of an ethos*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009);

John H. Stubbs and Emily G. Makaš, *Architectural Conservation in Europe and the Americas: national experience and practice*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011);

James Marston Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World*. (United States of America: University of Virginia Press, 1990).

al cover the first acknowledged western thinkers in preservation, Violet le Duc and John Ruskin, but also include very short descriptions of preservation in non-western cultures. Fitch on the other hand is concerned with mass production and the attending loss of authenticity that could be prevented through preservation of history. John Stubbs and Emily Makaš offer fairly broad works that touch on the work of the OCH briefly in a discussion about preservation history and practices in the Caribbean. Ellen Soroka's article about restoration in Venice is useful for its description and analysis of the debate between Violet le Duc and John Ruskin in the field of preservation.³⁴ The two schools of thought that result from each of these nineteenth century thinkers impacted interventions in Havana in the early twentieth century. Soroka's article is also relevant to include because Venice is so frequently the center of debates regarding historic preservation and tourism. Despite not being specific to Cuba, these sources are useful to illustrate the wider context surrounding the Cuban model. Cuban theories and practice of historic preservation have been and still are cross-pollinated with American and European ideas. For example, prior to the Revolution it was not uncommon for Cubans to travel to the U.S. in order to study or visit historic sites.³⁵ These sources help to establish a general framework of historic preservation without making a specific comparison between Cuba and any other country.

On the other hand literature in English that focuses on historic preservation in Havana generally addresses tourism's role. Tourism funds preservation work, but there are distinct shortcomings from utilizing tourism in a country with a struggling

³⁴ Ellen Soroka, "Restauro in Venezia," *Journal of Architectural Education* 47, no. 4 (May 1, 1994)

³⁵ Isabel Rigol, "La recuperación del Patrimonio monumental en Cuba (1900 – 1959)" in *Conservación patrimonial: teoría y crítica*. ed. Isabel Rigol and Angela Rojas (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial UH, 2012), 96.

economy.³⁶ In their monograph *Urban tourism and development in the socialist state: Havana during the 'special period,'* Andrea Colantonio and Robert B. Potter compare pre-Revolutionary tourism to tourism in the 1990s in order to showcase complaints from locals regarding elitism, decadence and U.S. interference and to highlight the post-revolution inconsistencies between tourism and the socialist model that resulted from welcoming tourism back.³⁷ The increasing revenue earned by tourism was a valuable resource for the Cuban economy after the loss of Soviet support, but the benefits did not extend to everyone, while the negative effects did.

There is very little discussion of the socio-economic effects of the Revolution and its aftermath in the popular genre of architectural photography books about Cuba. While these books of beautiful images include sections on history, their scope and format prevents them from acknowledging the current functions of the buildings. Instead photography books treat buildings as if the story of the building ended when construction was completed.³⁸ Rachel Carley's book, *Cuba: 400 years of architectural history* uses this technique, but also touches on the issue of preservation briefly in the final section.³⁹ This is clearly a conscious decision, as Carley has written other articles that deal with the polemics of the OCH's work.⁴⁰

Other studies offer more in depth analyses of the history of Old Havana, its preservation, and the OCH. In their monograph of the city, Authors Scarpaci, Coyula and Segre thoroughly describe the story of Havana from its early history through the end of

³⁶ Babb, "Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris: Cuban Tourism."

³⁷ Colantonio and Potter, *Urban tourism and development*.

³⁸ Michael Connors, *The Splendor of Cuba: 450 years of architecture and interiors*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2011).

³⁹ Carley, *Cuba: 400 years of architectural heritage*.

⁴⁰ Carley, "In a New Era of Foreign Involvement..."

the twentieth century including an analysis of the work of the OCH in Havana.⁴¹ Writers of journalistic pieces for newspapers and magazines as well as articles in scholarly journals often include biased opinions. These types of works reveal current sentiments towards Cuba by the authors who do not live on the island, though often have history or family in Cuba. The observations put forward in these articles merit further scholarly study.⁴²

Much of the information published about the OCH is produced by the institution itself or by its partners. In fact, the most recent in depth work about preservation in Havana was published in Spanish by the Offices of the City Historians from five Cuban cities and is a report on their own work that lacks critical distance of third party studies.⁴³ A 2006 publication in both Spanish and English titled *Una Experiencia Singular*, was the result of a partnership between the OCH and UNESCO and includes evaluations written by two UNESCO experts. Nonetheless, the rhetoric and analysis is overtly complimentary and similarly lacks the critical objectivity of work by independent scholars. However, the data collected in this report is a rich foundation that is reexamined in this thesis in order to more critically review the office's work.⁴⁴

There have been additional academic and scholarly articles written in Spanish and English regarding the work of the OCH, which due to their shorter format do not analyze issues in depth, but again, identify topics that merit additional scholarship. For example, a conference paper in Spanish by two Cuban architects who are professors at the Instituto

⁴¹ Joseph Scarpaci, et al, *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*.

⁴² Belmont Freeman, "History of the Present: Havana: In the looming post-Castro era, Cuba's capital faces profound social and economic challenges," *Places* (December 2014).
Damien Cave, "Tourism apartheid in Cuba: Many of the island nation's most beautiful areas are off limits to its citizens. Will Fidel's tourist policy be his undoing?" *Salon.com*
http://www.salon.com/2002/02/06/cuba_apart/ (accessed 1/3/2015).

⁴³ Red de Oficinas, *Luces y Simientes*.

⁴⁴ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*.

Superior Politécnico José Antonio Echeverría on the southwest side of Havana, outlines Havana's history in great detail, but also touches on contemporary preservation conditions in Old Havana, the Escuela Taller, and several other topics that merit further development.⁴⁵

Through in-depth analysis of current scholarship in combination with on site research, this thesis begins to address the gap that exists regarding the study of preservation in Old Havana. There is an opportunity for Cubans to build upon the successes that the OCH has achieved and to address areas where the office is not effective, but without critical analysis of the current situation it is impossible to plan for the rapidly evolving future. Additionally, given recent political events and the anticipated influx of Americans, dollars and North American businesses, the lack of comprehensive, critical writing on Old Havana and its most influential organization, the OCH, makes it more difficult for Americans to engage Old Havana in a contextually responsive way.

Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula finish their chapter on Old Havana by calling for empowerment of the local citizens. Colantonio and Potter end their study by directing future research to assess the potential roles of small businesses in Cuba. This thesis examines projects that begin to answer both sets of scholars' calls for additional work. In this way, the original research done in Havana in June 2014 with additional graphic analysis, not only synthesizes previous work, but also deepens it. In particular, the examination of specific projects and interviews with practitioners illustrates key concepts in a robust context.

⁴⁵ Maysel Castillo García and Marién Ríos Díaz, "La Habana Vieja, Un Presente Audaz: Old Habana, a Fearless Present," *Congreso Iberoamericano, Interdisciplina en Diseño Urbano*, San José de Costa Rica, (September 25 – 28, 2013): 37 – 56.

1.4 Breaking Down the Topic

This thesis begins with a review of why historic preservation is important in general and in Havana particularly. This is followed by a discussion of the background of the OCH to explain the forces that shape its work. Through several case studies of completed and ongoing projects of the OCH this thesis will describe the OCH's integrative methodology, its achievements and shortcomings, and possible methods to address gaps in its successes. By identifying other projects in Old Havana today that could serve as models for the policies that could be part of the solution, the conclusion of this thesis will suggest possible extensions of the OCH's policies and procedures.

The work of the OCH in many different sectors in Old Havana touches the lives of the residents by rehabilitating their homes, providing social services and job opportunities. Despite the far-reaching impact of the OCH's work to date, there are still many buildings, people and problems that have yet to be served. By empowering more individuals and non-OCH businesses to address issues that the OCH cannot address in the near future, more residents of Old Havana would be able to improve their quality of life.

CHAPTER 2: PRESERVATION AT 30,000 FEET AND IN HAVANA

2.1 A Brief Timeline

Historic preservation is the act of retaining and interpreting the history, identity and people of a place. The ways that different cultures have viewed history and how they have treated artifacts of history differ over time and from place to place. Sometimes history is oral, sometimes written, and generally represented by artifacts that may be large, like a building, or small, like a tool. For the purposes of analyzing the OCH's model of historic preservation, it is necessary to examine the origins of historic preservation, how and why historic preservation is important, and how terminology will be used in this thesis. Inherent in the discussion regarding *historic preservation* are ideas about *memory* and *identity* and how these terms relate to the term *place*. All these terms have broad abstract implications as well as implications specific to Havana.

According to preservation expert John Stubbs the possibility of losing landmarks that are a part of the identity of a place can inspire the surrounding population to reassess the value of those landmarks and to decide to preserve them.⁴⁶ This serves as one explanation for why attitudes towards preservation change over time. People's attitudes remain the same unless there is an event that motivates change. The Cuban author Angela Rojas identifies the earliest efforts to "transmit 'something' to posterity" in Egyptian culture, citing the collections of goods and servants in burial tombs as an example of preserving those collections for the afterlife, or the next life. While this is not

⁴⁶ Stubbs, *Time honored: a global view*, 53.

preservation or conservation of goods or memory for future generations, it is possible to see the seed of conservation for the future in Ancient Egypt's preparation for the afterlife.⁴⁷ Rojas continues to trace ideas about memory and beauty from the Greeks, through the Romans, through conservation of knowledge in monasteries during the Middle Ages, through John Winkleman's writing about ancient art, and more recently through the effects of mass reproduction of industrialization. Rojas' discussion of Viollet le Duc and John Ruskin dovetail with the descriptions made by other authors, but she continues the timeline of conservation concepts through the remodeling of Paris by Baron Haussmann to restoration charters of the twentieth century and current discussions around modernity, conservation and demolition.

Rojas' timeline of the field of preservation ends with the establishment of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), two international bodies working to identify sites, educate the public and conserve human heritage. While Rojas' timeline speeds through periods and points of view, it does seem to support Stubb's description that potential loss increases awareness and assessed value of a given site. As conservation concepts, awareness and scholarship spread, so did conservation and preservation interventions. It was not until the later twentieth century that historic preservation was formalized as a scholarly pursuit and the first higher education programs were created to study its methods and concepts. In Cuba, while as early as 1940 the Cuban Constitution recognized the need to protect national heritage, the field did not gain much attention until after the Venice Charter was written in 1964. Cuba's

⁴⁷ Angela Rojas. "Síntesis histórica de la conservación del patrimonio," in *Conservación patrimonial: teoría y crítica*. ed. Isabel Rigol and Angela Rojas (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial UH, 2012), 30.

first graduate level international study programs, established in the 1980s, were one example of the larger push to grow the technical and scholarly historic preservation base in Cuba.⁴⁸

The historical debate that seems to most effectively frame more recent theory and practice began with Viollet le Duc and John Ruskin in the nineteenth century. Ellen Soroka and Norman Tyler take slightly different positions regarding these two thinkers, but both agree that le Duc and Ruskin were in opposition. Soroka characterizes le Duc's methodology as utilizing historical data to return the building to an appropriate style through preserving surviving aspects and recreating lost elements.⁴⁹ These strategies are often defined as *restoration* and *reconstruction*. Soroka's description seems to characterize le Duc's work as scientific and respectful of original designs, while Tyler asserts that le Duc's methodology went further and intended to improve upon original designs rather than just loyally reproduce or restore them. Through reinterpretation and historical study, le Duc rebuilt buildings or monuments more stylistically pure than they ever has been. According to Tyler, le Duc's theories and strategies do not drive the practice of historic preservation today, despite the fact that le Duc was one of the first architects concerned with restoration and preservation.⁵⁰

While Le Duc was concerned with recreating a completed building, Ruskin felt that the ruin of a building was an artifact that should be valued.⁵¹ His approach today is typically described as *conservation*. While le Duc was concerned with what he viewed as the high point of a building's lifespan, Ruskin felt that the full arc was embodied by

⁴⁸ Isabel Rigol, "La recuperación ... (1900 – 1959)" and "La recuperación del Patrimonio monumental desde 1959" in *Conservación patrimonial: teoría y crítica*, 100, 112, 114.

⁴⁹ Soroka, "Restauro in Venezia," 225.

⁵⁰ Tyler, et al, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction*, 20.

⁵¹ Soroka, "Restauro in Venezia," 225.

whatever state the building reached over time and that evidence of eras and style subsequent to the original period of construction were worth preserving. Le Duc and Ruskin believed it was important to preserve architecture for different reasons, which influenced their different approaches to preservation.

2.2 Preservation Regulations and Organizations

Today most interventions into historic sites consciously engage a combination of these two schools of thought, balancing *restoration* and *conservation*. In order to preserve the built environment as a document of history, laws and regulations may act as constraints that preserve the historic character of buildings and places in many cities and countries. In some contexts these rules are not requirements, but simply recommendations. While le Duc might have recommended improvements to a historic structure, Ruskin would have prioritized maintaining the structure's appearance.

Specific regulations vary from state to state and country to country, but if a proposal does not comply with local and federal laws, the architect or builder must change their project in order to comply.⁵² In general, outside of historic districts the standards for conservation are less stringent, except for sites of particular value. Preservation policies are determined by a governmental body, sometimes without consultation of local authorities or property owners.⁵³ This is not to say that owners lose control over their property, but rather that value placed on historic sites can vary within a country or locale and that local people sometimes value sites less than their own governments. Education regarding preservation is used to encourage populations to support preservation activities.

⁵² Stubbs and Makaš, *Architectural Conservation in Europe and the Americas*, 436 – 455.

⁵³ Stubbs, *Time Honored*, 34.

Despite the fact that local governments generally control historic sites, today there are national and international preservation organizations with varying amounts of control, influence and funding. One well-respected international organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is known for its World Heritage List program. This program recognizes examples of heritage of *universal* value meaning of importance to the entire world and human history, not just the city or country where they are located.⁵⁴

Old Havana and the fortifications were added to the World Heritage List in 1982. Shortly after this designation preservation and restoration projects increased in number and the National Center for Conservation, Restoration and Museumology (CENCREM) was established.⁵⁵ CENCREM was devoted to research, teaching, technical advice and special projects around the country.⁵⁶ The designation by UNESCO was first supported by the central government and then led to additional resources to formalize and support preservation activities. In fact, the first five year plan for the restoration of Old Havana, approved by the Cabinet of the central government, begins with the objective to “convert the international recognition that this declaration derives into a reaffirmation of historic, cultural and social values of our country...” (translation by author).⁵⁷ This plan signaled the beginning of the first decade of restoration work by the OCH.

Cuba’s historic preservation professionals, while involved with UNESCO, have maintained their autonomy and the international group has maintained its typical advisory

⁵⁴ Unesco, and IntesaBci. *World Heritage: Archaeological Sites and Urban Centres*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications through St. Martin’s Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ Rigol “La recuperación ... desde 1959,” *Conservación patrimonial*. 116.

⁵⁶ Rigol “La recuperación ... desde 1959,” *Conservación patrimonial*. 115.

⁵⁷ El Secretario del Consejo de Ministros y de su Comité of Cuba. *Plan de acción para la conservación y restauración del centro histórico de la Habana Vieja y su sistema de fortificaciones*. 7/18/1983.

role after naming Old Havana and the fortifications a World Heritage site.⁵⁸ Cuba has its own system of training preservation professionals; students can attend university and study architecture, historic preservation, or preservation trades: for students that do not pass the university entrance exams, they can apply to enroll in the Escuela Taller or Workshop School.⁵⁹ The strength of the OCH's program in Havana seems to be a result of following its own path, responding to the specific context in Old Havana and combining services as it made sense for Old Havana.

2.3 Terminology

Terminology, as applied above to le Duc and Ruskin's approaches to the historic built environment, has evolved over time. In the United States the umbrella term for many different activities is *preservation*, while in much of the rest of the world the generic word that includes a range of practices is *conservation*. After reviewing the spectrum of terms the more general terms can be redefined more narrowly in order to use them to discuss case studies of Cuban projects.

James Marston Fitch provides specific distinctions among terms by listing seven that range from maintenance to copying in their meaning.

- 1) Preservation: "maintenance", nothing added or subtracted, "interventions ... to preserve its physical integrity ... are ... unobtrusive."
- 2) Restoration: "returning the artifact to " a previous condition. Moment in time is picked.
- 3) Conservation and consolidation: "describes physical intervention in the actual fabric of the building to ensure its continued structural integrity." ex fumigate for termites, insert new foundation
- 4) Reconstitution: "more radical version of the above, in which the building can be saved only by piece-by-piece reassembly."
- 5) Adaptive Reuse: "often the only economic way in which old buildings

⁵⁸ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, December 12, 2014.

⁵⁹ Frank Días Valdes, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

Pedro Rodríguez Sánchez, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

can be saved, by adapting them to the requirements of new tenants."

6) Reconstruction: "the re-creation of vanished buildings on their original site." ... "one of the most hazardous culturally: all attempts to reconstruct the past, no matter what academic and scientific resources are available to the preservationist, necessarily involve subjective hypothesis."

7) Replication: "the construction of an exact copy of a still-standing building on a site removed from the prototype."⁶⁰

Despite Fitch's clear and concise definitions, it is difficult to relate them to actual practice. In the particular situation of the OCH, these terms cannot be neatly applied.

The case studies included in this thesis frequently blend Fitch's first five strategies depending on the state and goals of the project. This is also true of projects not included as case studies. For example, when historic buildings are residential units, strategy three, conservation and consolidation, is frequently critical because of the structural decay and damage that makes them unsafe to live in. At the same time, ad hoc additions by the residents would be removed, reducing the structural load, improving air and light quality, but also returning the building to an earlier state, or restoring it, strategy two.⁶¹ The example of a residential building does not necessarily fit under number five, adaptive reuse, because the building was previously residential.

A term that might be more descriptive of a combination of strategies that respect and restore historical elements of a property, but ensure that it is functional for future use would be *rehabilitation*. Even projects that do fit into the category of adaptive reuse, or strategy five, for example converting a colonial mansion into a hotel or museum, also contain elements of strategies one through four, because of widespread structural problems and aesthetic damage that generally resulted from decades of neglect. In a project where the function of the building changes, the OCH still strives to preserve and

⁶⁰ Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management*, 46.

⁶¹ Joseph Scarpaci, et al, *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 328.

retain historic elements like the decorative embellishments on columns, restore specific pieces that have been damaged, lost or covered over like wall murals and leaded glass windows, repair and reinforce the structure of a building like failing floor systems, and even rebuild elements that may have crumbled away entirely like steel reinforced concrete balconies.⁶²

None of the case studies that are presented in Chapter Four fit neatly into just one of Fitch's categories. In light of the combination of techniques employed throughout Old Havana, in this thesis *preservation* and *conservation* are used interchangeably as umbrella terms that signify that multiple strategies may have been employed when referring to the practice in general. The term *rehabilitation* is used to highlight the restoration of functionality to a building, but with the understanding again that multiple strategies are employed in order to preserve, restore, and recreate historic elements. When discussing particular projects and specific interventions within projects, this thesis employs narrow terminology like *protect*, *remove*, and *imitate* in order to describe the work more thoroughly without delving into the technical elements involved in the actual trades. While it seems clearer to define historic preservation activities in the way that Fitch does, the reality of practice of historic preservation in Havana is difficult to categorize neatly.

The practice of preservation does not exist in a vacuum. Robert Stipe argues that three contextual elements that are essential to understanding the American system of preservation, but these ideas could be applied to any locale. He stipulates that in order to understand the context of preservation, one first has to have a grasp of 1) the system of government, 2) the preservation process, and 3) the economic system. Each of these

⁶² Elements of completed projects observed by the author during travel to Havana in 2014.

elements affects any preservation activities.⁶³ For example, Stipe specifically cites the free market economy as shaping the practice of preservation in the United States, and it is equally evident that the centralized economy has shaped the practice of preservation in Cuba.

Another context which any historic preservation project must deal with is ideas about place. The term *place* is used here to capture the idea of creating a sense of identity that is tied to a particular location geographically and culturally. Early historic preservation projects were frequently concerned with the preservation of monuments. Di Giovine argues that the etymological root of the word monument is the Latin verb *monere*, to remind. Di Giovine suggests that the role of monuments is to remind people of important events.⁶⁴ This thesis will not examine any monuments that have been specifically preserved to remember or honor a memory, but this idea of memory induced by an architectural object helps to explain how architecture contributes to an understanding of place. Architectural monuments are part of the creation of collective memory that is required for placemaking according to Di Giovine.⁶⁵ A sense of place is wrapped up in other concepts such as nationalism, otherness, local, and heritage.

In the Cuban context, the idea of patrimony, or heritage that has been handed down to the current generation ties the present to the narrative of the island and contributes to the concept of Cuban identity. Museums, for example, are considered cultural outlets that should be accessible to all Cuban citizens.⁶⁶ Museums house Cuban artifacts that can illuminate the priorities of the past as well as the chain of events that led

⁶³ Stipe, *A Richer Heritage*, 24.

⁶⁴ Michael A. Di Giovine, *The heritage-scape: UNESCO, world heritage, and tourism*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 25.

⁶⁵ Di Giovine, *The heritage-scape*, 26.

⁶⁶ Vladimir, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

to the present. These objects and places have been witness to and setting for past events that shape the present.

2.4 A Tripartite System

The dense urban center in Havana was almost entirely built before the 1959 Revolution and the majority of the buildings were built in the early twentieth century or earlier.⁶⁷ Therefore, the architectural heritage of Old Havana is one legacy of Cuba's 400-year history of control by Spain, then decades of influence from the United States. However, after the Revolution, the government and population sought to define and promote Cuban identity as distinct from outside forces and uniquely Cuban, which from one perspective devalues Old Havana's architectural heritage.⁶⁸ Today, Old Havana has been recast as part of that distinct Cuban identity. For example, the majority of buildings in the historic center are considered to be *eclectic* in style, or utilizing a combination of several styles and original details according to local Cuban preferences.⁶⁹ However, as is true in many post-colonial contexts, the value of heritage in Cuba goes beyond constituting identity through tangible and intangible elements, because the historic buildings and cultural products are essential for tourism. Tourists come to see the heritage of Old Havana, and the connection is strengthened by the many businesses related to tourism that utilize historic sites in the city including, restaurants, hotels, museums, and retail stores. Many Cubans depend on the industry of tourism for their

⁶⁷ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*, 32.

⁶⁸ Gott, Richard. 2004. *Cuba: A New History*.

⁶⁹ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*, 34.

livelihoods, therefore historic sites and preservation of those sites are important to the Cuban people for both cultural and economic reasons.⁷⁰

In Havana, the dependence of tourism-related-businesses on historic sites is also true in reverse: the preservation of historic sites is dependent on tourism. In a mutually beneficial system, tourism dollars fund preservation and preservation creates the spaces to host tourism. The OCH owns and operates hospitality businesses through Habaguanex, a corporation founded in 1994. The revenues from this company (as well as real estate and construction arms owned and operated by the OCH) are reinvested into preservation and also social services. Without the OCH's third focus on social services, the dual priorities of tourism and preservation could have resulted in a Disney-like imitation of Old Havana.⁷¹ Instead, the OCH has prioritized the preservation of a "living city" and built a system of interdependencies between tourism, preservation and social services.

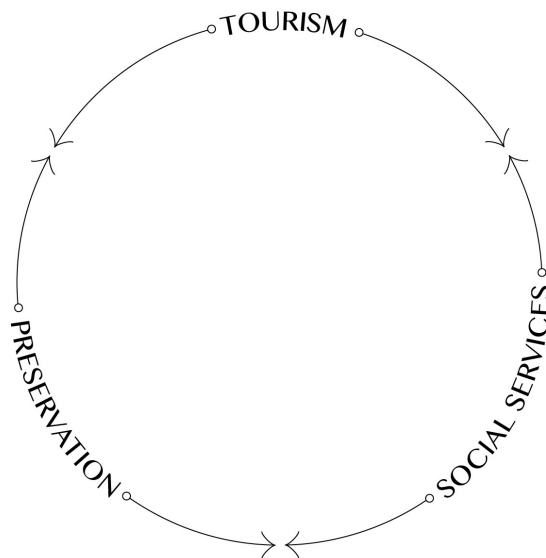


FIGURE 4: Diagram of the tripartite system of tourism, preservation and social services. Drawn by author.

⁷⁰ Prensa Latina. "Havana: Restoration as a Social Issue." (April 4, 2011).

⁷¹ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 203.

The OCH connects social services to tourism and preservation by housing social services like concert spaces, elder care centers, and maternity homes within historic buildings. The case studies included in Chapter Four are examples of historic structures rehabilitated by the OCH in order to provide necessary services for the community at the same time that the buildings themselves are preserved. By utilizing historic structures in order to deliver services the OCH addresses both preservation and social priorities at the same time. At the same time, other historic buildings are preserved and used to house tourism-related functions, which in turn encourages more activity at all tourism-based businesses and generates more funds to support more preservation and social services.

As a result of caring for the local population, the OCH has retained a vibrant and lively Cuban historic center. Through preservation projects, the OCH meets the disparate priorities of the community, the tourism industry and preservation.⁷² Both of the objectives of preservation and social issues are funded through the tourism industry, which in turn depends upon both the historic fabric of the city and the living culture to be the draw for tourists. The OCH has constructed a system of dependencies among these three elements that make each one more successful than it would have been without the others.

The relationship between the OCH's three priorities is circular. Preservation serves social purposes and creates places to host tourists.⁷³ Social services maintain the local population and keep the community vibrant as well as an attractive venue for tourism. Tourism pays for both preservation and social projects. It seems that the OCH's Integral Development Management Strategy takes a holistic view that incorporates all

⁷² Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 186.

⁷³ Dallmeyer, "Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?"

three concepts concurrently instead of addressing each in isolation. Instead of prioritizing any singular element over the others, the OCH uses all its resources in order to preserve the social, cultural and physical infrastructure of Old Havana.

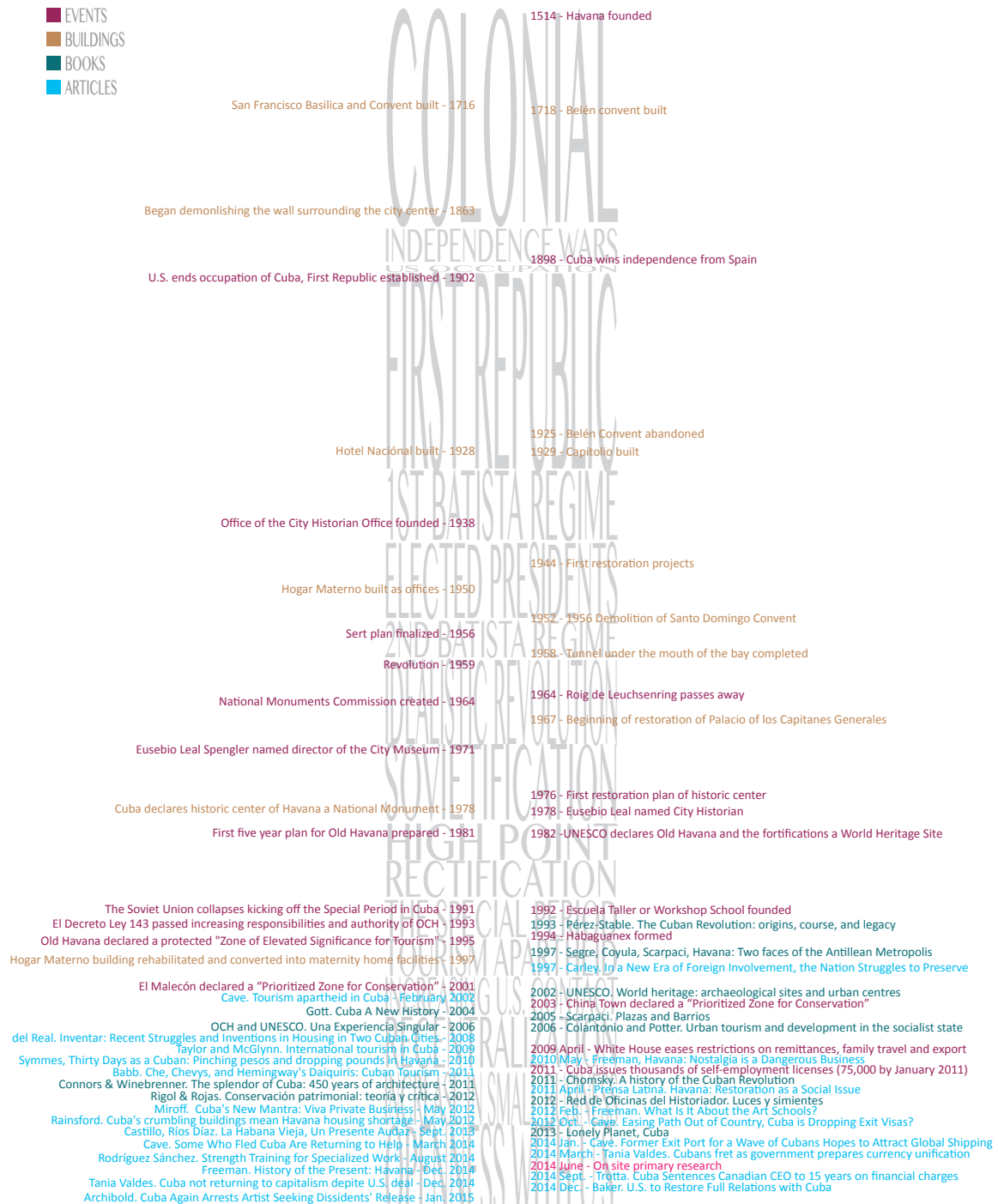


FIGURE 5: Timeline of events, buildings and literature. Diagram by author.

CHAPTER 3: THE OFFICE OF THE CITY HISTORIAN OF HAVANA

3.1 Old Havana's Urban Fabric

The OCH's tripartite model of preservation management only emerged relatively recently. The OCH of Havana as it is today is the result of changes that happened in the 1990s, but the organization was established more than fifty years earlier. Old Havana was already overcrowded and deteriorated by the time Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring founded the OCH in 1938.⁷⁴ Today the area that the OCH oversees extends several blocks beyond the location of the original city wall to the Paseo de Marti and includes the Capitol building (finished in 1929).

⁷⁴ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia* vii, viii.

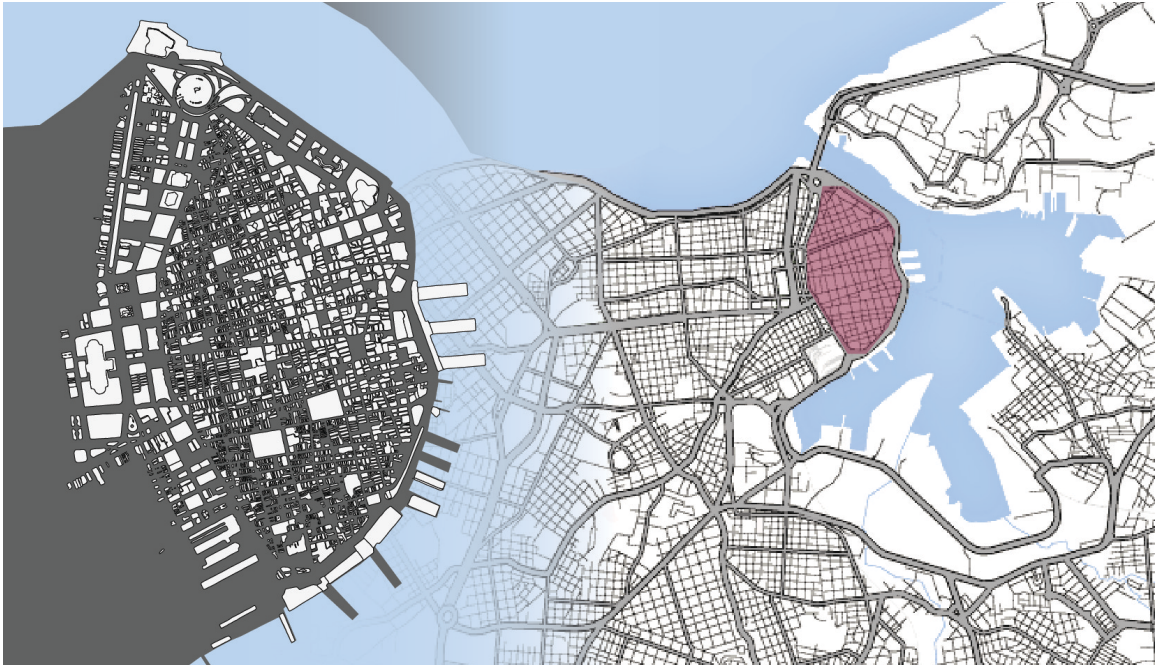


FIGURE 6: On the left individual buildings are called out from the city fabric. On the right the extents of Old Havana are highlighted in maroon. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

Most of the buildings that still stand in Old Havana were built in the first half of the twentieth century, with a significant number from the nineteenth century. In general, the surviving villas and mansions that were built before the nineteenth century are near the plazas that shaped the development of Old Havana.⁷⁵ As a wealthy port city founded in 1519, Havana was home to families who constructed large multistory homes in the city center. The influence of the Catholic Church is also evident in the multiple churches and convents that date from the eighteenth century and earlier.

⁷⁵ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 31.



FIGURE 7: Map of time period buildings were built. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular*.

As the city expanded past the original city wall, many of the wealthier citizens moved away from Old Havana. By the early twentieth century many tenements had replaced earlier buildings and larger homes had been subdivided into what are called *cuarterías* in order to house multiple families.⁷⁶ The diagram below shows several common housing plans at a consistent scale, including a subdivided colonial mansion on the left.

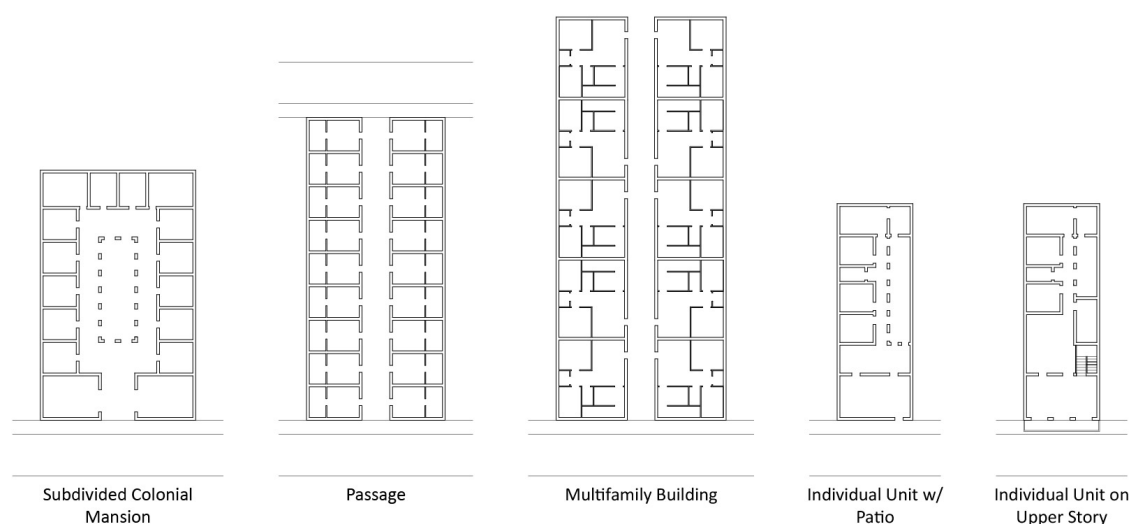


FIGURE 8: Diagrammatic plans of typical multifamily buildings in Old Havana. Drawing by author based on diagrams from Harms, *Vivir en el "centro"*⁷⁷

In parts of Old Havana today, deterioration is still extensive and infrastructure services are not sufficient: balconies have been damaged by water to the point of collapse, wires crisscross streets and doorways, and fifty percent of the city's water is lost due to leakage from faulty pipes.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Carley, *400 years of Architectural heritage*, 86.

⁷⁷ Hans Harms, *Vivir en el "centro": vivienda e inquilinato en los barrios céntricos de las metrópolis de América Latina*. (Hamburg-Harburg: Technical University, 1996), 116.

⁷⁸ Freeman, "History of the Present: Havana," 24.

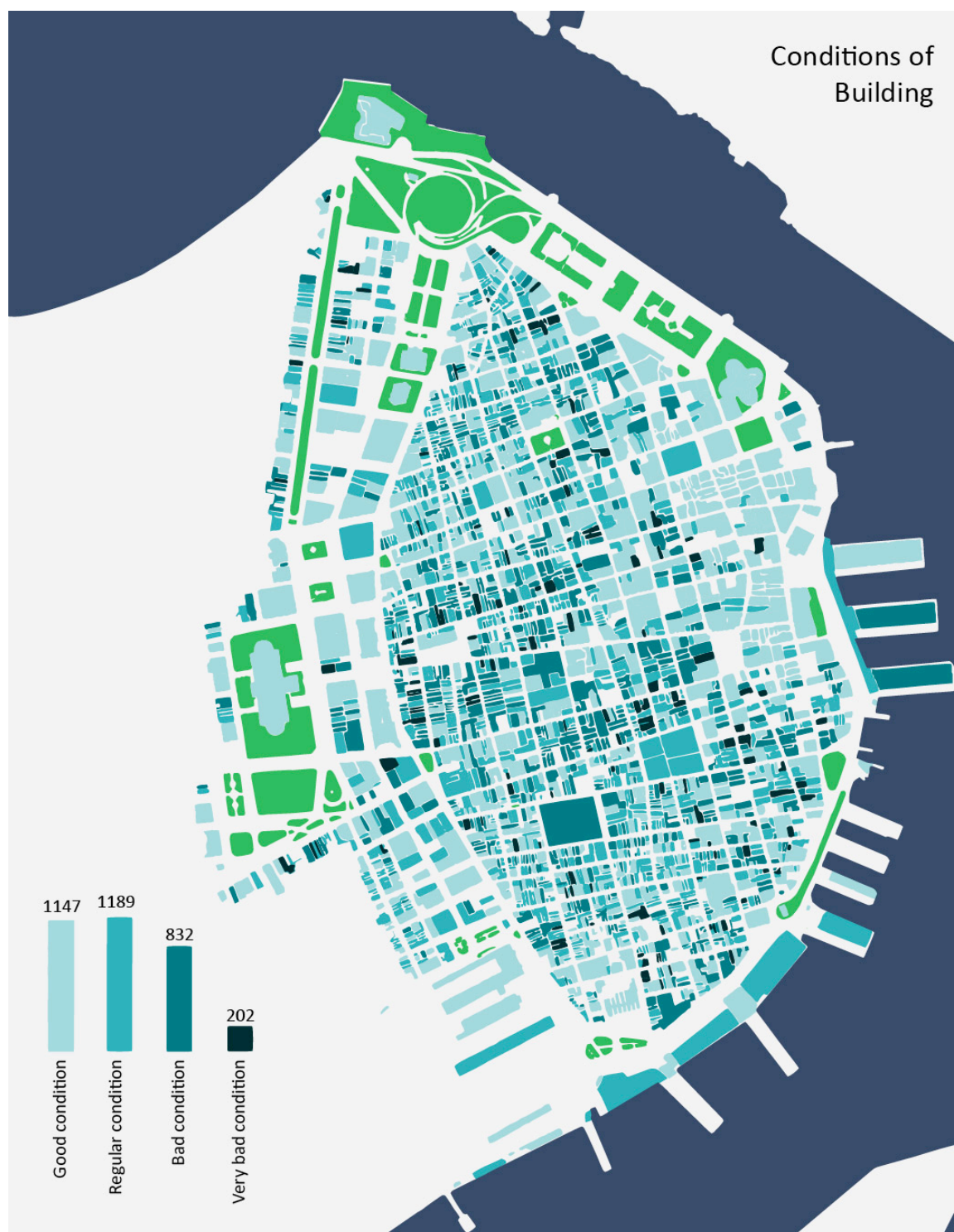


FIGURE 9: Map of the condition of buildings in historic center. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular*.

These problems are all exacerbated by the fact that Old Havana is extremely overcrowded: the majority of the 3,370 buildings in the district are residential, with 20,000 units in approximately 0.83 square miles.⁷⁹ Cuban planners report that Old Havana would have an optimum density with only half of its current population.⁸⁰ In addition to the subdivision of buildings into multiple units to accommodate so many residents, intermediate floors have been added and interior courtyards have been filled in with additional rooms, all resulting in decreased ventilation and light as well as negative air quality and poor sanitation.⁸¹



FIGURE 10: Diagram of added intermediate floors. Photograph by author, diagram modified by author after González and Menocal.⁸²

⁷⁹ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 24

⁸⁰ Scarpaci, *Plazas and barrios*, 195.

⁸¹ Scarpaci, *Plazas and barrios*, 195.

⁸² Mesías González and Morales Menocal, “Arquitectura al servicio del usuario creadores de su vivienda.” 1984.

As recently as 2004, the OCH reported that over forty percent of homes in Old Havana had structural problems with their roofs, just under forty percent had cracks in the walls and more than twenty percent had sinking floors.⁸³ These problems can result in structural failures; every three days, two collapses of varying severity occur in Old Havana.⁸⁴ When overcrowding is considered alongside the poor physical condition of many homes, housing becomes a critical issue.

Despite the unfortunate conditions of the city, the fact that these structures have survived and it is possible to preserve them can be considered positive. While the historic center was woefully neglected for much of the twentieth century, the 1959 Revolution is generally credited with preventing actual demolition of many historic structures. The new revolutionary government abandoned the dramatic redevelopment plans of the previous administration. The master plan by Sert, Wiener, Schulz and Románach approved in 1958 by the Batista regime would have destroyed a large swath of Old Havana, replaced the now iconic Malecón low rises with high rises and constructed an artificial island for casinos and hotel in the bay.⁸⁵

Instead of executing this plan, after the Revolution in 1959, Fidel Castro's government concentrated resources away from the city center, focusing on medical, education and housing projects intended to equalize the disparities between the rural part of the country and the elite urban area of Havana.⁸⁶ Many analysts of Cuban history argue that by raising the quality of life and restricting movement around the entire island, Castro prevented the rural to urban migration that put pressure on many cities in

⁸³ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 41.

⁸⁴ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 39.

⁸⁵ Colantonio and Potter, *Urban tourism and development*, 103.

⁸⁶ Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 29;
Gott, *Cuba: a new history*, 171.

developing countries in the mid-twentieth century.⁸⁷ Scarpaci has noted that protecting built heritage was not Castro's intent since the buildings were evidence of the country's colonial and subservient past, but his actions preserved many buildings through pausing development in Old Havana.⁸⁸

Although this pause in development is often romanticized by outsiders as having frozen Havana in time, it has had distinct benefits. Belmont Freeman, who was a child at the time of the Revolution and whose mother left Cuba well before the Revolution, considers the pause in development to be a great asset to Havana because it precluded fifty years of unfortunate capitalist development.⁸⁹ Unlike many cities in the late twentieth century, Havana's older neighborhoods were not bulldozed to make way for highways and the iconic facades of the Malecón were not replaced with high rises. Slum clearance policies, car focused urban planning, and shortsighted development strategies dramatically changed the fabric of many American cities, but in Havana and other Cuban cities the historic fabric survived due to shifted focuses and limited resources.⁹⁰ During this period when few physical interventions were occurring in the urban core, the OCH focused instead on information gathering in preparation for a time when resources could be devoted to Old Havana.

3.2 Research before Restoration

There is not a great deal of scholarship about the OCH prior to Old Havana's designation as a World Heritage Site in 1982, but there is evidence that the OCH was working on researching and documenting the city itself. Under Leuchsenring there were

⁸⁷ Freeman, *History of the Present*, 6.

⁸⁸ Scarpaci, *Plazas and barrios*, 185.

⁸⁹ Freeman, *History of the Present*, 33.

⁹⁰ Freeman, *History of the Present*, 33, 34.

some preservation projects early on in the existence of the OCH, but it was not until 1964 that the National Monuments Commission was created in order to formally recognize built examples of heritage that should be protected.⁹¹ During the 1960s and 1970s the groundwork for later, much larger rehabilitation projects was laid.

The gap in leadership created by De Leuchsenring's death in 1964 was not filled until 1978 when Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler was named City Historian. In that same year the historic center was named a National Monument, ensuring protection under Cuban law. For more than a decade before becoming City Historian, Dr. Leal Spengler was in charge of the restoration of the Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, originally built between 1776 and 1791, which today houses the City Museum.⁹² The scholarship and initial restoration work that happened in the 1960s and 1970s led to the nomination of Old Havana and its fortifications to UNESCO's World Heritage List by the government of Cuba.

⁹¹ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, viii.

⁹² Oficina del Historiador de la Habana. "Museo de la Ciudad y Templete." <http://www.ohch.cu/museos/museo-de-la-ciudad-y-templete/> (accessed November 16, 2014).

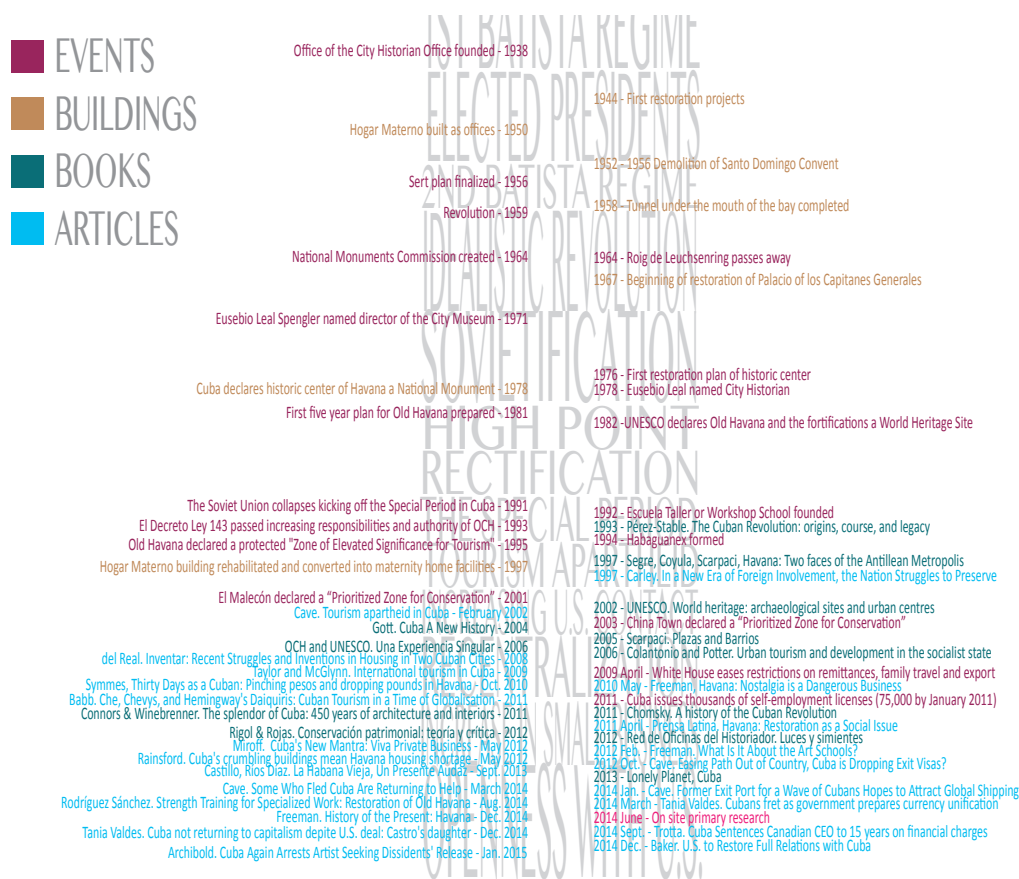


FIGURE 11: Timeline of the OCH between 1938 and 1982. Diagram by author.

3.3 The Beginning of Restoration

The recognition of Old Havana as a World Heritage site kicked off the activity detailed in the first five-year plan for restoration. This plan's outline included eighteen main points concerning the broad-brush strokes of the work to be done. In addition to capitalizing on the international attention focused on the historic center in the early 1980s, the plan focused on improving living conditions for the residents of the historic center, projecting an image of conservation and revitalization and enabling tourism.⁹³ Improving living conditions in rural Cuba had been a focus of the Cuban government since the

⁹³ El Secretario del Consejo de Ministros y de su Comité. “Plan de acción para la conservación y restauración del centro histórico de la Habana Vieja y su sistema de fortificaciones.” 7/18/1983.

beginning of the Revolution. Considering the negative physical condition of many buildings in Old Havana, it is logical that housing in the area would eventually be addressed as well.

Tourism on the other hand, had been rejected early on by Fidel Castro. Though Castro proclaimed that Cuba should avoid becoming an “island of bartenders and chambermaids as had other Caribbean nations,” the economic opportunities possible through tourism were valuable.⁹⁴ While the OCH concentrated work in corridors connecting the historic plazas as a way to create a zone for tourism, the focus of interventions through the 1980s remained on preservation activities and the residents of Old Havana.

This push to renovate Old Havana in the 1980s coincided with a period of the Revolutionary regime that one Cuban identifies providing a relatively comfortable living standard and an internationally respected health-care system.⁹⁵ Despite this positive description of Cuba at the time, the historic center of Old Havana had received scant investment in maintenance or infrastructure and the condition of the buildings continued to deteriorate. Soon after the UNESCO designation in 1982 comprehensive rehabilitation work began adjacent to the Plaza de Armas on one block of Obispo Street lined with deteriorated residences near the oldest fortress in the city..⁹⁶ The OCH rehabilitated and restored the street and the buildings, addressing both the interior living spaces and the façade in keeping with the dual goals of improving living conditions and fostering tourism.

⁹⁴ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 185.

⁹⁵ Belmont Freeman, “History of the Present: Havana,” 19.

⁹⁶ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.



FIGURE 12: Two photographs of the same block. On the left work is underway and on the right work is completed. The same building is called out in both images. Photographs courtesy of Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill.

This first intensive project on Obispo Street was critical to building trust with the population.⁹⁷ The Revolution had promised to cure all economic and social ills, but after twenty years people still had not received the assistance they needed.⁹⁸ If this project were perceived by the public to be a success, it would pave the way for future urban preservation projects to run smoothly. At the same time that the office wanted to address the living conditions of locals, they also wanted to be able to foster tourism in the area and considered this objective in the rehabilitation of the buildings.

The OCH continued to work according to this same comprehensive model of rehabilitating the streets, facades and interiors of buildings, creating corridors of revitalized buildings that connected the Plaza de Armas, the Plaza de la Catedral and Plaza Vieja. Havana was originally developed around these three and two additional

⁹⁷ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

⁹⁸ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*, 84.

plazas, so by focusing on these areas the OCH was able to address many of the oldest structures while at the same time creating a zone that tourists would not have to leave in order to see the main historic sites.⁹⁹ The OCH continued working in the same manner through the 1980s, working with residents to rehabilitate and restore their homes while at the same time paving the way for a tourism corridor.

In the 1980s it was not yet clear how necessary tourism would become.¹⁰⁰ In 1959, at the time of the Revolution, tourism was viewed as a negative influence on Cuba, but when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, tourism became necessary for Cuba's economic survival. Beginning in the early 1960s Soviet bloc countries had largely propped up the Cuban economy by purchasing Cuban exports at generous prices and subsidizing the sale of goods that Cuba needed.¹⁰¹ The loss of Soviet subsidies meant that everything became scarce, from petroleum products to food to soap.

In recognition that funding from outside Cuba was required, but that no subsidies or support would be coming to replace the Soviet backing, the Cuban government began encouraging tourism in the 1990s. The Cuban government justified this *mal necesario* or necessary evil, by aligning with the socialist model of Cuba.¹⁰² The Cuban government officially declared the "Special Period," and instituted a series of rations intended to be used in the event of a war, but required during this "special" time of scarcity. In addition to public rationing, the Cuban government actively shed some of its financial responsibilities. The government could not employ as much of the population and was

⁹⁹ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 185; Cave, "Tourism Apartheid in Cuba", 4.

¹⁰¹ Richard Gott, *Cuba: a new history*, 287.

¹⁰² Henry Louis Taylor Jr. and Linda McGlynn, "International Tourism in Cuba: Can Capitalism Be Used to Save Socialism?" (*Futures* 41, 2009), 406.

Florence E Babb, "Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris: Cuban Tourism," 57.

forced to lay workers off. Instead, licenses for specific private businesses were issued to open non-governmental job opportunities.¹⁰³ The OCH was able to utilize these two new allowances, tourism and private business to their advantage.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 could have meant the end of funding for the OCH's preservation work, but the economic disaster instead turned out to be its prime opportunity. Preservation in many places can be viewed as a luxury due to the high cost of expertise, labor, materials and time required to execute the work. The extremely limited resources available during the Special Period precluded luxuries in most realms of Cuban life.

For the OCH, the Decree-Law 143 changed the situation dramatically. Enacted in 1993, this law shifted financial responsibility for preservation and delivering many social services in Old Havana from the central government to the OCH itself. As a result the OCH gained the power to self-fund by operating tourism-based businesses and the responsibility to deal with the most pressing needs of the population.¹⁰⁴ Up until that point, the OCH was subordinate to the City Administration as simply one office within the much larger bureaucracy.¹⁰⁵ However, the same law that expanded the jurisdiction and authority of the OCH also made it report directly to the Council of State, the national executive body headed by the President of Cuba.¹⁰⁶ With this action, the OCH gained autonomy from the city of Havana and some financial autonomy from the National Assembly, Cuba's main legislative body. OCH's tourism company Habaguanex, did not

¹⁰³ Gott, *Cuba: a new history*, 292.

¹⁰⁴ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, xi.

¹⁰⁵ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 48.

¹⁰⁶ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 48.

remit profits to the National Assembly, the way that other state run businesses are required, but could reinvest them directly.¹⁰⁷

3.4 The Office of the City Historian Today

As a result of the early 1990s reorganization, the city of Havana lost control over its lucrative historic center, but was also relieved of the responsibility of paying for its rehabilitation and its population's needs; the city government could focus its attention and resources elsewhere in the large city of Havana.

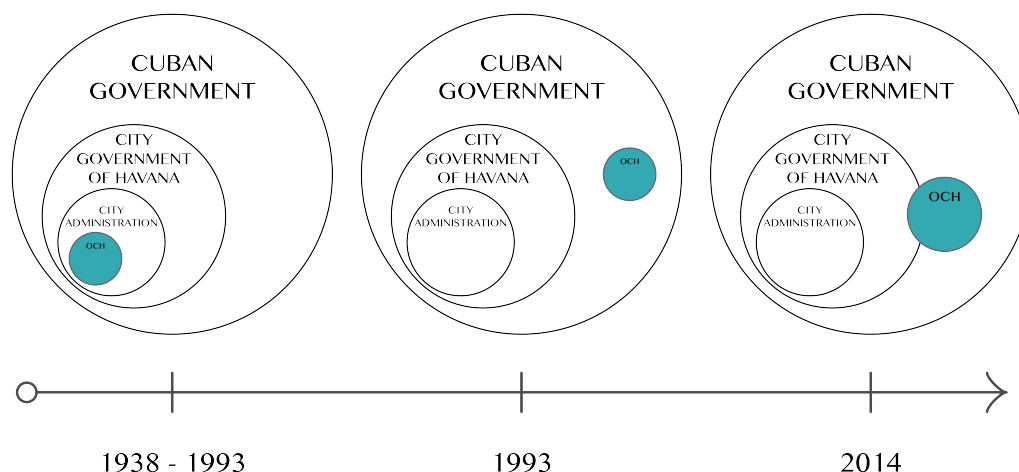


FIGURE 13: Diagram illustrating the relationship over time between the OCH and the City of Havana. Drawn by author.

Old Havana is still a part of the city of Havana, but the OCH now includes so many non-preservation functions that it is in many ways acting as a city government for the historic center. Old Havana function effectively as a city within a city. This model of funding and autonomy exists nowhere else in Cuba, and allows the OCH a great deal of power. The office was assigned “powers to adopt measures and solve, within the area of

¹⁰⁷ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 188.

its jurisdiction, the most pressing and urgent needs of the population.”¹⁰⁸ It has addressed the needs of the local population within the scope its preservation projects.

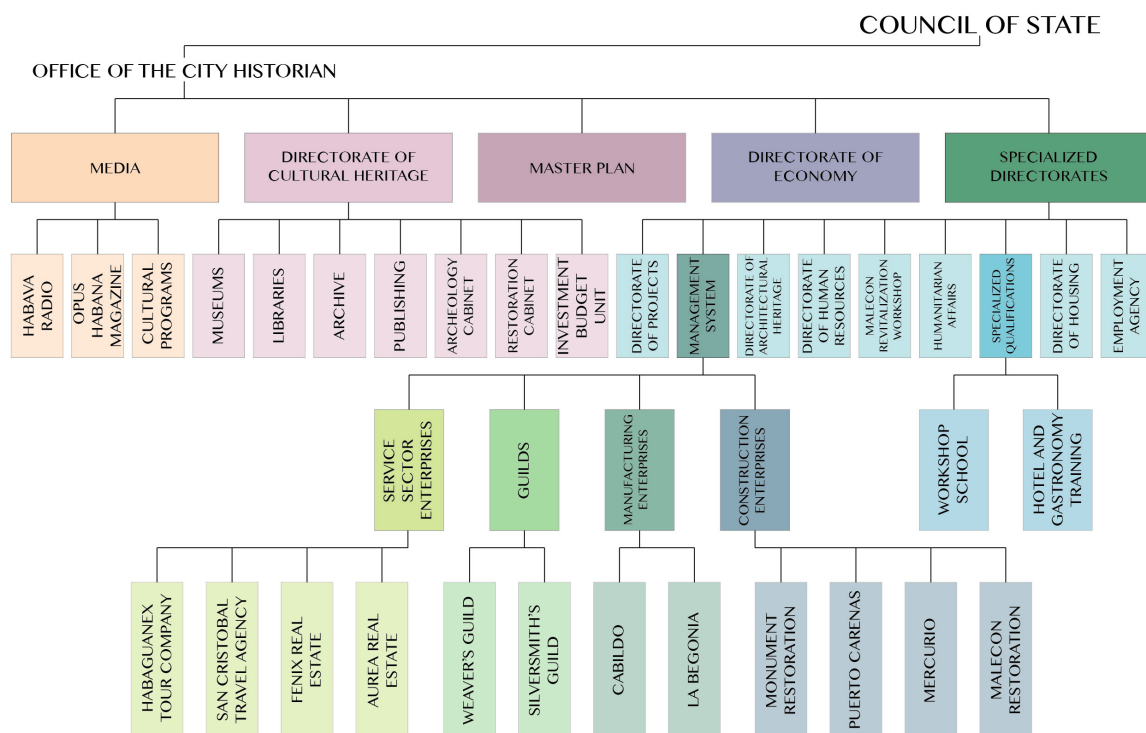


FIGURE 14: Organizational diagram of the OCH. Redrawn by author, based on chart from *Una Experiencia Singular*.

Today the OCH has grown to encompass a wide variety of businesses and services that operate throughout Old Havana and have created the previously described triad between preservation, social services and tourism. In addition to charging the OCH with preservation and taking care of the inhabitants of Old Havana, the law passed in 1993 allowed the OCH the legal right to run businesses to support its projects. The following year it formed the corporation Habaguanex in order to run hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops in Old Havana. Sixty percent of the revenues from these businesses

¹⁰⁸ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, XI.

are invested into preservation projects and the remainder is invested into social projects.¹⁰⁹

Because preservation and social services do not normally pay for themselves, the relationship between tourism and these activities seems one way, but this is not the case. Preservation is required to create and retain the environment for tourists to visit. Through the rehabilitation of businesses and homes, even though some are converted into hotels and restaurants, the urban fabric of Old Havana is retained for both tourists and locals. The delivery of social services beyond rehabilitation of homes, including medical services, job-training opportunities, daycare for the elderly and the young, concerts and educational events are what keep people living in Old Havana. The OCH is clear that they prioritize the residents of the city, and recognize that people are the vehicle of culture.¹¹⁰ Therefore, if tangible and intangible heritage is valuable then both buildings and people are valuable. The architectural and cultural heritage of Cuba creates the basis for the tourism industry; therefore, they are mutually dependent.

¹⁰⁹ Red de Oficinas, *Luces y Simientes*, 87.

¹¹⁰ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 50.

CHAPTER 4: SUCCESSES

4.1 Preserving Community, People and Place

As described in the 2006 OCH and UNESCO publication, *Una Experiencia Singular*, the OCH is capitalizing on Cuban heritage through historic preservation in order to affect a social, cultural, and physical recovery.¹¹¹ In other words, the OCH preserves the community, including both the people and the place. The case studies that follow demonstrate how the OCH has tied the delivery of necessary social services to preservation projects and tourism through the funding and the function of the building after rehabilitation. If viewed in isolation any individual project could lead to the assumption that only preservation, social services or tourism is that OCH's main objective. However, when viewed collectively, the projects reveal that the OCH's multiple objectives are achieved through each project and the triad of preservation, social services and tourism is balanced over the entire scope of their work.

Through demonstrating the integration of non-preservation functions into the OCH's work, this chapter sets the stage for the next two chapters, which identify where the work falls short. By identifying the unintended negative consequences that result from tourism and the limitations of the OCH's work, examples of strategies that address those problems can be recognized. The first step in that process is to examine OCH projects that combine preservation, social services and tourism.

¹¹¹ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia Singular*, vi, 48.

The five examples discussed in this chapter show how apparently unrelated goals become dependent on the success of one another. Two of projects analyzed herein were built as religious structures in the early 1700s, one was an office building built in the 1950s, and the fourth project is not a building at all, but rather the Escuela Taller or Workshop School. Each is a project that preserves historic structures and also meets a social need of the residents of Old Havana. None of these projects are self-funding: they can only exist because of the revenues earned by Habaguanex. Therefore, the final example is a colonial era home that has been converted into a hotel.

4.2 La Basílica Menor de San Francisco de Asís

The Basilica and Convent of San Francisco de Asis, built between 1548 and 1738, lost its religious function long before the Revolutionary government discouraged Catholicism.¹¹² After the English used the Basilica for Anglican services in 1762, the leadership of the Catholic Church in Spain considered it desecrated. Despite this, the building continued to house monks and a school until Queen María Cristina of Spain ordered its closure. In 1907 the Cuban government purchased it for use as a warehouse and an office.¹¹³ By 1936, the church and second cloister were rehabilitated for use as the Ministry of Communication.¹¹⁴ The impressive architecture would have made this building an incongruous warehouse and office despite its location immediately across the street from the port's customs buildings.

¹¹² Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 21, 2015.

¹¹³ Cuba Absolutely, "Basílica Menor Y Convento de San Francisco de Asís." *Havana Guide by Cuba Absolutely* (<http://cubaabsolutely.com/content/basilica-menor-y-convento-de-san-francisco-de-asis/>) (accessed January 13, 2015);

Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 21, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Rigol "La recuperación ... (1900 – 1959)," *Conservación patrimonial*, 97.



FIGURE 15: Map of the location of San Francisco de Asís. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

This stone church has a Latin cross plan, with tall domed ceilings in the nave. The twelve interior columns represent the twelve Apostles.¹¹⁵ The sculptural undulation of columns and ornament along the façade of the church is difficult to photograph due the narrow street that it faces, but when on site it is easy to imagine how the 42-meter-high tower was the tallest in Havana at the time of its construction.¹¹⁶ This tower still offers an impressive panoramic view of Old Havana.

¹¹⁵ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 21, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Dallmeyer, “Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?”



FIGURE 16: Front façade of the Basilica. Photomontage by author.



FIGURE 17: Side façade of the Basilica. Photomontage by author.

The complex was rehabilitated in 1981 – 1982 as part of the first five-year master plan. Because of its long history and architectonic values the Basilica and Convent of San Francisco de Asis were revitalized to become an exposition space enjoyed by both locals and tourists.

In order to rehabilitate the Basilica the OCH completed structural and cosmetic work on the interior and exterior of the building. The structural work that was required included reinforcing the floor, strengthening structural elements, repairing portions of the roof, and maintenance to the tower. In particular, the exposed wooden stairs in the tower were rebuilt and are accessible today. The more cosmetic work included cleaning the stone on the façade as well as maintenance to the interior gardens and patios.¹¹⁷



FIGURE 18: Pianist warming up in the Basilica. Photograph by author.

¹¹⁷ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 21, 2015.

Not only does the Basilica play host to concerts, but it also houses a museum and the children's theater group La Coleminta, which has travelled worldwide.¹¹⁸ In this way, the architecture provides space for the arts and therefore contributes to the preservation of Cuban culture.¹¹⁹ It should be noted that Cubans pay a lower ticket price than tourists in order to ensure their access to cultural events to Cubans not just tourists.¹²⁰ The rehabilitation of the Basilica and Convent of San Francisco de Asis represents a project that preserves both tangible and intangible elements of Cuban heritage.

4.3 Convento de Nuestra Señora de Belén

Another neglected religious building in Old Havana that the OCH revived is Our Lady of Belén Convent and Church. This project does not fit neatly into the classification of preservation or social services because it contains elements of both.¹²¹ The convent was built between 1712 and 1718 and run as a home for the poor and the ill by the Order of Bethlehem nuns. Enlarged by the Jesuits in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the convent was abandoned by them in 1925 in favor of a different site.¹²² After 1925, the building housed government offices.¹²³ Over the convent's long history, it has undergone four distinct renovations and restorations starting in 1770, 1870, and 1910. The fourth restoration, which started in 1988 after a large fire destroyed much of the church, still continues today. The current work is based on research by archeologists,

¹¹⁸ Escuela Taller. "Basilica Menor y Convento de San Francisco de Asis" <http://www.etalder.ohc.cu/index.php/obras-ejecutadas>. (accessed January 20, 2014); *Cuba Headlines*. "Children on Stage, La Colmenita, the Only Theater Company Made up by Children" http://www.cubaheadlines.com/2008/01/05/8188/children_on_stage.html. 2008. (accessed January 5, 2015)

¹¹⁹ Dallmeyer, "Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?"

¹²⁰ Vladimir, interview with author, Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹²¹ Dallmeyer, "Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?"

¹²² "Our Lady of Belén Convent and Church." *Convento Y Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Belén* (<http://www.cubapeace.ca/belen.php>. Accessed January 22, 2014)

¹²³ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 23, 2015.

historians and specialists in traditional trades. Modifications from over the lifetime of the convent that are not cohesive with the original convent have been removed and earlier conditions have been revealed and restored. This investigation has not targeted a particular year, but rather searches for elements from the eighteenth century in general.¹²⁴

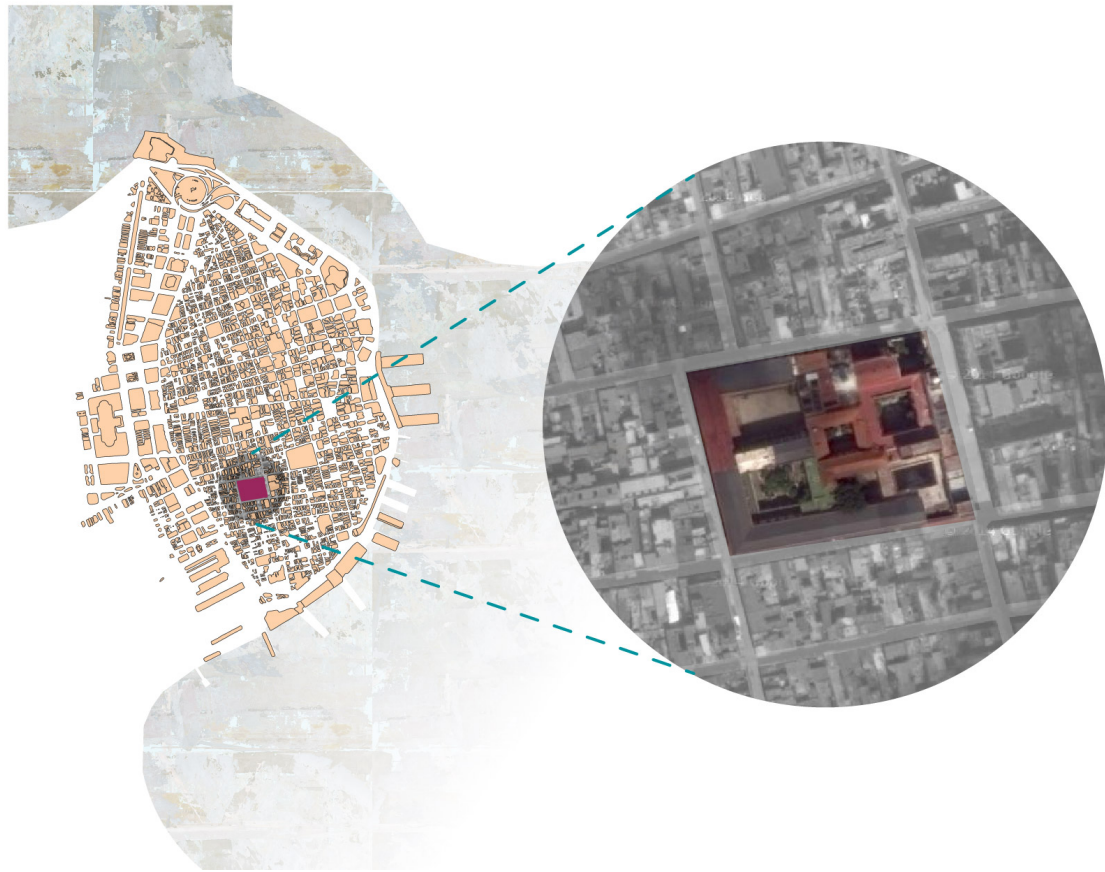


FIGURE 19: Map of the location of Our Lady of Belén Convent and Church. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

In the Belén neighborhood, a densely built area of three and four story tenements and warehouses, the complex occupies a full city block. Restoration is still ongoing, but Our Lady of Belén serves people and families of all ages. In addition to programming for

¹²⁴ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 22 and 23, 2015.

the mentally and physically disabled, there are performance spaces, a computer lab with Internet access, and eighteen apartments for the elderly.¹²⁵ Today, it also houses the Office for Humanitarian Affairs, a division of the OCH.¹²⁶

The restoration is reclaiming the block as a contributing part of the physical community. The architecture of the former convent is monumental in ways that the surrounding structures are not. The long, smooth façades of Belén contrast with the narrow, frequently colonnaded buildings across the street. In front of the convent there is a small plaza that plays host to car mechanics, fruit sellers, and dog walkers, providing an interactive public space for the neighborhood community. The Our Lady of Belén project involves not only the restoration of the building, but also restoration of the services that were offered in the building before its abandonment.¹²⁷ Preserving the building itself is a worthwhile project, but through continuing its already long history, the complex also has life. Without the people that occupy the buildings and spaces, the architecture would be a static museum.

¹²⁵ “Our Lady of Belén.” 2014.

¹²⁶ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 23, 2015.

¹²⁷ Dallmeyer, “Must Tourism Remake the City in Its Own Image?”



FIGURE 20: Archway adjacent to Belén plaza. Photograph by author.

4.4 Hogar Materno Infantil Doña Leonor Pérez

The Basilica and Convent of San Francisco de Asís and Our Lady of Belén convent and church were important religious buildings built while Old Havana was still the wealthy center of the city. In contrast, an office building designed by the Cuban architects Govantes and Cabarrocas in 1950 to house offices of social services for women and maternal health is less iconic within Old Havana. Despite this lack of architectural distinction, the building was reused by the OCH as a medical facility for expectant mothers who either reside in Old Havana or work for the OCH.¹²⁸ In addition to fifty

¹²⁸ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 24, 2015.

beds in the facility, the staff has the capacity to see an additional sixty outpatients who need medical and nutritional care.¹²⁹



FIGURE 21: Map of the location of the Hogar Materno. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

The rehabilitation and conversion into a medical facility in 1997 was the result of a partnership between the Ministerio de Salud Pública de Cuba (Public Health Ministry) and the Office of the City Historian.¹³⁰ The building itself maintains the scale and proportions common in Old Havana at the street level but has additional stories set back

¹²⁹ Gilbert González, “Hogar materno infantil de La Habana Vieja, 13 años de servicio exitoso,” *Blogueros y Corresponsales de la Revolución*, 8/16/2010. (accessed January 22, 2014).

¹³⁰ González, “Hogar materno infantil.”

from the street. The ornamentation is focused around the entry, which meets the intersection of Lamparillas and Mercaderes. This type of entry that addresses an intersection rather than a street is common in Old Havana and other parts of the city.



FIGURE 22: Front of the Hogar Materno. Photomontage by author.

While the building obeys the architectural norms of the neighborhood and blends in appropriately, its main architectural significance is the design team of Govantes and Cabarrocas better known for their role in the design of the Capitol building in Havana. On the other hand, the services provided in the rehabilitated building are extremely significant, indicating that this example of preservation focuses more on services instead of heritage.

4.5 La Escuela Taller de la Habana: Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos

The fourth example an OCH project that intertwined preservation and social services is not a building at all, but instead a training program. Founded in 1992 and named for the Spanish poet Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos in honor of the Spanish partnership that made the school possible, the Escuela Taller, or Workshop School, trains disadvantaged youth in preservation trades like mural painting, masonry, metalwork and leaded glass.¹³¹ The trades that these students learn are both necessary to preservation projects in Old Havana and are not commonly taught outside the school, and therefore at risk of being lost.



FIGURE 23: *Escuela Taller* students working in the Christopher Columbus Cemetery. Photographs by author.

¹³¹ “Escuela Taller - ¿Quienes Somos?” <http://www.etaller.ohc.cu/index.php/quienes-somos> (accessed January 20, 2014).

Originally located in the cloister of the San Francisco de Asís Convent, the students worked on the restoration of that building as part of their training.¹³² They moved to a nearby studio 1995. Through the continued practice of these trades, historic preservation of the historic structures of Old Havana is possible while at the same time the intangible heritage of local craftsmanship is also preserved.

The Workshop School is not entirely about preservation. All the students are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, and this opportunity to enter a lucrative trade is very attractive because they had few other options.¹³³ These students did not qualify for the university and may not have finished high school, but this job-training program teaches them valuable skills whether they work for the OCH or a private enterprise after finishing the two-year program. Many of the Workshop School students live in Old Havana, and other Cuban cities have similar programs for their residents.¹³⁴ By opening the door to economic opportunity to residents of the communities where the work is happening, the Office of the City Historian builds support for their projects, and ensures that they have access to a strong workforce. It would be difficult to separate the two priorities in this example; it is an effective blending of meeting two needs: preservation and job training with one program: the Workshop School.¹³⁵

¹³² “Escuela Taller - ¿Quiénes Somos?”

¹³³ Pedro Rodríguez Sánchez, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹³⁴ Castillo y Ríos, “La Habana Vieja, Un Presente Audaz,” 51.

¹³⁵ Emily Dallmeyer, “Cuba, historic preservation: Integrated community and policy.” (conference paper, ARCC, The Future of Architectural Research, April 9, 2015).

4.6 Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz

The final example of this chapter illustrates the connection between tourism and preservation. The Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz is only a few steps from the Plaza Vieja within the Protected Zone (protected for historic and touristic value). According to the Habaguanex website, El Hotel del Beltrán de Santa Cruz was originally a mansion belonging to a marquis.¹³⁶

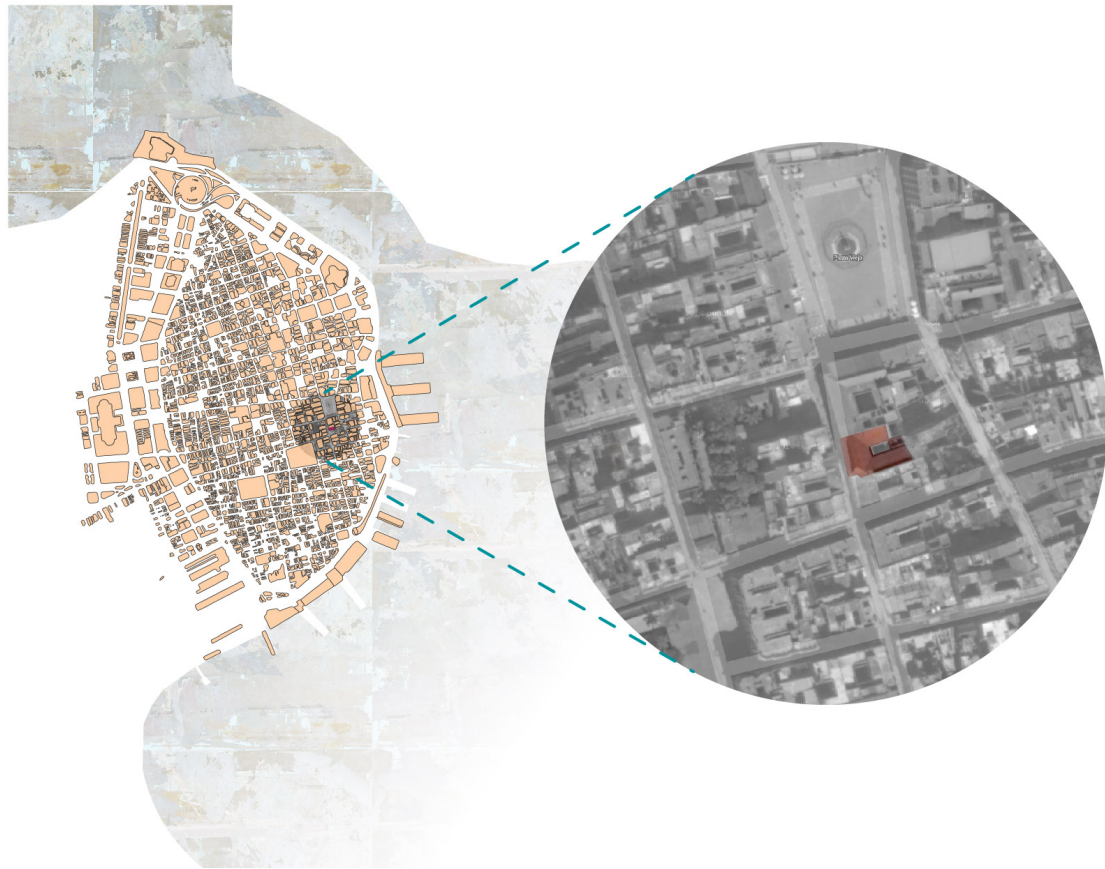


FIGURE 24: Map of the location of the Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

¹³⁶ Habaguanex, “Hotel Beltran de Santa Cruz.” <http://www.habaguanexhotels.com/en/hotels/hotelbeltrandesantacruz.asp>. (accessed February 5, 2015).

Built in the eighteenth century, this home's plan is a warehouse-residence typical in Old Havana. A visitor enters a large salon directly from the street before passing into the central courtyard. At three stories tall, the structure allowed for combined commercial and residential functions. On the first floor were offices and goods storage. Servant and family quarters would have been on the second and third floors, respectively.¹³⁷ The third floor balcony overlooks the courtyard.¹³⁸

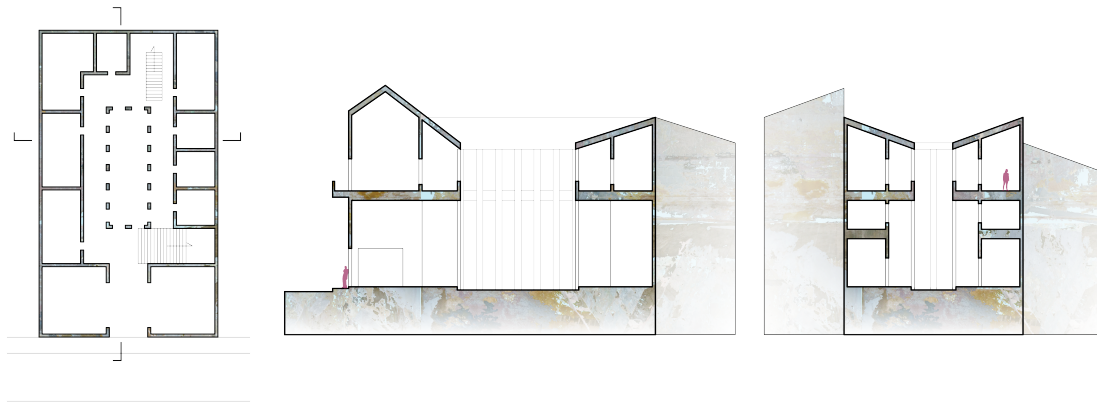


FIGURE 25: Plan and Section diagrams of the Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz (not to scale). Drawn by author.

Staying in a hotel like the Hotel Beltrán allows tourists to occupy colonial residential spaces. Buildings that are still occupied by Cuban families cannot allow tourists to file through and examine the architecture, but the opportunity to visit and sleep in an example of a building that was once typical for Old Havana gives the tourist an opportunity to more intimately understand the climate, architectural materials and customs as well as how Cubans thought about public and private space. The most overt educational element of Hotel Beltrán is the mural that follows the staircase. In restoring

¹³⁷ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios* 187.

¹³⁸ Joseph Scarpaci, et al, *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 312.

these paintings the OCH technicians left multiple layers visible. As a result multiple moments from the history of the building are immediately accessible to the viewer.



FIGURE 26: Murals along the main staircase of the Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz. Photographs by author.

4.7 Preservation and Social Services Intertwined and Dependent

These five of many possible examples demonstrate how through preservation of the structures in Old Havana, the OCH is able to preserve tangible and intangible heritage while providing social services and building community support for additional preservation work. The OCH is preserving the social, cultural and physical infrastructure of Old Havana through these various projects. The connections between preservation, social services and tourism are not superficial, but instead are interdependent. Without

the services provided in the buildings those structures would lose their current relevancy and become museum pieces; without the buildings to house them, the services could not be provided. Despite the fact that hotels are mainly for tourists, they also play an important role in preserving historic buildings while at the same time funding preservation and social services.

Local residents can see and appreciate the results of the work because projects are located throughout the historic center; residents access services at historic sites and many of the 200 to 400 students in the Workshop School are from the surrounding area. This is important in order to build trust between local people who are impacted by the work and the OCH. Trust facilitates all of the projects. While it is easy for residents of Old Havana to support the services offered by the OCH's projects, it is also easy to resent the investment in hotels, restaurants and stores that cater to tourists by selling products that are far out of reach of the average Cuban.¹³⁹ When a specific need of a resident has not been met, the expenditures that serve tourists seem extravagant and unreasonable. The tension that is created by visible investment in luxuries for non-Cubans is not eradicated by the OCH's efforts to preserve the community.

¹³⁹ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 192.

CHAPTER 5: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

5.1 Unintended Negative Consequences

The positive outcomes that have resulted from the work of the OCH are palpable: buildings have been restored, people have been served, and communities have been maintained. Yet, at the same time there are scholars and residents of Havana who claim that Old Havana is already dead, that the historic district has become a museum.¹⁴⁰ It is not clear whether the museum-like quality that these scholars and residents identify is a result of the efforts of the OCH or whether the lack of new development creates the appearance that the area has been paused in time. An examination of the effects of international recognition and increased tourism shows how both can undermine the OCH's goal to preserve community despite simultaneously supporting the OCH's projects financially. When juxtaposed with the visible decay in predominantly residential neighborhoods, the luxury of hotels and restaurants that cater to tourists is a source of tension in the scholarship regarding Old Havana. As of 2004, after more than twenty years of rehabilitation work, only one third of the buildings in Old Havana were rehabilitated, leaving more than two thousand structures in various states of decay.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Frank Días Valdes, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹⁴¹ UNESCO, *Una Experiencia*, 84.

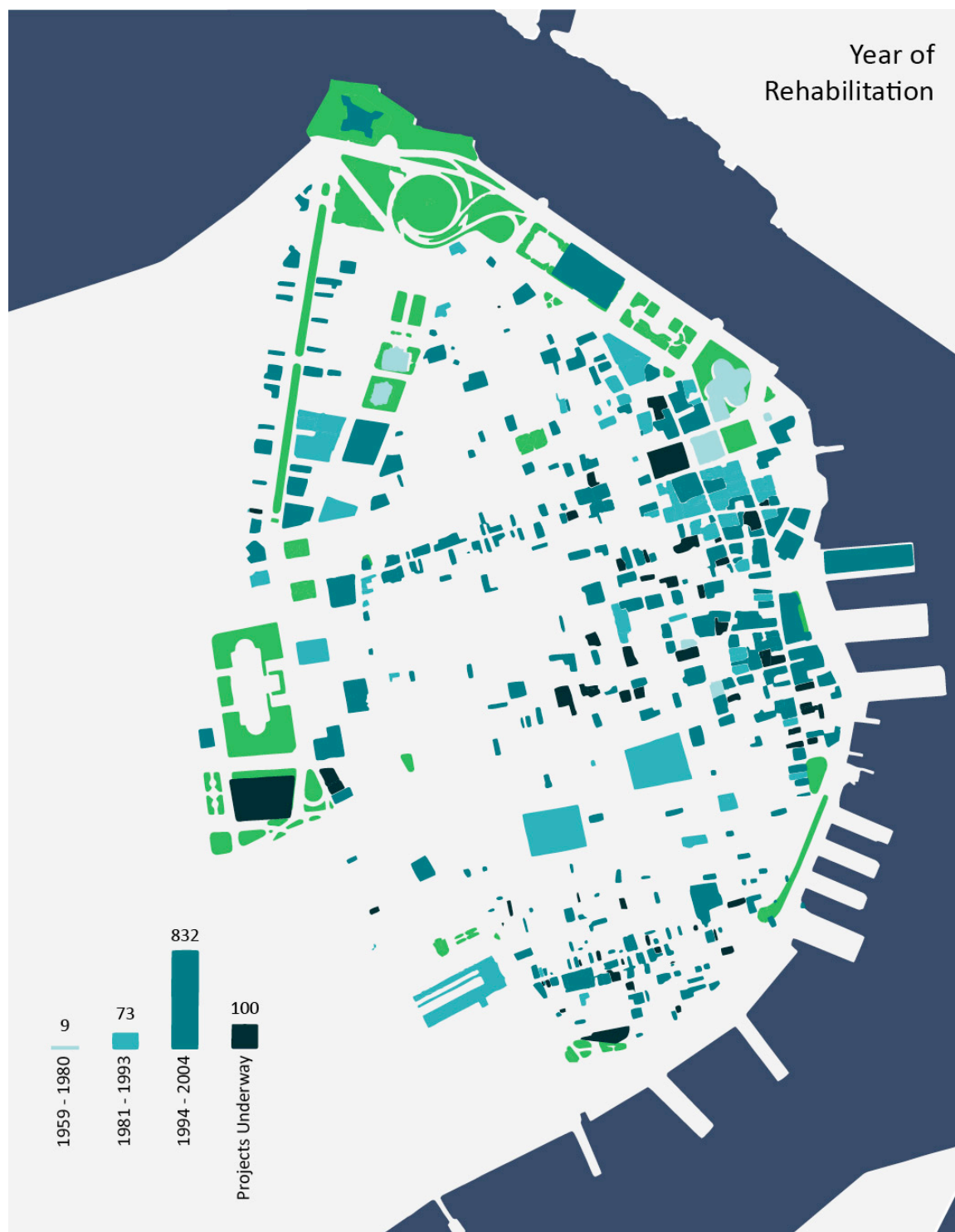


FIGURE 27: Map of the year buildings were rehabilitated in historic center. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular*.

Work has continued during the ten years since the publication of UNESCO's assessment of the OCH's work, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. Despite the significant accomplishments of the OCH, there are shortcomings with respect to the impact on the local community.

5.2 Positive and Negative Effects of Tourism

Fetishization of decay is considered distasteful by Belmont Freeman and other writers, but nonetheless there is beauty in the both the unrestored and the rehabilitated buildings in Old Havana.¹⁴² The beauty and history of Old Havana attract the attention of non-Cubans. If UNESCO's declaration of Old Havana as a World Heritage site recognizes the universal significance of the site, then Old Havana no longer represents only Cuban heritage. This outside attention has had mixed consequences for Old Havana. First and foremost, the designation assists to preserve the site. This is not because UNESCO has a direct physical or financial impact on the site, but because according to Di Giovine and other scholars, awareness of a historic site drives people's desire to preserve it and encourages tourists to visit it.¹⁴³

The outside attention also serves to recognize and legitimize the work of the OCH, but results in a certain amount of simplification of Old Havana's narrative and scope of work. This recognition in the early 1980s may have helped to support the case for increasing the OCH's responsibilities in the 1990s. Also, international recognition would encourage partnerships from abroad, despite difficulties created by the U.S. embargo. On

¹⁴² Belmont Freeman, "Havana: Nostalgia Is a Dangerous Business" *Places* (May 2010). <https://placesjournal.org/article/havana-nostalgia-is-a-dangerous-business/> (accessed January 2, 2015), 8.

¹⁴³ Di Giovine, *The heritage-scape*, 376.

the other hand, the packaging of the idea of Old Havana for the outside world can contribute to the commodification of the historic district.

The marketability of Old Havana is essential to the success of tourism in Old Havana. To this end, the OCH made sure that their major rehabilitation work progressed in corridors that allowed tourists to remain within restored sections of Old Havana rather than having to pass through unrestored, deteriorated sections in order to see the major sites. As discussed in Chapter Three, these corridor areas included hotels, businesses, residences and public spaces. Today, local residents mingle side by side with tourists. When tourism was first encouraged by Cuban government in the early 1990s, this was not always the case. In fact, the government tried to implement what came to be called “tourism apartheid” which consisted of separating Cubans from tourists except for those Cubans that worked in the tourism industry.¹⁴⁴ By restricting access to the most luxurious beach resorts and other tourist locales, Castro claimed that the goal was to benefit the whole island from the influx of cash.¹⁴⁵ Whatever Castro’s motivations actually were, the impact of “tourism apartheid” was far more nuanced than simple protection.

It is no longer official policy to prevent residents and tourists from interacting, but in Old Havana today the prohibitive costs of patronizing businesses that cater to tourists maintains some of the isolation of the early 1990s. Therefore, buildings that have been converted to hotels generally cater to non-Cuban tourists. While this de facto segregation is lamentable, as described in the previous chapter, historic hotels offer a way for tourists

¹⁴⁴ Cave, “Tourism Apartheid in Cuba”, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Cave, “Tourism Apartheid in Cuba”, 4.

to engage with the heritage of Havana more intimately than would be possible if all the historic spaces were reserved for locals.

5.3 Internal “Brain Drain”

While creating opportunities for tourists to more fully engage architecture and therefore understand it better, hotels like the Hotel Beltrán de Santa Cruz contribute to a sort of internal brain drain that is occurring in Cuba.¹⁴⁶ Working in the tourism industry gives workers access to tips, which are generous in comparison to normal Cuban salaries. For example, the night manager at the Hotel Beltrán was trained as a physical therapist, but chose instead to work at the hotel because his earning potential was so much higher.

Cuba’s dual currency creates an extreme difference between the value of tourists’ money and Cubans’ money. Salaries in Cuba are generally low and are paid in national pesos (CUP), but tourism based businesses price their products in convertible pesos (CUC). When CUP and CUC pesos were established they were intended to be equal, but today value of one CUC is tied to the dollar, while CUP are worth 1/25th of a CUC.¹⁴⁷ Staple goods intended to meet the basic needs of the Cuban citizens are priced in CUPs and price controlled: there are markets made up only of these types of goods. Additional markets selling more expensive and difficult to obtain basic goods are priced in CUCs.¹⁴⁸ Most businesses that cater to tourists have prices only in CUCs. Based on recent travel to Cuba, CUC prices were slightly cheaper than prices one would expect for similar products in the United States.

¹⁴⁶ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 158.

¹⁴⁷ “Cuban Peso.” *OANDA*. <http://www.oanda.com/currency/iso-currency-codes/CUP>. (accessed November 18, 2014).

¹⁴⁸ Vladimir, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014; Patrick Symmes, “Thirty Days as a Cuban: Pinching Pesos and Dropping Pounds in Havana.” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 2010, 48.

When compared with Cuban salaries, it is easy to understand why Cubans are not able to patronize the same restaurants and hotels as foreign tourists. One former geography teacher left teaching in order to earn more money driving a cab for tourists. At the time of the interview, a twenty-minute drive would cost a tourist 10 CUC. He quoted his previous salary for one month as a teacher as equivalent to 11 CUC.¹⁴⁹

Tourism brings money into Cuba, but also motivates some Cubans to structure their lives around tourism. If the most lucrative career opportunities for Cubans are centered around presenting Cuba to outside tourists how much of the ‘real and authentic’ Cuba remains behind the presentation?¹⁵⁰

5.4 Illegal Opportunism

Two industries that most tourists will see without having to seek them out are prostitution and *jineterismo*, or hustling. Harkening back to the 1950s when Havana was marketed as a haven of sun, gambling and sex, prostitution has become more prevalent as the tourism industry grows. Scholarship regarding the long history of prostitution in Cuba and its consequences relates to studies in other parts of the world. According to Andrea Colantonio and Robert Potter’s surveys of Havana residents, the most negatively perceived effect of tourism is the rise and geographic spread of prostitution. Prior to the Revolution, prostitution was concentrated in a few specific areas, but today it has spread to additional areas where tourists are plentiful.¹⁵¹

Even if a visitor does not seek out illegal activity, many tourists will encounter *jineteros* or hustlers of various types. *Jineteros* vary from aggressive to polite and may

¹⁴⁹ Alfredo, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Dallmeyer, “Cuba, historic preservation: Integrated community and policy.”

¹⁵¹ Colantonio and Potter, *Urban tourism and development*, 166.

try to convince a tourist to buy a souvenir, visit a dance club or give a gift to the *jinetero*. While some interactions can be benign, Colantonio and Potter's interviews reveal that the practice of *jineterismo* also includes assault and theft. In fact, there are special police units to deal with crimes against tourists in order to protect the economic potential of tourism.¹⁵²

5.5 Housing Shortages and Displacement

As mentioned in Chapter Three, overcrowding is a significant problem in Old Havana as well as the rest of the city. Preservation activities of the OCH keep many neighborhood residents in their historic homes, but also lead to the displacement of other residents. During the process of rehabilitating overcrowded buildings it is necessary that the residents move out. Some people are moved to temporary housing while the work is underway, but it is frequently not possible to provide appropriate living conditions in terms of space, sanitary needs, and air quality for the all of the original residents in the original building after rehabilitation.¹⁵³ As a result, families are relocated, many to the Habana del Este or East Havana neighborhood on the other side of the bay.

¹⁵² Colantonio and Potter, *Urban tourism and development*, 167.

¹⁵³ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 194 – 201.

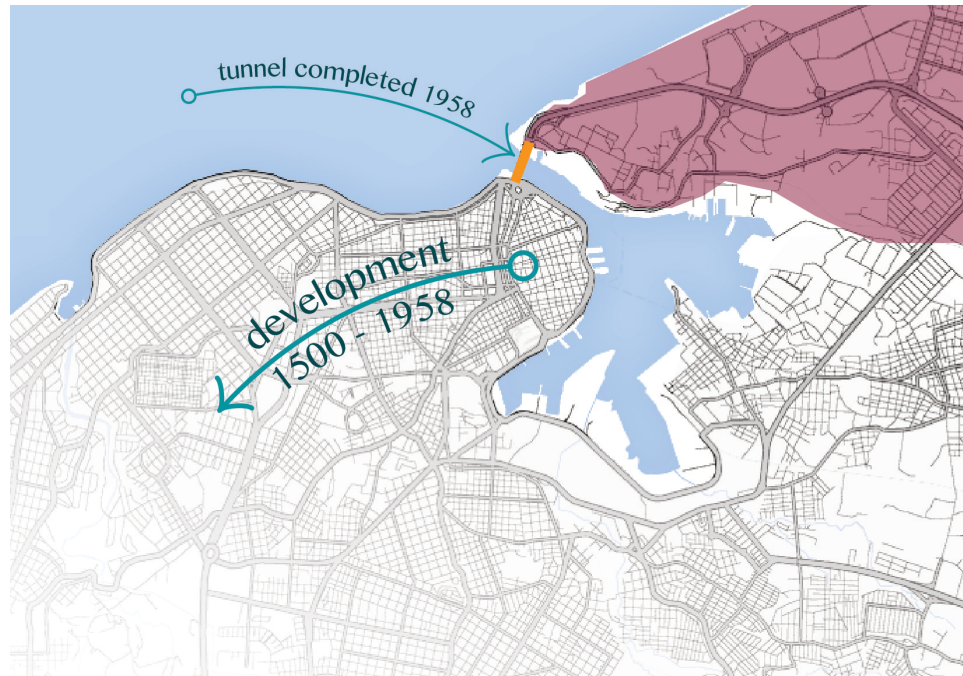


FIGURE 28: Map illustrating the location of the East Havana neighborhood (in maroon) in comparison to the location of Old Havana and the development trend of the city overall. Redrawn and modified by author from www.googlemaps.com.

While there are certain advantages to gaining more space and better conditions for a family, some Havana residents consider East Havana undesirable because of the lack of public transportation and other services.¹⁵⁴ Official relocation figures are not available, but based on field research author Joseph Scarpaci estimated that in the two-year span between 1998 and 2000 at least two hundred residents were displaced from Old Havana as a result of the work of the OCH.¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately Scarpaci's figure can only provide a snapshot that might be an indication of the larger pattern.

Even from those residents that stay in Old Havana, there is criticism of the changing character of the neighborhood. One Cuban who grew up in Old Havana complained that before the Plaza Vieja was renovated, children used it as a park. He

¹⁵⁴ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 194.

¹⁵⁵ Scarpaci, *Plazas and Barrios*, 194.

implied that the renovation by the OCH, which included the installation of an attractive fountain in the center, made it harder for local children to play their games. Before the renovation of the plaza the community felt intact to this resident, despite the fact that homes were crumbling.¹⁵⁶ The open area in the plaza was the roof of a Batista era underground parking garage that protruded up, blocking sight lines across the plaza. An architect working for the OCH explained that originally, the plaza was flat which allowed clear views of the facades of the surrounding buildings. The parking garage therefore destroyed the original character of the plaza.¹⁵⁷ In order to return the plaza to a more historically accurate state the OCH demolished the parking structure and leveled the plaza in the 1990s. The OCH strives to balance the competing points of view that surround any project, but there almost certainly will be people who are not satisfied.

Despite the centrally planned economy of Cuba, neither the central government nor the OCH can control the reality of Old Havana. Unplanned outgrowths of the tourism based economy like *jineterismo* and “internal brain drain” are just a few of the potential downsides to fostering this industry. The mission of the OCH is to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of Old Havana through preserving the community. The visible decay present in Old Havana contrasts projects that do not directly address those issues. Every example of work that remains, including people to be served and buildings in need, can be viewed as either a shortcoming or a reason for the OCH to continue their work.

¹⁵⁶ Osmay, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

CHAPTER 6: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND REVITALIZATION

6.1 Diversification and Decentralization

Whether the current unmet social and building needs are viewed as a shortcoming of the OCH or a motivation for the OCH to continue working, unmet needs are evidence of gaps in current service. The OCH plans to continue working on the redevelopment of Old Havana in order to address those gaps. If additional strategies to address the needs of the local population and the crumbling buildings were employed then those needs could be met more quickly and completely. While the OCH manages most of the responses to social and physical needs in the historic district, the office is joined in this work by a number of other businesses and organizations. By allowing and even partnering with non-OCH businesses, the OCH diversifies and decentralizes activities addressing social needs and rehabilitation of buildings.

The OCH oversees many diverse functions by controlling them centrally. Despite this, when evaluating its own work the OCH stated that a potential weakness of the office is the “decentralization” of their organization in comparison to the centralization of the other government organizations with which they interact.¹⁵⁸ While the office is complex and multifaceted, the extensive planning and management that it executes contradicts the adjective “decentralized.” However, where non-OCH enterprises infiltrate the fields of social services and of tourism it appears that the office is allowing and sometimes

¹⁵⁸ Red de Oficinas, *Luces y Simientes*, 66.

fostering decentralization in small ways. The following four examples showcase different types of interaction between the OCH and an outside organization or individual.

6.2 Sant'Egidio Providing Social Services



FIGURE 29: Front of Sant'Egidio. Photomontage by author.

A Catholic community group, Sant'Egidio, that works for world peace and serves the poor is located in the Belén neighborhood as a result of a partnership with the OCH. Early on in the Revolution relations between the government and different religious organizations were not positive: Catholic, Protestant and other private schools were closed as part of an effort to guarantee equality among schools, Spanish priests were deported on suspicion of counter-revolutionary leanings and in 1976 Cuba was declared an atheist state.¹⁵⁹ The centrally planned Cuban government originally had every intention of addressing all the social, cultural and economic needs of its citizens and did not anticipate the need for independent religious charities. However, a partnership between the OCH, a governmental body, and Sant'Egidio, an international Catholic

¹⁵⁹ Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, 151.

group, is tacit approval of private charities as well as an acknowledgement that the group's services are not currently provided by the government.

Since its inception in 1968 the Community of Sant'Egidio has served and "befriended" the poor and disadvantaged. Today, the group has affiliates in more than sixty countries, 70,000 members and their goal is to practice peace advocacy, mediation, friendship with the poor, prayer, gospel, and community without borders. The Havana Sant'Egidio was founded in 1992 and moved into their current building across from the Belén Convent in 2010. The OCH offered this building to Sant'Egidio and partnered with them to execute the rehabilitation and adaptations of the early twentieth century workshop necessary for the community's work.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Gerardo Díaz, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.
Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 25, 2015.

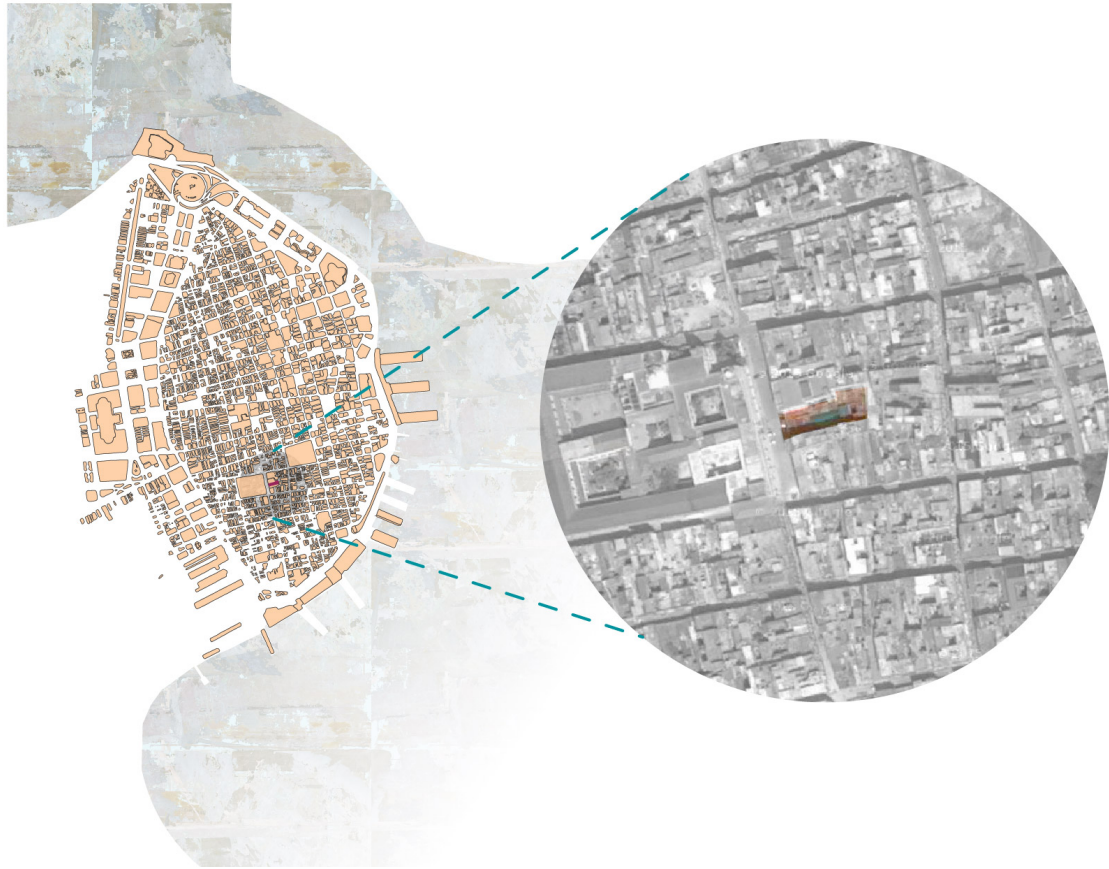


FIGURE 30: Map of the location of Sant'Egidio. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

The neighborhood that surrounds the Sant'Egidio is historically low income and perceived to be less secure than other neighborhoods; therefore, despite the fact that the community did not choose this location, it is appropriate to be surrounded by people who may need their services the most.¹⁶¹ Alterations were made to the building, including removing one mezzanine on its long southern side, which served to open up the central space and make it more suitable for gatherings and presentations. On the end furthest from the street a second story balcony and elevator were added that connected with the

¹⁶¹ Based on multiple warnings to be careful prior to visiting this specific neighborhood; Gerardo Díaz, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

remaining mezzanine and the rest of the second floor. Spaces on the second story were converted to offices and a classroom for children.

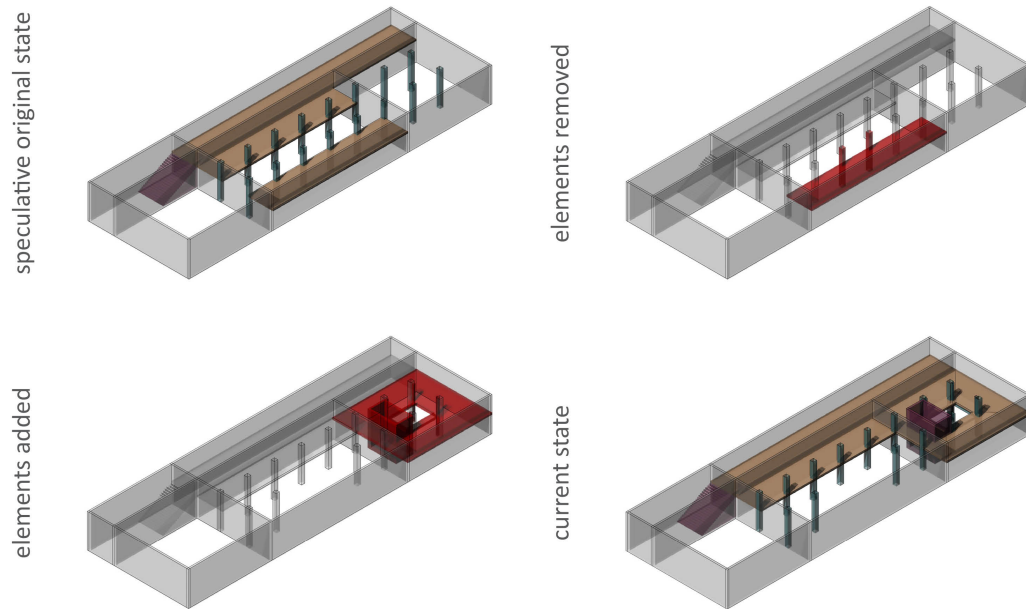


FIGURE 31: Series of diagrams illustrating alterations made to the building. Drawn by author.

Though its work in Old Havana parallels that of the OCH, Sant'Egidio is a separate entity that does not report to the OCH as do the OCH's educational programs, daycare for the elderly or the Workshop School. The difference between a partnership and a subordinate relationship is significant in the context of Cuba's centrally planned systems. Sant'Egidio's efforts are an example of decentralization of activity within the historic center, as well as one small effort to fill a gap in social service needs that the OCH has not been able to address to date.

6.3 Private Shops Preserving Historic Structures

In addition to needed social services, the population of Old Havana would also benefit from increased economic opportunity. With access to capital, citizens might be able to make their own needed repairs or even purchase alternative housing. It is becoming more and more common for friends and family living abroad to send not only money to help Cuban's live, but also to invest in new businesses.¹⁶² The opportunity to earn income independent of the state can be a chance to grow financial stability for the business owner. In fact, between 2011, when restrictions on remittances to family members were lifted by the Obama administration, and 2013, the amount of funding sent to Cuba from family in the United States increased by twenty percent.¹⁶³ Architect and historian Isabel Rigol, the retired director of CENCREM, or National Center for Conservation, Restoration and Museology, notes two adaptive reuse projects in Old Havana that can serve as examples of historic buildings used by business owners other than the OCH.

The first business, Píscolabis, rents their space from the OCH, which completed rehabilitation of the building in 1983.¹⁶⁴ Píscolabis is a small shop and café carrying decorative and utilitarian household items, located very close to the Plaza de la Catedral on San Ignacio. The early twentieth-century building is not considered historically

¹⁶² Belmont Freeman, "History of the Present: Havana: In the Looming Post-Castro Era, Cuba's Capital Faces Profound Social and Economic Challenges." *Places*, December. 15.

¹⁶³ Emilio Morales and Joseph L. Scarpaci. *Opening up on Both Shorelines Helps Increase Remittances Sent to Cuba in 2011 by about 20%*. The Havana Consulting Group. http://thehavanaconsultinggroups.com/index.php?option=com_content&...s-sent-to-cuba-in-2011-by-about-20-&catid=48%3Aremittances&lang=en. 2013. (accessed January 2, 2015), 1.

¹⁶⁴ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 25, 2015.

significant on its own, but its location and relation to the adjacent buildings motivated the OCH to restore this building.¹⁶⁵

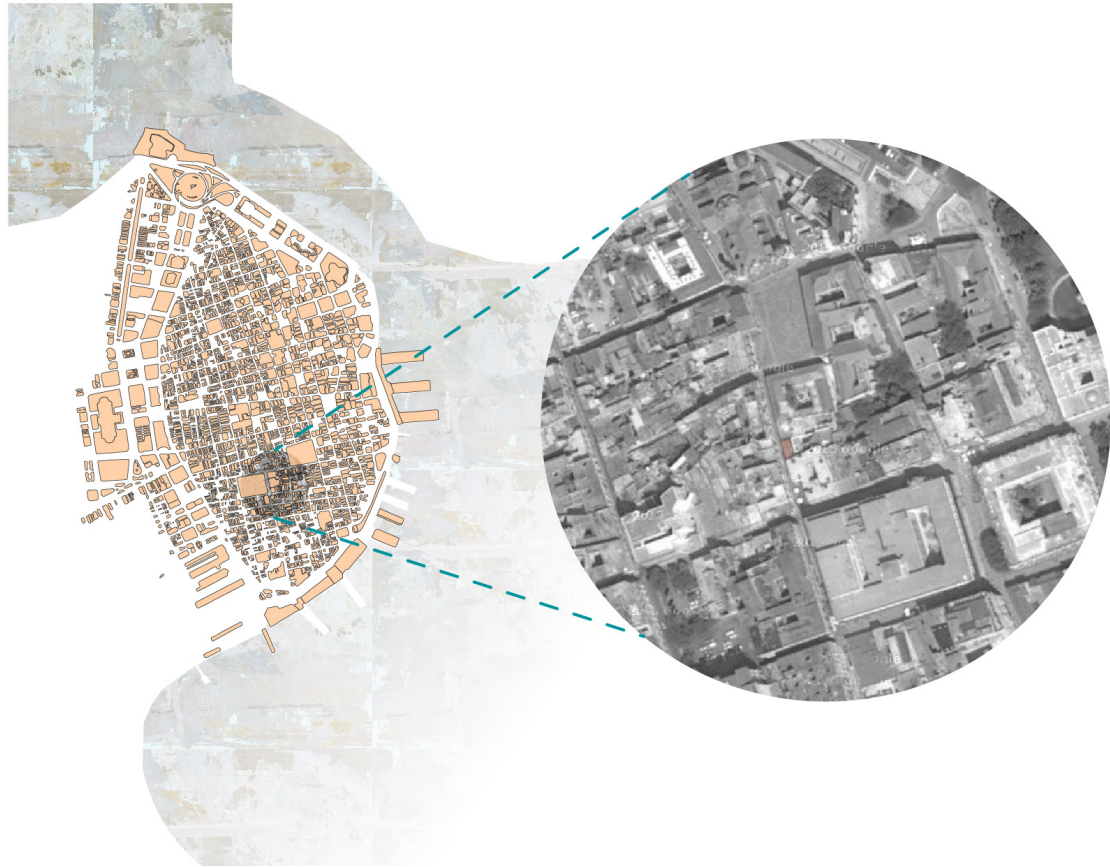


FIGURE 32: Location map of Píscolabis. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

Píscolabis' building retains its overall historic form because the rehabilitation work required in 1982 and 1983 was minimal; there was some reconstruction required in the walls, the staircase and a bathroom. Following rehabilitation the building housed a handicraft retail store owned and operated by the OCH. In 2010, the space was rented to

¹⁶⁵ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 25, 2015.

a Cuban architect who does not work for the OCH, who made additional minor renovations with private funding and labor. Today, the same architect runs Piscalabis, devoted to selling Cuban made goods. The prices in this shop indicate that this business caters to foreigners.



FIGURE 33: Exterior and interior views of Piscalabis. *Local Arrendado* translates to Locally Rented. Photographs by author.

Treatments to the building itself are restorative, but minimal. The stone floor on the first story and the visible structure of the second story floor appear original. The exterior of the shop shows evidence of restoration in the surface of the façade and paint.

Beyond painting the interior walls a bright white, the intervention treads lightly in this historic building. Perhaps the most important element of a business like Píscolabis is that it is an OCH sanctioned opportunity for a private citizen to become an entrepreneur and to participate in the preservation of Old Havana.

Another example of an independent business located within a restored historic structure in Old Havana is Fumero Jacqueline. This clothing boutique also serves drinks and sandwiches, but according to its website, the owner's main purpose is to sell her clothing designs.¹⁶⁶ As indicated by the previous example, it is common in Havana to combine a retail business with food service. Fumero Jacqueline occupies part of the ground floor of a three-story building built in the early twentieth century. The shop faces la Plazuela del Angel and the Church of Santo Angel Custodio.



FIGURE 34: Location map of Fumero Jacqueline. Redrawn and modified by author from *Una Experiencia Singular* and www.googlemaps.com.

¹⁶⁶ “Jacqueline Fumero.” <http://www.jacquelinefumero.com/>. (accessed February 25, 2015).

This shop was restored in 2012 and 2013 by a private owner with private funding and labor, so the OCH was not involved.¹⁶⁷ Overall, the shop has more significant interior intervention than Píscolabis; none of the interior finishes are original and instead of traditional wooden doors flush with the exterior, the entryway has been pulled to the interior and is all glass.



FIGURE 35: Exterior and interior views of Fumero Jacqueline. Photographs by author.

¹⁶⁷ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 24, 2015.

This business seems akin to small shops that might be found in any large city: well designed modern looking interior and an atmosphere in which both tourists and locals would enjoy spending time. At the same time, like Píscolabis, Fumero Jacqueline's prices are still high enough that much of their clientele would have to be tourists, or Cubans with some sort of foreign support. The opportunity to tap into revenue from this higher spending type of customer has the potential to be lucrative for Fumero Jacqueline's owner.

6.4 Private Restaurants Serving Tourists

The final business type highlighted here is also the most independent of the OCH. The *paladar* or restaurant in a residence was originally strictly illegal, but as more licenses have been issued for private businesses, *paladares* have become commonplace and more official. For years restaurants run by OCH's Habaguanex had the reputation of serving bad food. Cuban entrepreneurs have taken advantage of that opportunity to cook delicious food and serve it in their homes. Guidebooks, experienced travelers and online sources all recommend that a visitor to Cuba eat in *paladares* instead of state-run restaurants.

Depending on the scale of the business, the front room of a family's home may be converted into a restaurant simply by adding a few tables with the family's living space condensed to the rear of the home, or an entire apartment might become a restaurant. For example, the restaurant Boaz is located only a few blocks from the Plaza Vieja in an unrehabilitated residential area of Old Havana. It would not be possible to find this restaurant without directions except for the staff member waiting at the nearest intersection to direct passerby to the staircase in the middle of the block that leads up to

what was a second floor apartment. Today, the front two rooms of this apartment are filled with dining tables and the hallway to the rear of the apartment gives no clue as to whether a family still occupies the remainder of the unit. It seems as though little rehabilitation has been done to the apartment, and what appear to be the original floor tiles have been scrubbed clean.

This is one way that tourists are able to have a glimpse of the spaces that everyday Cubans live in and an opportunity for a family to earn additional income. At the same time, a family has been displaced from at least one room in their home, in a city where overcrowding is rampant. If instead, it were possible for a family to rent commercial space from the OCH in order to run their *paladar*, some overcrowding could potentially be alleviated. While this business model currently depends upon the independence of the business owner, there is the potential for numbers of *paladares* and opportunities for local entrepreneurs to grow if *paladares* were supported by the OCH.

6.5 Filling the Gaps

Each of these three business types fills gaps in the OCH's tripartite system of social services, preservation and tourism. If viewed only superficially, all three are competing with the OCH, but when the program of each one is examined closely the products and services offered do not appear to overlap with what the OCH programs offer, but rather to diversify and expand opportunities within Old Havana.

The Sant'Egidio community does not offer the same services as the Belén convent, instead it befriends the poor and advocates for peace, Pícolabis does not sell souvenirs as are found in the shops run by the OCH's Habaguanex, they sell home goods and some of the profits go to pay rent to the OCH. Fumero Jacqueline is a independent café selling

Cuban designed clothing and there are no similar OCH businesses nearby. *Paladares* like Boaz most closely overlap the businesses of Habaguanex, but because they are located in residential spaces further away from the restored areas, *paladares* serve a different geographic area.

The OCH has not made any statements about how it views these newcomers to Old Havana, but its implied support and approval indicate a move towards a more decentralized model of development. In addition to the OCH's many sub-offices and the examples discussed in this chapter, there are an increasing number of similar non-UCH players on the redevelopment field. Just as the national government has been issuing licenses for private businesses (seventy five thousand in 2011), the OCH has been assisting the establishment of organizations that provide services that complement it's own.¹⁶⁸

The examples of small businesses operating in Old Havana seem to be small-scale manifestations of a larger series of changes happening in Cuba. While Sant'Egidio, Píscobabis, and Fumero Jacqueline are individual organizations all within Old Havana, there are larger changes across the island. In addition to the previously referenced private business licenses, Cubans are now allowed to freely sell their homes and a Free Trade Zone is being established at the port of Mariel 30 miles west of Havana.¹⁶⁹ By lifting restrictions and allowing more economic freedoms to citizens and businesses in Cuba, it appears as though the central government is allowing more capitalist activity. In

¹⁶⁸ Nick Miroff, "Cuba Issues Thousands of Self-Employment Licenses" (*NPR*, January 18, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/18/133020988/cuba-issues-thousands-of-self-employment-licenses>) (accessed January 25, 2015).

¹⁶⁹ Damien Cave, "Cubans Set for Big Change: Right to Buy Homes." *New York Times*, August 2, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/03/world/americas/03cuba.html>. (accessed April 30, 2015); Freeman, "History of the Present: Havana," 26.

contradiction to that apparent trend, Raul Castro's daughter affirmed that Cuba would remain socialist shortly after the announcement of renewed diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba.¹⁷⁰ Not all of the reforms that have taken place over the last few years will noticeably affect the built environment, but the overall trend towards diversity and decentralization changes the context in which the OCH works.

¹⁷⁰ Tania Valdes, Rosa. "Cuba Not Returning to Capitalism Despite U.S. Deal: Castro's Daughter." *Reuters*, December 19, 2014. (accessed January 2, 2015).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Success in Progress

In Old Havana, the OCH has prioritized the preservation of community through the preservation of the built environment and the promotion of tourism. By integrating non-preservation activities into both the organization and practice of preservation, the OCH built a system that ties efforts to preserve the historic built environment to the delivery of social services. This action converts preservation from an apparent luxury into a tool that serves the needs of the community. Both preservation and the delivery of social services have been funded with tourism revenues earned through the OCH's corporation Habaguanex. Together these three pieces are central to the OCH's management of Old Havana.

When assessing the work of the office to date, specific strengths and shortcomings become clear. For the sake of the both the residents and the architectural history of Old Havana, one can only hope that the OCH will be able to adapt to the changes that may be coming to Cuba as successfully as they have adapted in the past. Today the office operates like a benevolent dictator prioritizing community through comprehensive control of the historic district. Despite the office's own assessment of decentralization, the OCH as a single authority addresses a myriad of different issues within its own family of sub-offices.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Red de Oficinas, *Luces y Simientes*, 66.

The City Historian, Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler is a well-known and well-respected local celebrity. In every interview with a historic preservation professional that I conducted in June 2014 in Havana, the interviewee cited Leal Spengler as the talented leader and essential force behind the OCH's work. Now in his seventies, Leal Spengler himself was unavailable to be interviewed because he was recovering from surgery.¹⁷² His age and health raise the question of what will happen once Leal Spengler is no longer in the office as he has been so instrumental in the OCH's work for decades. He has reportedly built a competent team that can carry on the work of the OCH, but is that singular leader a necessary figure?

The position of the OCH as an office that reports to the central government instead of the city government and the power that it enjoys to run Habaguanex and other related businesses was earned under Leal Spengler's guidance and as a result of his connections and importance within the Cuban regime. The OCH's position of relative autonomy has been essential to its success.

As a condition of its autonomy, the OCH has been required to be self-sufficient. That is to say that the revenues from Habaguanex stay within the OCH. This allows the OCH to invest in social programs such as community centers, medical clinics, elderly care centers, and schools.¹⁷³ Based on the OCH's prioritization of the community it is reasonable to define *success* in this context as executing preservation projects that have a positive impact on residents' quality of life. Success here is ongoing because it is impossible to restore all of Old Havana at once.¹⁷⁴ Points of success include the projects

¹⁷² Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, interview with author. Havana, Cuba, June 2014.

¹⁷³ Scarpaci, et al., *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 332 – 333.

¹⁷⁴ Oscar Jaime Rodríguez Cunill, email message to author, March 25, 2015.
Scarpaci, et al., *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 333.

examined in this thesis, the Basilica Menor de San Francisco de Asís, the Belén Convent, the Hogar Materno, the Escuela Taller, the Hotel Beltrán, as well as the numerous other completed OCH projects. In the 1980s when restoration began, and in the 1990s when restoration accelerated because of funding from Habaguanex, one third of the buildings in Old Havana were rehabilitated in an impressive departure from decades of neglect.

7.2 A Little Decentralization with a Large Effect

The OCH has completed a high number of projects, but with a little extrapolation, inherent shortcomings appear. Given the current condition and number of unrestored buildings in Old Havana in combination with the low salaries that prohibit residents from maintaining their own homes, it is not possible for residents to contribute to the ongoing restoration of Old Havana. Based on the pace of work of the first twenty-five years, it will take decades before every building can be restored, by which time, the first projects would be ready for renewed attention. Therefore, the residents themselves and non-OCH entities must be empowered in order to preserve Old Havana.¹⁷⁵

Current efforts to include non-OCH entities in the redevelopment of Havana economically and socially suggest that there may be room for additional non-OCH preservation activity to address even more of the needs that the OCH has not been able to address.¹⁷⁶ What form that help would take, whether the work is completed by the residents, financed by nongovernmental organizations, or plays out according to a different scenario, it seems possible that non-OCH preservation projects might help to combat the commodification of Old Havana if additional preservation were not tied to

¹⁷⁵ Scarpaci, et al., *Havana: two faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 344.

¹⁷⁶ Carley, "In a New Era of Foreign Involvement, the Nation Struggles to Preserve its Historic Architecture," 3.

tourism. The OCH is already criticized for catering too much to tourism, so allowing or even supporting preservation and rehabilitation that serves residents that the OCH cannot reach might help combat prevent Old Havana from becoming a museum like area of little interest to locals.¹⁷⁷

Empowering the residents would prevent criticism related to relocation of residents; if a family chose to move out for better living conditions it would not be because the OCH required it of them. Work could progress more quickly through the historic sector if there were more projects taking place at any given time. However, it would be important for the OCH to regulate changes to existing buildings as well as new construction through design guidelines or a design review process in order to protect the buildings and the whole district.¹⁷⁸ Cubans have already proved that they will build what they need, when they need, with what they have, but ad hoc solutions are not preservation and a return to the micro-brigades of citizens organized to build their own housing may not produce high enough quality work to effectively protect Old Havana's remarkable built environment.

Currently, the organizations that occupy rehabilitated buildings in Old Havana do not include all the types of businesses required to constitute a healthy community. When some of the resident-owned mechanics, grocery stores, and laundry services are able to move into rehabilitated buildings in the densely populated residential parts of Old Havana, then the neighborhood strategies will truly be decentralized in a healthy way that focuses on the community's needs. Support from the OCH for businesses such as these would parallel that of any city government fostering local small businesses that productively

¹⁷⁷ Scarpaci, et al., *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 338.

¹⁷⁸ Scarpaci, et al., *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*, 344.

diversify its economy. Rather than necessarily adding to the work load of the OCH, this could potentially reduce the need for some of the services that are already offered, for example a resident might watch a few neighbors' children as a business if there were space in the house.

Because the buildings of Old Havana are not the only priority for the OCH or the neighborhood's residents, any long-term solution for protecting this historic built environment must consider the needs of the local population. While the OCH has constructed a complex, far reaching centralized method of leveraging the disparate functions of preservation, social services and tourism, there are over one thousand structures that have not been rehabilitated. By empowering local citizens through fostering and supporting decentralized small business endeavors, the OCH has the capacity to once again expand its model of management, for the benefit of the residents of Old Havana.

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