

‘Architecture is repetition’: Adapting postcolonial spatial theory for post-Revolutionary socialist Cuba

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Abstract

This paper brings architectural theory into contact with spatial theory developed in literary and cultural studies and human geography. Arguing that the basic principles of postcolonial and of Marxist spatial theories (as applied by David Harvey, Achille Mbembe, Doreen Massey, Edward Soja) require significant adaptation for a Cuban context, this paper begins to develop a new spatial theory appropriate to socialist post-Revolutionary Cuba. This adapted spatial theory which builds on architectural practice and theories can be applied to Cuban literary culture: this paper briefly examines the annual Havana book fair and literary festival, Feria. An examination of social space in Havana, and its representation in texts that provide an insight into those spaces for “global” readers, needs to be alert to the ways in which the politics of space remains foregrounded in Cuba, as well as the extent to which the accommodation of policies compatible with capitalist global trade and tourism begins to replicate the inequalities of capitalist spatial configurations.

Keywords

Cuba, architecture, spatial theory, literary marketplace, postcolonial, literary culture

The Politics of Cuban Space

Architectural philosopher Andrew Benjamin suggests that “the new in architecture is always conditioned by what has taken place”, that “architecture is repetition” (2000, 102). In Cuba, “what has taken place” is both the Revolution, and its cause: the uneven system imposed by successive imperial powers. The conception of Cuba as composed of two opposite stages, pre- and post-Revolution, along with a further distinction between Cuban and “Foreign” works and ideas, is, according to architect-theorists Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula (2002, 358), ubiquitous. Its architecture reflects both of these periods, and this contrast is usually represented as a marker of failure: the cracked walls and crumbling balconies of Spanish colonial houses are often exploited as evidence of a failing economic model while the modern, concrete structures are called ugly or monotonous. An example of this is the representation of Cuba’s dilapidated beauty which depicts a failing state. Such claims can be found in news media discussions of Fidel Castro’s death which describe the country as “a time capsule”, with “many streets [...] lined by crumbling colonial facades and potted by holes that look like they have been there for decades” (Carroll and Watts, 2016). Tourist advertising is guilty of perpetuating this image as it celebrates Havana’s “peeling pastels and crumbling masonry”, “colonial relics”, “bygone glamour”, and a city apparently “timeworn but magnificent, dilapidated but dignified” (Intrepid, Rough Guide, Lonely Planet). But this is inaccurate and unfair; an architectural approach to Cuban space enables a different interpretation of the contrasts in the built environment, while a spatial theoretical framework informed by both postcolonial and Marxist spatial theorists ensures that the politics of space remains central to that interpretation. Kumaraswami and Kaptcia have argued that paying attention to space is essential when considering Cuban literary culture (2012, 50) but undertaking such an approach is not straightforward: Cuba’s unique situation as a socialist system with a history of imperial control, under increasing pressure to accommodate

neoliberal capitalism, necessitates an *adaptation* of existing postcolonial and Marxist theories of space.

This necessity will be explained more fully below when I examine various operating principles of spatial theories developed by David Harvey, Achille Mbembe, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja, but the chief distinction between Cuba and the locations considered by these postcolonial or Marxist spatial theorists is that Cuba's space was reconfigured to reduce inequality following the Revolution, while the capitalist cities studied by Harvey, Mbembe, Massey, Soja, and others remain configured for inequality and exploitation. A further obstacle arises around the politics of space: while awareness of space as political is a very recent concept in capitalist contexts, in Cuba, revolution through spatial justice and the reclamation of space means that space is not neutral or abstract and is instead highly politicised. Neoliberal and corresponding anti-neoliberal discourses mean that, as Edward Soja (2010, 14) argues persuasively, "never before has the spatial organization of human society [...] been as widely recognized as an influential force shaping human behavior, political action, and societal development". For Cuba, not yet fully immersed in the neoliberal economy, a spatial approach will become increasingly important. Maintaining "spatial consciousness" creates awareness that "the geographies in which we live can intensify and sustain our exploitation as workers, support oppressive forms of cultural and political domination based on race, gender, and nationality, and aggravate all forms of discrimination and injustice" (Soja 2010, 19).

Although space is understood to be politicised in the everyday articulations of ordinary Cubans, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, Cuba has been economically vulnerable and this has influenced the use of its public spaces. During what is referred to as the Special Period the Cuban government adopted policies compatible with capitalist trade and tourism. This was intended as a means of safeguarding the benefits achieved under the

socialist system while alleviating the impact of the loss of economic support from the Soviet Union coupled with the ongoing US-imposed trade embargo. The major impact was in tourism, which became Cuba's main source of income, and the use of space began to change as a result: it became an unspoken understanding that Cubans would not be welcome in hotel bars, for instance; suddenly policies appeared to be arranged so as to benefit tourists, not citizens. In this way, the previous socialist spatial policy was compromised and the politics of Cuban space began to replicate the inequalities of capitalist spatial configurations. In the context of a changing political climate, further concessions have been made since the relaxing of tourism regulations in 2015 to extend the opportunities for US citizens to visit Cuba.

The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that in 2017 the total contribution of travel and tourism to Cuba's GDP was 10.7%; jobs related to tourism provided 9.9% of total employment in Cuba; travel and tourism investment was 21.6% of total investment; and visitor exports generated 27.1% of total exports. (Turner 2018). Isaac Saney notes that in 1996, tourism surpassed sugar as Cuba's major revenue generator (Saney 2004, 28). Where tourism plays such a prominent role in the economy (and in Havana and the beach resorts where this is concentrated, in everyday life), the changing politics of space poses significant challenges for the analysis of social space in Cuba, and its representation in texts that provide insight into those spaces for "global" readers. A further challenge to analysing Cuban space concerns identifying an appropriate theoretical framework. As a postcolonial location, formerly a Spanish colony and briefly under British colonial control, then under American imperialist control, and latterly subject to the forces of neoliberalism, it might be expected that Cuba would merit a postcolonial analysis. Such an approach might involve applying the work of postcolonial spatial theorists including Achille Mbembe and Graham Huggan. Alternatively, a Marxist model of spatial analysis might be expected to yield positive results since Cuban spatial arrangements were made, especially in urban centres, to redistribute

living accommodation to each according to his needs, using a Marxist model. However, neither a Marxist nor a postcolonial spatial approach provides a good fit with Cuba's unique situation. Because of this, my paper offers an initial working model for approaching post-Revolutionary Cuba from an *adapted* postcolonial-Marxist spatial perspective that brings architectural practice and theory into contact with spatial theory.

Because architectural practice and theory (it is sometimes difficult to separate practice from theory, since architecture's practitioners are usually also its theorists) is concerned with clients, commissions, and the authorship of space, the field offers a more appropriate model for analysing Cuban space than human geography, the field in which Harvey, Soja, and Massey dominate. Architectural practice and theory represents space with sensitivity to the context of Cuba's ever-increasing involvement with global trade and tourism. Architectural perspectives consider the notion of authority over space, the flexibility of space, and the politics and economics of changing space, considering both the function of built space and of the space between buildings (paths, boundaries, plazas) and analysing the architect's role and responsibilities when altering those spaces. The politics of space is discernible in numerous Cuban contexts, including literary culture. Cuban literature draws attention to spaces of reading, while Cuban literary culture dominates spaces that were, before the Revolution, symbolic of colonial control: in Havana, the annual literary festival, *Feria*, takes place at the vast *Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña*, a former prison and colonial fortress; the second-hand book market is located in the prominent *Plaza de Armas* which was once used for military exercise; while writers' union buildings and cultural centres are located at all of the main city squares. Cuban literature reflects this prevalence of literary culture: spaces of reading take prominence over the reading matter itself in both "canonical" or classic Cuban fiction, in contemporary writing, and genre fiction. To offer a few examples, Leonardo Padura's series of crime novels circulate around private and public acts and spaces of reading

(Ramone 2016). Other contemporary writing demonstrates a similar pattern: across two recent collections of short stories written by Cuban women, there are 55 references to reading. Many of these are figurative references to canonical literary texts (for example, an individual being compared to “some latter-day tropical Hamlet” (Yañez 1998, 57)). However, 25 of the 55 references are to libraries, bookshops, or bookshelves, or describe reading in spaces such as attics and hotel lobbies, or in other ways foreground the idea of space – examples include references to the neighbourhood, room, patio, living room, or to tracking, or orienting, in the context of literature (Berg 2003, Yañez 1998). Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World* is set early nineteenth century decolonised Haiti; the context invites relatively few references to books, but where reading does take place the prominence of space endures: of 21 references, eight are to booksellers or bookshelves, and one important reference concluding the novel marks the end of plantation slavery when the roof and walls tumble onto the French *Encyclopédie* they had formerly housed. And Jesús Díaz’s *The Initials of the Earth* (1987), regarded as a novel of the Revolution, features a character nicknamed “Library” because of his expansive knowledge of books – again, the *location* of books helps his colleagues to choose his nickname.

It is important to note that although the majority of examples considered in this paper refer to Havana, architectural ideas and urban planning in Cuba are not led from the capital city or focused on urban spaces, as might be assumed. As architect Thomas Mayne notes, after the Revolution “the urban area lost its importance: it became equal with the rest of the country” (Noever 2015, 38). Rather, from the moment of the revolution onwards, a decentralisation project has involved the devolution of decision-making to local groups, which always include residents from the areas of proposed building development. Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula (2002, 153-7) describe how Cuba’s architectural practice and theory was initially governed by the Master Plans written in 1963-64 and adapted in subsequent versions.

These plans, which emphasised the use of open spaces and the improvement of road networks, were influenced by factors such as environmental quality and air pollution from Havana Bay, as well as ideas conveyed in Fidel Castro's speeches. Teams responsible for developing the plans included architects, demographers, sociologists, geographers, and civil engineers. Housing was a priority, and in 1984 recreation and industry also received considerable attention. Like the Master Plan teams, Workshops for Neighbourhood Change (Talleres de Transformacion Integral del Barrio [TTIB]) were led by multidisciplinary teams who prioritised members who lived and worked in the areas under consideration. The workshops had four objectives: housing, the local economy, education, and the development of a neighbourhood identity (Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula 2002, 162-3). Because of its emphasis on Havana, this paper can only be a partial attempt to construct a spatial theory that fits Cuba. And indeed, it is in Havana where changes in patterns of tourism are felt most keenly. Yet at the same time, its assertions can be applied more broadly since in terms of the politics of space, Havana is not considerably distinct from other regions: neighbourhood workshops adopt the same four principles throughout Cuba. These workshops operate as collectives, maintaining a strong sense of Cuban national identity and exemplifying Cuban spatial politics rather than performing the role of gatekeepers of space.

Spatial theory and Cuba

Spatial theory discards the common assumption that space is blank, neutral, and straightforwardly "mappable". Instead, as Edward Soja writes, "we are just as much spatial as temporal beings" and "[h]uman life is in every sense spatio-temporal, geo-historical" (Soja 2010, 16). Soja calls this the "socio-spatial dialectic", an awareness "that not only does the social comprise the spatial, it is also comprised by it" (Soja 2010, 5). At first glance,

postcolonial spatial theory (as exemplified by theorists including Achille Mbembe, and Graham Huggan) or Marxist spatial theory (Edward Soja, David Harvey, Doreen Massey) seems closely aligned with Cuban post-Revolutionary socialist politics. These theorists convey similar priorities to those expressed in Cuba: drawing attention to the political nature of space and refuting the myth of its “neutrality”, both suggest that an uneven allocation of space might be dispensed with in favour of a more equal use of space. However, postcolonial and Marxist spatial theory endeavours to uncover how the production of space maintains unequal societies in capitalist contexts, and therefore cannot be straightforwardly applied to socialist, post-Revolutionary Cuba. This section outlines ways in which the Cuban context differs from that of postcolonial and Marxist spatial analysis, and in doing so justifies the need for an alternative or adapted spatial theory to understand Cuban space.

Perhaps the most important human geographer for undertaking spatial analysis informed by social justice is David Harvey, a pioneer in Marxist geography whose *Social Justice and the City* (1973) was the first substantial work of left-wing geography, proposing a revolution in urban management based on Marxist political economics (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine 2008, 182). Harvey’s aim was to study the world from a geographical perspective in order to make it socially just. While Harvey’s insistence in *Spaces of Hope* (2000) that Marxism is of continued relevance to the wider project of creating a better socio-economic future is sympathetic to a socialist context like Cuba, Harvey’s immersion in largely US capitalist cities with high levels of poverty and inequality means that his work challenges the capitalist context that he works within and is not directly applicable to a socialist system.

In many respects, Edward Soja’s work responds to David Harvey’s pioneering claims for the reorganisation of space in urban, capitalist contexts to enable social justice. Soja uses the term “justice” after Harvey and extends it, suggesting “justice” connects activist movements and collectives with “broad concepts referring to the qualities of a just society:

freedom, liberty, equality, democracy, civil rights” (20). Soja’s work is entirely grounded in the context of globalization and the inequalities produced under the system of neoliberal capital; he suggests that globalization has “magnified many existing inequalities in contemporary society, such as between the rich and the poor, between men and women, and between different racial and ethnic groups” (22). In his attempts to seek justice in the metropolis, Soja identifies “a hive of community-based organizations and grassroots activism” (24). He reinforces their potential when he claims (as does Nancy Fraser in *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (2009)) that a nation-state system is now outdated (Soja 2010, 22). Concerning Cuba, however, this approach is unhelpful. In Cuba, a nationalist narrative, or nation-state system, has been essential for the maintenance of state-led “activism” against global capitalism. Cuban nationalism as a narrative has enabled arts, education, and social and political processes that support Cuba’s independence. Similarly, Doreen Massey states in *Space, Place and Gender* that “exclusivist” claims to places based on nationalist, regionalist and localist agendas have been “attempts to fix the meaning of particular spaces, to enclose them, [...] and claim them for one’s own” (4). A desire to enclose the space of Cuba in the early decades after the Revolution was, to a great extent, defensive, and not, as Massey suggests in the contexts she explores, motivated by the need to restrict citizens in service of an economic machine. Cuba’s internationalist outlook and its relationships with South America, Africa, and the USSR contrast with Massey’s assessment of the effects of narrating a national space. Likewise, although postcolonial theorists have argued for the relevance of the nation-state system in combating neocolonial globalisation, a positive emphasis on the nation-state system is rejected by spatial theorists. It is questionable to suggest that exclusivist claims to Cuba as a nation-state fix its identity; rather, external representations of Cuba are guilty of allocating fixed identities to Cuba, usually reinforcing the claim that Cuba is frozen in time.

Achille Mbembe's work on late modern colonial occupation in *Necropolitics* discusses the ways in which colonial occupation both up to and after the Second World War is entirely determined by spatial relations. He asserts, "*Colonial occupation* itself was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area – of writing a new set of social and spatial relations" (2003, 25), and calls this territorialization, a process "tantamount to the production of boundaries and hierarchies". Mbembe draws on Fanon's description of the "spatialization of colonial occupation" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, described as "first and foremost a division of space into compartments" involving "the setting of boundaries and internal frontiers" (26). The disempowering process in the context of Southern Africa explored by Mbembe differs from Cuba in an important way, though: Mbembe describes colonial occupation as "the subversion of existing property arrangements" (26) for the purposes of increasing inequality, whereas the subversion of property arrangements in Cuba was undertaken after the Revolution precisely for the opposite reason: to create equality. While Mbembe's specific findings cannot be applied to Cuba, his assertion that space and shifting socio-spatial relations are at the core of *any* colonial occupation, that they are not characteristics limited to early forms of colonial occupation, provides an important reminder: it is necessary to be mindful that political change in neocolonial contexts inevitably involves the reorganisation of space, and that such shifting boundaries are accompanied by hierarchies.

Applying Architectural theory to Cuban space

Published work in the field of architecture frequently takes the form of practice-based analysis of the function and principles of architecture, or of responses to the built work of particular architects and collectives. Architecture as a practical and theoretical methodology

offers new approaches to Cuban space. In *Bhabha for Architects*, Felipe Hernandez proposes two architectural ways of conceiving lived space which begin to provide answers to the question of how to theorise Cuban space, where existing scholarship in human geography, literary and cultural studies cannot. Hernandez draws attention to collaborative architectural projects, and to efforts to undo architects' conventionally conceived hierarchical and hegemonic powers. At the Architecture Again conference held in Havana in December-January 1994-95, US architect Lebbeus Woods (Noever 1997, 35) rejected the suggestion that because much of Havana's built environment has been constructed without an architect it is therefore flawed and ripe for redevelopment. He reaffirmed the space as architecturally logical, noting that everywhere there is evidence of complex, "hardcore architectural thinking about how to unify open and closed spaces through a network of passages, use of sunlight, how to deal with a landscape", insisting that this identifies the "Cuban condition" as a "spatially different freedom of a culturally unique society". Such architectural discussions which decentre the architect's control and recognise the positive result of collective work in the built environment engender transformative debates about Cuban space. Analysis of architectural theory, including work by architect-theorists Kevin Lynch, Lawrence J Vale, Rahul Mehrotra, and Andrew Benjamin, and of architecture practices including social housing collective Elemental as discussed by Felipe Hernandez (2010), reveals that there are specific benefits to analysing Cuban space from the perspective of architecture in order to expand spatial thinking in human geography, literary and cultural studies. Architecture is unlike related fields such as geography for two reasons: (i) it emphasises the role of the client in architectural projects, and (ii) it responds to a tradition where the architect is considered as the author of space.

(i) *the concept of the client*

An immediate distinction between human geography and architecture concerns the role of the client. The presence of the potential “client” proves very useful for understanding the impact of global tourism on Cuban perceptions of space. In *The Havana Project*, the statement “Architecture starts with the commission” is accepted as a general principle, yet is immediately challenged by the architects involved in the roundtable discussion, who suggest that this relationship between client and architect gains a new unseemly quality in the context of Cuba. The discussion raises questions over ethics: can a commission be accepted but transformed to fit the socio-political circumstances of the location and its population (Noever 1997, 57, 59)? In response to the assumption that the architect responds to a need, “who says what is necessary?” (Noever 1997, 59). What relationships exist between client and architect, and where is the balance of power? What role does money play: is it a controlling force, or a kind of fuel or “motor” for architecture (Noever 1997, 53-4)?

The use of the terms “client” and “commission”, underlying all architectural understandings of space, more securely establish the financial transaction and commercial reason for any redevelopment or alteration to Havana’s city spaces, and clearly identify the exploitative relationships that might be involved in building projects. For example, there was a proposal to remodel Plaza Vieja by Hilton, Armani, and Cartier in 1995 (Noever 1997, 44). Architect Wolf Prix describes such proposals as based on “predatory relationships” (Noever 1997, 44) between client and space. In the Cuban context this predatory relationship is evident, and as a result the architect performs the function of mediator and is required to rethink the legitimacy of their role, to acknowledge the “social, political, [and] cultural dimensions” of architecture (Noever 1997, 49). From the perspective of postcolonial or of Marxist spatial theories, such plans might be perceived as part of the greater neoliberal machine, an inevitable result of unobstructed trading routes. In contrast, architectural

terminology is direct and commercial, and acknowledges the exploitation involved in redeveloping a city space.

(ii) the architect's role: authority, collaboration, and the interstitial

The question of the architect's role is raised repeatedly in *The Havana Project* alongside the acknowledgement that, conventionally, architecture associates a strong sense of authorship or authority with the architect so that "space becomes architecture if there is an architect behind it" (Noever 1997, 35). Peter Noever suggests that the architect's power is so absolute that it is possible to "provoke other architects through highly personal statements" (34), both in terms of the perceived function of architecture, and the built work produced.

This autonomous and authoritative version of the architect's role is sometimes disputed, and Havana itself prompts questions about the extent to which the architect should retain power. Further, Cuba forces architects to see architecture as "a manifestation of broader energy" rather than an autonomous activity (Noever 1997, 50). Once these competing versions of the architect's role and the client's influence are compared, the potential of collaborative architecture is recognised: "the architect should be out there with everybody else in the street" (Noever 1997, 54). Through the *Havana Project*, architecture becomes a "dialogue" (Noever 1997, 56). The architect's role is even discussed in figurative terms, as that of "guru, sleuth, tourist" (Noever 1997, 94), and as surgeon or, better, homeopath, with responsibility for both "the spirit and the body" (Noever 1997, 61). Cuba is accustomed to working without an architect, as Scarpaci, Segre and Coyula (2002, 125, 126) describe: "Most of the buildings erected in the 1950s were done without an architect" and there was a "striking lack of demolition and substitution of the existing urban fabric", as wealthy Cubans before the Revolution opted to move districts rather than adapt their homes. The architect's

role or authority is closely aligned with the extent to which architectural projects are carried out collaboratively, and by what means they involve local communities.

Architecture and Cuban space in a flexible state of becoming

The Chilean social housing architectural collective Elemental (usually transcribed as ELEMENTAL) could be described as the apotheosis of collaborative architecture. The group contradicts received architectural knowledge about both the architect's role and the client's commissioning power, as Felipe Hernandez explains when he takes to task the idea of architectural authorship (2010). Elemental advocate city-centre sites for new social housing developments, rather than the peripheral locations usually reserved for the city's workers. Projects include unusually large expanses of space between houses, for two reasons: to create functional, communal public spaces within the developments, and to encourage room for growth: "to facilitate the appropriation of space for different, unexpected activities" (Hernandez 2010, 125). The houses themselves are large yet basic, in open-plan form with a kitchen and bathroom, to produce functional accommodation that occupants can transform to suit their particular living circumstances and preferences. These unfinished houses are completed over the lifetime of the building by their occupants and thus remove the architect from the "hegemonic place as author" (Hernandez 2010, 127). For Hernandez, the effect is that the architect and building remain distinct: they "touch only slightly, tangentially, at one point in history after which the building follows its own path of historical becoming in the hands of the people" (127).

Such a project resonates strongly with the Cuban repurposing of buildings after the Revolution. Perceiving Cuban built space after this architectural practice is illuminating. The mainstream view rejects Cuban buildings, suggesting they have lost connection with their

original meaning: architect Carme Piños voices these ideas and goes further, claiming Havana is “void of representations” (Noever 1997, 41). However, the concept of the building as becoming, being in process and incomplete, being in a state of transfer of power, helps to explain current usage of space in Cuba, and this is an important principle to consider when developing a spatial theory suitable for Cuba. Cuban space is in dialogue with its pre-Revolutionary counterpart and with its counterparts elsewhere, but this dialogue is not fixed. Cuban space is in a flexible state of becoming – it adapts to suit the needs of its population, and this is appropriate and empowering when it involves the use of space for improved living conditions and better access to arts, culture, and education. But it is also important to remember that in the context of increased accommodation to global tourism, a temporary repurposing of communal or living spaces for the comfort of tourists or for the profits of global brands might easily be effected; this is a risk where space is contingent and where any notion of authority over the use of space has already been unsettled.

Collaboration (or anti-authorship) is fundamental to a Cuban spatial theory, especially in the context of post-Revolutionary practices of sharing intellectual information: note that in Cuba there was a withdrawal of copyright laws in order to enable the widest possible access to cultural and educational resources. Collaborative Cuban architectural methods have an effect on external practitioners who demonstrate sensitivity to its principles; this is evident from the projects proposed by architects involved in the Architecture Again conference. For instance, Coop Himmelb(l)au suggest that “city planning does not exist any more, the city builds itself” (Noever 1997, 100). Related to this idea are concepts like flexibility. The frequent external characterisation of Cuban architecture as ruined colonial splendour interrupted by modernist, functional housing and industrial spaces (Noever 1997, 35) disregards the inherent flexibility of Cuban architecture. Cuban architect Mario Coyula describes Cuban architecture as having always been “very eclectic, very flexible in its

reception of foreign influences” (Noever 1997, 158-9). In themselves, notions of flexibility and fluidity are not wholly new concepts in spatial theory. Spatial theory contends that “places and the social relations within and between them are the results of particular arrangements of power”, and as a result, rather than fixed territorial units places are “relational and contingent”, “multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain” (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine 2008, 6). Fluidity for Cuba needs separate treatment, though: for theorists working to upturn the capitalist inequalities that are maintained by urban, national, and global spatial policies, fluidity and uncertainty can offer a route towards protest and activism. However, in the post-Revolutionary Cuban context, if spaces are not fixed they can be undermined by those who would seek to make profit – to exploit through neocolonial tourism and trade. Flexibility and openness to foreign influences in the specific context of collaborative architecture and anti-authorship means that space in Cuba must be understood as a negotiation, as grounded in practices of collaborative planning according to the priorities of the local population. Consequently, in Cuba, the politics of space is foregrounded and relationships between time and space are likewise political and significant.

While spatial theory is keen to demonstrate the significance of space to human experience rather than perceiving time as the dominant factor and space as a neutral backdrop, architects have always foregrounded the politics of space. Articulations of the relationship between space and time merit attention. In human geography, time and space grapple for prominence: three closely related definitions acknowledge the relevance of space to the process of social relations, demonstrating that space is implicated in social and political change, yet “space” differs in prominence in each definition: Doreen Massey uses “space/time” to assert that space is not independent from the social relations that construct it (2013, 2). Manuel Castells argues, similarly, that space does not exist without its conception as “space-time”, which presents space as constructed through and practised by social

relations (1977, 442), while Soja's "socio-spatial dialectic" (2010, 78) refers to ways in which space continues to alter social practices and processes. If Cuban space is conceived in relation to the pre- and post-Revolutionary temporal contexts, this might imply rigidity in the conception of Cuban space (/time) which is less apparent in practice. Instead, Cuban space (/time) is frequently defined in terms of a continuum. Carme Piños describes "a continuous space" perceived both in terms of the built environment and in "a state of mind" (Noever 1997, 127), and Lebbeus Woods suggests his architectural plans would create new built work in Havana to reflect the continuum of Cuban architecture rather than its contrasts: "I see the architecture of decay and of growth, together" (Noever 1997, 72).

Architectural representations of space and time tend to recognize space and its relationship with time as constant rather than contrasting; in this way the impact of social relations on space (or of space on social relations) is not restricted by time, but reveals that the changing nature of space is something incomplete, or between temporal or spatial states. Architect Peter Eisenman foregrounds the "time-space relationship" in his practice, and architectural philosopher Andrew Benjamin (2000, 5) notes that pursuing the detail of that relationship is the task of architectural theory. After Eisenman and with reference to Plato and Derrida, Benjamin posits the incomplete and the interstitial as fundamentals of architectural theory and practice, factors which are conveyed through this time-space relationship. The "pervasive sense of the incomplete" (21) that Benjamin observes in Plato's and Derrida's responses to space through writings on the *khora* (Plato's concept for an interval or womb-like space between, which Derrida called in-betweenness, a neither-this-nor-that property (1995)) gains practical purpose in the work of Elemental, and in Peter Eisenman's built work.

Andrew Benjamin suggests that Peter Eisenman draws attention to process and to the state of "yet-to-be" through disrupting the meaning of literal terms such as interior, exterior,

new, old, surface, and void. His work emphasises the interstitial because it often involves building between existing constructions of different styles, purposes, or architectural periods. This “disruptive quality” (Benjamin 2000, 40) is intentional so the buildings themselves, often adapted for new purposes by bringing together new and existing structures, gain the purpose of “awaiting”, of “forming the between”. In architectural practice and theory, the building itself is an active agent in the process of transition; understood from this perspective, the collaborative nature of the production of space in Cuba becomes clear. What emerges is a collaborative endeavour to actively create transition and control the present moment rather than passively observing any alteration of Cuban space in the context of global trade and tourism. Foundational architectural theorist Kevin Lynch (1960, 6) suggests that the architectural ideal is not a final concept of space, but “an open-ended order, capable of continuous further development”. Cuba is revealed, through this architectural approach, as being in this in-between state not just in respect of regime change but also in terms of the built environment and the function of space. To perceive Cuba as interstitial eliminates the detrimental representation of Cuba as backward, decaying, or ruined, and reaffirms its agency in its use of space.

Benjamin’s term “disruptive” also helps illustrate the particular resonances of the term “conflict” in architecture. There is much use of the word “conflict” by the Havana Project architects: the act of architectural work is described as “brutal”, as a “fight”, a “war”, as “confrontation” (Noever 1997, 50, 55). Counterintuitively, perhaps, these terms have a positive application; they are considered necessary to the creative process: architecture “thrives on conflict” and there is always “immediate conflict” (Noever 1997, 84) once the process of alteration begins. This is far more reminiscent of revolutionary activity than it is of the ways in which a postcolonial or Marxist interpretation understands conflict as is clear from a reconsideration of Doreen Massey’s approach to space. Addressing the dichotomies

that designate “space” as depoliticised in contrast with “time” as an active agent, Massey (2013, 7) argues for the “construction of specificity through interrelations rather than through the imposition of boundaries and the counterposition of one identity against an other”. However, Cuban space must be understood at least in part through the ways in which one identity (pre-Revolutionary Cuba) is counterposed against an other (post-Revolutionary Cuba). Not to do so is to understand Cuba only through the capitalist lens that sees it as backwards, dilapidated, dying, “poor”, rather than on its own terms. To read Cuba in conflict with other spaces in a positive sense following an architectural model is to reinforce its revolutionary aims, and to draw attention to its anti-neoliberal stance. Conflict understood as a positive creative agent in Cuba emphasises ways in which public spaces in Cuba are adapted to creative uses. An example of this creative appropriation is The Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña (known locally as La Cabaña), a large colonial fortress built between 1763 and 1774 on the high ground overlooking Havana. During the Spanish colonial period, a nightly cannon sounded to announce the 9:00pm curfew imposed on (mostly black) workers in the city who were required to return to slum dwellings in peripheral areas. Later, the Cabaña was used as a prison by both Machado and Batista, and then by the Revolutionary government. In 1990, as part of the adaptation of space for an enhanced global tourist market, the Cabaña was converted into a museum (Montalvo 2000, 54). The Cabaña is now the site of the national literary festival and the national art exhibition, and is a museum and tourist attraction during the rest of the year. This transformation of the space from a colonial fortress and prison to a literary festival space attended by hundreds of thousands of Cubans is all the more significant because of the legend attached to the high ridge overlooking the city: Juan Bautista Antonelli, the Italian military engineer who built a series of military fortresses and watchtowers in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, claimed that whoever was “master of the position of La Cabaña shall be master of the city also” (Montalvo 2000, 54). This space,

once symbolic of conflict and control, now signifies the collective ownership of Havana by its population, realised through their participation in literary and arts festivals and its use as a space for leisure year-round by Cubans as well as tourists.

Architecturally, conflict and disruption have particular meanings. Kevin Lynch, in his foundational work of architectural theory, *The Image of The City*, describes the city through categories: paths, channels enabling the observer to perceive the city whilst moving through it; districts, which are recognised as having a common, organising factor; nodes, which include junctions or breaks in transportation which enable an observer to enter a city, as well as convergences of paths, and spaces defined by frequent usage, such as enclosed squares and spaces used for regular gatherings; landmarks, which are external reference points such as physical objects including buildings, signs, and mountains; and edges, boundaries between phases including shores, railway sidings, walls, the edges of developed spaces, barriers or seams, which hold together generalised areas such as the outline of a city which is held together by a city wall. The edge, as perceived in architectural terms, is a point of physical conflict, drawing attention to the boundaries between spaces even where they are not formally enforced. The city wall in Havana enforced the city's edges in socioeconomic terms, and these were reinforced temporally by the nightly cannon fire from the Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña. While the wall and the fort remain in use for new purposes, after Lynch's architectural sense of the "edge" they draw attention to the boundaries and points of conflict that existed in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, while maintaining a continuum in terms of the use of space as interstitial and in process. Cuba has "no need for monuments" (Castro in Noever 1997, 8): it celebrates the present and future rather than recalling the colonial past. This is evident physically: the city wall crumbles in plain view and is neither protected nor taken down; the Cabaña is a museum but not a static marker of the past – it asserts the

continuum of space both through the nightly cannon fire which now serves a different purpose, and through its use for cultural events.

Repetition: The Feria and Resistant Space

A final principle that architectural theory can elucidate concerns repetition. From the perspective of psychoanalytical and narratological literary criticism, repetition is a paradoxical concept, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's foundational article, reflecting on Lacan, Genette, and Jakobson, insists. Rimmon-Kenan describes a "perplexingly double-edged phenomenon" (158), which, among its other paradoxes, reveals that, while "constructive repetition emphasizes difference, destructive repetition emphasizes sameness (i.e., to repeat successfully is not to repeat)" (153). Following Genette, and taking a similar position to Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, Rimmon-Kenan (1980, 153) asserts that a repetition without difference is normally perceived as dissatisfying since there is no sense of development. This reinforces her insistence (echoing or echoed by Genette, Deleuze, Freud, Lacan, and Derrida) that repetition is difference: "there is no repetition without difference and no difference without repetition, and each can only be discussed in terms of the other". With reference to Feria, this begs the question: why does the daily Cuban newspaper *Granma* repeat *without* difference the location of the literary festival? The statements in *Granma's* Feria articles do not produce a sense of difference: separate *Granma* articles advertising the Feria include almost identical statements locating the International Book Fair at the San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress (*Granma*, 2015-02-05, 2015-02-12, 2015-02-16, 2015-02-17). The repetition without difference is not undertaken to convey information or attract visitors: the festival takes place in the same location every year, is advertised widely, and is attended by hundreds of thousands of people familiar with the site and event. Rather, it has a political

significance: the repeated articulation of the function of this space can be understood as an important means of maintaining the Cuban politics of space. The repetition is not a redundant or frustrating intervention in the articles as Rimmon-Kenan's findings would suggest; it serves an important resistant function. Each repetition of the location re-inscribes that space with an activity that is collaborative, transformative, antagonistic in the most positive way, and which enables its ongoing transformation.

Deleuze's work on repetition focuses on the conscious act of repetition, and thus is applicable to this kind of rearticulation. Deleuze's (1994, 70) repetition involves a conception of the living present (*présent vivant*) as a state that evokes a sense of expectancy, which is relevant to an understanding of Cuba as interstitial, between-states. But Deleuze's sense of repetition as expectancy is rendered in his writings as an unconscious state: Deleuze suggests that the lived present is a "passive synthesis" (1994, 81) of time, a kind of habit, which leads to the state of expectation that an event or experience or situation will be repeated. James Williams offers an example to explain this, suggesting that even in the dark when drunk, the act of walking up the stairs is possible to repeat due to the sense of expectancy that pervades the living present (Williams 2003, 87). The repetition of statements identifying the location of the Feria insist on sameness. Yet collectively, these repetitions invoke the difference that the Feria produces from the prior meaning of that space as colonial fortress and then, during Batista's dictatorship, enforcer of uneven access to and ownership of the city based on race and socioeconomic class. These are accompanied in *Granma* by images showing the use of outdoor spaces, corridors, and internal and external passageways for workshops and events which take on further resistant and active significance when approached through Kevin Lynch's work on city spaces. Lynch privileges such spaces, categorised as paths, as fundamental to orientation and ownership of the city: these ways of experiencing space are

anything but passive, and assert the interstitial, unfinished, collaborative nature of the space as literary festival.

Architecture and repetition

In Havana, the speed of renovation works gets markedly faster, and the external companies carrying out that renovation are prominently advertised. David Harvey (1981) shows that capitalism attempts to circumvent its contradictions by finding ways to displace the crisis of surplus by implementing a “spatial fix”, tying up excess capital in buildings, roads, and infrastructure which will gradually produce income. The difference in Cuba is that the capital investment is being made not to avoid a crisis based on surplus, but to grow the tourist market, and this market is rapidly changing shape as well as size, with US tourists gaining increased access to the city as they are able to travel under new arrangements which offer longer stays in Havana from 2015 onwards and less structured visits. One effect of applying architectural theories and the idea of architecture as repetition is to dispel the myth that Cuba is “out of time”, or a “ruin”, dilapidated and dying.

Architectural theory gives new voice to Cuba since its approach to questions of habitation are grounded both in ownership of spaces and orientation within them, factors which are central to the impact of global tourism in contemporary Cuba. Kevin Lynch suggests that people “adjust to their surroundings and extract structure and identity out of the material at hand” (1960, 43). Recalling the ownership and orientation of the city in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, the majority of people did not own any of the city space, but inhabited peripheral slum dwellings. The central areas were dedicated to particular activities: La Cabaña was a prison symbolic of control; Plaza de Armas was used for military exercises and this reinforced the military dictatorship’s control over the city. The Revolution involved the

explicit reappropriation of city spaces for the people's use, and the end of enforced segregation between central and peripheral spaces. In the context of global tourism, this right of public ownership of, and access to, city spaces has been eroded. An adapted postcolonial spatial analysis to acknowledge Cuba's specificities is intended to ensure that Cuba(n literary space) remains resistant to neoliberal assault.

"We don't need monuments" (Noever 1997, 8), Castro said about the appropriation of Cuban spaces, rejecting the idea that colonial buildings should be preserved for their original purpose, and handing them over to public use. The Cabaña is perhaps the most active example of what might be a monument, but is used in flexible, unfinished ways which foreground the interstitial nature of Cuban space. The Cabaña is also an example of timespace / spacetime, with its nightly ceremonial firing of the cannon to remember a past that has been replaced with something new (but ever changing) in an antagonistic yet creative relationship, to ensure the tourist market is not restricted to a diet of beaches and bars, and to sound a time that marks a place that is no longer the same; in repeating its difference, Cuban space actively resists in the living present.

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