

INFORMAL



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CARACAS INFORMAL

A CRITIQUE OF HOW IT WAS WORKED AND
HOW TO WORK URBAN INFORMALITY IN THE CITY



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This thesis is especially dedicated to my brothers Alejandro and César, who are my hope for the future, my dad and my mom who are and will always be the ones who taught me to be free and never stop dreaming, and to Cris because he changed my life, no matter what: Together we can make it.







ABSTRACT

A CRITIQUE OF HOW IT WAS WORKED AND HOW TO WORK: URBAN INFORMALITY IN TH CITY

Caracas is the capital of Venezuela. It is a complex metropolitan urban space that condenses the political, administrative and economic center of Venezuela. It is one of the Latin American cities in which situations of dwelling marked by conditions of privilege and vulnerability arise. With at least 55% of the city's population living in informal buildings (slums), since the early 20th century, governments have tried to generate and promote informal neighborhood regeneration programs. The goal was to solve a housing deficit in the capital and improve the quality of the inhabitants' dwelling conditions, often trying to configure dense parts of the city through experimentation on multiple settlement principles and architectural typologies.

This production of urban space has long been the spearhead in a systematic war against the informal city (Barrios - Favelas). The same that, in recent decades, due to its amplitude and consolidation, has been accepted and for which different postmodern regeneration strategies have been tested.

Starting from the Caracas case study, the objective of this master's thesis is to make a critical reading of these two different project traditions for informality through investigations on some relevant experiences. The result of this effort is the construction of a different discourse around urban informality useful for identifying better intervention strategies.

Keywords: Informality, Barrios, Urban Informality, Neighborhoods, Caracas.



SOMMARIO

UNA CRITICA DI COME SI LAVORAVA E DI COME SI LAVORA: INFORMALITÀ URBANA NELLA CITTÀ

Caracas è la capitale del Venezuela, un complesso spazio urbano metropolitano che condensa il centro politico, amministrativo ed economico del Venezuela. È una delle città latinoamericane in cui si manifestano situazioni dell'abitare segnate da condizioni di privilegio e vulnerabilità. Con almeno il 55% della popolazione della città che vive in edifici informali (baraccopoli), dall'inizio del XX secolo, i governi hanno provato a generare e promuovere programmi di rigenerazione dei quartieri informali. Obiettivo era risolvere un deficit abitativo nella capitale e migliorare la qualità dell'abitare degli abitanti, tentando, spesso, di configurare parti di città dense attraverso sperimentazione su più principi insediativi e tipologie architettoniche.

Questa produzione di spazio urbano è stata a lungo la punta di lancia in una guerra sistematica contro la città informale (Barrios - Favelas). La stessa che, negli ultimi decenni, in seguito alla sua l'ampiezza e consolidamento, è stata accettata e per la quale si sono sperimentate differenti strategie di rigenerazione di matrice post-moderna.

A partire dal caso-studio di Caracas, obiettivo di questa tesi di master è quello di operare una lettura critica di queste due differenti tradizioni di progetto per l'informalità attraverso indagini su alcune esperienze rilevanti. Esito di questo sforzo è la costruzione di un differente discorso attorno all'informalità urbana utile ad individuare migliori strategie d'intervento

Parole chiave: Informalità, Favelas, Informalità Urbana, Quartieri, Caracas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I want to give a special thanks to my parents: Lissette and Glend, who never set limits to my dreams. That they taught me to work hard for them and that ultimately, they were a constant support and support for my personal fulfillment. To my Brothers: Alejandro Y Cesar: for being the fuel to never faint and wanting to be a better person, stronger and more whole every day. And in General, to all my family, you are my unconditional support and despite all the distances they are always there for me.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following research work, an exploration of the urban reality and urban informality of the city of Caracas is conducted through the critical reading of projects that were designed and brought to Cabao to fight against the informal city and the marginal neighborhoods. In a complex and broad set of ideas, the focus of the study focuses on analyzing the role of the state in the production of the city and how governments proposed different projects for the production of mass housing projects and seeing how these projects have modified not only the surface, density and interactions in the city but also the relationships between its inhabitants. All this to understand how the development of the informal city was, to understand its processes and open a discussion about how efforts should be oriented to work the in informal neighborhoods (barrios).

The concepts and bibliographies used for this analysis will illustrate through the different chapters an urban, architectural, political and social reality. Through maps of the city, and analysis of each of the projects, we will review the different contrasts between what was planned and how the way of living in the city changed, to conclude in the final chapter with a discussion about the effect and results of these interventions on the city and A critique of how the project development process should be approached in the informal city, and in the slums and barrios in general.

1. Context and motivations

Caracas is the capital city of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; it is the fifth highest capital in South America since it is located at an average of 900 meters above sea level. In it are the highest-ranking legislative bodies: The Presidency of the Republic, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Electoral Council, the Public Ministry, the Ombudsman, the Public Comptroller, among others. In turn, the metropolitan district is made up of 5 municipalities: Libertador, Baruta, Chacao, El Hatillo, and Sucre, which in total has a population of 3.087.642 inhabitants for the 2011 census. Taking into account that same census and in consideration the number of inhabitants of the 3 states that make up the metropolitan area, gives a total of 4,639,883 inhabitants, being the most populated city in the country. The city of Caracas ranks 81st in the 2018 Global cities index and is considered a Beta-type global city by the GaWC.

Today it is a city full of urban ambiguities and solid old achievements in city planning. While on the one hand the city seems to have sectors with a structure and a consolidated and planned urban fabric, on the other hand, there is a large part of the city approximately 55% (practically half of the capital's population) that constitutes the sectors of the city considered slums, spaces full of self-produced homes without urban planning, many built in high-risk areas and lacking in service networks and facilities. The latter developed by the need of thousands of Venezuelans to join the access to a "better quality of life" after the different migrations from the countryside to the city and the cultural and housing developments in the city environment given by the effervescent growing economy after the oil boom.

This thesis project will seek to show how the housing deficit and the different Government actions created the “luck” that led to the growth of the city in an unplanned way and we will show the results of its failed attempts to control the way in which the city grows. The main intention is to recognize the problem of the Informality in the city not as a single problem but to map each of its circumstances, recognizing the main origin of the disproportionate growth of marginal neighborhoods (Barrios), as well as the problems of living in them and rethinking from of the current solutions that did not generate a real solution but rather a short-term repair in the dynamics of the city. Social housing production projects have always had the characteristic of being an innovative proposal given the limitations of physical space to be able to build and an easy and feasible solution to cause a greater impact on the number of families benefited. These projects are not only a merely functional solution, but have also in many cases had a political background. The main characteristics of the projects that we will analyze are that they are works that have belonged and preserved to date due to their youth, for their architectural value and quality, and for the scope and magnitude of their projects. These projects changed the way of living and the lives of many Venezuelans and also marked a before and after in the spaces where they were located. Each project has very particular characteristics that make us put a focus on its policies, objective programs, and achievements. But until today none of these projects has focused on working in the informal area of the neighborhoods and how to improve living conditions in them. The ultimate motivation is to generate criticism not only about how to address the problems in the neighborhoods but also to make them feel part of the city and not a marginal limit. Being a part of the city that has often been denied the opportunity to visualize how such a problematic and sponta-

neous space can be the concealer of great ideas and be a space for projects that modify the quality of life of its inhabitants.

2. Limitations of the study

The political and economic situation of Venezuela does not allow to have a vision that represents the figures and representative data for the study and analysis some of its dependencies: Neither the Ministries of Habitat and Housing (Ministerio de Vivienda y Habitat), nor the social comptroller of the Republic(Contraloría General de la República) gave any response to the request for specific information on the housing deficit quantification data, not the estimated budgets per year for investment in social housing. In this case, the data and figures obtained are directly from investigations obtained from non-profit organizations or investigation teams that follow the cases of public investment or the various housing problems.

In the current process of developing the Thesis project, the difficulty and effort in the midst of a global pandemic must be recognized: Covid-19, which greatly hindered the fluidity of the investigation due to the different lockdowns both in the city of Turin and in the city of Caracas, from where most of the data for the investigation were extracted.

3. Objectives

The general objective of this thesis is to generate criticism and awareness about how architects and urban planners can approach the idea of projecting in the neighborhood (barrio). Recognizing how it was generated from its beginnings, recognizing this space as an important part of the city and categorizing its opportunities and main problems to develop a critical

vision on how to build in it. Urban informality as part of the architecture of the city, and cannot be marginalized, but rather addressed since its inhabitants must have the same rights and opportunities as those who do not inhabit these spaces. Architecture must be able to find a response to informality, a possibility that is not to demolish and start urbanizing from scratch but rather to provide comfort and a sense of local and social identity.

The specific objectives are:

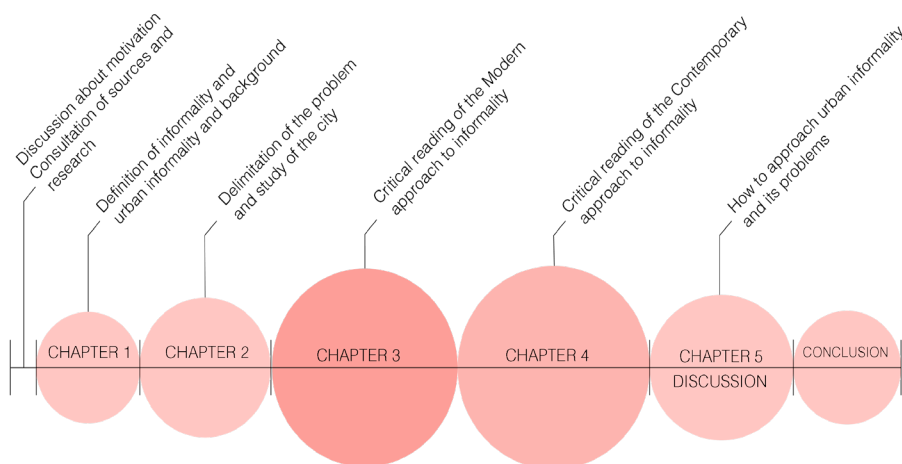
1. Make a critical reading from the actions of the state regarding the management and treatment of informal settlements, population and about informality in the city.
2. Show and describe the growth of the city describing not only the evolution of the physical footprint of the city but also the population.
3. Describe the role of the Venezuelan State in the development of the 3 projects in the city that fight the informal urban, making an analysis of their objectives and scope.
4. Based on the experiences of informality and its developments in the city, recognize the strategies and possibilities necessary to consider generating opportunities in informal urbanism.

4. Thesis Structure

The thesis begins with the recognition of the context and motivations. In this case, the city of Caracas and its informality for the purpose of analysis and subsequent criticism to analyze

the experiences and possibilities of informal living (Introduction).

First, in chapter 1 we will review the definition of informality, and its basic concepts and approaches, and we will also focus on analyzing the population growth of the city of Caracas to understand how these dynamics boosted the growth of informal sectors in the city. Then we will delimit the city of Caracas and understand the processes and forms of the informal sector that are the main problem of informality in the city. In chapter 3 we will review 2 emblematic case studies that were plans to fight informality and informal settlements through a critical reading. In chapter 4 we will review contemporary approaches to solve the problems of urban informality, the case of the “Gran Mision vivienda Venezuela”, the vertical gyms and the metrocable to close with Chapter 6 which is a discussion on the lessons over the years and how to generate a hypothesis on how to approach urban informality and its problems through design. Finally we will end with the general conclusions of the project and some ideas on how to approach urban informality projects in the future.



Scheme developed by the author.

5. Data collection methodology:

For the final collection of the data for the analysis, a generalized archiving of sources was carried out in stages: first an analysis of the physical bibliography in Italy provided by the different Italian tutors and assistants in conjunction with visits to the Library of the Polytechnic of Turin. Secondly, a digital bibliography of European and Latin American educational portals and a review of promotion works and thesis at the Central University of Venezuela.

Also, for more general support with theoretical material on urban theory in Venezuela, we had the support of Professor Hilda Torres from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the UCV.

All historical cartography refers to research documents, as well as the most up-to-date cartography that was obtained from the Office of National Cartography (la Oficina de Cartografía Nacional) in Caracas, Venezuela.

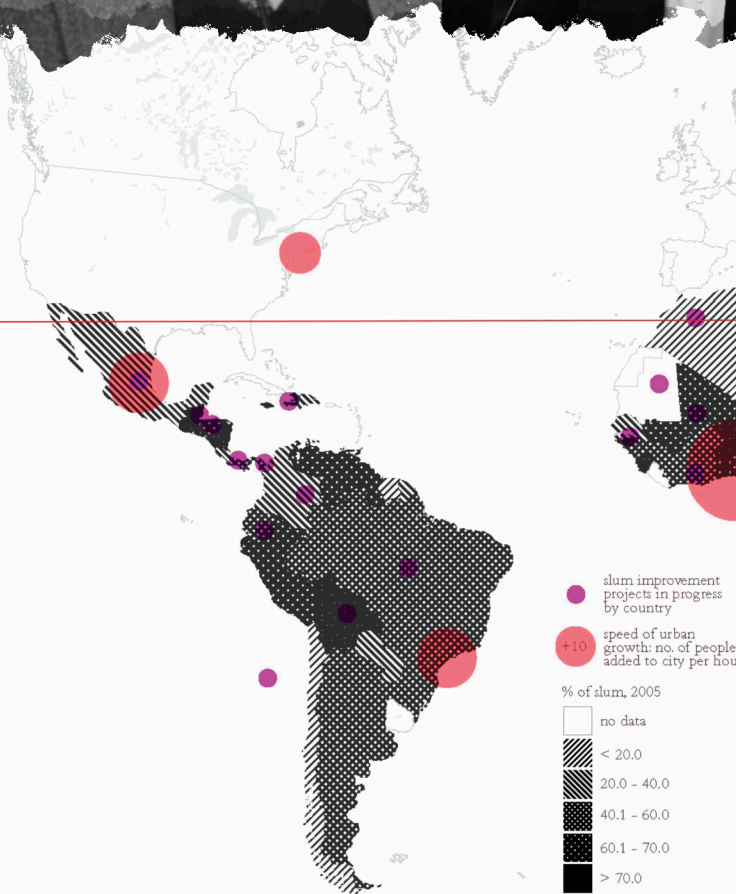
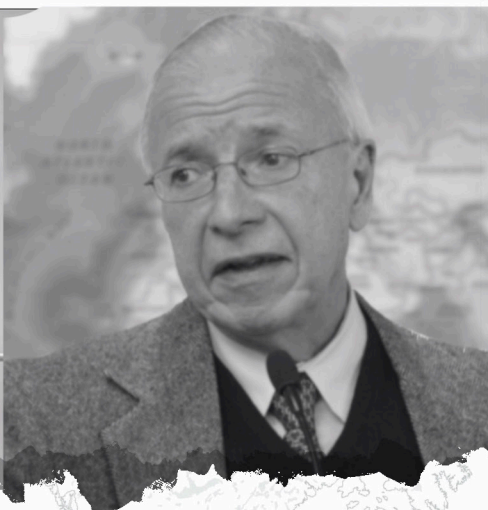
6. Motivation of the study the Urban Informality

Currently in the world there are approximately one million people living in informal slums worldwide. This being a number that is expected to double by 2030. Between 60 and 90 percent of urban growth is taking place in slums. every day more than 150,000 people leave the countryside and most of them go to non-formal and extra-legal settlements. Caracas through the years has established its urban growth in non-formal areas. These informal settlements are marginalized from the city in terms of equipment and services, which deteriorates and disqualifies the people who inhabit them. The citizens of

these neighborhoods deserve the same rights and opportunities as the citizens of the city that was planned.

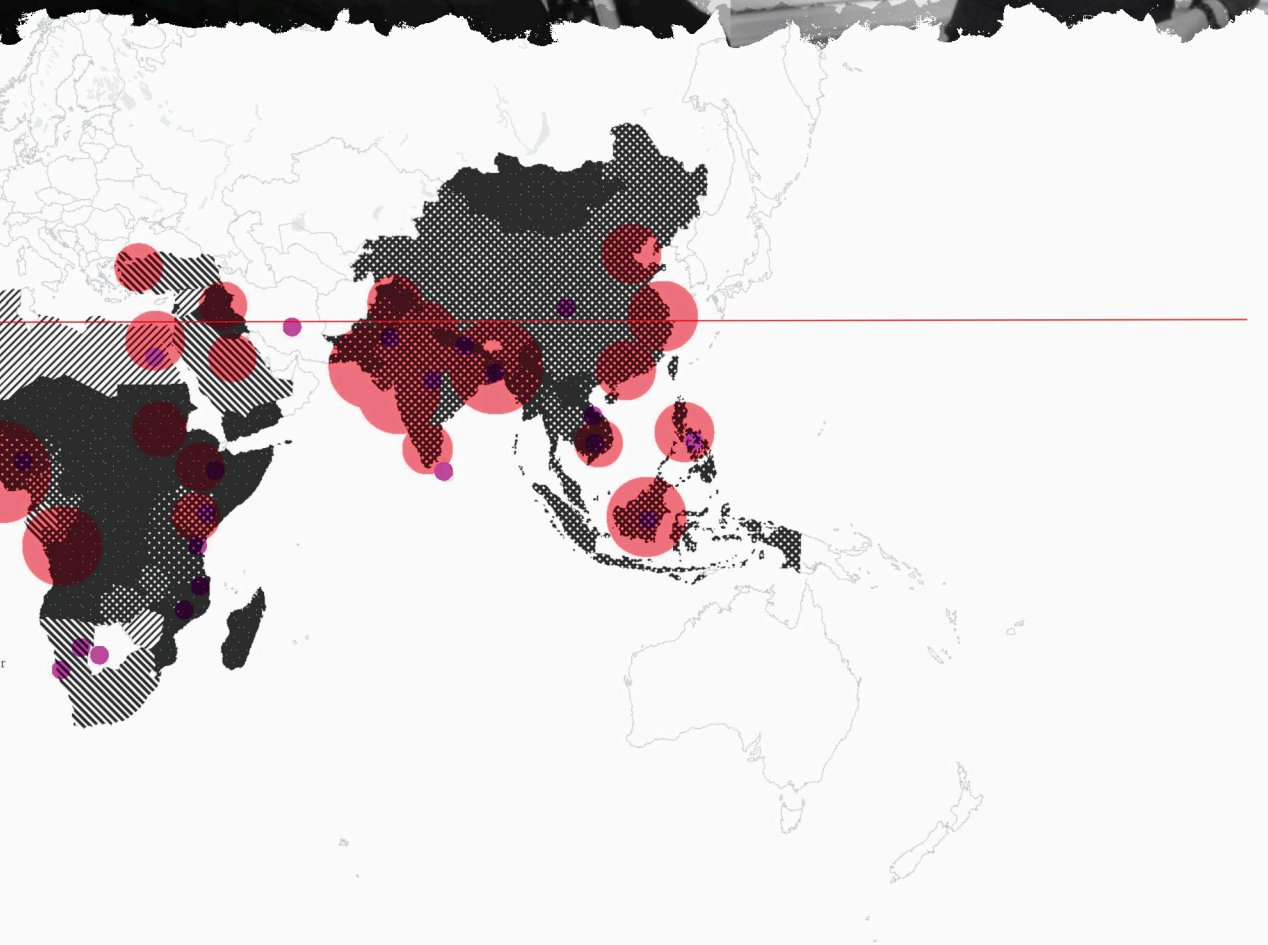
7. Reason for the Selection of the Study Cases.

Whether it is one of the upswings of the Venezuelan economy, each plan is part of the socio-spatial formation of the Venezuelan city. The redevelopment of “El Silencio” is the city’s first sanitation plan and the first mass-produced housing plan that is part of a larger total urban plan (“The Plan Rotival”). It was conceived just after the discovery of oil in Venezuelan lands at the beginning of the 20th century. The urban plan in the “2 de Diciembre”, later named “23 de Enero”, is also part of an urban plan called “Cerro Piloto”: a plan that used the expropriation of land and demolition of the barrios (favelas). The biggest Social Mission of Housing in Venezuela: “Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela” is part of a gigantic program of policies of social interest that have the purpose of providing “decent housing” to people with fewer resources. It is a plan with different scopes that I build and continues to build housing blocks in the city. “The San Agustin Metrocable is the most recent urban equipment system in terms of transportation services for informal settlements and The vertical gymnasiums on the other hand are a condensed solution of various sports facilities in the city, without a doubt these spaces have become an efficient implementation of multipurpose use in function to the current needs of sports and recreational spaces not only in the slums but in various sectors of the city. These case studies were chosen to analyze how critical thinking evolved in relation to informal settlements and housing deficits. And also, to evidence a trend in the government’s efforts to solve the problem of informal settlements.



CHAPTER 01

THE BACKGROUND



1.1. WHAT IS INFORMALITY?

Until now there has not been a single definition of informality, there is at least one different definition according to each discipline. Economists, architects, and many different professionals have proposed different explanations for this phenomenon. One of the first academic definitions of informality is defined by British architect John FC Turner in 1963, who framed informal developments as a self-produced housing solution due to the shortage of shelters for people from urban poor in developing nations (Van Ballegooijen & Rocco, 2013). Turner described many characteristics of informal developments; the concept was still limited to self-built settlements in precarious conditions. It was not until 1973 that Hart proposed a definition that, oriented to economic activities, was applicable to Urban Studies and Other sciences. This definition was always referred to duality: Formality and informality. These were considered separate economic “sectors” with completely adverse characteristics. While the formality was considered modern, standardized, and stable; Informality was precarious, unregulated, and chaotic. (Hart, 2008; Kucera & Roncolato, 2008; Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2015). Many academics reacted against this position and rejected the idea of informality as an isolated and subnormal sector. These proposals were classified into 4 main approaches, divided mainly by their views on the causes of Informality (Hart, 2008). Initially 2 aspects were called structuralist and legalistic, these

highlighted the macroeconomic causes and the legal causes of Informality Respectively (Larson, 2002; Rakawski, 1994; Roy, 2005; Van Bellegooijen & Rocco, 2013). More recently, 2 other aspects of the literature were identified as Voluntarists (Chen, 2012; Recio, Mateo-Babiano, & Roitman, 2017) and the approach of Critical Governance (Davis, 2017; Goodfellow, 2016; Mukhija & Loukaitou- Sideris, 2015). The first pointed to the individual agency and the second to governance as the main responsible for informality. In general, diverse, and often contradictory attitudes towards the informal sector have shaped the understanding of informality until now.

1.2 INFORMALITY APPROACHES

The Dualistic Approach:

The history of definitions of informality was inaugurated in 1973 with the ideas of Keith Hart for ILO in Ghana. He explained that “the distinction between formal and informal opportunities is based essentially on that between wage-earning and self-employment. The key variable is the degree of rationalization of work”(Hart, 1973 p. 68). Hart added that the companies that managed to be surveyed were considered the modern sector or the “formal sector” of the urban economy, while the remaining companies were considered “low productivity”, or simply the “informal sector”. Hart’s theories suggest that there is an exact and unequivocal division between the two economic sectors coexisting: the formal sector defined as the rational, modern, and well-organized sector, while the informal sector was reminiscent of the other as a precarious, pre-modern and inefficient sector. The relationship between the formal and informal sectors is based on the dualism of these postulates. This only means that the informal sector is

considered totally opposite to the formal sector, although they coexist and are part of the global economy (Hart, 1973; ILO, 2002; Moser, 1978). Informality is considered non-precarious, composed of self-employed or small companies, generally without sophistication and low productivity (Rakowski, 1994). The dependence of the informal sector on the Formal is assumed in theory. While the formal sector is stable and reliable, the informal sector is risky and highly variable (Hart, 1973). Informality is caused by the nature of the industrialization process, in which the population grows and creates an oversupply of labor in the cities. Informality serves as a safety net against unemployment and as a survival strategy used by the urban poor (ILO, 2002). Hart concludes that the informal sector would disappear if the developed world guaranteed sustainable economic growth and industrialization (Hart, 1973).

The structuralist approach

In 1989 Castells and Portes identifying informality as a crucial factor incorporated into the economic system. Informality is defined as: “Unregulated by the institutions of Society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated” (Castells and Portes, 1989). The authors delimited a clear line between informality and illegality, since illegality is an economy specialized in the production of illicit goods or services while the production of the informal economy is considered legal. In this theory the informal only refers to the process of production and exchanges but not to the result or production as such. These discretions are artificial, since they arise directly from the regulation and are discretionary for the definitions of the regulatory frameworks. This means that: once the state defines the limits of the formal economy, it also establishes the limits of informality.

The differences between formality and informality are artificial for structuralists since institutions create and modify this division. There is only one economy with formal and informal activities and both aspects depend on the other economy (Portes, Castells & Benton, 1989). This means that informality is not the same as poverty or marginality. This goes beyond social classes and could emerge anywhere in the world. In fact, the formal sector is the product of an institutionalization of working conditions and non-wage benefits for industrial workers in the Global North (Recio et al., 2017). Therefore, the differences between informality and formality are related to institutions. Portes considers that informality is not only an isolated sector in underdeveloped or poor regions, but a structural characteristic of the capitalist system.

For structuralism, informality is rooted in the economic system. The economic conditions of the Post-Fordist era created a polarization between the upper and lower social strata. This polarization had visible representations in the highly segregated spatial organization of Modern cities. (Castells 1977). High-income gentrification and low-income survival economic activities are spatially shaping modern cities. These phenomena have opened doors to urban informality in many forms such as small businesses in residential neighborhoods or unauthorized changes in land use and settlements in intra-urban areas. Urban informality for structuralists is visible and in the high end and in the low end of the extremes of cities due to the economic polarization caused by the modern capitalist system.

The Legalistic approach

The legalistic approach was led by Hernando de Soto, who argued that the formal sector neglected the informal sector. This approach recognizes that even the poorest households have financial capital, but informal housing tenure and rental agreements prevent them from accessing formal economic opportunities. “Formal property representation such a title is not a reproduction of the house, like a photograph, but a representation of our concepts about the house. Specifically, it represents the non-visible qualities that have potential for producing value”(De Soto, 2000). Therefore, for this approach, formality has a utilitarian value that derives from the ability to create and exchange wealth and capital in modern societies. Legalists argue that informality originated from an excessive number of exclusionary regulations and practices, while compliance with these regulations and practices involved complicated and costly bureaucratic processes that excluded the urban poor. Legalists confer the responsibility on the state to create discriminatory regulations that favor privileged economic groups, and because of these formal companies benefited from regulations and policies that hinder the growth of possible competitors. While informality is composed of microentrepreneurs who are forced to work informally to counteract the excessive cost and regulations required to work in the informal sector (De Soto, 2000). Therefore, regulatory systems disadvantage informal businesses by leaving them out of regulations.

The legalistic approach has won the support of international agencies and has helped to frame policies that aim to free markets and privatize public companies. Regarding urban planning, it is considered that the regulation of land use is one of

the most important causes of informality. Zoning and other land regulations increase the cost of access to housing and encourage illegal occupation. Consequently, more accessible property rights and simplification of bureaucratic systems are some of the most frequent policies recommended by legalists. The legalistic approach views state and urban policies and regulations as obstacles that force citizens and businesses onto the path of informality.

The Voluntarists Approach

In total opposition to the Legalists' approach, the voluntaristic approach exposes informality from an election rather than a result of excessive regulation. For voluntarists, informality is the product of a voluntary decision aimed at increasing competitiveness, avoiding regulations and taxes. This means that the degree of participation in institutions or "formality" is not always complex. Therefore, informality is not a mutually exclusive category, so citizens are involved in certain levels of formality and informality.

Voluntarists argue that no institutional or governmental distortions are required to generate an informal sector, so companies must transition from informal to formal as part of their natural evolution. Small and family businesses in the early stages remain informal as part of the conscious strategy to avoid regulations as part of the conscious strategy to avoid costly regulations, so they are expected to become more formal as they grow and acquire more experience. Formality is equivalent to participation in civil society institutions such as government programs, social security, legal and financial systems, commerce, and civic organizations. Households and workers prefer to use informality to increase their income without the

burden of welfare systems, but formality is also useful for accumulating capital and skills in regulated companies. Therefore, informal actors can voluntarily exit from formal regulations after various cost-benefit analyzes.

The voluntarists extended the definition of informality to high-income groups, as they assumed that everyone could bias and adapt to government policies. Elites and the middle classes often use informal means to build new houses. Therefore, citizens and companies are not imposing against the submissive authority of the state, so they can decide whether informality is appropriate or not after an analysis of things and benefits. For Volunteers, Informality is primarily a choice or a manifestation of the agency of individuals, while it is moderately related to the level of regulations imposed by the market and the state.

The Critical governance approach.

The critical governance approach identified the planning system as a cause of informality. Informality could be considered as a strategy of territorial and ethnic control created by the state, as occurs in colonial systems. As informality can be produced by state repression to guarantee political and social stability, citizens in unfavorable conditions can go against power. Thus, they can challenge and challenge power itself and legitimize previously informal practices. Therefore, informality is not an exclusively state activity, but citizens and formal companies can also participate. Citizens are not only subdued by state power, but they can also create tactics, organizations, and mobilizations to transform power structures and define the scope of informality (Yiftachel, 2009). While it is important to recognize that regulations and planning prac-

tices are the originators of informality, the critical governance approach places a greater focus on citizens as creators and modifiers of the formality-informality dichotomy.

Ultimately, informality is a strategy used by individuals and communities to achieve mobility and claim their rights and recognition. It is a logical system, it is a process in constant construction and redefinition of relationships that generates rules by operating, negotiating value and de-mapping space. It should not be understood only as a lack of planning, but as one of the many ways of generating citizenship. Informality varies in different contexts and historical circumstances.

Approach	Dualist	Structuralist	Legalists	Voluntarists	Critical Governance
Features of informality	Instability, non-predictability, low-productivity, non-modern, risky	Low cost labour, highly competitive, eclectic	Creativity, Constrained, Reactionary	Convenient, Strategic	Marginalized, Discriminated, Organized, Contradictory
Causes of Informality	Population growth without expansion of the industrial sector	Regulation of activities by the state and institutions. Global capitalism	Overregulation, Bureaucracy	Inefficient welfare systems. Firms and citizens agency	The discretionary nature of the planning system
Policy recommendations	Growth oriented policies. Expansion of the modern working sector	Labour protection policies, Support for entrepreneurship and innovation	Liberalization, privatization, deregulation	Reduce taxation and increase the quality of formal institutions. Enforcement when appropriate.	Planning system reforms.
Paradigmatic literature.	(Hart, 1973)	(Castells & Portes, 1989)	(De Soto, 2000)	(W. Maloney & Levenson, 1998)	(A. Roy, 2005)

Informality Approaches compared. Scheme by the author.

1.3 GROWTH PROCESSES OF LATIN AMERICAN CITIES:

Latin America is an ethno-geographic concept that appeared in the nineteenth century to identify a region of the American continent with the majority speaking of languages derived from Latin (mainly Spanish or Portuguese and to a lesser extent French).

Latin American cities since the second half of the twentieth century have been characterized in a special way as the result of a strong and marked population growth, which has been widely studied and characterized in recent years, showing that the need to urbanize the territory to make it habitable (in what is called urban development) is a trend that has taken on considerable magnitude in recent decades, making Latin America and parts of the Asian continent particular reference scenarios and in which, in the midst of the changing economic cycles generated by the adjustments of economic models within the framework of capitalism it produces in urban centers (especially in the region), impacts that are associated with the urban fact in the perspective of living, which should be aspects to be integrated into the routines of analysis, study and observation from a profound change in the ways of urbanizing.

These scenarios that have become complex, present other determinants that are also supported by the speculation that is generated by the accumulation of expansion areas that have the appropriate conditions, forcing the valorization of these areas of opportunity, by inducing scarcity, with which these suitable or “legal” surfaces (according to the State’s territorial organization instruments) escape the domain of the public in the State’s vision, producing collateral effects and profound changes in the urbanization models, since that many of the

social factors that produce the city were altered, with which the production of space in Lefebvre's terms is substantially transformed and these collateral effects from the urban have been little observed .

In this tension, the interpretation of the norms made by the State, played a central role, since being distant and not observing these realities in the sense of what was happening (not having the appropriate instruments), produced that spontaneity a characteristic of the fact of living was made, in a scenario already associated at this point with "illegality", (in the sense of not being part of the planning vision of the State), which translated into the condition of informality when develop.

Under this perspective, informality became the characteristic of the city and segregation a result, which, in the midst of social disputes caused to a great extent Due to the growing demands for minimum conditions of well-being in urban areas, it put unprecedented pressure on the State to understand, link and organize the territory from and with informality as a generator of the city; therefore, a form of urbanism that also produces it.

At this point, and having referenced the tension between the formal and the informal, it is possible to observe the contemporary city in Latin America as a sum of events of diverse natures, therefore, with determinants and conditioning factors that largely respond to the spontaneous and the conjunctural as the development framework, which presents characteristics to be studied from new proposals of approach to the scenarios, since urban theory or the history of the traditional city does not apply, due to the lack of its own inputs.

From this perspective, it is that structuring the reflections on the spaces that produce this multiple, hybrid and stressed city, is an input to build the concepts that are required to investigate the complex reality that characterizes Latin American cities today.

1.4 POPULATION GROWTH OF THE CITY OF CARACAS BETWEEN 1574 AND 1990

Demographic records are another important source to continuously understand the growth of the city. However, for the population figures of Caracas rather than a comparison focused exclusively on local data, it is necessary to take as a reference the proportion of the Caracas population contingent with respect to the total of Venezuela. This allows us to explore the relationship between the city and the territory of which it became the capital, just ten years after it was founded, displacing settlements that were created previously, such as Coro, El Tocuyo, Barquisimeto, from this role. just to mention those that had been designated in advance as capitals of the Province of Venezuela. It should be added, on the other hand, that this comparison, from the methodological point of view, allows solving the problem of inter-period estimates through which, among other calculations, population growth rates are determined. The demographic data of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suffer from the minimum periodization essential for this type of evaluation to be carried out. In a rigorous way, it is only from the 1st National Census, carried out in 1873 that estimates of the intercensal growth of the city could be made, with some precision; this would force to ignore more than three hundred years of history of Caracas. For this reason, and despite being aware of the problems of reliability of demographic information throughout the colo-

nial period and the first seventy years of republican life, a path that allows the understanding, even when approximate, of the dynamics and meaning of the Caracas settlement.

Under these considerations, and according to the data obtained from the different sources, the participation of the population of Caracas in the general total of Venezuela was below 10% until the third decade of the 20th century. During a good part of the 19th century, the minimum values of this relationship were recorded, when it was below 3%. In such a way that nineteenth-century history, characterized by confrontations of a different nature –emancipation, Federal War, revolutions, and counterrevolutions– constitutes the period that registers the lowest demographic participation of Caracas in the National total. These clashes caused restrictions on the growth of the city, possibly similar to those generated by the seismic and epidemiological emergencies of the seventeenth century, a century for which, unfortunately, no data could be obtained to make a comparison with the general total. In the history of natural disasters in colonial Caracas, the following stand out: the 1641 earthquake, the 1658 plague and the smallpox and black vomit in 1687. All these episodes meant the death of a significant part of the local population.

Starting in the last decade of the 19th century, a slow but sustained growth began in the participation of the Caracas population contingent in the total of Venezuela, largely due to the improvements introduced by J. Vicente Gómez in terms of urban health management. After Gómez's death, between 1936 and 1941, the population of the capital almost tripled, while that of the country barely increased by 12.6%, causing a significant jump in the demographic weight of Caracas in the nation. The city becomes a pole for national and interna-

tional immigration, as this period does not coincide with the Second World War for nothing. Until the 1970s, this trend was manifested in the constant increase in the rate of demographic concentration of the national population in the capital. For the year 1971, a maximum value of 24.53% was reached, that is, one out of every four Venezuelans lived in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas. Subsequently, the values show a downward orientation and by the XII Population and Housing Census, one out of every five Venezuelans lived in the Caracas metropolitan area. The demographic situation that has been registered since the end of the 19th century corresponds to the increases and decreases in investment by the Venezuelan State in public works in the capital, analyzed in the referred point of territorial expansion, but from the point of view population, the problem of reducing investments in capital-generating goods and services is manifested more dramatically, if one takes into consideration that in the last two decades, the marginal population has significantly increased its participation in the total of the metropolitan population residing in the Central Valley and SE sector. The population went from 17% at the end of the 1950s to almost 50% by 1978, subsequently decreasing - it must be borne in mind that the calculation for that year is based on estimates - until reaching 40, 4% in 1990 - calculation based on direct data-, a rate that still reflects the precariousness of the living conditions of 4 out of 10 Caracas.

According to J. Baldó and F. Villanueva (1995), it was required, at 1993 prices, around 259,750 million bolivars, in contrast, according to the figures for the period 1983-1993, the contribution of the Ministry of Urban Development (MIN-DUR) in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas, barely reached the general amount of 8,804.91 million; In other words, for the different purposes that office invested only the equivalent of

3.34% of what would be required exclusively for the consolidation of slums.

Year	Population Venezuela	Population Caracas	%
1574-1579	30.000	2000	6.6
1773-1784	199.084	18.669	9.3
1800	780.000	40.000	5.2
1802	728.000	42.000	5.7
1807	975.972	47.228	4.8
1810	825.000	-----	6.5
1816	758.259	21.000	2.8
1825	659.633	-----	4.0
1850	1.366.470	34.165	2.7
1873	1.784.194	48.897	2.8
1881	2.075.245	55.638	2.8
1891	2.222.527	72.429	3.3
1920	2.411.952	92.212	3,7
1926	2.814.131	135.253	4.8
1936	3.364.347	203.342	6.0
1941	3.850.771	561.415	14.5
1950	5.034.838	704.567	18.31
1961	7.523.999	1.675.278	22.27
1971	10.721.522	2.630.260	24.53
1981	14.516.735	3.379.540	23.28
1990	19.405.429	3.789.855	19.53

Percentage of the marginal population in the inner metropolitan area of Caracas. Taken from the urban evolution of Caracas. Indicators and interpretations on the development of the city-nature interrelation. By De Lisio Marco

Year	Total Population	Population in informal settlements	%
1959	1.498.785	252.916	17
1978	2.400.375	1.164.886	48,5
1983	2.603.591	1.143.401	43.9
1990	2.689.549	1.085.523	40.4

Percentage of the marginal population in the inner metropolitan area of Caracas. Taken from the urban evolution of Caracas. Indicators and interpretations on the development of the city-nature interrelation. By De Lisio Marco

1.5 MIGRATIONS AFTER THE WORLD WARS.

In Venezuela, traditionally, only those people who entered the country with an immigration visa were considered immigrant. That is, those who arrived under a particular regime, defined from the migration policies of the National Government. However, this was only a minority of the foreigners who arrived in our territory. To give an idea, between 1948 and 1961 (one of the periods in which the national migratory activity was most active) less than 15% of foreigners who arrived in the country entered with an immigrant visa. Since its birth, in two centuries of republican life, Venezuela has seen a great number of people arrive who settled in these lands and left their mark. It is a phenomenon that, with greater or lesser intensity, has been constantly maintained to this day; however, it seems that little by little we are losing consciousness of it. Furthermore, in the face of the particular situations experienced in rich and industrialized countries, mainly in Europe and North America, immigration is increasingly understood as a problematic and negative phenomenon.

In 1955, “a year that is framed in the context of one of the main European immigration currents that arrived in Venezuela”, Miguel Acosta Saignes, in an article entitled “Indigenous and African elements in the formation of Venezuelan culture”, raised the Importance of also considering immigrant components of Venezuelan nationality: Intense immigration of Portuguese, Italians, and other Europeans is sowing new seeds. The primary work of the Venezuelan is to understand how elements from various origins merge at each step, at each hour in history to give national features. Ours will be more and more profound, if we knowingly incorporate what comes from other lands, on the fundamental historical substrate that the Colony

left us. Thus, Venezuela will be, increasingly more Venezuela.

With the start of the World War, that year the migratory flows were totally diminished until 1945. After the end of the conflict, the government of Medina Angarita established a commission to study how the country should address the imminent exodus that would be generated from the continent European.

The New National Ideal and the “open door” policy: During the dictatorial period between 1948 and 1958, the Government gave an abrupt change to the immigration policy that had been consolidated during the ADECO triennium. Leaving aside the efforts to direct and locate immigration, the new strategy would be characterized fundamentally by the relaxation of the requirements for the entry of foreigners, fundamentally with passer-by visas, giving rise to the period that has been called “open doors”. When reviewing the national migratory balances for those years presented, it is possible to observe how the entry of immigrants throughout this period was continuous, soaring mainly after 1953:

Year	Migratory balance
1948	36.999
1949	26.404
1950	27.421
1951	24.011
1952	28.948
1953	36.080
1954	45.865
1955	57.542
1956	44.780
1957	46.056

Migratory balances. Taken from Traces of immigration in Venezuela. Empresas Polar.

Nationality	1948	1951	1955	1958	1961
No nationality	1.9	*	*	*	*
Germans	1.0	2.7	1.9	1.4	1.7
Argentines	*	*	1.4	1.3	1.2
Colombians	4.9	4.2	1.3	7.6	12.8
Costa Ricans	1.3	*	*	*	*
Cubans	4.0	*	*	2.6	13.2
Spaniards	16.0	33.4	37.2	41.3	26.1
Americans	12.8	6.0	3.1	6.8	5.5
French	3.3	1.8	*	*	*
British	3.3	1.8	*	1.3	*
Dutch	1.3	*	*	*	*
Hungarians	1.4	*	*	*	*
Italian	27.5	35.5	34.3	16.2	18.3
Lebanese	*	*	1.5	1.0	1.6
Polish	5.4	*	*	*	*
Portuguese	4.4	5.5	12.2	9.0	9.0
Russian	1.3	*	*	*	*
Syrians	*	*	*	2.0	2.4
Others	9.2	9.1	7.1	9.5	8.2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentage of General Registration of Foreigners, Taken from Huellas de la inmigración de Venezuela. Empresas Polar

“Huellas de la inmigración en Venezuela” the retrospective review of the immigration processes experienced by Venezuela during the Republican period allows us to appreciate that these were only quantitatively significant once the 20th century entered. Likewise, when reviewing the relationship between the total population of Venezuela and the figures of those residing in the country born abroad during the 20th century, it is observed, as Baptista has suggested, 205 that the migratory peaks towards Venezuela (1961 and 1981) corresponded to the periods in which the economic situation of the country was more favorable.

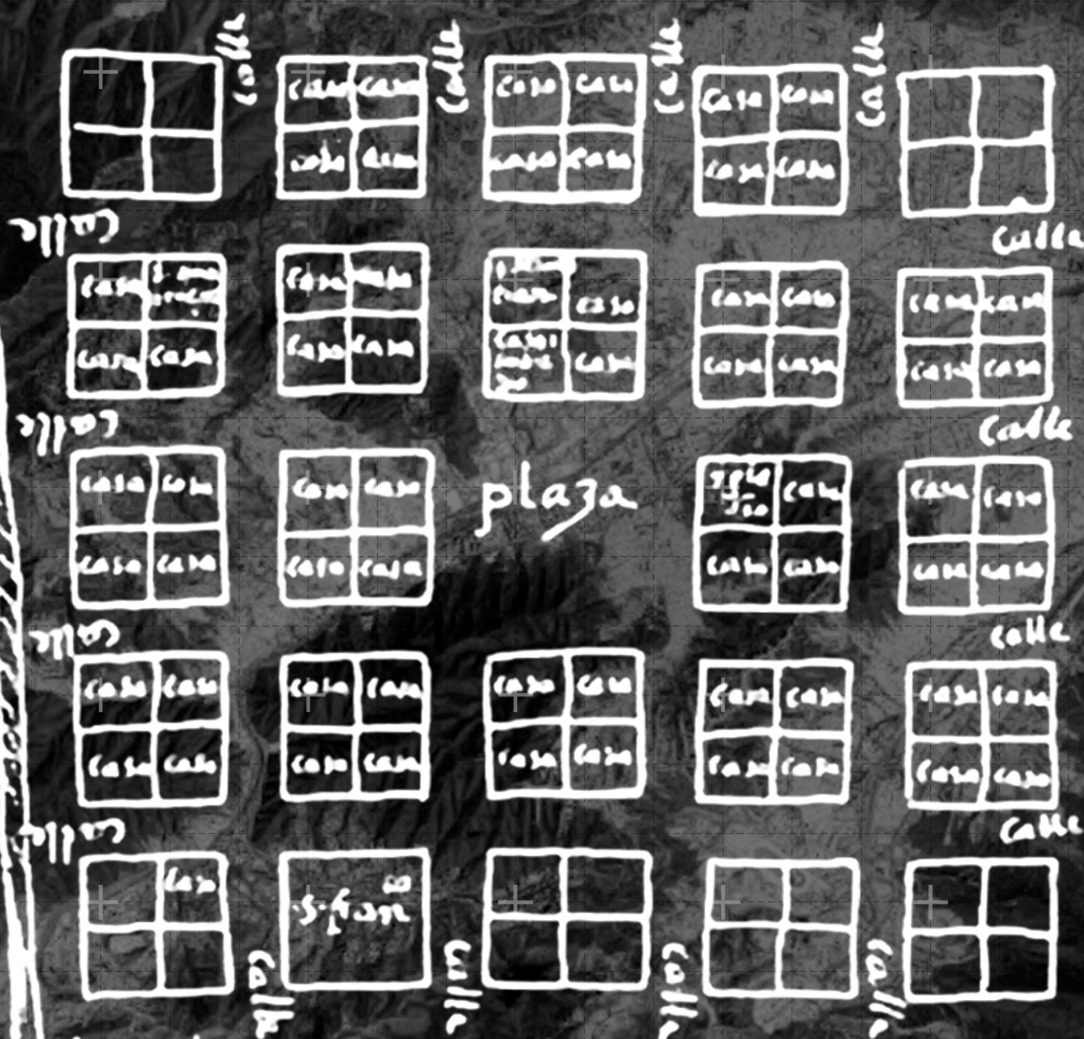
The analysis of the percentage distribution of the population born abroad residing in Venezuela between 1941 and 2001, shows that in the middle of the century Italians and Spaniards predominated; place that Colombians will occupy from 1981. It is true that the immigration that has reached Venezuela has not been as quantitatively significant as in other countries on the continent. For example, between 1870 and 1915, the United States received around 21.357.000 immigrants, which by that date amounted to 20% of its total population, and Argentina, which had 8 million inhabitants by 1915, received during the same period to 2,991,000 immigrants, which represented 37% of its population. On the other hand, in Venezuela during those years of immigration boom, the population of foreign origin never reached 8% of the national total. However, qualitatively these immigrants left their traces throughout the country, marking the Venezuelan nation of today with their imprint.

Country	1941	1950	1961	1971	1981	1990	2001
Spain	13.9	18.2	30.8	25.1	13.5	10.1	7.5
Italy	6.3	21.1	22.5	14.8	13.5	6.0	4.9
Portugal	1.3	5.2	7.8	10.1	8.7	6.7	5.3
Colombia	34.0	22.0	18.9	30.2	47.3	51.7	59.9
USA	7.2	5.6	2.5	1.9	1.2	-	-
Other	37.3	27.9	17.5	17.9	21.8	25.5	22.4
Total (in Inhabitants)	49.928	208.731	541.563	596.455	1.074.129	1.025.894	1.015.538

The analysis of the percentage distribution of the population born abroad residing in Venezuela between 1941 and 2001. Taken from Huellas de la inmigración en Venezuela. Empresas Polar.

la ciudad de santiago de leon

El solar de cada casa tiene septenta barriles granos



La anchura de las calles son de treinta y dos pies

CHAPTER 02

THE SITE AND PROCESSES : CARACAS

Esta fuerte batido el pueblo difirandose

2.1 THE PLACE

Caracas is the capital and most important city of Venezuela. It is located within a mountainous valley in the north-central coastal area 15 kilometers from the Caribbean Sea, from which it is separated from the Wararira Repano National Park, better known as Ávila. A mountain range considered by citizens as an emblem and plant lung of Caracas.

The metropolitan area of Caracas includes five municipalities, stretching between two states of Venezuela: The Capital District (Libertador municipality) and part of the Miranda state (Chacao, Baruta, El Hatillo and Sucre municipalities). Caracas defined between the state of Miranda and the capital district has limits: To the north with the state of Vargas. To the south and east with the state of Aragua and Miranda and to the west with the state of Aragua. Caracas covers a total area of 776,481 km², with a population of 2,082 million inhabitants (2015) and a density of approximately 157 inhabitants / km² divided into 23 parishes. Numerous streams descend from Avila that feed the main Guaire river, which is 72 kilometers long and runs through the city from west to east. Due to the lively orography of the area, the altitude of Caracas varies from 870 to 1,043 meters above sea level, so the climate is very pleasant, that is why it is called “the city of Eternal Spring”. During the year, the temperature ranges from 17 ° C to 29 ° C, with an average temperature of 23 ° C with January and

December being the coldest months and April and May the hottest months.

Thanks to the increase in density, Caracas has become a highly populated city with limited spaces, for this reason parks, squares and public spaces play a fundamental role within the city. Parks and squares are social and cultural meeting points and give cities an identity and promote permeability between neighborhoods and buildings. Caracas has become the educational center of the country. There are currently a total of 23 universities, 9 public and 14 privates. Similarly, Caracas can be considered one of the most important cities from the cultural point of view, since it is characterized by the presence of numerous theaters, museums, libraries and exhibition halls.

Caracas has exceeded the administrative limits of its perimeter due to accelerated population growth, so that its most suitable demographic study territory is the Metropolitan District or Metropolitan Area of Caracas. According to calculations of the year 2011 by the National Institute of Statistics, the metropolitan city had a population for the 2011 census of 3,087,642 inhabitants (includes census omission 6.31%). The Metropolitan District represents less than 1% of the national territory and is home to one-fifteenth of the total population of the country. In percentage numbers, 9.2% of the nation's total population lives in the five capital municipalities of the 335 municipalities that comprise the country. (Negron, Marco. Nov 2005).



Haiti Rep. Dominicana

CARIBBEAN SEA

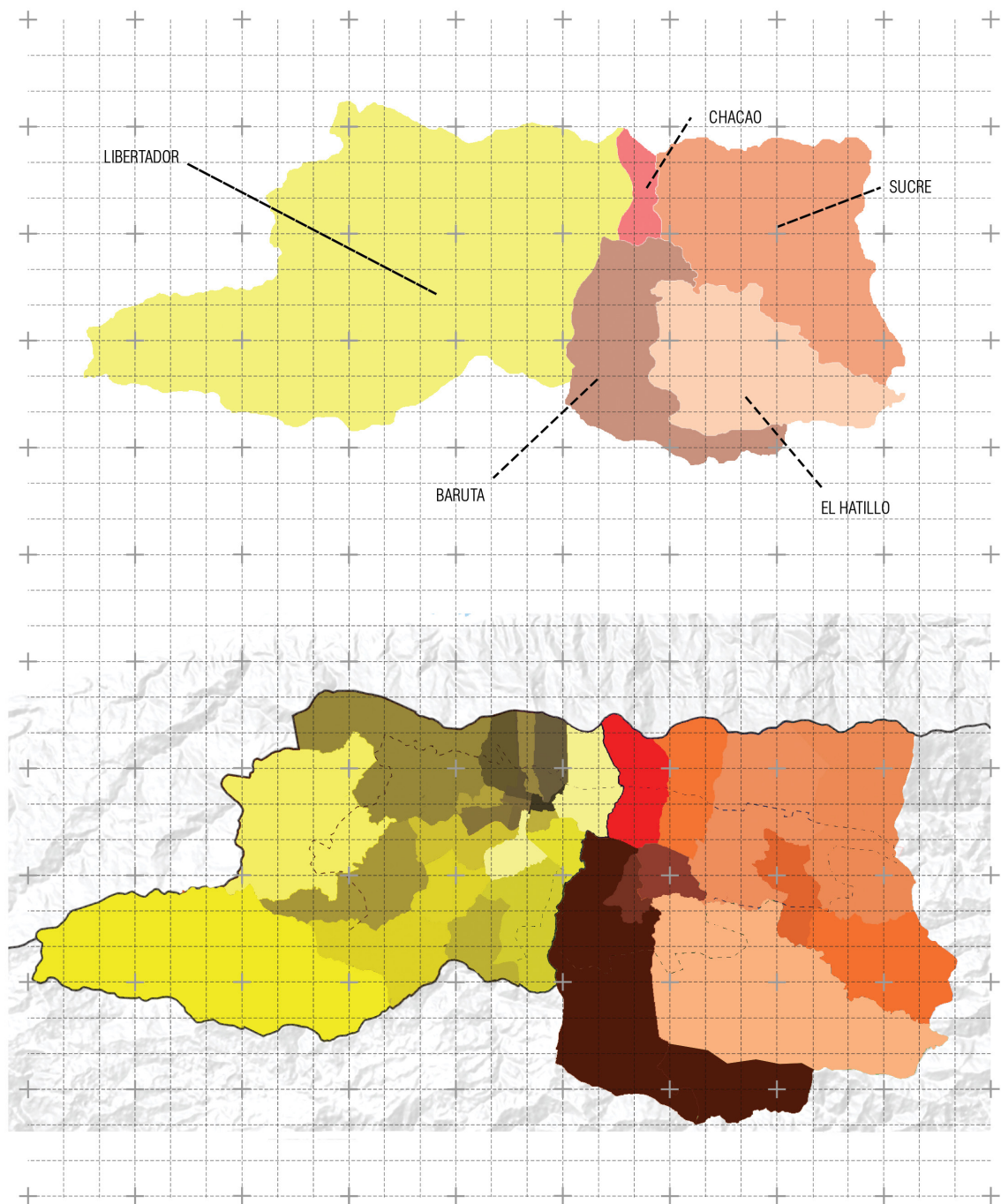
CARACAS

10°30'00"N 66°56'00"O

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Colombia

Brasil

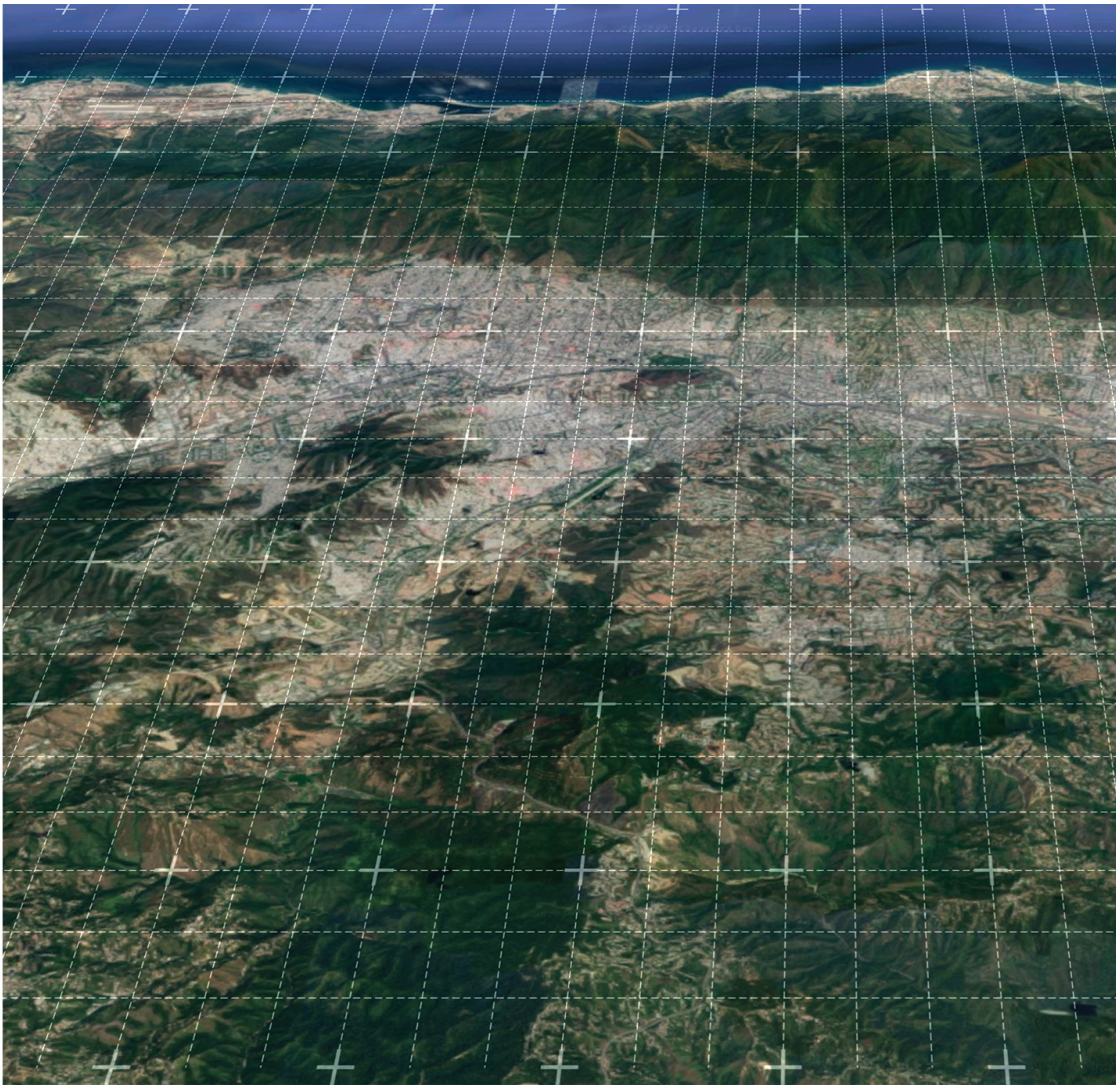


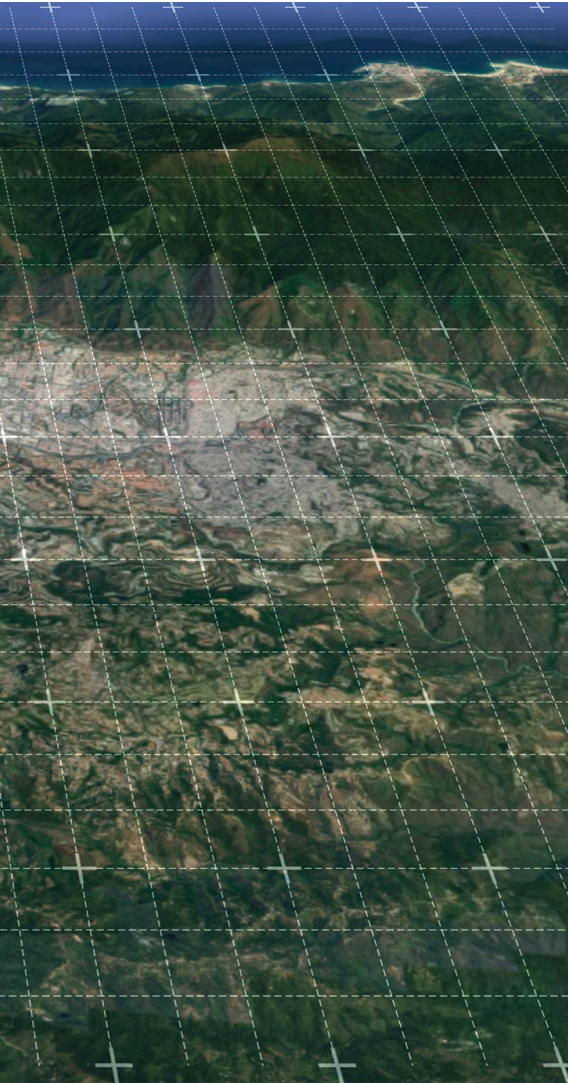
Location, municipalities and parishes.



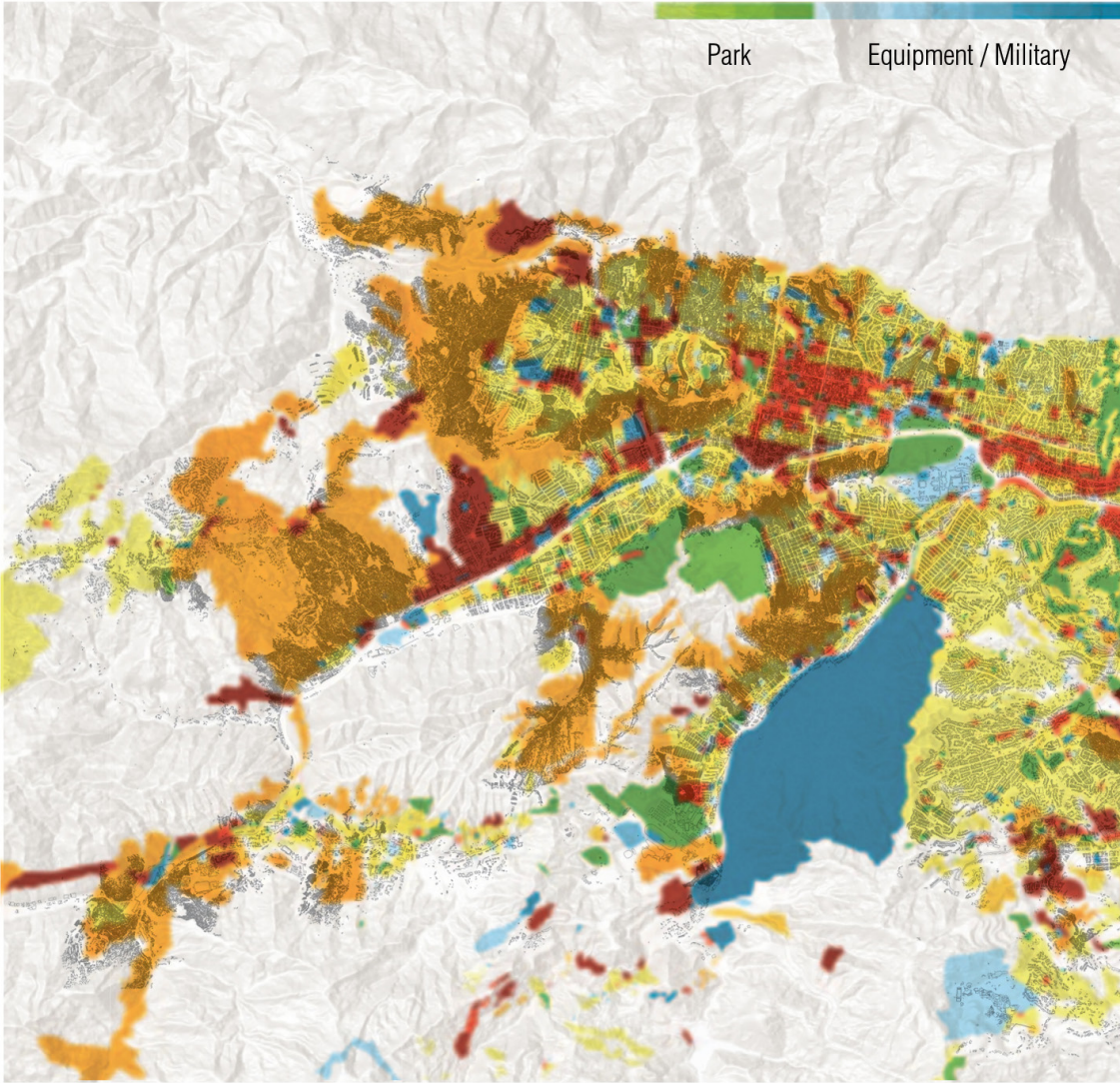


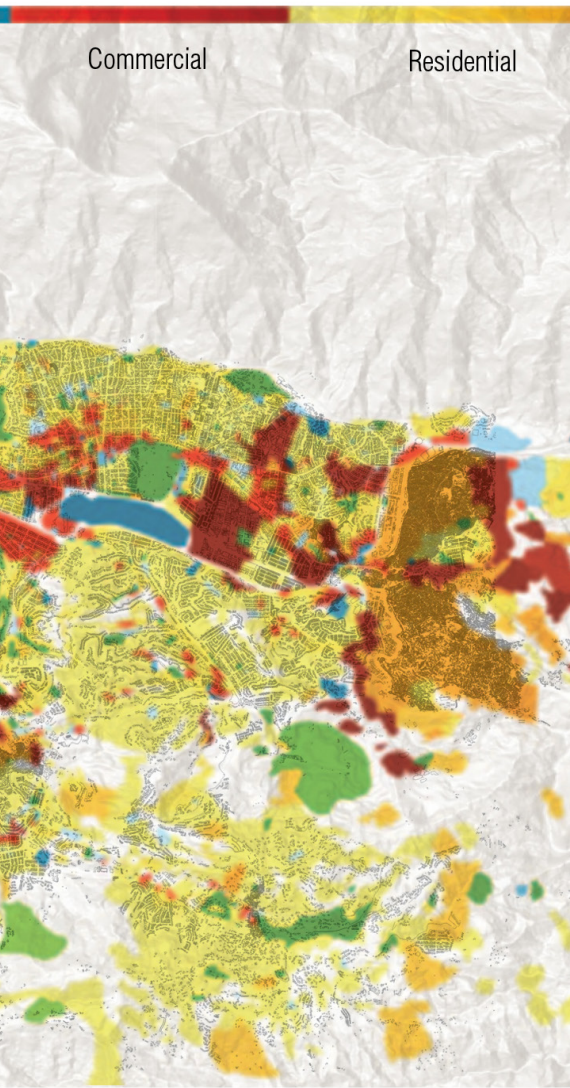
Satellite view of Caracas.-<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Caracas,+District+Capital,+Venezuela>





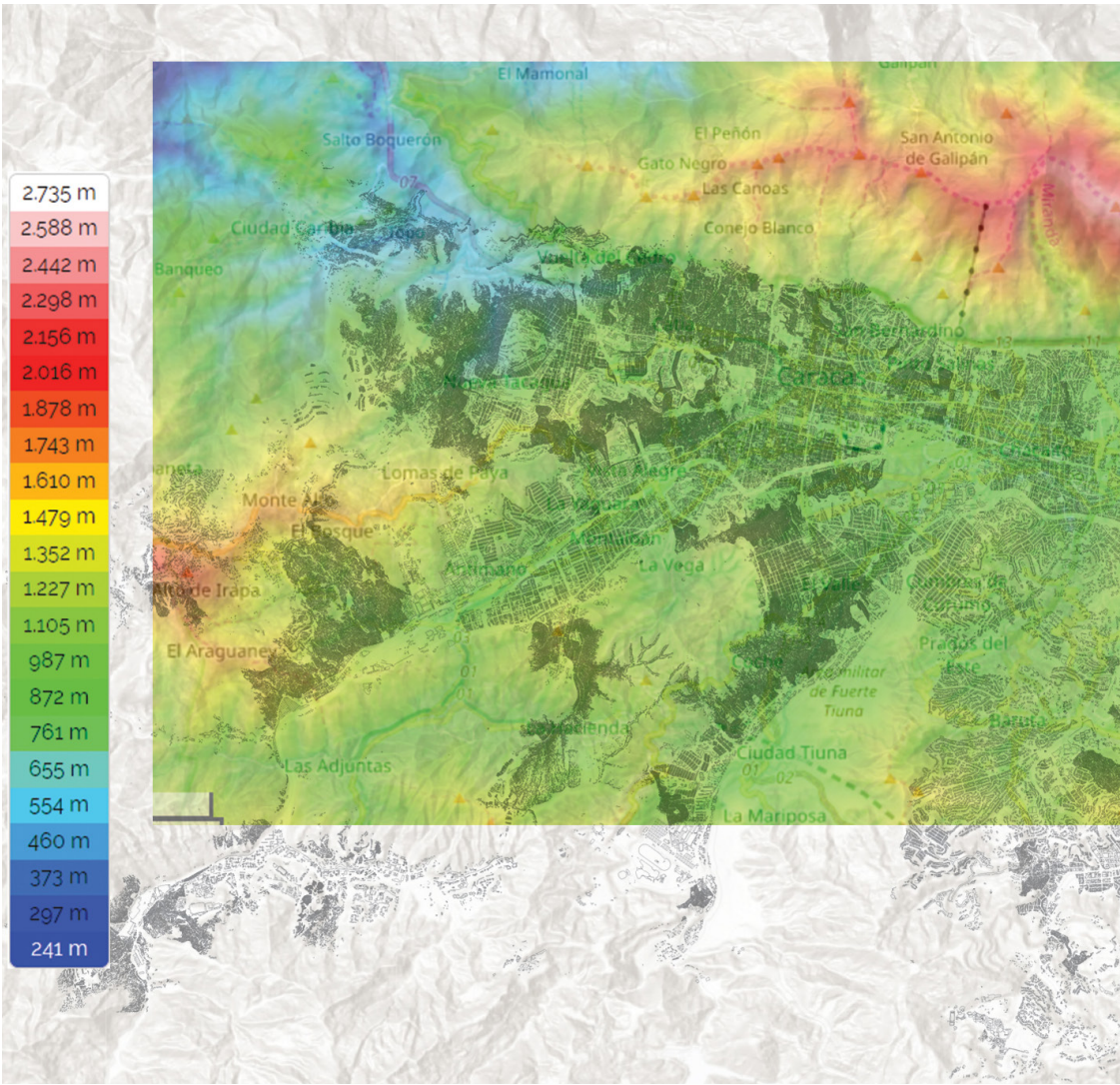
The privileged location of Caracas locates it in the center of a valley between the mountains, specifically the Guaraira Repano park.

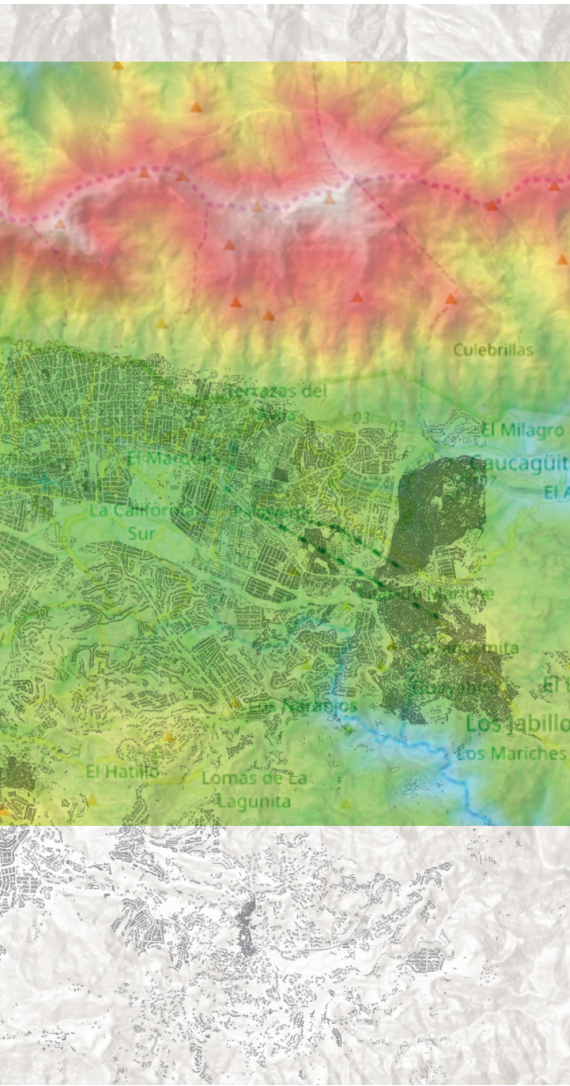




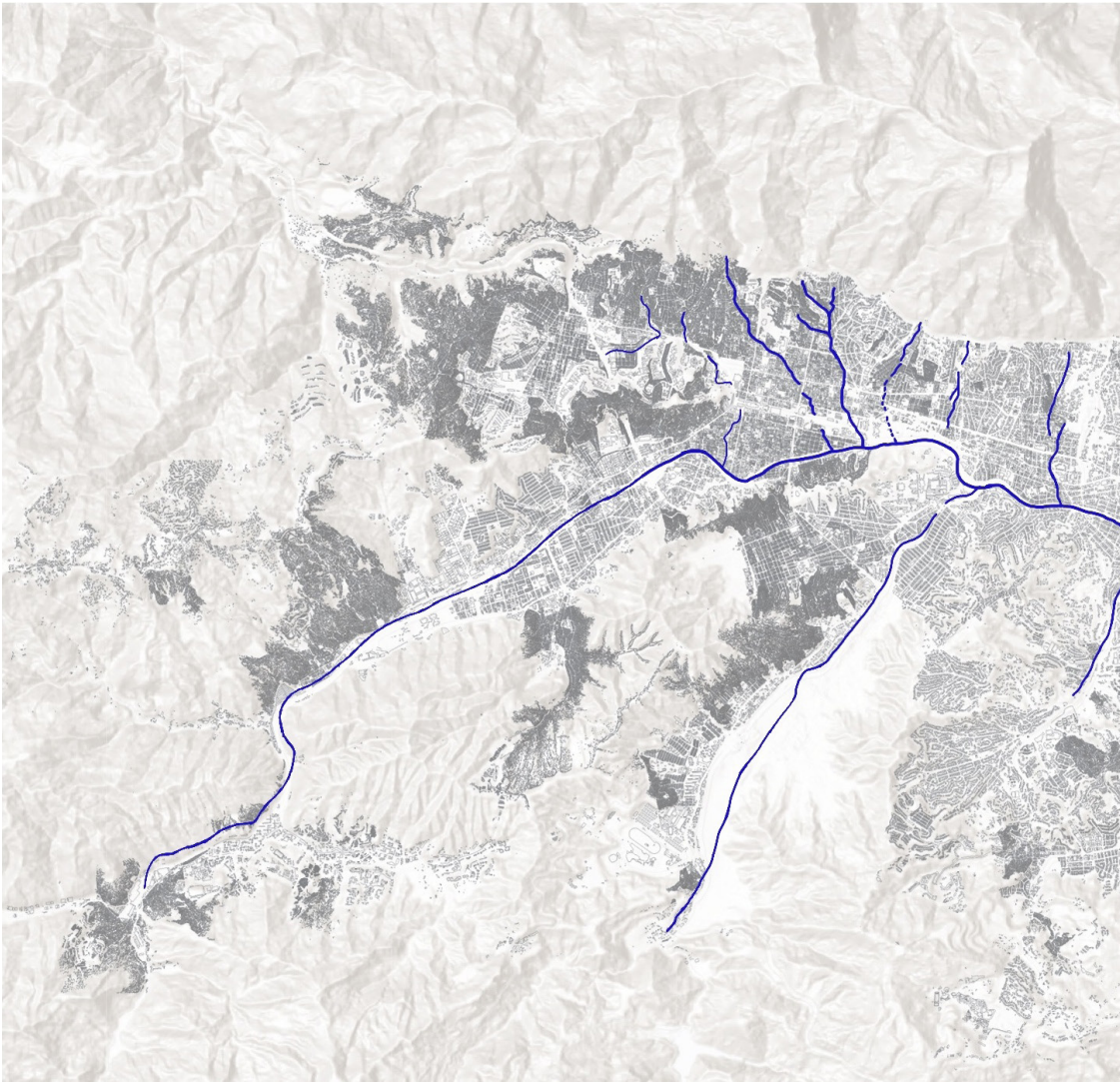
Land use is highly predominantly residential. The high densities of residents in the informal sectors of the city are represented in the orange colored blocks. These sectors are located in the periphery but there are also Barrios in the interior of the city.

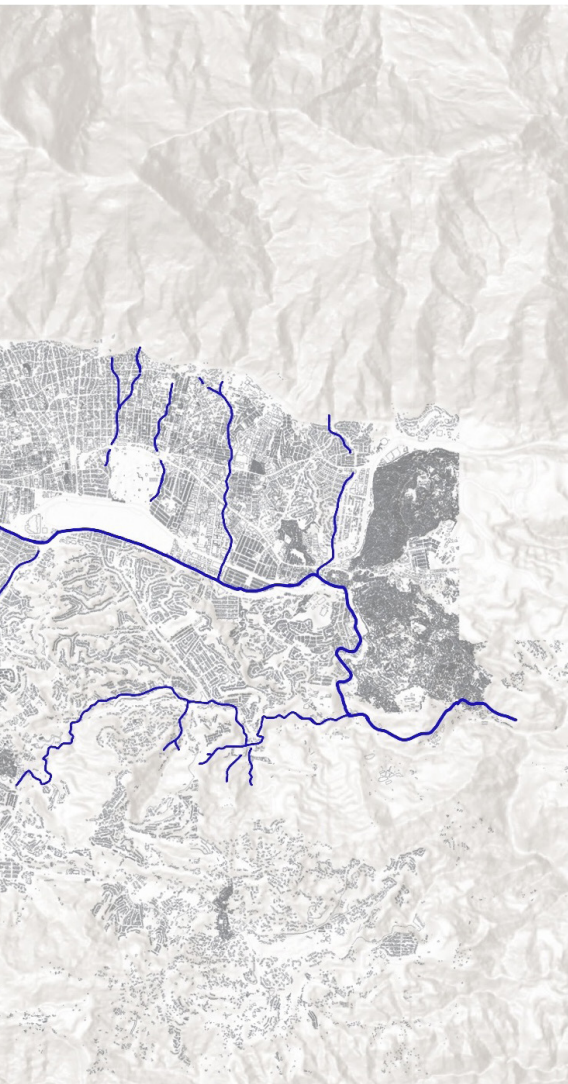
Land Use



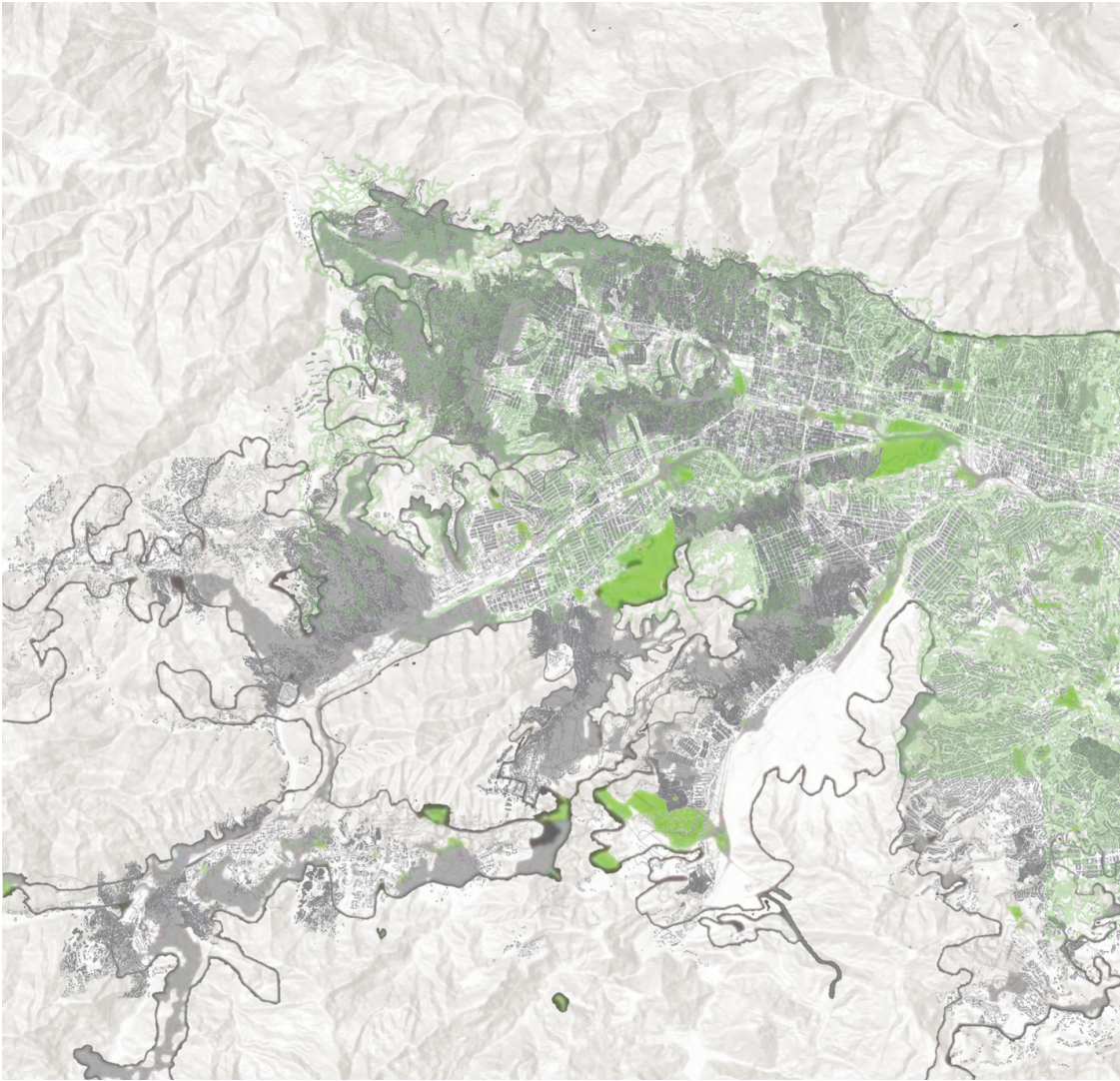


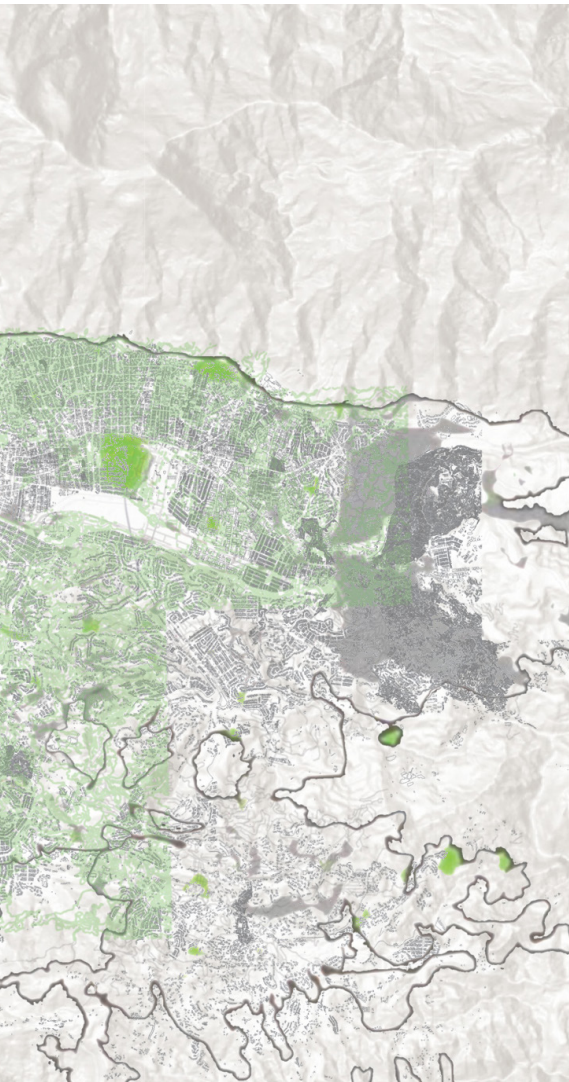
Topographic map of Caracas





Main Rivers and his Tributaries





Map of green areas and vegetation

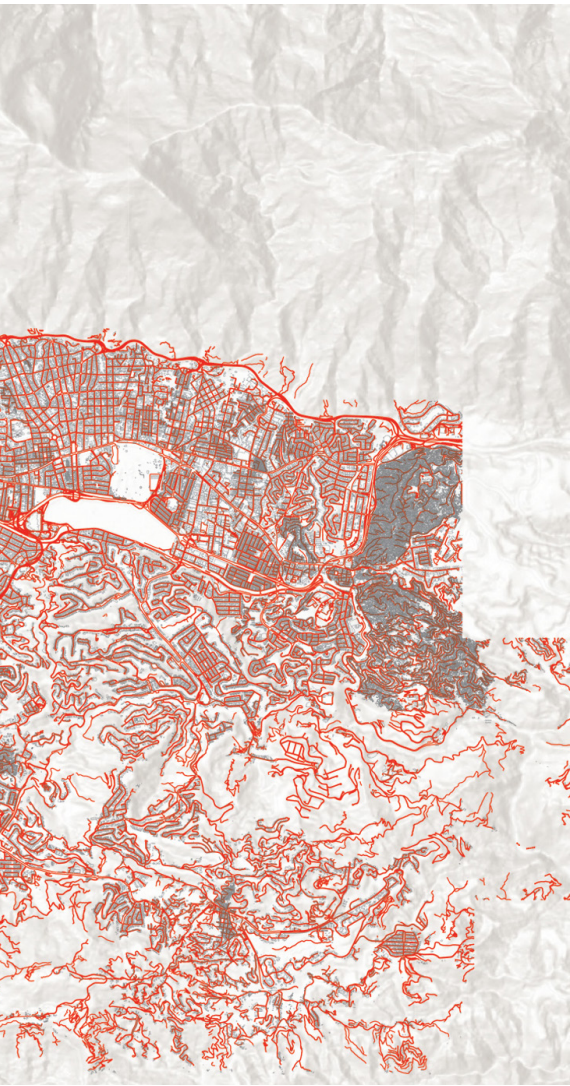




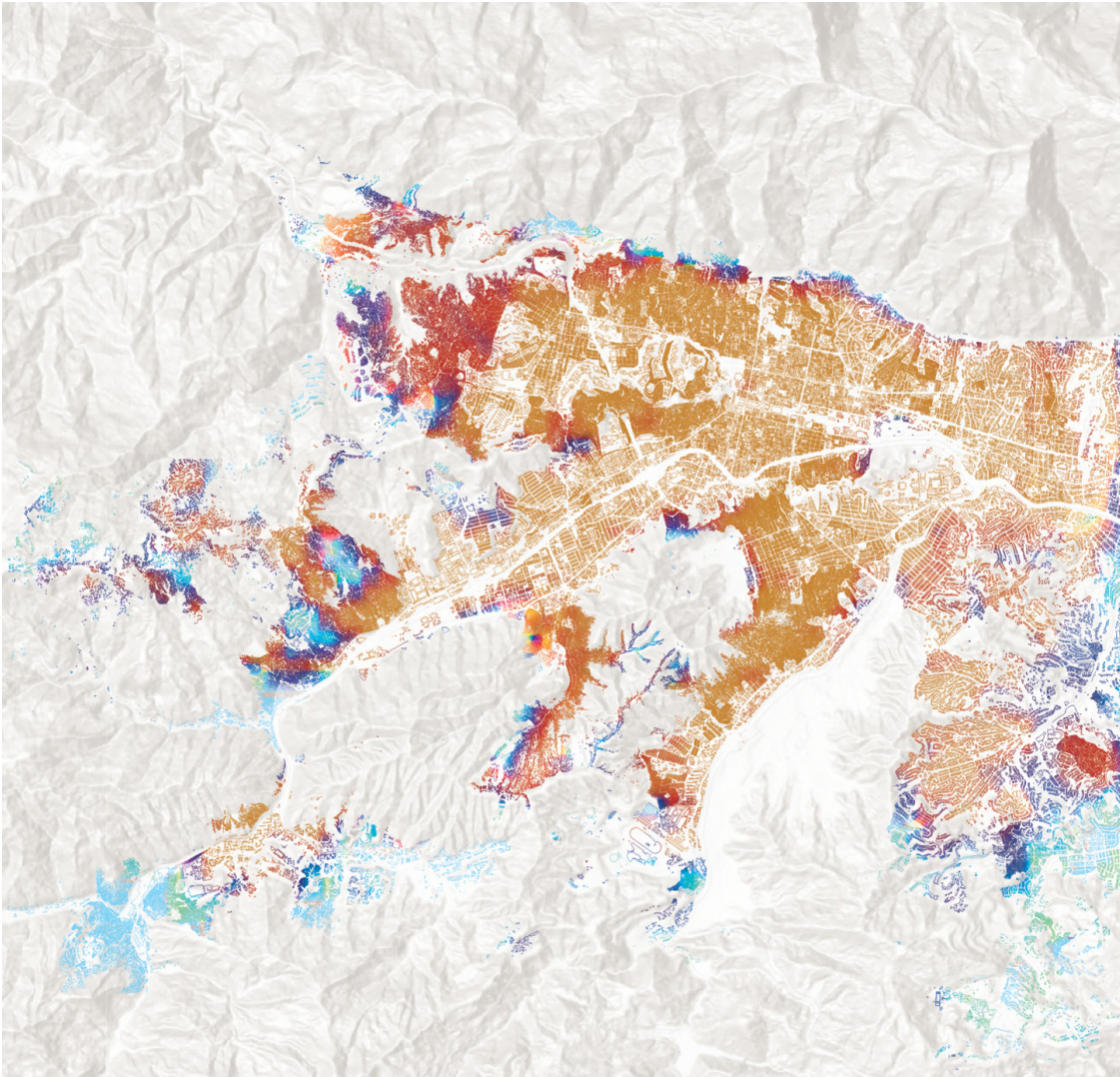
As a valley surrounded by mountains, the periphery of the city contains several high-risk sectors (Red). Many of these sectors adjoin or are within the Barrios sectors.

Landslide risk Map

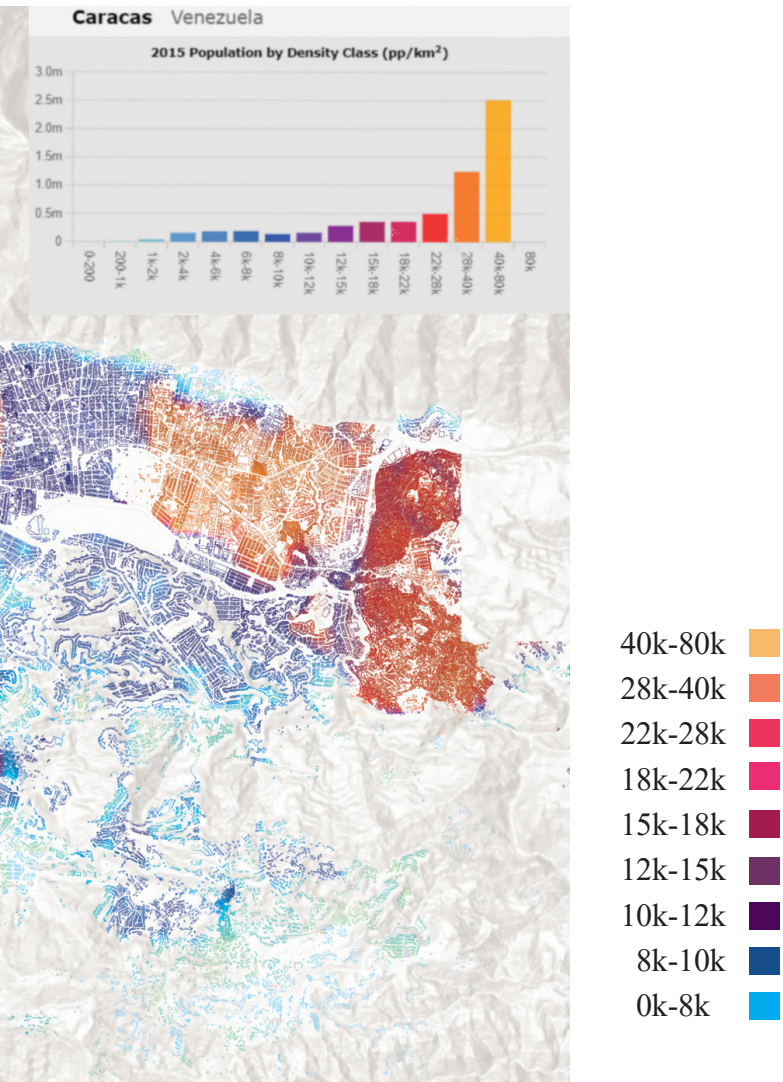




Road Network Map



Map of popu



Population density Class of Caracas (pp/km²) (2015)

2.2 THE BARRIOS OF CARACAS.

The most notable representation of the urban informality of the city is evidently the barrios: they are an essentially residential part of the city that shows disproportionate urban growth. Continuous spontaneous constructions that developed in the openings of the city are derived from need and opportunity. Its compact shapes and its adaptability to topographic conditions represent the opportunity for thousands of people in the world. The lack of government control over these constructions and the lack of response to providing an opportunity to live in dignified spaces, consolidated for several decades the stoning of the dreams of many Venezuelans who out of necessity built or bought parts of these ranchos. The lack of planning and adaptation of basic services such as hygiene, electrical service and health in general are some of the main problems. The density is not only urban but physical. And constant growth increases inequity.

“The barrios prove that there are myriad small overlapping cities inside a bigger city. The urban configuration of the informal city is beyond the mere physical definition of space. The strategy of construction involves a complex intertwining between forms of urbanity and processes that create this urbanity. One could even say the barrios are a kind of grassroots movement without a manifesto, but with necessity in mind. The casual urbanizations are not a memory-freezing urban system, but with their high degree of improvisation, flexibility, and inventiveness produced by anonymous builders, a product of tactical urbanism. The barrio is of grand scale but represents the antithesis of a master plan or an authoritarian paradigm of the academic world.” (Lepik, 2015: 28)



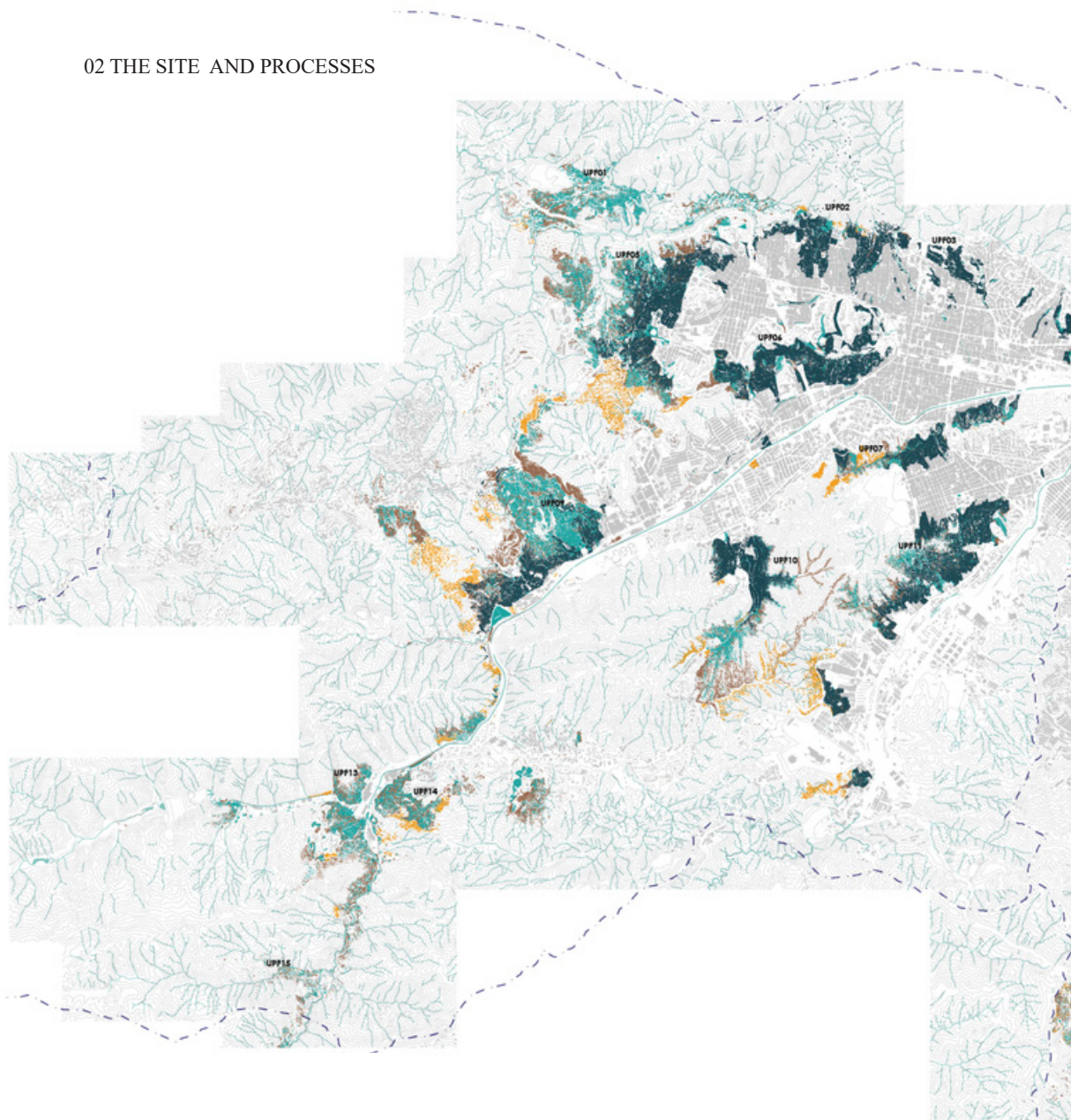
Informal settlements building process: Retrieved from: Informal is the new normal with activist architect Alfredo Brillembourg. (<https://youtu.be/RIMRaqemuY>)



The result over time: Consolidation of the Barrios. Barro P

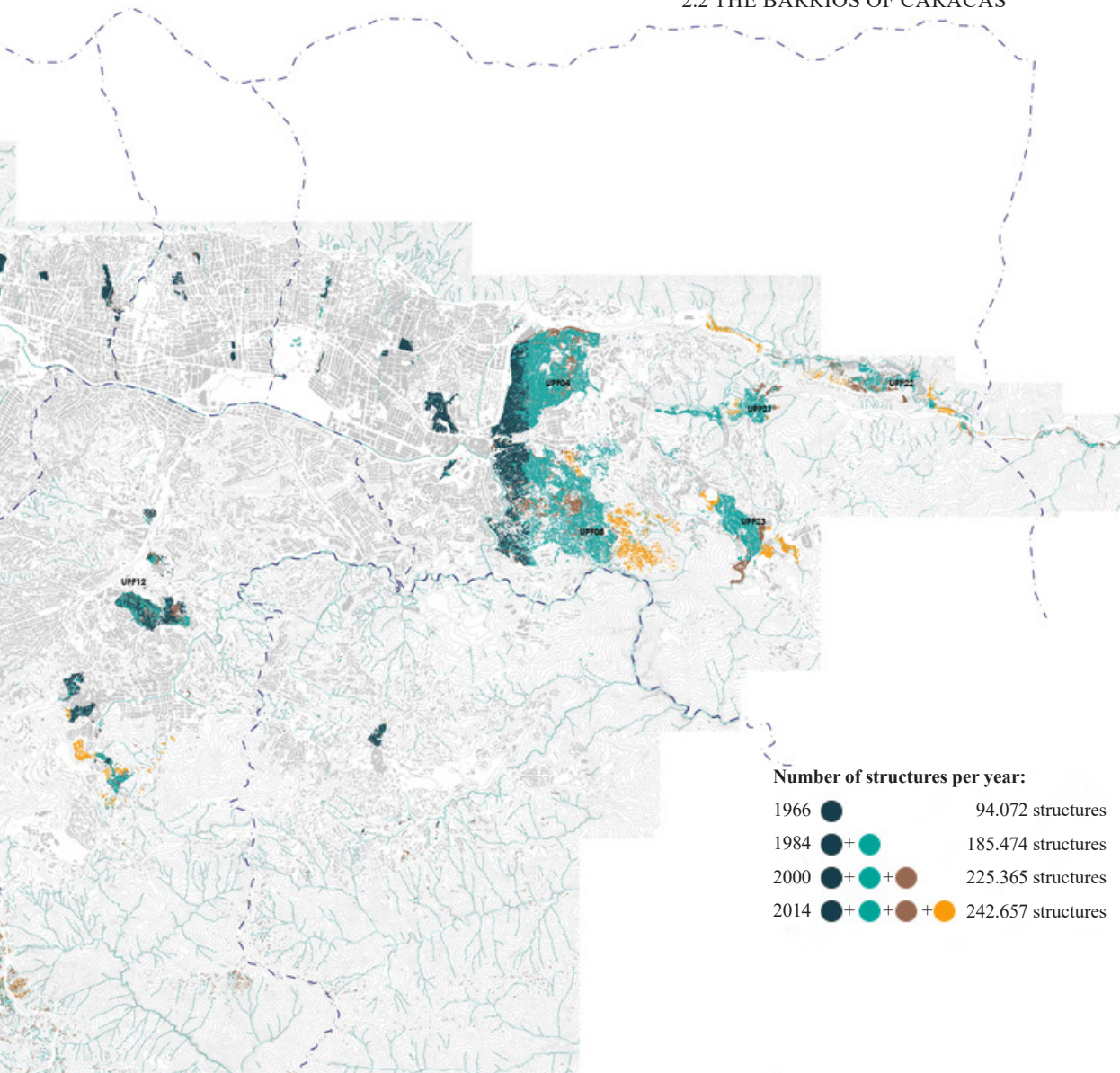


etare. Retrieved from: <https://es.orbinews.com/2017/06/29/por-que-no-bajan-los-cerros/>



The production of the Barrios has always been an issue in the city of Caracas. Well, all the barrios of the city are built in areas bordering the city or in geographical features, near streams or tributaries. They show an urban, economic, and social disparity. The barrios are marginalized to the limits of the city and although many of them are also in the inner areas, high risk places such as wastelands and cliffs, at the foot of the mountains or in areas of high risk of flooding or landslides.

2.2 THE BARRIOS OF CARACAS



Map of the Location of the “Barrios” of informal settlements in the city of Caracas for 2014. Cabaccs (2016), Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014.

Municipality	Area year 2014				Population	
	Sector	Area (hectares)	% of urban area	Comparison between planned area and spontaneous	Estimated population for 2014 (inhabitants)	% of population by sector
Libertador		51635.77				
	Spontaneous	3241.53	12.2%	37.4	977508	49.3%
	Planned	5425.00	20.5%	62.46%	1004416	50.7%
	Urban	8666.53		100%	1981924	100%
Sucre		17240.54				
	Spontaneous	1300.25	12.7%	34,5%	345858	55.4%
	Planned	2462.99	24.1%	65,4%	277955	44.6%
	Urban	3763.24		100%	623793	100%
Chacao		1931.42				
	Spontaneous	9.62	1.1%	1.3%	3240	5,38%
	Planned	745.70	84.4%	98.7%	56984	94.6%
	Urban	755.32		100%	60224	100%
Baruta		9509.82				
	Spontaneous	175.36	1.8%	6.8%	65890	28%
	Planned	3177.42	25.3%	95.2%	169200	72%
	Urban	3352.78		100%	235090	100%
Hatillo		11321.05				
	Spontaneous	10.71	0.1%	0.8%	4090	6.9%
	Planned	1349.39	11.9%	99.2%	55300	93.1%
	Urban	1360.10		100%	59390	100%
Total						
Metropolitan Area	Spontaneous	4757.47			1396586	
	Planned	13160.50			1563835	
	Urban	17897.97			2960422	
	Municipalities	77638.59				

Table with percentages of area and inhabitants in urban and informal settlements in Caracas by municipalities for 2014. Cabaccs (2016), Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014.

“In addition to the human dangers of informal settlements, each year numerous informal residents perish, or lose their dwellings and properties, because settlements are sometimes built on areas prone to natural disasters, such as landslides, flooding, or earthquakes, or that are affected by explosions of buried gas lines or gas emissions of former garbage dumps. This often happens because settlers selected sites unaware of the risks or simply because they had no other choice.” (Gouverneur, 2015: 27)



Urban planning vs informal settlements in Caracas. Hills de Bello Monte urbanization on the left, Petare neighborhood on the right. Informal is the new normal with activist architect Alfredo Brillembourg.

The results of these occupations are isolated, marginalized neighborhoods with relatively precarious conditions of connectivity to the city. Great efforts are required to cross long distances, walk in small corridors, and often climb steep stairs to reach homes. Conditions that not only hinder mobility but are quite dangerous. Caracas has the second highest crime rate in the city in all Latin America, with most of these episodes occurring in informal settlements, these settlements are virtually inaccessible since they are located on the city limits and partially hinder police attention.



Petare formal vs barrio de Petare. Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/517773288410597597/>

These segregations are at a disadvantage compared to the urban society of the planned city since they have limited access of their inhabitants to economic and social networks. Due to economic limitations, these inhabitants are restricted from obtaining formal jobs, thus becoming unemployed and making them part of the informal economy as a means of subsistence. All these aforementioned factors contribute to social inequity, the stigmatization of poverty and discrimination against vulnerable groups of the population, creating barriers for their personal, social, and psychological development.

The meeting place par excellence is the street. The street is not only used for mobility but for social interaction: positive or negative. The space between several settlements always has a multipurpose use: it can be a patio; it can become the access to other settlements, or it can become a play space for the youngest. The street is the social condenser of the neighborhoods. Stairs, bridges and corridors are active components of the barrio, and the settlements are the private space par excellence. The neighborhood belongs to pedestrians.

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The absence of the basic advantages of urban life is reflected in the quality of life. In the neighborhoods, one of the main problems is the lack of basic service infrastructures. Access to potable water, electricity, street lighting, paved streets, sidewalks, rainwater collection systems, sewage drainage systems, and waste collection services do not work in these sectors of the city. The waste collection system does not exist due to the difficulties in accessing many of the spaces, which is why garbage accumulates and for this same cause thousands of sanitary problems are produced that expose its inhabitants to health risks. The absence of organization among the inhabitants reflects violence, insecurity, and neighborhood vulnerability. The lack of planning and the spontaneity of the settlements accentuates the fact that there are no parks and facilities for the development of social activities in the neighborhood, which are often replaced with leisure spaces and vacant spaces. The lack of spaces for social interaction, meeting centers, sports facilities and schools result in a habitat that is not suitable for people's personal growth.

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other settlements, or it can become a play space for the youngest. The street is the social condenser of the neighborhoods. Stairs, bridges and corridors are active components of the barrio, and the settlements are the private space par excellence. The neighborhood belongs to pedestrians.



Jorge Somaca square, Barrio Chapellin Caracas. Retrieved from: <http://www.enlacearquitectura.net/obra/2018/12/plaza-chapellin/>

In the barrios, its inhabitants develop a strong social identity. The concept of collective use of space through the street as the social condenser allows them to get to know their closest neighbors and generate empathy for the general conditions in which they live, fine-tuning their social ties. The need to create a social support network is essential in the barrio for survival and development. Each neighborhood is unique and in each barrio there are small neighborhoods that identify themselves as units, made up of a group of settlements. These units work for the common space as a family, encouraging a sense of community. The latter was reflected a lot in the phenomenon of the David Tower, where the phenomenology of the event and the architectural landmark served as a condenser

of experiences: both as the organization of the cooperative, and in the general organization of the tower in terms of uses, security and services.

2.3 NON-RECOGNITION AND INFORMALITY.

The lack of recognition of the Barrios as a part of the city is the crucial problem that makes their progress impossible. The barrios are the denied part of the city because they do not have political or judicial representation. The term Informal assigned to this type of settlement is a demonstration of the lack of acceptance that removes the government's obligation to develop a legal figure for their development. At the beginning of the 20th century, this dismissal of the barrios as a drag on the city was notorious in the campaigns for the Modernization of the city and "Lucha contra el rancho". The Inhabitants have an insecure residence status because they do not have any formal ownership documents. Illegality and informality are a manifestation of the lack of power or inability of the authorities to act on these territories, ignoring them has only deteriorated the situation. The correct direction is to accept and understand that the barrio is city.

The Barrios emerge as the result of the combination of systems without continuity or care, socioeconomic disadvantages, the exclusion, and marginalization of the problem. "Informal settlements should not be seen as a problem but rather a consequence of historic and structural deficiencies of developing societies that are experiencing exponential rates of urban population growth." (Gouverneur, 2015: 24). Accelerated growth due to emigration, little control and insufficient action with adequate policies, Lack of political responsibility over the control of the housing situation, government mismanage-

ment, the deficit of housing production systems, policy failures urban, corruption and dysfunctional land markets were the perfect conditions that affected the population to act under their purchasing power during a socioeconomic crisis to enter the city system informally. All these circumstances were cause and effect of spatial segregation and social exclusion, highlighting even more inequity in urban areas.

In the last 30 years there has been an evolution towards acceptance and acting on the approach to the issue of the Barrios and informal settlements. These spontaneous settlements were ignored and seen as marginal elements that had to be eradicated. This was the case until they expanded into a dominant form of urbanization, making them an important factor in the functioning of cities in general. It was then that barrios approaches began to change little by little in Latin America and Africa. Urban planning and design found it necessary to address the problem to improve the living conditions of these settlements. Progressively, the legal aspects began to be modified seeking the recognition of the barrios, forcing the public sector to act accordingly.

“The changing attitude towards informality varies from country to country but tends to travel a similar path. It is preceded by an initial period in which institutions and formal dwellers begin to understand that a new modality of informal occupation is beginning to occur, at which point they may ignore it or attempt to stop it through use of force or through developing formal housing provisions. While some nations today deal with informal growth in a proactive and creative way, others believe that they can control it and eradicate it.” (Gouverneur, 2015: 5).

Permission to live in Informality or Institutionalized informality?

On February 2nd, 1999, in the National Congress of Caracas the inauguration of President-elect Hugo Chávez is celebrated, the Revolutionary promise was outlined in a country and a city in crisis. Buildings deteriorated after the stormy 90s. The poor and unprotected who found themselves in a city that ignored them now had the power. The marginalized took the city, the nights became elaborate discussions to carve a niche in that city that had ignored them. The Chávez era was characterized by Invasion and Expropriation.

In the years since his first election, Chávez had given high priority to the idea of rural land as a location for designing new housing complexes. In his speeches, he routinely made reference to the *Latifundios*, parcels of possible agricultural production of at least 5000 hectares that were in disuse or occupied. Chávez condemned that disused land should be expropriated by the government and distributed to the poor, as a way to satisfy the enormous and growing demand for houses and rooms for the poor in addition to increasing the national production of agricultural goods.

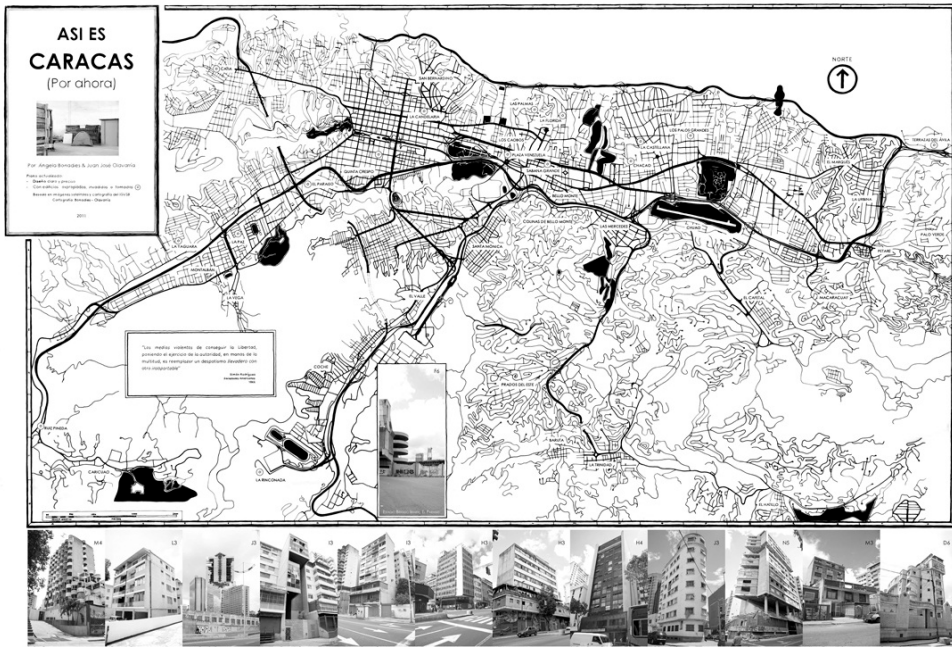
Initially, there was no clear legal basis for the expropriation of the land or buildings. Relying on his passionate rhetoric, to give the poor what belongs to the poor, the president publicly supported, even knowing that it was technically an illegal procedure, the invasion and appropriation by individuals and groups of land and buildings. He emphasized the concept of “social property” over “private property” and gradually built the legal bases for the expropriation of land and property through a series of presidential decrees.

The first one: The Land Law. Established in 2001 that gave the government the power to expropriate land and built assets that were considered vacant or misused. Then in February 2002, Chávez ordered a second decree to give title to the land and assets to those people who had occupied those occupations previously published by the government and the property titles to other lands that people have occupied. for more than 10 years. This last decree favored the people of the oldest neighborhoods of Caracas since it guaranteed Venezuelans who lived their entire lives in informal barrios the ownership of their houses.

Since 2003, many speeches by President Chávez have encouraged “the poor to occupy the buildings of the powerful” - H. R. Chávez, and even expropriate buildings from his weekly television program: *Aló Presidente*.

Hundreds of buildings have been invaded since the phenomenon began in 2003: apartment blocks, office towers, warehouses, shopping centers. Currently, the invaders occupy about 155 buildings in Caracas.

In their work “*Así es Caracas, por ahora*” Angela Bonadies and Juan José Olavarria mapped the city of Caracas in 2011 and the cartography shows a city in which some empty buildings have been taken, converted into neighborhoods or ranchos, they introduce into the traditional traces of the city an external anomaly within structures, in many cases they are the product of the economic boom period in the second half of the 20th century.



Representation of the mapping of buildings invaded by angela bonadies and Juan Jose Olavarrieta in “Así es Caracas por ahora”. (2011). Retrieved from: <http://latorrededavid.blogspot.com/p/otras-investigaciones.html>

Latin American informal slums are laboratories, they are studied as laboratories where it is possible to understand urban and social processes different from the contemporary formal city, which can contribute to the definition of new urban tools. The role of housing as a city cell, the conservation of the human scale in the urban space, the mixture of scales and uses or the definition of the street as a social space are some of the topics that can be understood at the time of analyze the slum as a grand experiment. Understanding architecture is not only understanding the built but also its why and its human interactions and this is where we place special emphasis on what has to do with informality. Not only the illegal appropriation of spaces but also the great challenges in terms of solution systems in formal aspects such as security, the distribution of services, mobility and the guarantee of the minimum habitabi-

lity requirements are some of the questions that are They put in evidence in this great and recognized social experiment, as such a great opportunity to study a development or problem in the city at a physical, architectural, social and economic level.

In April 2011, an estimated 155 offices, apartments and government buildings were occupied in Caracas by illegal invaders, Torre David was one of them. The occupation of the David tower marked a milestone in the history of the city of Caracas, as a metaphor for the system, the tower throughout its life has remained in parallel with the processes that the city is going through: The economic Bonanza, the great crisis, the housing deficit and its total unemployment. The current crisis in Venezuela erases all hope for Torre David. After multiple attempts to sell, unsuccessful announcements to convert the tower into a cultural center or offices of the city administration, it has become the living sample of the city that Caracas was and is not now.

2.4 TOWER DAVID PHENOMENON

In 1990, the construction of the Confinanzas Financial Center had begun in the center of the city of Caracas, and its location could not have been more advantageous. In the heart of the city, and very close to the original historic center, the tower of the Confinanzas center would be located. Nearby were the mercantile bank tower and the BBVA Banco Provincial tower, as well as other landmarks of the city such as the Central Park complex towers, which would be the tallest skyscrapers in South America (until then date). The concentration of political, financial, and symbolic power to distinguish the municipality: the presidential palace, the supreme court of justice, the main tower of the central bank of Venezuela and some of the

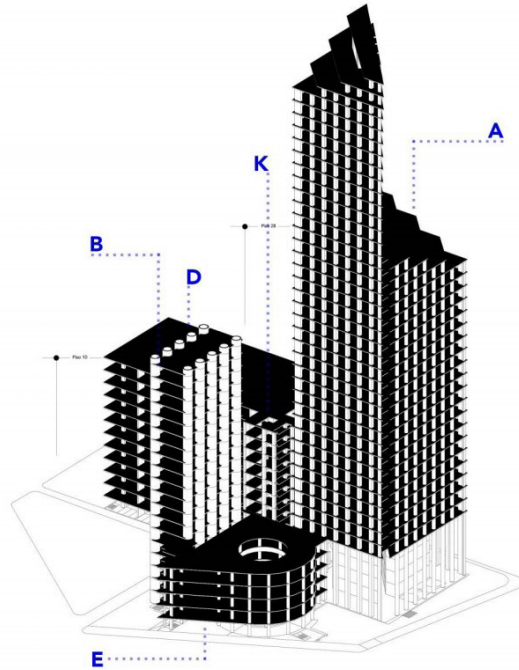
tallest skyscrapers in the city turned the sector into the Wall. Street of Caracas, the financial center and the perfect location for the buildings of the global city.

The man behind the vision of the tower was Jorge David Brillembourg Ortega, the main investor in the construction of the Centro Confinanzas, conceiving the idea of the tower as the largest private financial center in South America. Enrique Gomez was the chief architect of the project and Mathias Brewer of Brewer, was in charge of design and development; Frank Kelemen of Keleman & Keleman was responsible for the construction management and Tegaven, was the Portuguese company in charge of the concrete specialists being the general contractor. The total cost of the complex was worth 5.7 billion bolivars - the equivalent at that time of approximately US \$ 82 million.

Building A (Torre David), the main tower was built to have 46 floors with a helipad on its terrace. The first six floors were intended to be part of the hotel services; From the seventh to the sixteenth floors were designed to be the Hotel and the floors from 18 to 45 were planned to be the 30000m² of office space for the Confinanzas group and the Metropolitan Bank of Urban Credit. The office floors were highly designed, the hotel was impeccably finished: in its design they boasted more than 21000m² of Italian marble.

Building B was a 16-story structure, which would be home to 81 apartment-suites for executive use. A swimming pool was designed on level 6 that would be accessible to hotel guests via a bridge connecting with building A. Building D A spacious parking lot was essential for a complex of this magnitude. At least 890 vehicle stalls would be designed in a 10-story

tower. And the building E an atrium, a wall of 30m high with 1500m² covered by a glass dome.



Tower diagram. Miranda O. La Torre David (Laboratorios de ocupación urbana) (2017)

On September 17, 2007, a group of city dwellers was evicted from an invaded building in La Candelaria. They are looking for a place to take refuge they found the David Tower. That same day, people from the slums of Caracas began to receive calls from those who were close to the settlement to specify the appropriation and occupation of the David Tower. Thousands of families appeared at the entrance to the complex. The 2 guards in charge of the entrance doors of the building allowed the entrance of hundreds of people who that night began the occupation process.

Those people who entered the complex that night, began in

the following days a process of rethinking the lobby space, building a communal kitchen and setting up tents, tents and delimiting their territories. 3 days later the number of invaders had grown exponentially. There was very little privacy, but a good portion of space for each family. During the first weeks the new invaders waited to find out if they would be evicted again, but it did not happen. The new inhabitants of the building, in view of the fact that they were not evicted, organized themselves under the command of the original invaders in an exploration of the rest of the tower and the entire complex in order to evaluate the provision of new spaces to inhabit. Together they organized the cleaning of the tower, floor by floor, removing trash and debris and dividing the spaces to occupy. They gradually organized the construction of the railing elements and painted communal spaces and private apartments. Each floor of the tower had 15 approximately 15 families. Initially only tower A was occupied, being occupied by 200 families. The occupation also gave new forms of commerce and work since informal supplies were developed. With the passage of time, the tower stopped looking like just an invaded building to evolve more into the home of a community, a new way of life.

It is important to show that the way of living in the tower was a circumstantial reflection of what the informality of living in Caracas had been for years. The occupants of Torre David were people from the Lower or Lower Middle class who, for one reason or another, had never had the possibility of acquiring a home in Venezuela. For many Venezuelans, having the purchasing power to acquire a property is a dream.



Photography of the tower .(2012) Schwartz Daniel.
Retrieved from:<https://www.danielschwartz.co/torre-david>

Formality as a paradigm of Informality.

At present, the phenomenon that occurred in the David Tower seemed something unprecedented but it was a process that would have been taking place in the evolution of the city thousands of times, a space of land with the basic conditions for life that could be occupied by the inhabitants , Some spaces that had access to basic services (water, sewage services, and electricity) or that at least had the possibility of being updated to be able to acquire them: This phenomenon was a reflection of the ranchos or slums that were settled in all the city by all its margins and its ravines. Places with physical space with conditions that provide access to waste drainage with the streams

and tributaries of the city. And with acquired or stolen services such as the water connections and the electrical system. These people, who were thousands of long-time inhabitants of these settlements, this time achieved a more incomplete built settlement that they adapted to their needs and evidently with the complex but vast occupation it came to be called the “vertical slum” as they came to nickname it.

But, was Torre David really a slum? According to UN-HABITAD: “After a week of intense debate, the expert group meeting reached an agreement on the operational definition of what a slum is. Two definitions were developed, reflecting two units of analysis: the definition of a slum area and the definition of a slum home. As an indicator for target 11, the proportion of slum dwellers within the urban population refers to the number of households; consequently, the slum household is defined as an entity that lacks one or more of the following conditions: a) Access to an improved water supply; b) Access to improved sanitation services; c) Durability of the home; d) Adequate living space; e) Security of tenure”. Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Program. October (2002) UN-Habitat

According to this definition we could rule out that the occupation of the tower was defined as a slum by the clauses of water supply, the accesses to the improved sanitation services. Regarding the durability of the house and the adequate living space, it is presumed that most of the inhabitants had built and conditioned most of their spaces with finishes like those of any other housing unit, as we will show later. But as for the last clause, it was always considered as a slum since there was no security of tenure. The inhabitants did not have property titles since there was no type of recognition by FOGADE to hand

over ownership of the space. In addition to these indicators, the last mention to be recognized as a slum by UN-HABITAD was overpopulation, which was defined if 3 or more people shared the same room, but this did not happen in most of the housing units. However, there were other equally worrisome characteristics such as the lack of hygiene in the spaces and security. Many of these areas were resolved in an organizational way by the occupants of the tower, including security, as well as rules of coexistence.

It is important to note that this phenomenon of occupation led to levels of organization and control by its occupants to make the occupation a successful phenomenon. Just as in a common residential building, the residents had to comply with legal obligations such as the payment of electricity bills and the building's water services, all this in order to normalize coexistence as much as possible and to gradually work on the recognition and legalization of their situation.

Residents of Tower David took the opportunity to occupy an existing structure, originally designed for another purpose, and use it to meet their needs for living space. They gradually adapted certain standards of habitability. This occupation resulted in a strong Organized community that grew and became more and more autonomous. As an occupation for the city, it is not justified at all under any political label or to glorify any action or authority, but as an autonomous community it generates certain knowledge and new opportunities to review what is done in architecture to help understand human needs in these cases, but also a new universe of opportunities that could be revealed in an architectural phenomenon of this magnitude.

To understand the phenomenon of occupation, it is necessary

to show the formal structures of informality, we will first review the intangible aspects of the tower's organization and then address those tangible organizational factors. Physically analyzing the organization of the tower, the occupation and the operational organization is simpler but sectioning and highlighting the social factors and the political organization are a bit more complex.

The social structure of the tower was clear: 1 General Director of the Cooperative "Caciques de Venezuela", who in the last period of the tower before its vacating was in charge of Elvys Marchan. The rest of the executive positions were that of the vice president of the cooperative: Ingrid Rodríguez. Then for each floor of the tower there was a floor representative. Those responsible for each floor met with the management of the cooperative once a week, where they agreed and discussed issues of common interest. Also, part of this system was those in charge of electricity, water and the security of the entire complex. A single monthly payment was established that was equivalent to 30 euro for each house, paid into the account of the neighbors' cooperative. A public control was kept of who and when the amount was paid. A series of legal documents were required to open a new resident's folder in the tower, among which were a sworn letter of not owning any home, a job letter or a certificate of income and identification such as a birth letter and identity card. Sales and negotiations of occupied spaces were strictly forbidden without consulting the floor coordinators or the members of the board. The complex had an evangelical church organized by the residents, this played a fundamental role within the social fabric; many residents attended the mass offered by the pastor in addition to offering ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms.

Security was one of the most controversial issues in the tower. In this case, we are talking about 2 guidelines: security with respect to violence between tenants and the security that the building provides to its residents. The community was controlled by Alexander (El Niño) Daza, who was one of the first occupants of the tower, an ex-convict turned evangelist pastor and who served as pastor in the whole church. Control of the tower was exercised by the Caciques de Venezuela cooperative led by Elvys Marchan. The political structure placed the expression of the interests of the group in the head of the cooperative. Security was fully guaranteed by a series of rules that were woven throughout the community. There was a control point through the only pedestrian access point to the structure, a kind of gate where all the people who entered and left the enclosure were registered. This vigilance is associated with the typology of gated communities, where in isolation security and protection from outside violence are sought. Having only 2 entrances, both pedestrian and automobile control was guaranteed. The inhabitants organized to make a security guard in the building that in 3 groups, protected the entrances in a 24-hour shift rotation.

The protection rules were strict: the sale of alcohol was prohibited, circulation in the corridors without shirts, the presence of children after 7:00 pm was prohibited in the corridors, it was forbidden to leave minors alone in the building spaces, it was forbidden to see children naked or barefoot in the corridors, it was forbidden to leave garbage in the bathroom or in the corridors, the presence of family members for more than 7 days without consulting the pee delegates was prohibited, it was prohibited the permanence of children living on other floors, it was forbidden to hold meetings in the corridors with other people from other floors without consulting. People who

did not comply with the rules were sanctioned, fined or changed floors.

In the towers there were no elevators, given this and using the parking structure in the form of ramps, the inhabitants who owned motorcycles offered their transport services from the ground floor to the 10th floor of the parking structure (the highest floor to which it was accessible via the ramps). To move between the buildings, the new rents had drilled openings through the reinforced concrete walls of each of the floors and built hanging walkways.

Finally, as part of the intangible organization, the inhabitants organized part of the mixed uses of the plants and added shops and other precarious equipment: there were sewing workshops, gymnasiums, food stores, hairdressers, school supplies stores, office supplies and supplies with essential items. The Cooperative regulated and reviewed the prices of the products and forced them to sell the products at prices regulated by the government. Only stores above the 10th floor could increase the price of products due to transportation difficulties. In total, there were about 33 workers in the management of the complex, which included the board of directors, floor coordinators, security guards, those responsible for electricity and water coordinators.

In this regard, and after reviewing how the tower is organized operationally, we can see that living in the tower instead of being more similar to a marginal slum, is much more similar to living in a residence if we leave aside the final aesthetic aspect and of finishes. The only points in which this last idea is overcome is in the ownership of the spaces (the legal possession of each of the housing units) but to classify the David tower

as a vertical slum is only due to the conditions of habitability, they are not the most suitable. The control of hygiene and the regularity of services is also an issue that highlights the shortcomings of the occupation. Security is the most controversial of the issues, but it is here where we can most realize the terrible disparities that are produced by the informality in which the occupation occurs, Informality in the intangible aspects of the occupation are recognized in a system of social hierarchy based on caudillismo (warlordism) where a person or Caudillo (Warlord) has all the power over the tower in this case the president of the Caciques cooperative of Venezuela and it is this same one who exercises control and authority through different coordinators. It is the director who serves as a defender and as a judge of what can or cannot be done in the tower and who dictates the sanctions or decisions that affect all the tower's inhabitants. Security is practically a martial law where the different rules must be fully observed and where they can only guarantee what happens inside the tower. The records of the people entering and leaving, as well as the accesses to the tower are cared for and monitored in order to eradicate possible new invasions, external threats or other criminals who want to harm the community.

The physical structure and architecture.

In this section we will analyze what are the physical structures of the tower and the systems used both to occupy the spaces and to make the spaces a habitable place. It must be understood that being 60% of its development, the complex already had several of the systems that could help the drainage, circulation and water supply systems for domestic use, leaving only the electrical system and the accessibility of the tower in addition to the adaptation of the spaces that were not origina-

lly planned as housing. Everything was based on necessity; each family group occupied its own space. Each resident built and designed for himself and to the extent of his possibilities. The expressions of the typologies were clear, there were quite rustic designs that were more similar to the houses in marginal slums with only walls built by blocks and cardboard enclosures to more similar forms of housing to those of a middle-class family with cladding, glass windows and finishes. The floors between floor 6 and floor 17 were originally conceived as a hotel. In these the partition of apartments was simpler. While, in the complex's Atrium, a more irregular area, the occupation was uneven and the construction occurred in a casual and progressive manner. It was very common for the walls not to touch the upper floor slab. Many inhabitants managed to build false ceilings. The least interest of intervention were the floors since many of them were finished in concrete. Many inhabitants laid tile or linoleum.

It is here where we can most find a similarity with the slums that we find in the city. Each housing unit responds to its own space needs and the purchasing power of each of the people who inhabit the tower. There is no rule or control in the aesthetics of the finishes or in the way to divide the space. Needs make each occupant have the space and its subdivisions according to the possibilities of it. As in the slums, the culture of creating a space to be and survive predominates in how the architecture is built in these occupied houses. Many of the walls are built in block walls adhered with cement or any binder and do not have any coating. The walls are raised as far as the ability to acquire the blocks allows it and although many rooms have paint as a final finish, it is not the norm in the entire building.



Generic room in the tower (2012). Taken from the book Torre david. Informal vertical communities

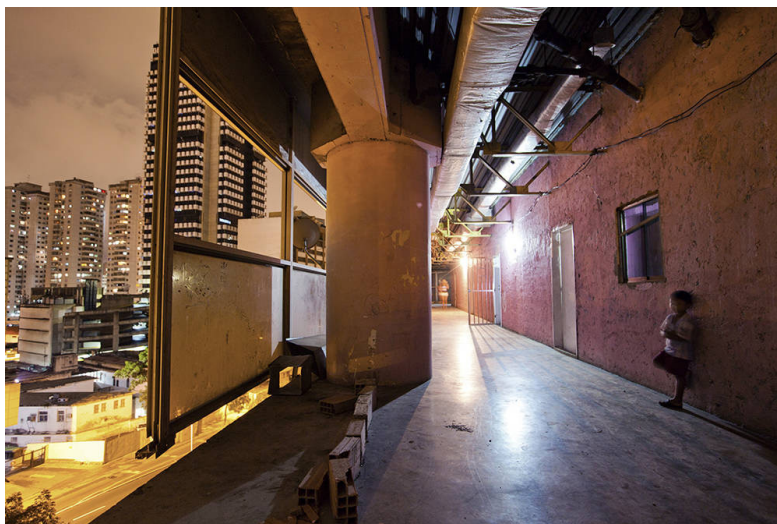


Photograph of the main atrium on the ground floor of the tower.(2012) Schwartz Daniel. Retrieved from: <https://www.danielschwartz.co/torre-david>

Outside these private spaces, the rest of the building's areas begin to take shape. The common areas of the building were nothing more than the residual spaces of the tower that did not lend themselves to occupation for one reason or another in addition to the circulation systems. There is a contrast that must

be emphasized, unlike what can happen in a slum of the city where there are no limitations in the growth of construction, the tower has a notable physical limit and that is that it cannot be occupied beyond the structure which is currently built and, in that sense, we could differentiate it from the normal slums of the city where each inhabitant can have (as far as the structure responds) the growth of their house or “rancho”. I think this as an experiment makes us understand that although the tower can grow in its number of inhabitants, the physical occupation of the space is limited by this physical and virtual container.

The intermediate spaces of the tower that we are going to highlight are the corridors, the stairs, and the common areas. The corridors are the interaction zone between the dwellings on each floor and would act as the street streets of the neighborhoods. In some of them, not only domestic life was developed but also commercial life. From some of them you can access certain shared areas such as the collective bathrooms. Homes that do not have access to natural light keep their doors open to the corridors to light and ventilate. In the tower we found 2 fundamental types. Those of the exterior corridor and those of the interior corridor. The exterior corridors were on the 6th and 17th floors, where the corridor route was around the perimeter of the tower, concentrating the dwellings and the vertical circulation of the building inside. And the remaining circulation was directly in the core of the tower. The corridors functioned as pedestrian streets that absorb the scale of the house and give each floor an entity.



Photograph of perimetral corridors 2012) Schwartz Daniel.
Retrieved from: <https://www.danielschwartz.co/torre-david>

The stairs are the circulation space of the entire tower due to the lack of elevators. A large part of the social interaction was concentrated in them, given the sporadic encounters of its inhabitants and the strict regulations that prevented the permanence of its inhabitants in the corridors. This space was the one that served as the street inside the tower by serving as a space for social transition. In the common areas that were the residual spaces of all the other functions or spaces in which it could not be built due to their danger or exposure, leisure or short-term spaces were created. The common area was the ground floor of the building where neighborhood meetings were held or the church was located. Also, the parking area was a common area for all the inhabitants. In them everything related to the community in general happened, the entrances, the checkpoints, sports areas such as the basketball court. The parking ramps, the corridors of the 28 occupied levels, the playgrounds or sports areas become the structuring equipment of the dynamics between the urban system (The city) outside the perimeter wall, the complex and the living spaces, the si-

dewalk or neighborhood is seen as highly condensed among all these spaces as places of social meeting and the favorite place for all social interactions. The need and the social factor make habitability from the point of view of the commune correct. Each inhabitant has rights and duties, all inhabitants take care that the rules are observed and help with the cleaning and maintenance of each of the spaces and plants. Security within the complex is “controlled”, a kind of tranquility is granted in the social aspect, unlike in the neighborhood of the city where the street is already directly outside the home space and is subject to any eventuality.

As for the infrastructures that maintain access to the services and the building’s flows, there are different notes to be made since the tower is not finished and much less fully designed for what the occupation meant. For the rainwater system, only drainage systems were provided from floor 7 to floor 16, these were equipped with a water evacuation network for their intended use for the hotel. Due to this, the other plants had to use alternative flushing methods, the flushing of toilets was carried out with buckets of water, and the network emptied into the municipal sewer of the building. With regard to domestic garbage, each family is in charge of disposing of their own garbage and taking it to the general container.

For the water for domestic use, everything was planned from the needs of the residents, taking advantage of some of the systems that were in place at the time of its construction. The water came from a city water pipe. It was pumped up to the 11th floor of building b and from there using another pump to the 22m³ water tank on the 16th floor. Another pump distributed water to the floors below and above. And a last pump leads the water to the 28th floor. The main tank was continuously

fed by pipes. Because the building lacked the plumbing infrastructure to serve each of the neighbors, the residents had created a control system where the floor coordinators open a valve at each level through the staircase that allowed the residents from each floor connect a hose to fill water tanks of each house of approximately 500 liters to be supplied with the vital liquid. The water was not considered drinkable so many residents individually purchased 20-liter jugs of water. The average apartment had a toilet, 1 sink, a washing machine, and a dishwasher. Until 2012, residents had incurred a debt equivalent to \$ 56500 to Hidrocapital, the state water supply company in the city. But the service was never revoked because in Venezuela the water service is “Guaranteed” Legally. It is a bit illogical to think that this complex in the midst of all the problems of being an invasion and not having the corresponding property regulations could have access to the water service of the state company. In this sense, the informality of the contracts, the occupation supported or not by the national government and the lack of attention to the phenomenon that was happening is reflected again in everything that happens in the city itself on a specific scale through the tower.

Depending on the electrical system of the tower, electricity is introduced through a cable that runs from an electrical outlet on the street. The skyscraper and Building B had their own electrical system, but there is no electrical substation for the complex. Although residents came to enjoy a relatively constant and adequate power source, sometimes a peak in demand would overload the line and small fires would break out. The inhabitants were forced to change the main switches. Many of these accidents were due to the high current demand and above all due to the system requirements for the operation of general installations and elements such as water pumps. The

inhabitants had an average of 2 televisions, a DVD player, a refrigerator, a sound system, 5 light bulbs, 3 telephones, 2 fans, 1 washing machine and a clothes iron. The state company that supplies electricity Corpoelec coordinated initiatives to repair and improve the flow of electricity with representatives of the tower, proposing specific circuit breakers. In this way, the electricity supply was regulated and each tenant paid the consumption of his home. A monthly payment was also paid that was used for the collective consumption of electricity in the common areas and the operation of the precarious infrastructures.

We were already able to review how the tower worked physically and how it was organized socially, but what did Tower David mean? The tower exemplified the appropriation of a space where self-construction completes the architectural guidelines set by the tower's structure. The privileged position within the fabric of the city offers the occupants of the structure direct access to the city network. The tower exemplifies an important difference with the rest of the informal settlements, usually on the periphery or isolated by physical borders built to avoid heterogeneity, fostering homogeneity and the fear of being excluded. In Latin America, the largest number of closed marginal slums or Gated Communities are concentrated, where parks or streets are illegally privatized, in operations protected by the state in its inability to provide security. The David tower is a radical break from the grid of a traditional city, where the tower is a symbol for strangers and displaced people and is itself what its occupants saw as the only opportunity to survive. The tower helps to understand phenomena where the collective and the need are superimposed on the individual, where the house has minimal conditions that forces an appropriation of the collective space, where protecting

everyone's space is a necessary condition for viability. These problems do not normally arise in traditional settlements such as the traditional neighborhood where each inhabitant takes care of his plot and the interstitial spaces are relegated and unprotected.

The concept of community goes from just being an abstract set, to having a character through the consolidation of the Cooperative as the Cooperative Housing Association "Caciques de Venezuela" formally registered with certification from the autonomous registry and notary service in 2009 This cooperative or association aimed to:

"Promote the construction of an urbanism composed of Dignified homes, built by apartments, a neighborhood house, a preschool, a nursery school, areas for parking spaces and a multipurpose room."

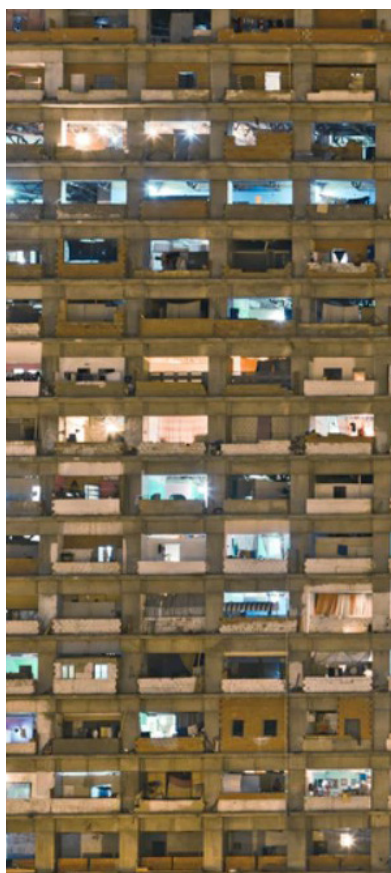
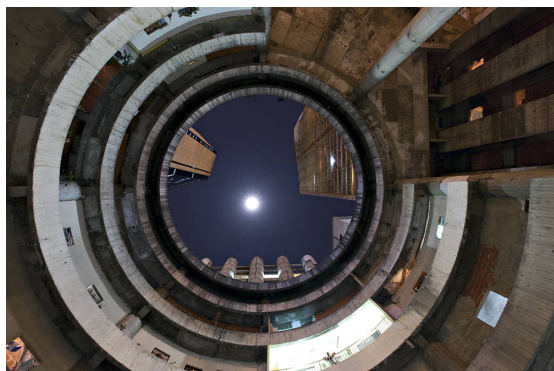
It is clear at this point that it seems incredible how this type of cooperative or association was given legal recognition or validity despite not having any ownership of the space. In this act of recognition, new incongruities between what is legal and what is illegal are recognized, but above all in the informality of decisions and dialectics of what can be done in the city, which at this point is discussed, what is really done under the laws and what cannot be done?

The expropriations became a legal mechanism that not only helped the occupants of hundreds of buildings in the city, but also helped to legalize the property of many Venezuelans in the slums to obtain their property titles. All this at the cost of taking ownership of the land and buildings from their former owners. A situation that only deteriorated the confidence of

people who owned second properties and people who have rental properties, making them think twice to rent their properties. At present these procedures (expropriations) are very common in a city that has a high number of emigrants who leave their properties closed with the idea of ever returning to their country. Expropriations became a tool to move from the informal to the formal registry in terms of land or property ownership, but it became a tool for controlling space. The expropriations were not all fully justified. Many helped to obtain the spaces that were destined to later develop the GMVV.



Circulation in the parking tower (2012) Schwartz Daniel.
Retrieved from:<https://www.danielschwartz.co/torre-david>



Torre David (2012) Schwartz Daniel. Retrieved from:<https://www.danielschwartz.co/torre-david>



Visit to the abandoned David Tower.(2017) Taken by the author

The origin of their eviction

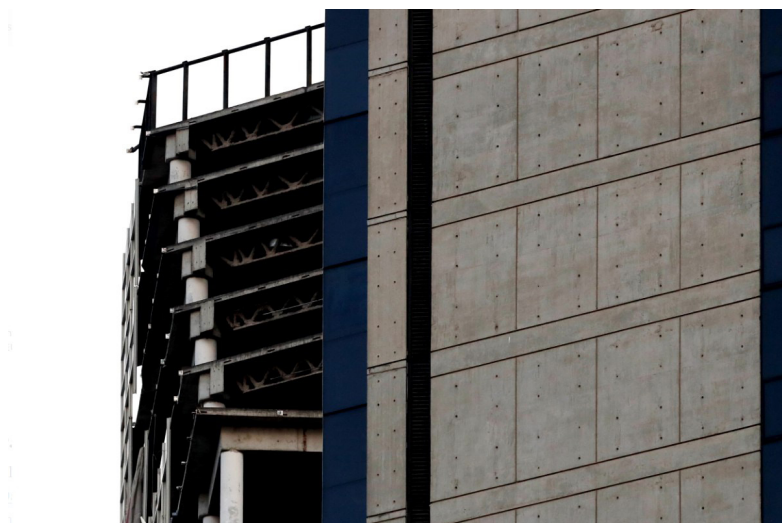
At 3 am in the afternoon of April 9, 2012, police elements from different national official security bodies (between 200 and 300 troops) entered the vicinity of Torre David in a violent and armed manner, searching for the whereabouts of Guillermo Cholele, a businessman and diplomatic member of the Costa Rican embassy who had been kidnapped in the city of Caracas the night before. The Cholele Relatives had received a phone call asking for an amount of money to be handed over as a ransom. Troops from the Investigation and Kidnapping Corps had traced the call to the tower. According to reports from the newspaper “El Universal” the police forces entered and searched floor by floor from the ground while another team had arrived by helicopter to make the corresponding search and denying the entry or exit of the inhabitants of the building while the investigations were carried out. Not only were the inhabitants attacked and searched by the official bodies, but they were also separated from minors and representatives in the middle of the raid. Residents condemned that police forces stole electrical appliances, cell phones, and cameras from homes, as well as destroyed walls, doors, furniture, and other household items. Very early the day after the search of the entire David tower, Cholele was released by his kidnappers and contacted the police and his family. To vindicate his innocence, residents organized protests outside the Ministry of the Interior and Justice on April 11th as a measure to expose his feelings for the abuses and excesses of the security forces.

The race of the residents in face of abuses and the lack of official recognition of their rights as inhabitants and citizens was totally precarious and reflected how informal was the treat-

ment that these occupants had for the city. While FOGADE (the government entity that had the ownership of the property) did not recognize them as the owners of the spaces they had occupied, the legislative and judicial initiatives and presidential decrees -in addition to the public statements of the then president Hugo Chávez- them they conferred the property rights of the spaces.

On the night of Monday, July 21, 2014, the Confinanzas Financial Center began to vacate, “It is not an eviction, it is a coordinated operation, in harmony with the community of the Confinanzas tower, which involves the transfer from here to urban planning of the GMVV”, declared Ernesto Villegas, Minister for the Transformation of Greater Caracas, to a local television station. A group was transferred to Ciudad Tiuna (Caracas), located within the military zone known as Fort Tiuna. Others stayed in Ciudad Zamora (Valles del Tuy), about 70 km from the capital. The rest was distributed between the state of Vargas, Caucagua and Lomas de Guadalupe (Ocumare del Tuy), more than an hour and a half away from the city. Housing conditions improved substantially for residents, no one denies it. From living in an improvised structure, they moved to new apartments with kitchen, living room, 1 or 2 bathrooms, 2 or 3 bedrooms, as the case may be. They have electricity, gas in cylinders, urban toilet and water, which arrives at least with some regularity. “We are better here, because we have the comforts of an apartment and the peace of mind that this is ours,” says Faride, who was transferred to Ciudad Zamora. “But in the Tower of David we felt more secure. There the coordinators put order. They did not allow drunks or drug addicts. They didn’t let strangers in and we had guards. In Ciudad Zamora, you cannot leave the apartment alone for fifteen days, because when you return, they have stolen everything

or they take over the property. And the neighbors don't even intervene, because they don't want to get into trouble with criminals," she adds. Ciudad Zamora also lacks sources of work, which forces its inhabitants to move to Caracas daily. Many must leave their homes at four in the morning, to catch the first railroad at 5:30 am. Otherwise, they don't make it to work at 8 in the morning. They do not have supermarkets, which forces them to do their shopping in Cúa (20 minutes away) or Charallave (30 minutes away). There is only one primary school and young people must move to surrounding areas to continue with high school. In 2015, the David tower was cleared and inaccessible and in August 2018, a strong earthquake severely damaged the top of the skyscraper, which made it a danger to the city, the 7.3 magnitude earthquake that would have taken place in front of the Venezuelan north coast. Authorities estimate that the top of the structure of this unfinished building leaned 25%.



Photograph of the leaning Tower David after the 7.3 earthquake (2018) Público.es .Retrieved from <https://www.publico.es/internacional/venezuela-seismo-magnitud-7-3-sacude-venezuela.html>

The end of the occupation of Torre de David implied the end of something unusual in Latin America: the existence of a settlement where people with limited resources lived with easy access to the comforts of the center of the capital. Traditionally, both social housing projects and neighborhoods have emerged far from urban centers, commercial areas, and services in general. “The residents of the Tower of David accomplished something that is nearly impossible in the modern city: they defined the nature of their own coexistence. “This is an opportunity that average citizens never have,” commented architecture and design critic Justin McGuirk in the book *Radical Cities*, in which he toured different Latin American housing projects. At present the tower is closed and apparently totally uninhabited. There are national guard control commands at its entrances, but it has become very common that under the payment of a fee or bribe for accessing, the officers let adventurers, photographers and onlookers enter the interior of the tower to take tours and take pictures. the state of the tower that is completely dismantled and unoccupied as well as photographs of the entire city from what would be the tallest building in all of Caracas. However, the David tower has been a novel phenomenon with a monumental impact on the media for its impressive experiences in what has to do with architecture and urban planning, The Urban Think Tank Office won the Golden Lion award for the best project of the common Ground exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012 for his study and analysis of the phenomenon of occupation of the tower as well as possible ideas to adapt solutions to the problems of the inhabitants of it in a joint effort to improve and recognize the residents who dwelt there. We must acknowledge the work of Alfredo Brillembourg (architect of the Urban Think Tank Office) who is the son of David Brillembourg, the former

owner of the Confinanzas Consortium and former owner and main Investor of the Tower project. Different documentaries have also been released to the public where the main problems and dynamics of how the inhabitants lived in the tower are condensed, such as “Our World” by the BBC and Torre David by Urban Think Tank as well.

The David tower is a reflection on a micro-scale of the different forms of Expression of Informality in the city of Caracas, informal economies, informal transportation, informal residence, informal property ownership and an informal social organization that, although not well recognized as all actions in the city formal, It worked consistently to develop the life of its inhabitants in a “normal” way. It would be necessary to think if in the city of Caracas its inhabitants made Informality the new normal where thousands of activities, economies and services go out of the norm due to their flexibility and the need in a country that every day deteriorates the conditions for all its citizens have the same chances. It would be necessary to deeply analyze if the inhabitants of the tower ever thought that informal life in the tower would be only temporary while they improved their economic stability or if indeed the development opportunities in the city left them only to live the day a day. Without a doubt, the Torre David phenomenon is a successful example of how community organization can generate new life opportunities and new horizons in which the organization of space and the needs of the people can be solved with the help or not from government interventions. It would be necessary to wonder if organizational initiatives like these can be combined with government initiatives such as the Gran Mision Vivienda Venezuela to create synergies of action where the beneficiaries can be active actors in the process of decision-making and consolidation of spaces. The

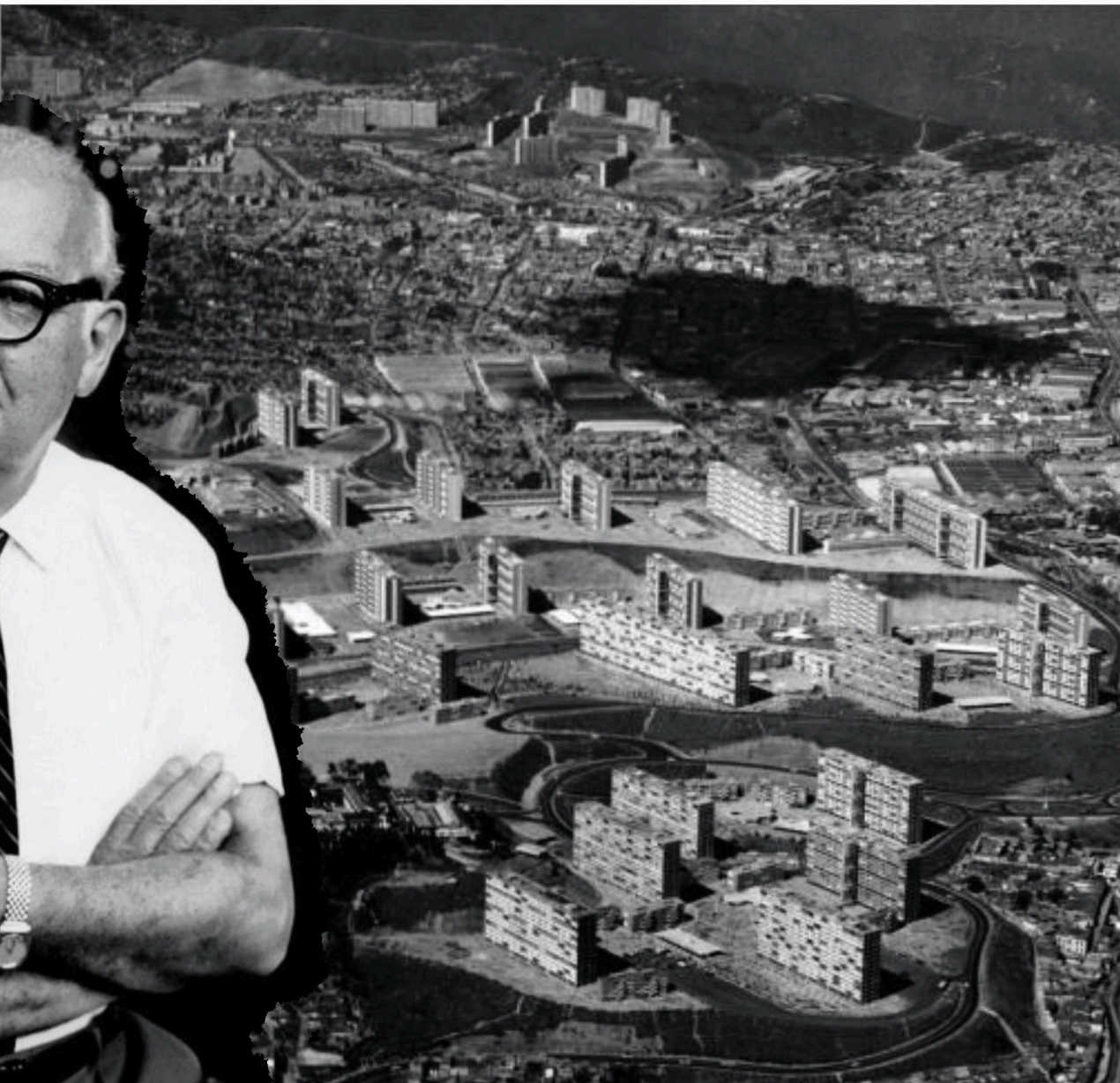
organization and consolidation of the city is exemplified by the phenomenon of the tower where it is shown that making a city begins with everyone, making a community and organizing itself is the key to the development of a Sustainable city over time.

In order to show how the issue of informality was worked on, we will carry out a critical reading of 2 projects that tried to attack the problem of urban informality in the city of Caracas. These projects have in common that they were improvement projects for the city of Caracas created with the purpose of stopping the growth or development of informal settlements. These projects built over time used what we will call the Modernist method since they were based on the vision that the home was only a residential space and that the city had to be fully configured to show perfection and neatness closely related to the visions of standardization and sanitation after the World Wars. These approaches are far removed from the vision of addressing the problem from the root, from the individual. They focused on 2 aspects: Give a more hygienic and modern sense to the city and reduce the problem of informal settlements to a numerical problem (a housing deficit) with which only generating a large supply of formal housing would be a solution. But later on we will discover that a technical solution cannot be given to a problem that not only has a number component (the deficit) but also a whole cultural, economic, political and social background.



CHAPTER 03

THE MODERNIST APPROACH TO INFORMALITY



CASE STUDY I: THE REURBANIZATION OF “EL SILENCIO”.

3.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Venezuela from colonization to the beginning of the 20th century had maintained a purely agricultural economy. Crops of various fruits and vegetables made national production such a production to supply national and international consumption. But the product that boosted the economy the most was coffee. The latter happened effectively until the pioneering geological exploration that traced hydrocarbons in the country was between 1911 and 1916. It was in 1914 that the first discovery of the precious hydrocarbon was made in the Sumaque Well in the Mene Grande field. From there it was a race against the clock between different foreign companies for the conduct of the exploration, exploitation and refining of hydrocarbons to make it one of the most important sources of energy.

Oil and its implications impacted the total dynamics of the population and the economy of the country. The rural state and agricultural state was replaced by The Oil Rent; the international reality of the coffee and cocoa exporting country, changed by the geopolitical and geostrategic circumstances of the oil state; Foreign investment replaced businesses with pre-capitalist traits; the oil extraction went from the rudimentary of the Petrolia del Táchira (first Oil Venezuelan company) to the expert procedures of the world oil consortiums. And most importantly, the oil income altered the way of life of the nineteenth-century and village society.

At the beginning of the 1920s, with the new oil concessions granted to companies in England and the United States, Venezuela's oil production went from 2.2 million barrels in 1920 to 8.7 million in 1924. During the world crisis of 1929 Venezuela is the second largest oil exporter in the world. In this environment of economic expansion, in 1928, the Banco Obrero had been founded, based in Maracay and attached to the Ministry of Development, with the initial idea that it would be a promoter-financial agent of the Government, to "facilitate the poor workers the acquisition of cheap and hygienic dwellings". At the end of the mandate of Juan Vicente Gómez (1936), even after almost twenty years of oil activity in the country, it was little urbanized: 9 urban centers, with 20,000 or more inhabitants, concentrated 15% of the national population; and there was little that the Banco Obrero had done to achieve the objective formulated in 1928.

The reforms initiated by the government of Eleazar López Contreras, in 1936, are aimed at "tackling social, political, economic, health and educational problems", very in tune with the postulates of the Welfare State or the Sozialstaat, current at the time. For this reason, the Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio de Obras Publicas: MOP), created in 1874, and the Banco Obrero assume the role of guaranteeing "social peace" through the ability to generate employment through their works (Cilento, 1998). The Banco Obrero moves its headquarters to Caracas, reorganizes and restarts its activity now as a builder of urbanizations, mainly for the recently created unions of urban workers. The Bella Vista (1937) and Pro-Patria (1939) Urbanizations represent the first great effort to make good the proposal of the Banco Obrero Law to provide cheap houses to poor workers.

In 1938 an attempt was made to order the future development of Caracas through the preparation of a “regulatory plan” by the Urban Planning Department of the Federal District, created in 1936. Although the territorial scope of this last initiative was reduced to the section of the city included within of the limits of the Federal District, and its study focused mainly on aspects of roads and the monumental composition of sets of public buildings, represented the first effort made in the country to face the future of our urban areas with a broader focus than the simple application of alignments and the realization of occasional investments of a remedial nature. (Fossi, 1984). Banco Obrero’s first major urban renewal experience will be the redevelopment of El Silencio, with 747 apartments and 207 commercial premises, in the center of Caracas, begun in 1941, on the grounds of the previously demolished, bustling central neighborhood of the same name. with a project by Carlos Raúl Villanueva.

The redevelopment “El Silencio” was the first important Work of urban development that was developed in Venezuela and, it, gave rise in our country to the creation and consolidation of a high-quality construction industry. The technical and administrative organization, especially to direct said work, could be considered as the first management contract in Venezuela.

The Directorate of Urbanism, an organism that was created by resolution of the Federal District, on April 6, 1938, focused its studies mainly on the transformation of the Central district of the city of Caracas. The management was assisted by the consultants from the firm of urban planners , Prost, Lambert, Rotival and Wegentein. For the purposes of Control, the Technical Urban Planning Commission was appointed on the same

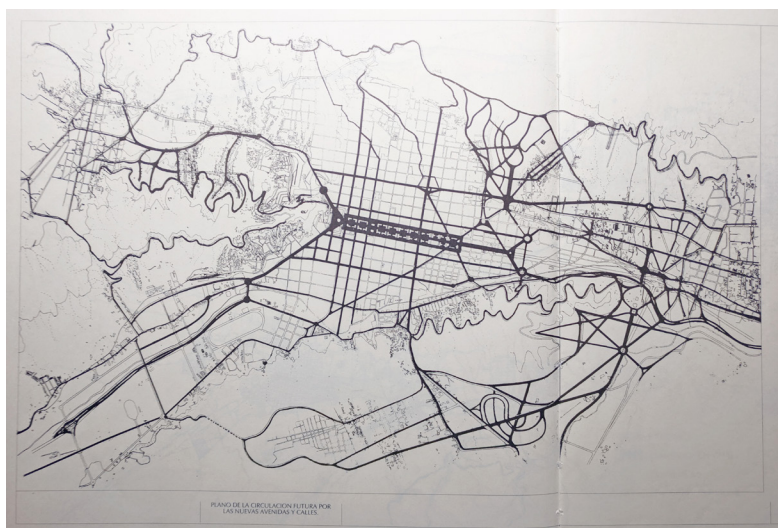
date, made up of: Dr. Edgar Pardo Stolk (Engineer), Director of Buildings and Ornamental Works of the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) and the Architects Carlos Raul Villanueva, Carlos Guinand, Enrique Garcia Maldonado and Gustavo Wallis. The task of this direction was to prepare an Urban Planning Plan for the city of Caracas, a Plan that was submitted to the consideration of the municipal council the following year (De sola Ricardo. 1988).



Rotival sketch of the urban structure of Caracas. De Sola Ricardo, R. (1988) *Cronicas de la reurbanización del Silencio*.

In 1938, Maurice Rotival presented a project for the preliminary studies of the layout of the new avenues, streets and highways. The urban action in the center and the logic of road infrastructures for the valley and its surroundings confirm the vision of a monumentalized capital in its founding nucleus and with new peripheral settlements. In fact, with his proposal he reaffirms the importance acquired by the road between a modernized central area and the new urban peripheries that are added and that are suggested as opposed to the density and intensity of metropolitan use in the center. The plan of future circulation with the new avenues and streets proposed by Rotival presents the substitution of the bidirectional order of

the founding plot, which developed over almost four hundred years, by a linear axis of east-west direction that is linked to the urban peripheries through a system of hierarchical roads that are supported by the establishment of roundabouts or articulation nodes as a mechanism to string together scattered fragments in the territory.



Plan of the circulation proposed in the Rotival plan. De Sola Ricardo, R. (1988) *Crónicas de la Reurbanización de 'El Silencio'*

The design of another city, different from the original plot, is fully confirmed in the Haussmannian notion of demolishing an important set of blocks of the founding center and in the introduction of a series of diagonals that, following the example of other major cities, establishes a connection between the center and the peripheries. However, unlike the logic with which the grid plot of the founding city is proposed, the urban structure that is generated from the Rotival plan of 1939, far from being an organizer of the totality in which it operates, as it was Its original intention will detonate in a development by aggregation of large isolated agricultural areas, which are linked to axes of east-west direction and which have violent borders in their relationship or fabric with their immediate

edges, thereby generating discontinuities and frictions in the meeting of its plots and elements. The plan does not contemplate the continuation of the city through the extension of the grid, but rather the creation of a new urban center inscribed in the foundational layout and whose extension will be carried out from road infrastructure operations that make it possible to connect said urban center with new developments in the periphery.



Zones whose expropriation is necessary for the settlement of the city. De Sola Ricardo, R. (1988) *La reurbanización del Silencio*

The new monumental axis confirms the expansion of the city in the valley and the recognition of new satellite peripheries to it. It is from this location that it is decided to organize the expropriation of all the land in the area of “El Silencio”, a neighborhood of Caracas made up of houses with soft buildings and of poor architectural quality coupled with the fact that it was an area of houses self-produced.

3.2 ARCHITECTURE VS. “LOS RANCHOS”.

The Banco Obrero as an entity was created with the purpose of making it easier for poor workers to acquire housing in urban areas. Although it is true that the insufficient residential supply harms the entire population, it particularly affects those who lack the resources to access the formal housing market. This began to manifest itself as a social problem in Venezuela since the 1920s, when the massive migrations from the countryside to the city occurred, which were reviewed in the background chapter of the study due to the transformations derived from oil exploitation. Thus, without prior notice, nuclei of “provisional” accommodation began to appear, made up of so-called ranches, houses built with precarious materials in “Cerros” (hills) or around streams, in areas lacking public services adjacent to the already developed urban fabric. The presence of this type of construction is not considered problematic until its massive presence in cities affects the functioning and the image of the city itself. In the volume General Summary of the Republic, synthesis of the results of the VIII National Population Census carried out in December 1950, the Ranchos are defined as a house with a typical structure of bahareque walls, thatch or palm roof and a dirt floor (Venezuela, Ministerio de desarrollo, 1957).

During the presidency of General Eleazar López Contreras (1936-1941), the BO (Banco Obrero) is reorganized and modernized with the new law of 1936 that allows defining financing and land acquisition policies, as well as structuring plans for the construction of more than 1000 homes ; consequently, it breaks with the old system that left the bank only the role of investor.



Street full of ranchos. Mesa B. (2010) *Contra el Rancho en Venezuela: de la campaña de 1946-1951*

The gap between the operation of the BO and the housing supply is shown in the results of the VII National Population Census carried out on December 7, 1941. For the first time in the country, sanitary data on housing are collected, examining aspects such as: Type of house, Roof quality, toilets, Water supply, Water situation inside the house, Distribution of the house, Overcrowding, Ventilation, Garbage disposal, Protection of the house against insects and parasites (Venezuela, Ministerio de Desarrollo, 1947).

A population of 3.951.371 inhabitants is registered in 1941, the majority being established in rural areas (65.1%). Of a total of 669,752 dwellings, 406.640 (60.8%) were classified as ranchos with thatched roofs and dirt floors, revealing with indisputable clarity the disconcerting panorama that constitutes housing in Venezuela. Of these ranches, 92% have dirt floors, lacking basic services such as direct provision of drinking wa-

ter through aqueducts or sewers for an adequate disposal of toilets. Although a substantial percentage of this total of ranches is found in rural areas, their existence is also recorded in cities such as: Caracas, Maracaibo, Barquisimeto or Maracay (5437, 3710, 3986, 1695 ranchos, respectively). A 1944 study of the ranchos indicates that in the Federal District there are 12.738 houses with thatched roofs, dirt floors, without potable water, or adequate toilets.

3.3 CRITICAL READING

Due to the organization's search for the growth of the city of Caracas and the creation of a city planning plan, the Rotival Plan tried to organize and project a new way of organizing the city. But given the conditions and needs of the Hausmanian-style project, it was necessary to remove and sanitize sectors of the city that did not belong to this ideal of perfect order and future. It is when, very close to the historic center of the city and in one of the main axes of the new Rotival plan, one of the largest urban projects of the city takes place. El Silencio at that time it was a field west of the original 25 blocks of the city and Garcí González de Silva bought those lands a few years after the founding of Caracas. The name El Silencio is presumed to have originated after an epidemic that killed all the inhabitants of that area. In the government of President Isaías Medina Angarita, the demolition of all the houses, bars and brothels that were in the area was ordered to make way for the redevelopment of El Silencio on July 25, 1942.

Without collateral, the inhabitants of this sector, which consisted of low-income inhabitants of the city who owned self-produced houses on the side of the adjacent stream, were evicted but not relocated. In the first instance, it seems a just cause

to remove the inhabitants of the sector in which a type of informality proliferates. Where houses, bars and brothels were demolished for a cause of Public health, but the rights to the city were denied the citizens in question. For this moment the ideas of the perfect order and modern city make us think that a clean sheet is the right means to fulfill the objectives of a more perfect city. Very little had been studied on Informality and the informal settlements in the sector were very “soft” so their consolidation was not a problem for the demolition of all the buildings in the sector. It would be necessary to question whether these people who were evicted. Where did they move? Was it their economic poverty that caused them to be mobilized? As it is a sectoral redevelopment project and they are the current inhabitants, shouldn’t they have the right to the space that was taken from them? And it is at this point that we ask ourselves if episodes like these are the ones that make evacuating the settlement make poverty look like a problem that urban planners and planners see as a technical problem.

The Banco Obrero organized an architecture competition for the elaboration of a project for the development of the “El Silencio” Zone in the city of Caracas. The contest was fought between the proposals of 2 architects: Carlos Guinand and Carlos Raúl Villanueva. On March 23, 1942, the Banco Obrero offices received the projects of the Young architects. Villanueva in his project contemplates the construction of 7 blocks with a uniform type of housing for the middle class. Indoor gardens, playgrounds, sanitary facilities in each apartment, kitchen, and corridors. The construction work began on January 4, 1943, with the architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva being the winner of the contest and in charge of its design together with the sculptor Francisco Narváez.



Final proposal of Villanueva section. Taken from: <https://entrerayas.com/2015/08/70-anos-de-la-inauguracion-de-la-reurbanizacion-el-silencio/>

Designed in 1941, the El Silencio Redevelopment addresses the then unprecedented issue of low-income, high-density housing. The work marks the beginning of the urbanization process in Venezuela and constitutes the first example of an urban complex installed in the geographic center of the modern city.



Carlos Raúl Villanueva was born on May 30, 1900 at the Venezuelan Consulate in London. He is the son of Carlos Antonio Villanueva, a Venezuelan civil engineer and diplomat, and Paulina Astoul, a French lady of the Paris elites. Carlos Raúl had four brothers: Marcel, Sylvia, Susana and Laureano who preferred European life. He spent the first seven years of his life in London, then moved to Paris, where he began his secondary education studies at the Lycée Condorcet. In 1922 he entered the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and enrolled in architecture, the same career that his brother Marcel had studied. After attending various drawing and urban planning workshops, Villanueva graduated in 1928. That same year he traveled to Venezuela for the first time, got to know the Caracas of the time and settled for a time in the Cojedes State. Soon after he travels to the United States, where he resides for a year, working with his brother Marcel in the office of architectural projects for educational purposes Guilbert and Betelle. By 1929 Villanueva returned and settled in Venezuela, a country that, at that time, remained under the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez. But the Villanueva family had always maintained close relations with the Venezuelan governments, so upon his arrival he began to work for the Ministry of Public Works. In mid-1937 Villanueva returned to France and resumed his studies at the Institute of Urbanism of the University of Paris. A few months later, he headed back to Venezuela, when President Isaías Medina Angarita offered to work on the projection and construction of the new headquarters of the Central University of Venezuela, the University City of Caracas, which would be his most outstanding work and the product more finished within the concept of “synthesis of the arts”.



Carlos Raúl Villanueva. De Sola Ricardo, R. (1988) *Cronicas de la Reurbanizacion del Silencio*.

The national government, through the municipal council in 1942 and in cooperation with the Banco Obrero, established the bases for collaboration in the development of the project for the redevelopment of silence. Through a report of the commission made up of the 2 entities, a contract is published in *La Gaceta Municipal* N ° 6158 of the month VI year XLII and the same contract received approval by the council on December 6, 1943.

The contract establishes the cooperation to be provided by the Municipality in the Redevelopment of “El Silencio” summarized as follows:

1. The municipality is responsible for carrying out the following municipal works: a) Paving the streets, sidewalks and squares, budgeted at Bs. 355.000.00. b) Drainage of rainwater, sewers and aqueduct pipes, budgeted at Bs. 85.000.00. c) Placement of public lighting lanterns, for a value of Bs. 30.000.00. d) The municipality recognized to the Banco Obrero a Credit for Bs.1.500.000.00 that would be paid or compensated until its total extinction with taxes on houses, buildings, and undeveloped land that the bank had to pay to the municipality in

the area covered by the Redevelopment “El Silencio”.

The 3 first works totaled a total of Bs 470.000.00. Likewise, a commitment was established by the municipality to carry out Said Works in the Period between January 1, 1944 and June 30, 1945.

2. On the other hand, the Banco Obrero undertook to carry out the following works at its own expense: a) The embedding of the Caroata ravine in the sector that crosses the Barrio el Silencio. b) The Banco Obrero declares that it does not recognize itself as having the right to claim the price of the land used for public squares, widening of streets and avenues for public use, and in any case formally renounces that right.

As a consequence of said contract, the contribution of the Municipality for the development of the Redevelopment Works “El Silencio” reached the figure of Bs 1.9700.000,00 instead of the sum of Bs. 3.000.000.00 requested by the Banco Obreiro. (Martin, J.J. 1989).

For the construction of the Works of Silence, the Banco Obreiro obtained loans for the order of Bs. 31.105.000 distributed as follows: Export Import Bank: loan for \$ 6.000.000 that at the change of the time that corresponded to bs . $3.35 = \$ 1$ represented the amount of 20.100.000 bs. Panamerican Life Insurance: two loans of bs. 1.000.000 and one for \$ 300.000 equivalent to Bs 1.005.000.00. Banco Venezolano de Crédito: loan for Bs. 3.000.00. Banco de Venezuela: Loan for Bs. 3.200.000.00. Banco de Caracas: Loan for Bs. 1.800.000.00. (De Sola Ricardo, R. 1988).

The role of the state is defined from the moment in which,

through the Plan designed by Rotival, the Modernization and sanitation of the city is planned, trying to improve its road infrastructure and in turn redesigning the use of the city center not only for Patrimonial Use but also making it part of the residential fabric of the city. From the moment of the eviction and the collapse of the buildings and ranches in the neighborhood of “El Silencio”, the intention to sanitize and re-qualify the sector of the city was imminent. Through the Banco Obrero as Financial Entity, the production of urbanization in the sector of the City was produced, which noted the intention of the National Government to produce a project of Housing in which different Objectives were achieved: 1) to produce a change in the Silence modifying the neighborhood and its old buildings (Ranchos, Bars, and several Brothels) for a more emblematic image of what was needed to be part of the historic center of the city. 2) 747 housing apartments were built divided into 7 blocks with all the comforts and facilities and services guaranteeing the sanitation and equipment of the sector in a new system for the time that combined residential buildings with commercial premises, parks and other equipment, all this conceived in the same project plan.

The construction of the complex as a proposal to clean up the old slum El Silencio meant a strategic feat of a political and economic nature. The materialization achieved through the Banco Obrero and promoted by a campaign initiated by the media tried to resolve various aspects. In the social order to respond to the growing demand for housing for the working and professional class, replacing the pre-existing unhealthy situation of the sector. In the urban order, densify and structure the node between the East - West axis of the city and its bifurcation to the Southeast (San Martín) and Northwest (Avenida Sucre), taking up the lines of the Urban Planning Plan. In the

economic order, to drive the economy from the activation of the construction industry. To achieve this, Banco Obrero uses loans from various financial entities, including Export Import Bank, Panamerican Life Insurance, Banco Venezolano de Crédito, Banco de Venezuela and Banco Caracas.

The transition between the traditional city and the modern city, it expresses through its urban-architectural response this duplicity between two stages in the country's history, rural Venezuela and the oil industry. It adopts the continuous multi-family block, with between 4 and 7 floors to adapt and shape urban spaces of different scale and spatial quality in order to value the two basic elements of urban design: the square and the street according to the type of building of the Höfe developed in post-war Europe. The Ensemble of El Silencio propagates a double formal code to the changing city of "Los Techos Rojos"(The Red Roofs) . To the outside an image seasoned with almost iconographic themes from the colonial repertoire. However, towards the interior he frees himself from the historicist prejudice and is sincere with modernity, resorting to the type of workers' dwellings in interwar Europe, alluding to the model of the Austrian Höfe. The new style is used in our environment with the same intention, but with significant local adjustments in its formal, functional and environmental conception.



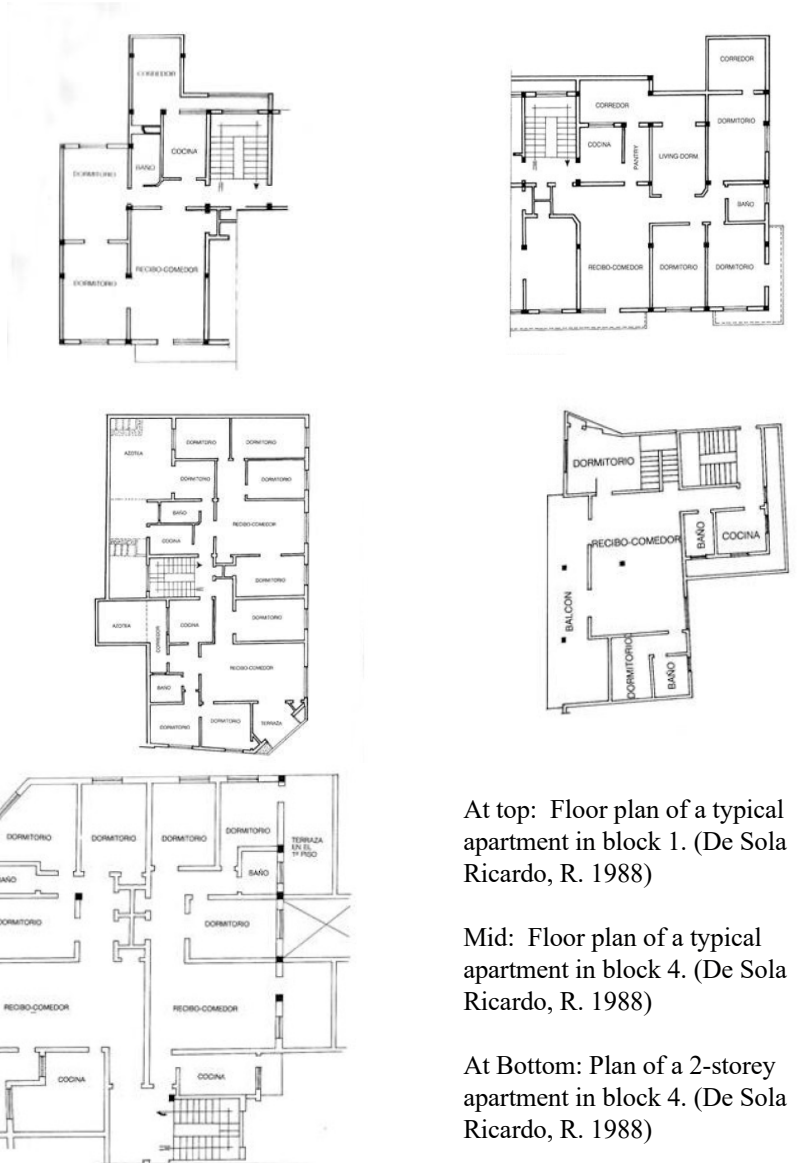
Karl Marx-Hof,
classic social
housing in Vienna.
Retrieved from
<https://casa-abierta.com/post.php?t=-591065238dc7c>

For the composition of the complex and the definition of the urban space, Villanueva very strictly assumed the premises established by the Metropolitan Commission for Urbanism, leaving a wide Central Plaza that would later be called “Rafael Urdaneta” and later “O’Leary”. From there, the exit to Catia and Antímano was ensured, and the scene of the modern city was perpetuated for the future from the mooring that, with Bolívar Avenue, was established between El Calvario Park and Block 1 as a backdrop for background, and Los Caobos Park as the opposite end of the complex. Villanueva responded with the urban planning approach to the geographical condition of Caracas, respecting the conformation of the hill.

The El Silencio Redevelopment is structured in seven blocks of different dimensions. Block 1 (the highest) is equivalent to the backdrop and culminates the axis of Avenida Bolívar. Blocks 2 and 3 are arranged symmetrically on both sides of Avenida Bolívar giving way to the underground road. Blocks 4 and 6 closes laterally and give scale to Plaza O’Leary; Block 5 is developed in terraces and demarcates an expressive curved and ascending street, while Block 7 extends perimeter over a patio and precedes Plaza Miranda.

The housing units are chained through central circulation cores, and they turn in their internal functioning towards the rear spaces or playgrounds. The apartments are the application of a series of functional criteria that Villanueva will have the opportunity to develop years later in high-density multi-family housing. Sun protection, cross ventilation, social, private and service areas, constitute a series of basic approaches related to modern housing. El Silencio is an ideal made to receive the bright light of the tropics and at the same time protect the inhabitants from torrential rains and inconsiderate winds

through its galleries and corridors. Villanueva creates a Caracas city with the intention of favoring the arcaded street and transcends climatic reasons in a work in which cultural criteria prevail. The gallery crystallized the desire to recover the porticoed street as a desideratum of the Laws of the Indies, which from the time of the Spanish conquest regulated the entire growth of Latin American cities.



At top: Floor plan of a typical apartment in block 1. (De Sola Ricardo, R. 1988)

Mid: Floor plan of a typical apartment in block 4. (De Sola Ricardo, R. 1988)

At Bottom: Plan of a 2-storey apartment in block 4. (De Sola Ricardo, R. 1988)





Photographs of the urbanization.
Cronicas de la Reurbanizacion del Silencio
(De Sola Ricardo, R. 1988)

The phase of maximum splendor of the complex is framed between the end of its construction and inauguration in 1945, until the moment in which the western lower bodies of Blocks 2 and 3 are mutilated between 1957 and 1962. This phase is crucial since between the decades of the 40s and 50s, it is consolidated as a residential, institutional and commercial center for the city, gradually occupying its residential units and becoming the headquarters of prestigious government and commercial institutions.

But also, and therein lies another of its great values, El Silencio becomes a fundamental setting for the historical and political events of our city in such momentous events as the end of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, the rallies of the electoral campaigns, the protests trade unionists, the carnival parades and the May 1 marches, among others. O'Leary Square is definitely one of the most memorable spaces of the second half of the 20th century for the city and nation.

During the 1950s, the economic boom in the country was reversed in the movement of groups of the middle class and rising professionals in residential spaces, accompanied by the installation on their ground floors of the best shops and commercial premises of the city, aimed fundamentally at the growing middle and professional class. Airlines such as Aeropostal and KLM., Maritime such as the Royal Dutch Vapor Company, sales of automobiles such as Chevrolet, electrical appliances such as Doña Francisquita company, distributor of the General Electric Co. The Redevelopment of "El Silencio" was a key piece in the ideal of the Rotival Plan, a culmination from the east side of the city to the monumentally planned Bolívar Avenue. Between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, road reforms were carried out around Pla-

za O’Leary, in response to the express character that Avenida Bolívar acquired with the construction of the Simón Bolívar Center. In 1969 the project received the Construction Prize awarded by the Venezuelan Chamber of Construction. In 1999 El Silencio was declared a site of cultural interest. Since 2003 the Mayor’s Office of Libertador has recovered the area of what has been called El Silencio Urbanization since then.



Photograph of block 1 (2015). Daniel Galindez. Taken from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/143933353@N02/33141221915/in/photos-tream/>



Photograph of the Oleary square and Las Toninas (Fountain) (2017). Taken by the author.



Overhead photograph



CASE STUDY II: URBANIZATION 2 DE DICIEMBRE OR “23 DE ENERO” BY CARLOS RAÚL VILLANUEVA.

3.4 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1943 the National Institute of Sanitary Works (INOS Instituto Nacional de Obras Sanitarias) was created, attached to the Ministry of Public Works (Ministerio de Obras Públicas) and in charge of studying, developing and managing the water supply and sewerage programs, a responsibility that had exceeded the limited capacity of local administrations. Important programs are undertaken for the development of basic social infrastructure: in education, sanitation, social assistance, housing, transportation and communications, which will have a marked influence on the acceleration of population growth and the urbanization process (Fossi, 1984).

With the so-called “Revolución de Octubre” of 1945, which invokes as a reason for the overthrow of the government of Isaías Medina Angarita the search for direct and secret universal election and the female vote, the practice of formulating plans for the achievement of the goals of social advancement proposed by the Revolutionary Government Junta; for these purposes; in 1946; The National Highway Commission and the National Urban Planning Commission are created.

The creation of the National Planning Commission (CNU), and the organization of its Technical Directorate attached to the MOP, institutionalizes urban planning as a public function

on a national scale, and immediately undertakes the study of the main cities, within a regional frame of reference. The degree of urbanization of the country was growing rapidly and the CNU and its Technical Directorate addressed the preparation of “regulatory plans” for Caracas, Maracaibo, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Maracay, San Cristóbal and Mérida. The 1947 Constitution will incorporate the concept that the evolution of the city system is in the national interest, a principle that was maintained in the following constitutions (Fossi, 1984).

In 1946, through Decree 144, the first housing plan of the Banco Obrero (1946-1949) was established, with the objectives of replacing the existing ranchos with sanitary housing, taking half of the population growth as demand in the large cities, and distribute the action among the fourteen largest cities in the country, with a goal of building 4,000 homes per year. In tune with these objectives, an ambitious program for the early acquisition of land for urban development is started, in accordance with what was proposed in 1945 by the Housing Commission appointed by the Governing Board. As was the policy of Banco Obrero from its inception, homes were awarded in installment sales operations, with initial installments and low interest rates, in the order of 5-6%. In this period the figure of rent with purchase option was reactivated, which had been used in a pioneering way in the San Agustín del Sur urbanization, the first of the Banco Obrero in the period 1928-1936.

3.5 VILLANUEVA’S MASTER PLAN.

In November 1948, President Gallegos was overthrown, the dictatorial decade of Marcos Pérez Jiménez began, and public works and housing became the political and economic axis of his government, with the doctrine of the “New National Ideal”

and the objective of “moral, intellectual and material improvement of its inhabitants and the physical environment.”

Starting in 1952, with the “batalla contra el rancho” (the battle against the rancho) the stage of the “superblocks” of Banco Obrero began, which sought to respond to the “excessive growth” of the ranchos Slums in Caracas and the Litoral, product of the strong migrations of peasants who have to compete for employment with European immigrants (Spanish, Italian and Portuguese); These monopolize almost all jobs in construction, the main internal economic activity in the country. With this orientation, between 1953 and 1958, in an impressive operation, 19,580 apartments were built in Caracas and Maiquetía in 97 15-story buildings (the superblocks) and 78 four-story blocks, which in total came to house about 180.000 inhabitants.

In the 1940s, the VII National Population Census was carried out on December 7, 1941. For the first time in the country, sanitary data on accommodation were collected in a registry, examining aspects such as: Type of house, Quality of the roof, Toilets, Water supply, Water situation inside the house, Distribution of the house, Overcrowding, Ventilation, Garbage disposal, Protection of the house against insects and parasites.

A population of 3.951.371 inhabitants is registered in 1941, the majority being established in rural areas (65.1%). Of a total of 669,752 dwellings, 406,640 (60.8%) were classified as ranchos with thatched roofs and dirt floors, revealing with indisputable clarity the disconcerting panorama that constitutes housing in Venezuela. Of these ranchos, 92% have dirt floors, lacking basic services such as direct provision of drinking water through aqueducts or sewers for an adequate disposal

of excreta. The figures highlighted the predominance of the ranch together with the lack of minimal sanitary resources for subsistence, evidencing a “development of elements harmful to the health of its inhabitants.

Although a substantial percentage of this total of ranchos is found in rural areas, their existence is also recorded in cities such as: Caracas, Maracaibo, Barquisimeto or Maracay (5437, 3710, 3986, 1695 ranchos, respectively).

The number of ranches registered in 1941 located in the national, state and Federal Territories capitals reaches 107.780 units, indicating the magnitude of the problem that affects the urban population, which by law had to be served by the BO. The alarming numbers do not cause changes in state housing policies, but during the 1940s there was an opportunity to execute innovative proposals of remarkable own value, although little or nothing was linked to the existing situation. A 1944 study of ranches indicates that in the Federal District there are 12.738 houses with thatched roofs, dirt floors, no drinking water, and no adequate disposal of toilets.

The deficit reflected in the 1941 Census did not bring notable changes in official policies until the establishment of the Revolutionary Government Junta in November 1945. The Junta created ad hoc the National Housing Commission, made up of specialists on the subject. His Report on Housing of January 14, 1946, based on the VII National Population Census, concluded that there were 30.000 unhealthy homes in the country and 40.000 new ones were needed to meet the requirements. The considerations of the Report justify the promulgation of two decrees on January 18, 1946: No. 144 contributes Bs. 50 million to the Banco Obrero, increasing its capital to Bs. 70

million, and proposes a plan for the massive construction of houses under its responsibility (40.000 units in 10 years, 4.000 located in 14 cities during the first year) with an investment of Bs. 28 million per year.

The 1946 Housing Plan, according to Decree No. 144, ordered the Banco Obrero to build 4000 homes per year for four years. It has already been said that between 1945 and 1948 what should be a Banco Obrero production of twelve thousand units, barely reached five thousand.

Urbanization and the territorial concentration of the population in certain areas characterized the country in the mid-20th century, when it was intended to impose the rational transformation of the physical environment included in the modernizing approach of the New National Ideal, advocated by the military estates in power since 1948. Hence the urgency of making an effort to build a complex infrastructure that would attend to the deficient territorial and urban conditions.

Unemployment, abandonment of the countryside and urban invasions, as well as worsening of habitability problems, occurred during the 1950s. In capital cities such as: Caracas, Valencia or Maracay, the housing of humble people is usually described as “miserable and does not meet the conditions of comfort and basic hygiene”

The population flow to Caracas raises a strong demand for housing that leads to the emergence and proliferation of slums. In 1949, 20.953 ranchos were concentrated in the city in sectors such as: Catia, Antímano, La Vega, Petare, El Valle and the north of the city (Metropolitan Office of Urban Planning, 1974).

The rational transformation of the physical environment of the New National Ideal proposed since 1949, is the basis for attacking the housing shortage, for which, accordingly, the battle against the rancho is declared early in the Banco Obrero. The concept is to clean up areas of Caracas occupied by suburbs in order to build for the Venezuelan workers, a house “cheerful, ventilated, full of light. The clean receipt, the modern dining room, the bathroom” (El Nacional newspaper, July 1951).

In this ideological context, the Banco Obrero builds comfortable and inexpensive apartments in Sarría where residents of the Tiro al Blanco slum would go, while those of the Ciudad Tablitas slum would settle in Catia. That *tabula rasa* policy directed towards the liquidation of the miserable ranchos that housed the most needy social classes, was expressly manifested at the end of 1951 in the inauguration of two Bank developments in Caracas: the Simón Rodríguez Urbanization and the 2 de Diciembre Urbanization, which later it would be recognized as 23 de Enero. The condition of an oil country in the middle of the second post-war period allows us to have enormous resources that are invested in the economic and social fields in favor of modernization in accordance with the provisions of the doctrine of the New National Ideal, particularly regarding the rational transformation of the physical environment to achieve the moral, intellectual and material improvement of all the inhabitants.

3.6 CRITICAL READING

From Quinta Crespo to Diego de Losada, in the TABO (Taller de Arquitectura del Banco Obrero : Banco Obrero Architecture Workshop) high-density and high-rise buildings are projected, introducing changes in the original model, first in number of floors and variety of apartments, then in location and quantity of communal services, reaching its total elimination when all the spaces are destined for residential use. Until 1953 these buildings were built in isolation in different areas of Caracas, however, from 1954, the Executive Branch headed by the then Colonel Pérez Jiménez insisted on focusing the housing policy on the elimination of the ranchos, which is why takes the first step towards mass production of the Banco Obrero through the Cerro Piloto Extraordinary Plan, announced in December 1953. Cerro Piloto would be called the socio-economic study carried out by the Government of the Federal District and the BO, in an area formed by a single hill and several ravines to the South of the Central hill, occupying part of the Sucre, Catedral and San Juan parishes. The study, which would be taken as a paradigm for future developments, was based on the National Censuses of 1941 and 1950, plus the data collected in 1953, and showed the existence of 53000 ranchos in the hills, where 310.972 people lived, representing 38,53% of the total population of Caracas, 807.053 inhabitants by the end of 1953. Parallel to this analysis, the architect Guido Bermúdez, from the BO Projects Section (former TABO), prepared in 1954 an architectural-urban proposal known as the Cerro Piloto Multicellular Study, which is exposed as a “response” to the data thrown by the Socio-economic Study.

The Campaign Against the Rancho of 1946 implied accepting the state’s inability to unilaterally resolve the housing defi-

cit, without the collective being called to participate; It was aimed at providing technical and financial support to those who had to solve their housing problems alone. However, this Campaign that could be described as realistic based on the circumstances of the country and the notable number of ranch residents was not implemented, and its possible results were unknown.

Since 1948 and protected by the growing oil resources, the military regimes in power have dedicated themselves through the Banco Obrero to the Battle against the rancho to eliminate the unhealthy and overcrowded rancho slums, in response to the official ideology and demonstration of their effective bureaucratic performance.

In a few years the attempt to satisfy the warlike yearnings in the field of popular housing expressed by the Executive Power prevailed in the Banco Obrero over previous experiences, and from 1954 the focus was directed towards the construction of multi-family superblocks taking advantage of the resources economic and technical available, seeking to immediately resolve the proliferation of ranches in the national capital. However, this also did not achieve the magic solution to a complex conflict in which different actors participated in particular historical conditions.

Considering the treatment of the housing shortage as an isolated numerical issue, which would only depend on the area of projects and construction plus a considerable injection of public money, the Venezuelan rulers exhibit a great ignorance of the aforementioned aspects - economy, poverty, urban planning, bureaucracy. , and they remain on the surface of the real situation, refusing to recognize a problem with very deep

roots in the political, economic and social system that prevails in the country at the time. Again, as in the construction process of the El Silencio Redevelopment, all the people evicted from the neighborhoods of the Sucre, Catedral and San Juan parishes were stripped of their homes, but in many cases, they were relocated within the new buildings.

The draft of high-rise blocks, the Multicelulares (MC), is announced as a solution to the housing needs in the hills of Caracas: 15-story buildings with mechanical vertical circulation, a corridor every 3 levels and apartments with direct access from the corridors, going up or down one floor by auxiliary stairs, except for the singles apartments on the roof, where you would have to climb two floors. (Mesa, B. 2008). These blocks would be organized with two different standard elements where type cells could be accommodated, according to the needs and family groups; Furthermore, depending on the topographic conditions of the terrain, six combinations in line and 29 at an angle would be possible. Eight models of apartments with cross ventilation and views were established in the design; kitchens and bathrooms would be mechanically ventilated, the first having natural lighting, and artificial lighting in the toilets.

The execution of the Cerro Piloto Plan began in March 1954, using only the Multicelulares building with a rectangular floor plan with eight models of apartments, maintaining the external auxiliary stairs and one internal one next to the elevator nucleus; without pilotis, open floors or services within the structure for residential use only. The construction involved the movement of large economic funds, reflected internally in multiple expenses that unbalanced the BO's budget. As already mentioned, the Cerro Piloto study carried out by

the Government of the Federal District and the Banco Obrero showed that there were 53.000 ranches in the Caracas hills, considering that state intervention should be aimed at their elimination. For this reason, Expropriation Decree No. 115 of June 4, 1954 is promulgated, which would affect 2.683.550m² of land located on the Central hill, north of San Martín avenue and east of La Quebradita.

Thus, the area of Cerro Central, where there were 19 ranchos slums, is destined for the Presidential Program to Eradicate Unhealthy Housing in Venezuela, as the BO plan will be called from now on. Those neighborhoods called Paraguay, Andrés Bello, Puerto Rico, Barrio Nuevo, October 18, Los Flores, Cañada de la Iglesia, Cerro de Belén, La Yerbera, Colombia, La Planicie, Monte Piedad, El Calvario, El Guarataro, New World, Eucaliptus, Matapalo, Barrio Unión and El Atlántico, would be progressively demolished to make way for the projects elaborated in the technical offices of the Banco Obrero. (Mesa, B. 2008).

For the fulfillment of the Program, Carlos Raúl Villanueva with the support of José Hoffmann and José Manuel Mijares, designs the 2 de Diciembre Community, made up of three Neighborhood Units (Unidades Vecinales : UV), to be built in three stages during 1955, 1956 and 1957. These three UVs They would be distributed in macroblocks on terraces adapted to the slopes of the East, Central and West sectors of the Central hill. In each stage made up of different Cooperative Units vertically contained in superblocks, these would be mixed with low-rise blocks and educational, commercial, civic, and religious services. For these superblocks, the reference taken is the DL model designed by C. Brando in 1953, more economical in construction and structurally more stable than the

Multicelular of 1954. The Modified DL-1955 presents a woven reinforced concrete skeleton formed by frames Four-legged rigid units, considered the last step of the “reductive operation of the Le ‘Corbusian model’”, the internal collective services have already been eliminated in a structure that is entirely dedicated to housing.

The terraces where the East sector of December 2 is located are due to immense earth movements, and the superblocks that graphically seem immediate to the city center, in reality are considerably distant from it due to the different heights where they are located, being in topographic levels well above the urban center.

The first stage was inaugurated on December 3, 1955, exalting the work of progress that is projected from the capital to the entire territory, thus materializing the ideological postulates that make up the doctrine of the National Good, advocated by the Prime Magistrate. The complex is presented as part of a program to provide comfortable and healthy housing for the neediest classes, displacing the old ranchos lacking the most basic services.

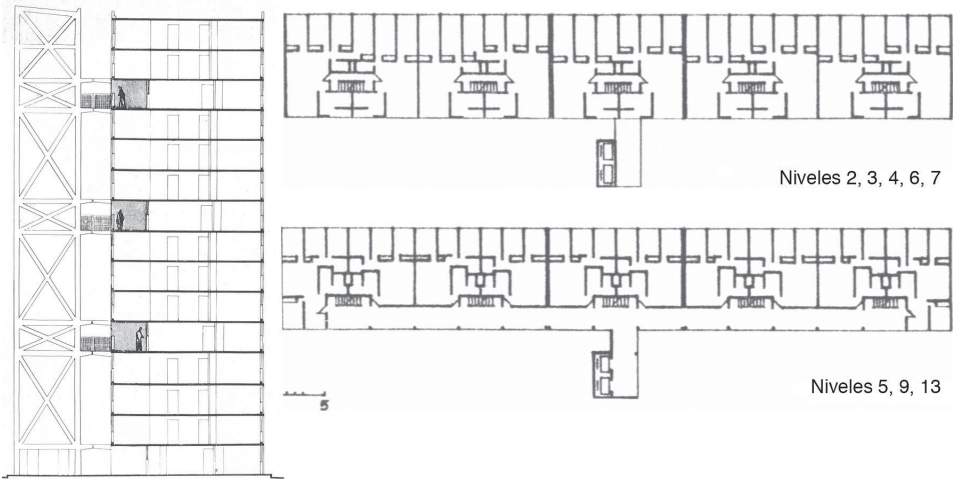
The Modified DL-1955 block designed for the Community, is a rectangular building with 15 levels and 150 apartments, it has an external tower with two elevators with stops every 4 floors, connected with corridors where five internal longitudinal stairs open, without ventilation. no natural lighting. You had to go up or down one or two levels to access two apartments; on each floor there are 10 houses with 2, 3 or 4 bedrooms; the terrace cannot be visited.

The detailed projects take references from the Marseille Hou-

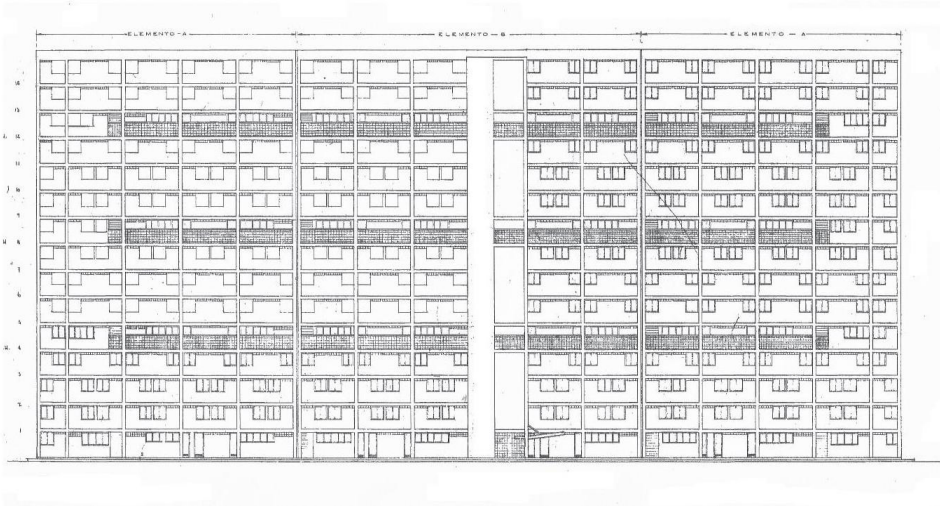
sing Unit (Boesiger, 1988), which was still under construction (1947-1952), indicating as early as 1951 the acceptance of a Corbusian home model. The characteristics of the Marseille Unit point to the metamorphosis of the contemporary way of life, turned into a prototype for the architectural discipline. Le Corbusier proposes a macro-building of 18 floors in a reinforced concrete superstructure, a free ground floor raised on colossal pilotis, 337 apartments of 33 different types with standardized elements of variable combination, a seventh level intended for communal services with an interior street and on the last floor, the open roof terrace where the race track, gym, swimming pool, nursery and theater coexist with sculptural ventilation chimneys. That Le Corbusier is the paradigm to be followed in the TABO is clearly stated in the 1951 Exhibition, both in its brochure and in the panels containing architectural proposals where, along with the technical drawings, his expressions such as “The City it is a work tool” or “We must balance the man-nature binomial”, as well as the French Auguste Perret “The skeleton is to the building as the skeleton is to the animal”. In the same way, the images of the first projects of high-density and high-rise buildings that in Venezuela will be generically called “superblocks” reveal the conceptual and graphic identification between the Corbusian Units and the TABO schemes.



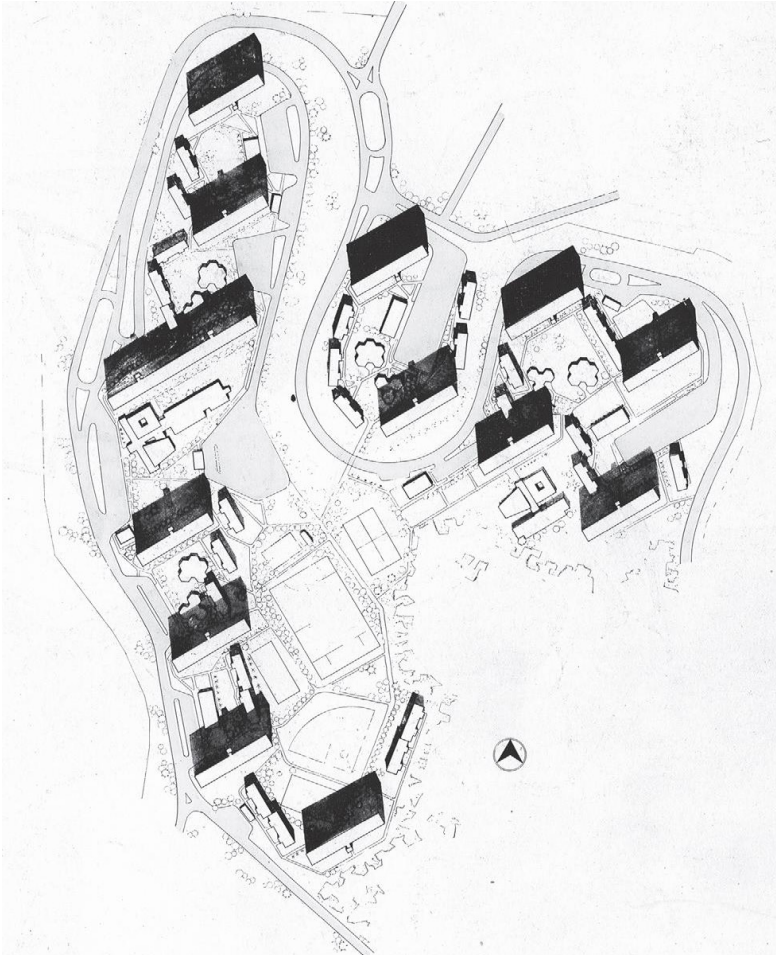
Unité d'Habitation / Le Corbusier. Taken from: <https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/771341/clasicos-de-arquitectura-unite-dhabitation-le-corbusier>



Modified DL superblock - 1955. Section and floor plans (Mesa, B. 2008)



Modified DL Superblock- 1956 Implanted in Simón Rodríguez. Facade. (Mesa, B. 2008).



Modified DL
superblock -
1955. Section
and floor plans
(Mesa, B. 2008)



Photo of the
community De-
cember 2, 1st
stage (1955).
(Mesa, B. 2008)

An investment of more than Bs.100.000.000 announced in April 1956 Alberto Díaz González, BO Managing Director: more than 50% destined for Caracas, the rest for Maracaibo and Barquisimeto. In the continuation of the campaign against unsanitary housing, Cañada de la Iglesia, San Luis, Tiro al Blanco and Los Flores de Catia would be evicted, to erect the second phase of the December 2 Community, with independent operation and its own urban life, providing of a community center in the middle of two groups of buildings, made up of a church, market, school and shops.

The Central Sector project was built in 1956, located to the west of the first stage of December 2, connecting these two areas by road and with access through Sucre Avenue. Macro-blocks are located on three differentiated terraces adapted to the terrain, where 2688 apartments are built in 13 superblocks of 15 floors –three doubles–, parallel to each other and oriented to the Northwest, along with four 4-story blocks with 256 apartments in different orientations.

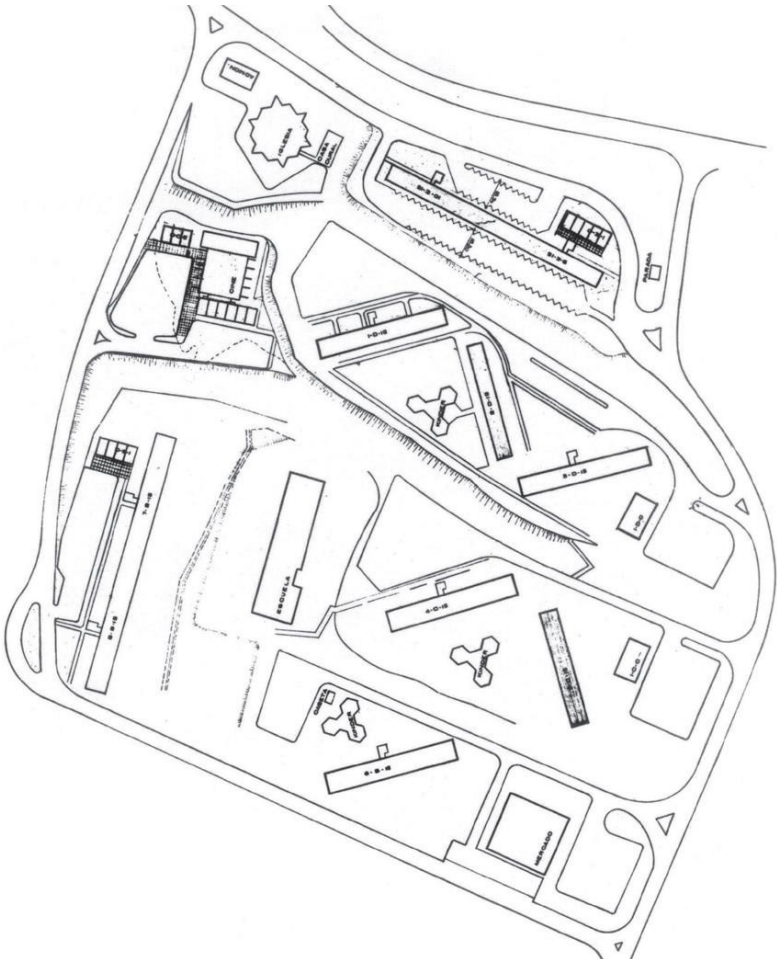
In this second stage, the DL Modified-1956 superblock model is used, which has internal transverse stairs, also lacking ventilation and natural lighting, preserving the other features of the DL Modified-1955 model. The houses have perimeter parking lots, 2 elementary schools, 6 kindergartens, 4 nurseries, 11 shops and a civic center, consisting of a third school, a theater, a market and a church.



Community plan of December 2, 2nd stage (1956). (Mesa, B. 2008)



Community view photo December 2, 2nd stage (1956). (Mesa, B. 2008)



Simón Rodríguez Housing Unit. Main plan 1957. (Mesa, B. 2008)

Photo of view of the Simón Rodríguez Housing Unit 1957. (Mesa, B. 2008)



The completion of the third of the four superblocks in the Tiro al Blanco area, which would be called Simón Rodríguez, allowed the Director-Manager of Banco Obrero to ensure that the complex would be completed by early December 1956, as would the new phase of December 2nd. At the same time, he reported, “that the investments for the construction of cheap houses reaches, this year, the sum of 140 million bolivars, an amount similar to that invested the previous year.”

In response to the Presidential Program to Eradicate Unhealthy Housing, an investment of Bs. 150.000.000 was approved in July 1957 to build 5590 apartments in Caracas –3000 on December 2840 in Simón Rodríguez–, 750 in the Litoral and 1000 inside. However, these figures, Díaz González director-manager, points out “that this year the most intense work will be carried out in the interior, since the Banco Obrero’s policy is to progressively resolve the housing problem throughout the country.”

On the Tierras de las Flores, 18 de Octubre and Barrio Nuevo, the third stage was built in 1957, west sector of 2 de Diciembre, with access from the East and Central Units, from Bella Vista street of the Pérez Bonalde urbanization and from the Morán avenue. Three streets border three narrow terraces at the foot of the hills, where 4122 apartments are built in 13 DL Modified-1956 superblocks (4 triples, 5 doubles), next to 6 blocks of 4 floors, served by 3 elementary schools, 7 kindergarten, a market, 10 shops and a civic center - theater, shops and church designed by Villanueva

General plan
of the commu-
nity December
2, 3rd Stage
(1957). (Mesa,
B. 2008)



Community
Aerial Photo-
graphy Decem-
ber 2, 3rd Stage
(1958). (Mesa,
B. 2008)



The three sectors that make up the Community 2 de Diciembre are linked by perimeter vehicular roads that run through them at three different topographic levels, although without crossing the areas where homes and services are erected. These areas are connected to each other by pedestrian sidewalks, stairways and large-scale open public spaces, highlighting the volumetric contrasts between the 15-story superblocks, the 4-story blocks and the collective buildings of one story in height and great morphological diversity.

Sets such as 2 de Diciembre with 9176 apartments and Simón Rodríguez with 1380 that add up to 10556 units were the product of interventions by the Banco Obrero that absorbed a large part of its economic resources and would provide housing to approximately between 50000 and 60000 Venezuelans.

These actions led to a constructive frenzy characterized by the immediacy of the projection and the speed of its execution, after vacating the hills, whose inhabitants were forced to leave their homes to make way for the superblocks. As can be seen, despite the statements made by the various BO Directors-Managers, it is evident that the largest housing production between 1955-1957 is concentrated in the capital, continuing a policy of housing overcrowding and the elimination of homes classified as unhealthy. It does not reach the cities in the interior of the country, neither in number of units nor in the use of the superblock model, which, apart from Caracas, would only be implemented in some areas of the Federal District's coastline. Initially, the December 2 Urbanization was conceived for the former inhabitants of the sector, with whom it was proposed to negotiate the apartments, in a purchase-sale operation. However, after the events of January 23th, 1958, when the Venezuelan people together with a sector of the National

Armed Forces overthrew the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, many inhabitants of the western Slums invaded the apartments of the superblocks of 2 de Diciembre that were in the process of being awarded. The same morning of the flight of the dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, in the 2 de Diciembre sector, people waving flags, took to the streets. They put up barricades and clashed with police agencies. Perhaps, from that moment, the rebellious, protesting, critical and revolutionary germ for which the parish is known throughout its history is born. Many of the evicted families, unsurprisingly, began new invasions and occupations, especially after the fall of the dictatorship in January 1958.



Photograph of the demonstrations in the December 2 neighborhood unit after the fall of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship (1958). Taken from https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/politica/enero-1958-anos-caida-dictadura_219984/

By 1959 a total of 4000 apartments were invaded. Faced with this situation, the directors of the Banco Obrero prepared the “Super-Blocks Evaluation Project” where they proposed possible alternatives and solutions to existing problems. They proposed, with respect to invasions and debtors, to promote an educational campaign for the residents, assigning a new value to the apartments to indicate new rental or sales quotas. Likewise, they envisaged a progressive arrangement that, ba-

sed on the new value and quotas, would set a date for the occupants to start their payments, suggesting that the establishment of these norms be progressive and testing the convincing methods followed in the educational campaign.

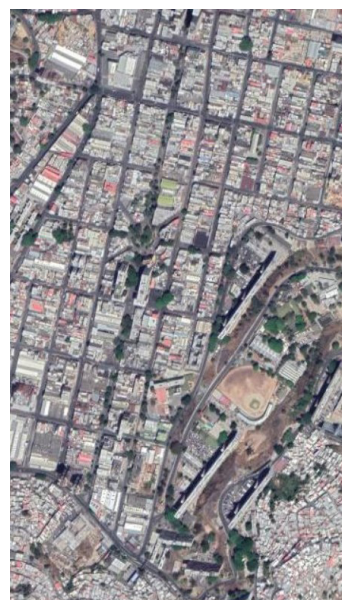
They also pointed out that such arrangements would be unique and that if Banco Obrero were ignored, it would be forced to resort to more extreme procedures, including the eviction of those families that, having reached an agreement with the institution, would not comply in the future. Proposing that the best rental fee policy is one that establishes that each successful tenderer pays what is within his reach according to his income. The fee policy had to be established immediately, based on the new value of the apartments and in accordance with the leasing or sales rules that were set. It recommended implementing a policy of subsidies for lower-income tenants. Likewise, rules of arrangement were established with tenants who completed two years of punctual payments, who would be granted a purchase option that could be effective in a period of two years, on the basis that the sale of the apartment will be formalized in accordance with the type of interest and the term that, in the opinion of Banco Obrero, each favored family could assume.

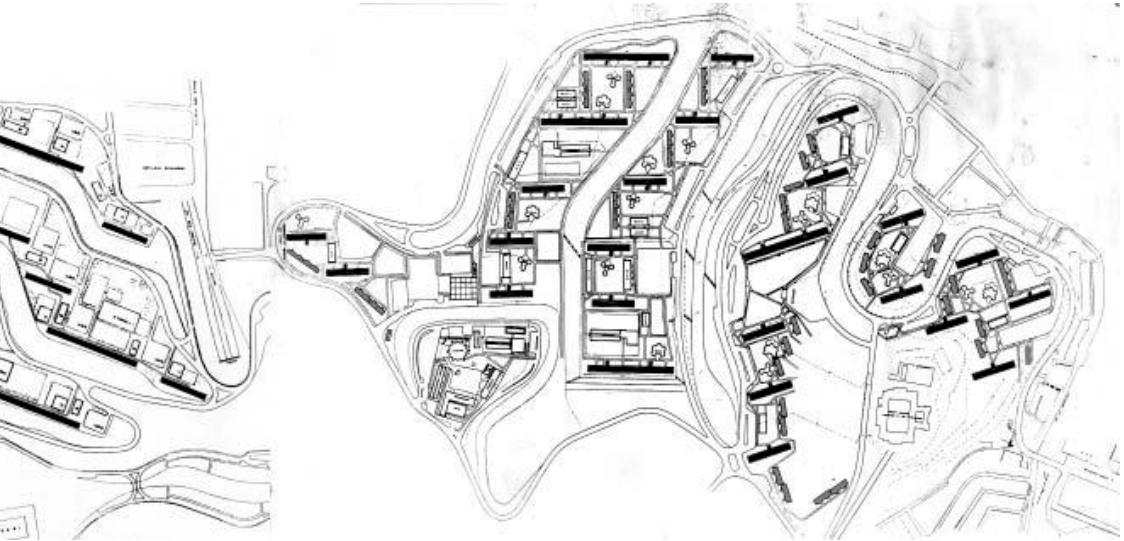
As the problem of debtors and invasions was considered an extraordinary problem, the creation of an office in charge of dealing with the ills derived from the occupation of the apartments was proposed. It would be a Special Provisional Office that would be in charge of translating the ideas resulting from this evaluation into practical, effective and immediately applicable measures.

At present in view of the urbanization of the city by the ran-

chos, the migrations from the countryside to the city and the insufficient measures of housing development in the city of Caracas, the inhabitants of the city found themselves in the need to occupy the residual spaces among the superblocks developed by Villanueva. The sudden appearance of new informal occupations occurred since the fall of the Dictator Pérez Jiménez. Many inhabitants of the superblocks who had not adapted to the modern but spatially limited residences in the superblocks progressively took over the gardens and terraces of the residential complex. The location and emplacement of “23 de Enero” dramatically experienced the invasion phenomenon.

Today, 23 de Enero is a unique experience when it comes to Un barrio as it contains Vertical components (the superblocks) and horizontal elements Los Ranchos, both with extremely high density. They live one of the most active communities of violent groups that were in favor of the revolutionary process of President Hugo Chávez. According to statistics, there are currently 279,320 inhabitants, while the parish has an area of 2.31km² (INE 2014).

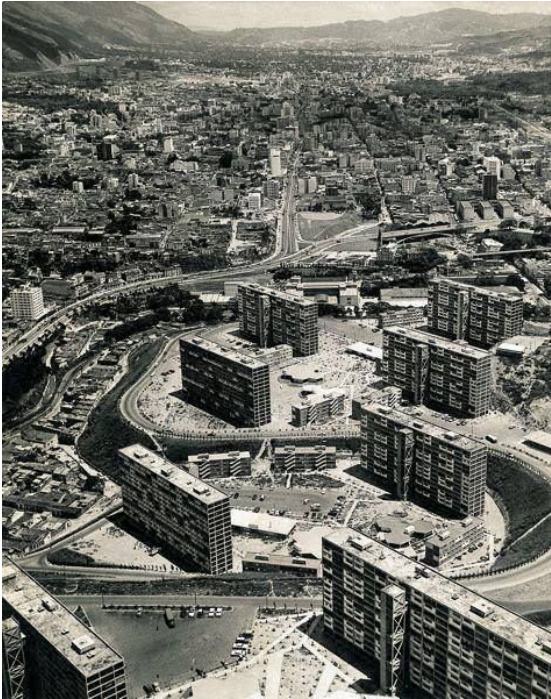




Plan urbanization 2 de Diciembre (1957). (Mesa, B. 2008)



Current Aerial View of the complex. Taken from Google maps. (2020)



Archival photographs.
Plan urbanization 2 de Diciembre
(1957). (Mesa, B. 2008)



Contemporary photographs of the blocks 23 de Enero Urbanization (2018) . Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/dnncbbf6>

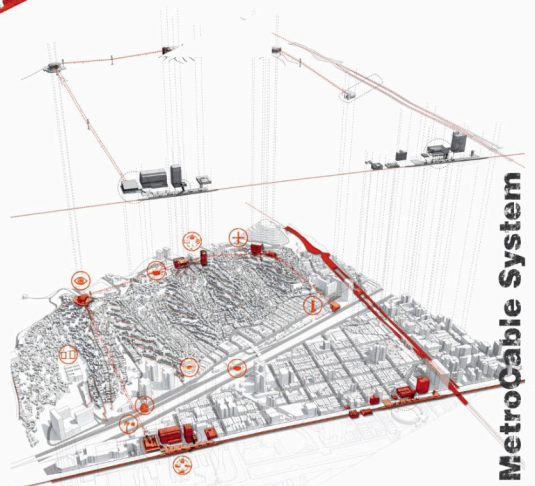
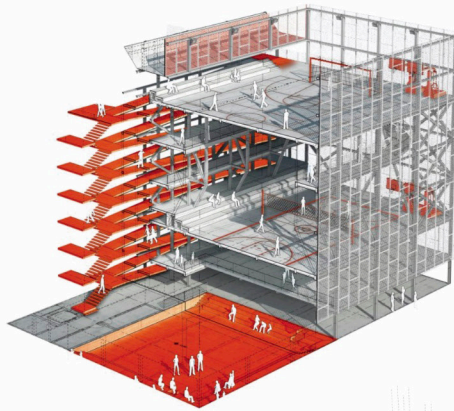


Contemporary



CHAPTER 04

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO URBAN INFORMALITY



CASE STUDY III: GRAN MISION VIVIENDA VENEZUELA

4.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From the proposal of the Super Blocks and the housing complex of 23 de Enero to the next project, a succession of events take place in the country that will affect the fate of the housing and habitability problem in the city of Caracas. progressive review of what happened in the city both politically and in the morphology and expansion of the city.

After the fall of the military government, an environment of uncertainty was created in relation to the survival of the new democratic regime. Guerrilla activities arise and a strong capital flight begins (about 1500 million bolivars in 1960) and the emigration of businessmen, construction foremen and specialized workers, who return to Europe after many years of absence. The credit reduction affects construction, especially private construction, which produces severe stagnation, in contrast to the overinvestment of previous years (Cilento, A. 1989).

In September 1958, the government, faced with the numerous social conflicts that affect the urbanization of superblocks, had asked the Inter-American Center for Housing and Planning (CINVA) of the Pan-American Union (later OEA), advice for the realization of “a study evaluation of most of the social, economic, technical and administrative aspects and problems related to superblock buildings”. In March 1959, the Final

Report of the Banco Obrero Superblocks Evaluation Program (PESBO) was presented, in which a series of recommendations was proposed that would constitute key elements for the formulation of a new housing policy. These include: (1) The need to establish a housing policy that simultaneously considers rural and urban problems; (2) The need for a modern mortgage financing system to replace the current system through the creation of mortgage banks and savings and loan agencies; (3) Promotion of housing construction in relation to the modernization of the construction industry, “in order to reduce costs in a substantial way”; (4) Creating incentives for small-scale construction professionals through cheap credit, tax exemption, and other incentives; (5) Intensification of the construction of rental housing through technical assistance and subsidies. The Banco Obrero will also be recommended to avoid the construction of high-rise houses.

In June 1961, President Rómulo Betancourt issued Decree No. 520, which establishes the Savings and Loan System, with a provisional organization, dependent on the Banco Obrero. The System begins its operations with a loan from the Agency for International Development (AID) granted in accordance with the multilateral pact for economic cooperation, known as the Alliance for Progress, proposed by President John Kennedy, and approved in Punta del Este, Uruguay in August 1961. Two years later, six savings and loan entities are already operating in the country.

At the same time that the first steps were being taken to create the National Savings and Loan System, aimed at financing the construction and acquisition of housing for the middle-income sectors of the population, in February of the same year the General Banking Law was enacted. and other Credit Institu-

tions, which introduces in Venezuela the specialized banking scheme (credit specialization), by regulating the operation of Commercial Banks (traditional banking), Mortgage Banks (long-term mortgage credit) and Financial Companies (financing of production and consumption). In 1964 there were already five mortgage banks, which in 1983 reached 17. The development of mortgage banking was driven by a different mechanism than savings and loans, since, during the economic recession, between 1958 and 1961, the start of its activities encountered serious difficulties, to the point that 95% of mortgage transactions were carried out outside the institutional market. It was also influenced by the fact that a large number of urbanizations were paralyzed due to lack of funds.

Then, in August 1961, Decree No. 611 was issued, by means of which the figure of the Credit Board for the Construction of Urban Homes was rescued, with the central objective of channeling loanable funds for the reactivation of construction and of the economy in general. The funds assigned to the Board were constituted with contributions from the State (Bs. 160 million) and from 16 oil companies (Bs. 200 million), which were used for the acquisition of mortgage bonds issued by mortgage banks created under the new General Law of Banks and other Credit Institutions (Cilento, A 1989). With the creation of savings and loan entities and mortgage banks, the expansion of the housing market promotion system and the development of the so-called “private sector stimulus policy” for housing production, aimed at non-residential sectors. served by the Banco Obrero, in urban areas.

During the period 1969-1974, the housing construction policy by Banco Obrero focused on the massive production of solutions aimed at sectors with incomes of less than Bs. 3000

per month (about \$ 700), through programs of: (1) “popular urbanizations”, which included complete houses, core or basic houses and bathroom units; (2) equipping slums, for which a specialized department was created in the Banco Obrero, in order to evaluate the problem at the national level and establish a plan that would provide a comprehensive solution to the problem; (3) “homes on a slope”, mainly concentrated in Caracas; and (4) the self-construction program, developed from the initial experiences of the previous period. Although there were some changes in the policies, as well as failures of instrumentation, in the period 1958-1973 the continuity of approaches was maintained that allowed restructuring and institutionally consolidating the sector; and 317.970 homes were built, despite the crisis that occurred between 1958 and 1961. The varied experiences developed and the balanced growth of the sector seemed to augur good possibilities of maintaining a progressive rate of responses to the housing problem.

At the beginning of the first government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, in 1974, as a result of the Arab-Israeli war (the Yom Kippur war), the average price of a barrel of oil went from \$ 3,71 to \$ 10.53 and will continue to rise until reach the price of \$ 29.71 in 1981. The income of the public sector increased from Bs. 18,960 million in 1973 to Bs. 45,564 million in 1974. The effects of this fiscal overflow on the total value of residential construction began to be felt in 1975 and it had its greatest impact in 1976, when it quadrupled the value in 1973. Circulating between 1973 and 1976 also tripled, as did the amount of savings and installment deposits and mortgage bonds held by the public. The greater influx of funds to savings and loan entities and mortgage banks allows an increase in the mortgage loan portfolio, which also triples (Cilento, 1989).

In 1974 Decree No. 168 was issued which created a Presidential Commission with the task of carrying out a diagnosis and proposing recommendations for the formulation of a housing and urban development policy. The Commission recommended, in 1975, urgently to launch a program for the public acquisition of land, estimating the needs up to the year 2000 at 177,400 hectares, recommending a program of 35,000 hectares for the first five years. That same year, the National Urban Development Fund (FONDUR), attached to the Ministry of Public Works (MOP), had been created with the purpose of carrying out a broad program of acquisition of land reserves for urban expansion. However, five years later it had only received 25% of the initial equity established in the law of its creation, and these funds should have been, to a large extent, destined to stabilize the secondary market for mortgage bonds. The most significant consequence of this vacillating policy of early land acquisition has been that the territorial location of urban activities and population was distorted by the shortage of space, appropriately enabled, in the sites foreseen by the urban development plans, which had the effect of hindering the harmonization of investment programs in basic infrastructure of services, with the creation of new housing areas in the different cities of the country, so that the contribution to territorial planning by the State -with the characteristics before indicated - it has been of such dubious quality.

In a highly centralized presidential country, the MOP had, and exercised, enormous power and would have even more because of the abundance of resources; not only economic but mainly political power, since the MOP (and its Institutes) were practically the only public works promoters in the entire national territory, with the exception of the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana. But it not only controlled the execution of

almost the entire infrastructure of the country, but also exercised, through the General Directorate for Urban Development, a good part of urban planning (often illusory), almost outside the municipal entities. In 1976 the Organic Law of the Environment was issued and, in April 1977, it was decided to divide the MOP, after reforming the Organic Law of the Central Administration; Thus, the General Directorate of Roads and the Ministry of Communications will give rise to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Directorate of Hydraulic Works will give rise to the Ministry of the Environment and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, and the Urban Development Directorate will be the basis of the new Ministry of Urban Development to which the National Housing Institute, Fundacomún and the National Urban Development Fund are attached. These new ministries never managed to restore the efficiency and technical competence that the MOP demonstrated in its 103 years of life; and the disturbance introduced by the parceled treatment of urban issues became evident, particularly when considering the lack of coordination and synchronization between the growing demands of urban development and the expansion programs of public services networks, especially those for the supply of water, sanitation (sewers and drains) and transportation.

The beginning of the war Iran-Iraq, in 1981-1982 increases the oil tax revenue which means that the government's income rises, for the first time, above one hundred billion bolivars (\$ 23.256 million). Financial entities and real estate developers, euphoric by the flow of resources, avoid the omens of a storm and place in the financial market mortgage funds with amounts unprecedented in the history of the Venezuelan financial sector: Bs. 10.084 million in 1981 and an additional Bs. 12.086 million (\$ 2.810 million) in 1982.

The stability of the exchange rate and the free convertibility regime, which for twenty years had guaranteed the country's external monetary relations, came to an abrupt end on Friday, February 18, 1983, the last day on which foreign currency was freely sold. Between December 1982 and February 1983, direct foreign currency outflows abroad had reached the enormous figure of Bs. 20.236 million (\$ 4.700 million), and at the end of 1983 the price of the free dollar had been located at Bs.12: a devaluation of 179%. At that time, the deterioration of the real wage and the almost disappearance of long-term credit have generated an oversupply and inadequacy of housing compared to demand expectations (Cilento, A. 1989).



Front page of the Venezuelan newspaper in the newspaper *Ultimas Noticias* on exchange control decreed on February 18, 1983. (1983) *Diario Ultimas noticias* retrieved from <http://blogorlandoparraeconomia.blogspot.com/2017/11/viernes-negro-black-friday-en-venezuela.html>

At the beginning of the eighties, the Venezuelan economy underwent a major structural change as a result of the deterioration of the international oil market and the increase in the service of the external public debt, contracted during the oil boom period. This adverse shock generated permanent effects on the availability of surplus foreign exchange and on the fiscal accounts, evidencing the exhaustion of the traditional mechanism for stimulating the domestic economy. In the same way, the general indicators of the quality of the urban environ-

ment, measured through access to basic services, deteriorated, while urban centers concentrate 84.1% of the total population of the country; and the population that is forced to live in neighborhood areas has continued to grow.

Since the mid-1950s, Venezuelan cities begin to experience an accelerated growth of their slums: in 1960 the population settled in urban poor slums already reached 22% of the urban population; in 1977 it reached 47%; and in 1997 it exceeded 50%. In the Caracas metropolitan area, which represents the highest quality of life in Venezuela, the population living in slums areas went from 16.3% in 1950 to 40.2% in 1990. According to the III National Inventory of Neighborhoods, carried out by the Central Office of Statistics and Informatics (OCEI) for FUNDACOMÚN.

In response to income limitations and the inadequacy of supply to existing demand, low-income families continue to increase the construction of new informal solutions (sub-standard) and progressively improve them. However, a level of suburbanization persists in the neighborhoods that cannot be solved by the inhabitants themselves without the participation of technically supported public investments.

In 1993-94, a research team established at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Central University of Venezuela (Josefina Baldó Alaya and Federico Villanueva Brandt, coordinators) drew up the Sector Plan for Incorporation into the Urban Structure of the slums Zones of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas, determining the Urban Action Programs necessary for the physical habilitation of the slums areas, that is, the urbanization works that allow the proper insertion of the neighborhoods in the built environment, as well as the overco-

ming of deficiencies internal in terms of levels of urbanization. Plan included a set of recommendations and organizational, methodological, and technical guidelines for the structuring of the actions, through the creation of “self-managed local urban development agencies”, for the preparation of the necessary projects, for the execution of the various works, for on-site technical assistance and recruitment.

The Plan proposes actions and specific ways to develop 4600 hectares of land occupied by slums, for a minimum period of 15 years, with a global investment of \$ 2450 million, to serve a population of 1.200.000 people, that is, 40 % of the total population of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas. The Sector Plan was originally prepared for the Ministry of Urban Development, as a service to support the strategic management of metropolitan municipalities, but later the Ministry ignored its application; however, it was unilaterally assumed as its own by the Libertador Municipality, which houses 65% of the population in slums of the Metropolitan Area. The first experience is that of the Catuche Consortium, which serves a population of 8747 inhabitants in 28.3 hectares.

The program of physical rehabilitation of Slums had a difficult implementation process, to the point that it could be said that it did not reach the stage of execution of the projects itself. In its evolution, 2 phases can be registered: the first between 1999 and 2001; In the first, the directive of the program was replaced and for a time a certain inertia was maintained in the hiring of the studies, then the program was suspended. The second phase was much shorter in 2005, when the program was reissued under the name of the Endogenous Slums Transformation Program. At this stage, operational aspects were developed, but in October 2005 the program was abruptly

canceled.

The conception of the plan was the fruit of the rich and extensive debate about the urban barrios, developed since the 80s both nationally and internationally. The basic conception of the program has existed since the beginning of the 90s, when the so-called International Meeting for the Rehabilitation of Third World slums (1991) was held in Caracas, in whose final declaration and conclusions some of the principles of what later it will be the PHFB. Almost immediately after this event, the Venezuelan State recognized the importance of the slum empowerment approach. In the first place, through the integrated survey of demographic and cartographic information of the slums areas of Venezuela, delimiting them and assigning them technical names of the authorization methodology: Physical Planning Units (UPFs), Urban Design Units (UDUs), etc. (Fundacomun-OCEI, 1993). And, secondly, with the contracting of the Sector Plan for Incorporation into the Urban Structure of the slums Zones of the Metropolitan Area of Caracas and the Capital Region (1994).

On the other hand, in 1990, after two years of studies and considerations, an agreement between the main political parties represented in Congress, allows the approval of the Housing Policy Law (modified in 1993), which establishes the mandatory Housing Savings through the contribution of 3% of wages and salaries (1% of the worker and 2% of the employer), as well as the fixing of 5% of ordinary tax income for housing programs for families with lower incomes. The funds collected by the Housing Savings are aimed at middle-income sectors and are managed by savings and loan entities and mortgage banks. Fiscal funds are distributed through the executing

agencies of national, state and municipal housing programs; and they are basically destined to the programs of construction and improvement of houses, rehabilitation of barrios and technical assistance to the organized population.

Between 1993 and 1994 the greatest political and financial crisis experienced by Venezuelan democracy broke out: failed coups in February and November 1992; removal of President Pérez in 1993; and the systemic banking crisis that broke out in 1994, affecting 50% of financial institutions. All of this contributed to abort the initial effects of the structural reforms undertaken in 1989 and to generate a profound change in the general expectations of the country.

In 1998 Hugo Chávez won the presidency of Venezuela since 1999 and governs until 2013, the national Executive had only been able to build about 260.000 housing solutions and the housing deficit stood at 1.8 million units in 2007, but it was implemented a policy of social programs, very active and which since 2003 have been called “missions”, the most publicized are the educational ones, the Robinson Mission to teach reading and writing in popular slums, based on Venezuelan-Cuban methods. The Ribas Mission to facilitate primary studies and the Sucre Mission for secondary and university students. In addition to these, there is the Barrio Adentro Mission that consists of a medical-assistance program for the most depressed areas of the country and the Vuelvan Caras Mission that consists of an incentive from the government for the production of goods and services by well-known organized societies as “Community Councils”. In total there are twenty-one great social missions. But according to figures from the Ministry for Housing and Habitat, by 2007 the figure of 100.000 houses a year needed to stop the increase in the housing deficit in Vene-

zuela has not been reached. In the area of urban planning and the housing deficit, the “misión Vivienda y habitat” (2004), and the “misión Villanueva” (2007) were implemented, which would become the Gran Misión Vivienda (2012), with the goal of building 3 million social housing, between 2012 and 2019.

Since the end of 2010, Venezuela suffered the worst rains in 40 years. The average rainfall in 2010 reached 1491 millimeters, well above the annual average of the last 40 years, which was 866 millimeters. The peak of these heavy rains occurred during the month of November as a result of the “La Niña” weather phenomenon, leaving 138 thousand victims in the country.

In view of this emergency, the government of President Chávez worked to attend to all those affected by the rains. Mobilizing families in risk areas, rehabilitating traffic routes and establishing refuge centers. He even gave the instruction to set up refuge centers in government offices, including the Miraflores Palace.

As part of the efforts to accelerate the effective response to this crisis, on December 17, 2010, the National Assembly approved an Enabling Law due to the need to attend to emergencies that arose in almost the entire country due to the heavy rains that left millions in losses and thousands of victims. This Enabling Law allowed the president to promulgate Law decrees in the areas of infrastructure, transportation, housing and public services. And at the end of December, President Chávez announced that one of the first decrees under the Enabling Law would be the creation of an emergency fund of Bs. 2.3 billion that would direct its resources to the attention of those affected by the rains. In addition, an ambitious plan for the construc-

tion of houses throughout the country and the reorganization of the capital city, Caracas, was proposed to address the problem of popular slums built in risk areas.

4.2 GRAN MISION VIVIENDA VENEZUELA

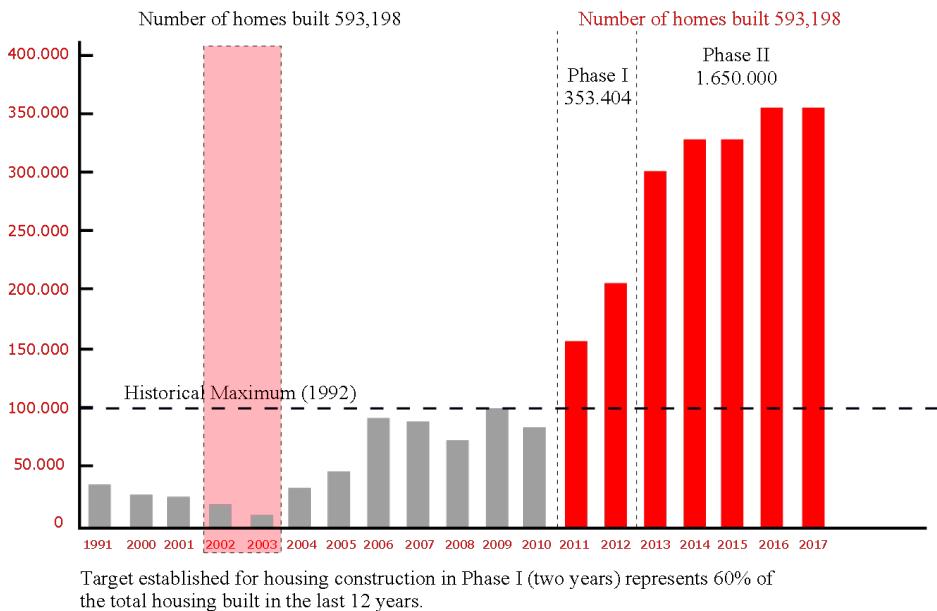
Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela (GMVV) is the name of the social program launched by the government of the late Hugo Chávez on April 30, 2011, initially in response to the thousands of families who were left homeless as a result of the heavy rains registered in the country between 2010 and 2011, according to the official version. The project would become the main promise of a sick president in the 2012 reelection campaign. The mission of housing as a social policy for the production of housing is an unprecedented and unique proposal since it uses the money from the oil rent, the state management and the resources of the labor of the inhabitants of the areas to be built to build the housing proposals.

It is important to frame it as a Housing Policy because if we compare it with antecedents such as the housing proposal on 2 de Diciembre, where the characterized systematic intervention of the state in all instances of production and provision of finished homes, we will discover that the Misión Vivienda is different. In it, in the Social housing developments, the population participates in the construction of the Projects through cooperatives. For the Misión Vivienda, the first vertex is “the Organized people”.

Another characteristic with which it is considered unprecedented is the selection of land in the city of Caracas, since unlike using cheaper land in the limits or peripheries of the city, it takes as locations underused land and vacant land to

avoid the costs of mobilizing the inhabitants to reach their homes and also avoiding residential segregation, promoting the integration and inclusion of new residents in the urban continuum. Chávez announced that the Gran Mision Vivienda Venezuela (GMVV) will solve the country's housing deficit, with the union of all sectors. Posing that its objective is to “solve the housing drama, which is only possible collectively: a national union of the private and public sectors, private and public banks, workers, honest businessmen, Venezuelans and the world : Cuba, Iran, China, Belarus, Russia, Portugal, Brazil ” Chavez (2012).

The GMVV defined the challenge of complying with the construction of 2.000.000 homes nationwide in 7 (2011-2017) years according to a progressive increase: 153.404 homes in 2011, 200.000 homes by 2012, 300.000 homes by 2013, 325.000 homes by 2014, 325.000 homes by 2015, 350.000 by 2016 and 350,000 by 2017.



Graph of homes built and homes Planned for 2013 By the Venezuela Housing Mission (Popular Ministry for Housing and Habitat MPPVH. 2013)



Towers blocks of Misión Vivienda in Nuevo Circo, Caracas. The eyes of President Chavez were part of the slogan printed on each of the buildings as well as his signature. (2013) Retrieved from <https://diario-octubre.com/2018/08/15/gran-mision-vivienda-venezuela-ha-construido-2-164-856-viviendas-en-todo-el-pais/>

GMVV has five Areas of Action:

The 1st line of action is a census, to accurately identify the families that in Venezuela do not have their own home or live at risk. The request for housing is made by the Ministry of the People's Power of Habitat and Housing. While for the Assignment, those in charge are: Higher Housing Body, State Housing Body, Communities Organized through cooperatives and the State Real Estate Agency

The 2nd axis is a land registry. The construction of the planned House Number implies developing and urbanizing large areas of land. In total, the need for 58.000 hectares is estimated to meet the goal, it was necessary to issue new laws to guarantee access by the State, its executing entities and the people to urban lands for the construction of houses since the laws previous were insufficient to attend and solve the pro-

blem. In addition, they did not allow to act in the short term. The location of land is a joint effort between the people and the Government and is carried out in three special areas:

- 1.- Within cities, on underutilized land with unjustifiable uses.
- 2.- In the expansion areas of existing cities.
- 3.- In areas where new populated centers are created, especially linked or structuring projects (railways, large industries, oil development, agro-industrial development, etc.).

In the first phase of the GMVV, given the emergency generated by the rains, the construction efforts were concentrated in the cities with the greatest presence of affected families and in high-risk sectors during the second phase, deconcentration policies were promoted population through the integrated development of the northern llanero and Orinoco-Apure axes, whose flagship project is the Orinoco Socialist Project.

The 3rd vertex is the registry of construction companies, national and international, including workers and communal and worker companies. In order to build the planned houses, there are several complementary execution modalities: Works to be executed by entities of the National Government, through international agreements by entities of state, municipal, local governments and by Organized communities, in turn within each modality There are several executors, therefore, the GVMM brings together a large number of private actors.

Works to be executed by entities of the National Government

With the hiring of large, medium and small companies that can address the different levels of complexity of the works through the scheme of “production units”. The main execu-

tors are the Ministries of the People's Power of Habitat and Housing, Oil and Mining, Environment, Defense, as well as the Presidential Office of Special Plans and Projects, the Vice Presidency of the Republic and PDVSA.

Works to be executed through International Agreements

They are works contracted turnkey to international public and private companies, derived from cooperation agreements with strategic allies and friendly countries. They imply the development of large housing complexes with a technology transfer scheme, they are essential to achieve the objective of industrializing the construction sector in the country because they conceive housing with prefabrication, systematization and modulation criteria.

The 4th vertex is financing. The State will place half and private banks the other half. "Not only the Government is going to finance housing, or private banking cannot finance only a sector of the population. It has to finance the poor, the professionals, the middle sectors, without falling into speculation mechanisms"(Chávez H. 2011). The GMVV requires a large number of resources to guarantee its objectives. To do this, IT managed to diversify the sources of obtaining financial funds through legal instruments, likewise, I achieved changes in the financing policies for the execution of houses. In this sense, for example, the Simón Bolívar Fund for Reconstruction was created, which brings together different sources of financing. Its mission is to make an optimal planned and efficient management of all the resources in bolivars such as resources in foreign currencies: The Fund makes periodic contributions to each of the entities (depending on the planned disbursement schedules), works guaranteeing a flow of continuous resour-

ces that avoid putting all the works at risk.

There are mainly three different sources of financing.

1.-Public sector, through the direct groups carried out by the state, whose main objective is to serve those families with fewer resources

2.-Commercial banking (public and private) through the mandatory mortgage portfolio, that is, the mechanism through which the banking system is directed to allocate part of its loans to the mortgage sector.

3.- Mandatory Housing Savings Fund established from the mandatory contributions of the worker and the employer (1% and 2% of salary, respectively).

In addition, there is a strict cost control policy in all materials and housing construction processes, which has made it possible to guarantee efficiency in investment spending, despite the resistance of power groups interested in maintaining control of both the procurement of supplies and materials as well as their costs. Within the axis of Financing to guarantee access to housing for the most deprived sectors of the population, a new and courageous policy of housing subsidies was implemented, of a progressive and direct nature, as well as long-term mortgage financing schemes, which address, On the one hand, the exemption between 40% and 100% of the total cost of the house, also depending on the family's ability to pay. Finally, the mortgage financing term was extended to 30 years.

The 5th line of action is construction materials.

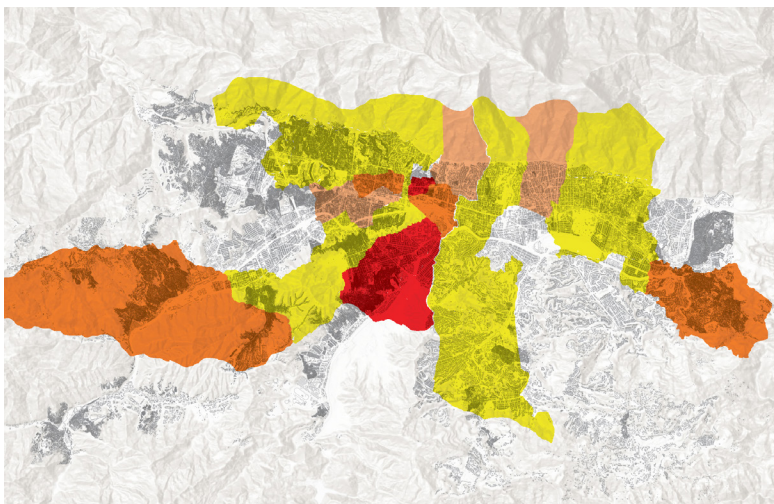
The GMVV is also in charge of determining the needs for materials and supplies for construction. It is also in charge of quantifying national production, in order to establish with precision. What materials are produced in sufficient quantity? What materials are insufficiently produced for which production can be increased in the short term? What materials should be brought to the country given local insufficiency? The GMVV works planning systematically. The input requirements for the execution of houses that are needed to build in the course of each year to solve the distribution problems created throughout the country an extensive network called CONSTRUPATRIA made up of 51 collection centers and distribution of inputs for I build it. This network centralizes supplier purchases and enhances local monthly requirements plans based on execution progress. This guarantees very efficient handling with real-time response possibilities and takes advantage of economies of scale. A direct fiscal stimulus program was created for all those companies engaged in the production of construction materials and components, and tariffs and port taxes were eliminated to guarantee the importation of those Items where national production is insufficient. With the private sector there are strategic agreements that ensure purchases by the state. This allows it to increase its productive capacity. In addition, the state assumed the purchase of 6,025 heavy machinery for construction, thus alleviating the enormous weaknesses that this sector presented, which had previously been cartelized by very few companies.

The result, with the data for February 2019, shows 35,802 finished homes, 8788 in process, and 9830 in project for a total of 54420 units, in the Libertador, Sucre, Baruta, Chacao and El Hatillo municipalities. They do not know with certainty the

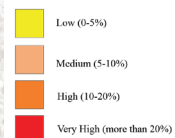
number of developments built. Therefore, the number of homes or developments found cannot be considered definitive; It is also possible that some of the projects included are not actually part of the Misión Vivienda. (Soonets, S. 2019)

The Libertador municipality is the most populated in the city, and where the housing deficit is greatest. It is also the municipality where the vast majority of Misión Vivienda homes were built, 89.85% of them, and with 107 developments, 89.17% of the total. This amount does not correspond to the rest of the municipalities, both in terms of population and in terms of deficit. The parishes of El Valle, Coche, Macarao and San Agustín are the most impacted by the Housing Mission and have registered a population increase of between 20 and 33%. Santa Teresa, Las Minas, El Cafetal and El Junquito were not addressed. The most developed parish is El Recreo, with 16.

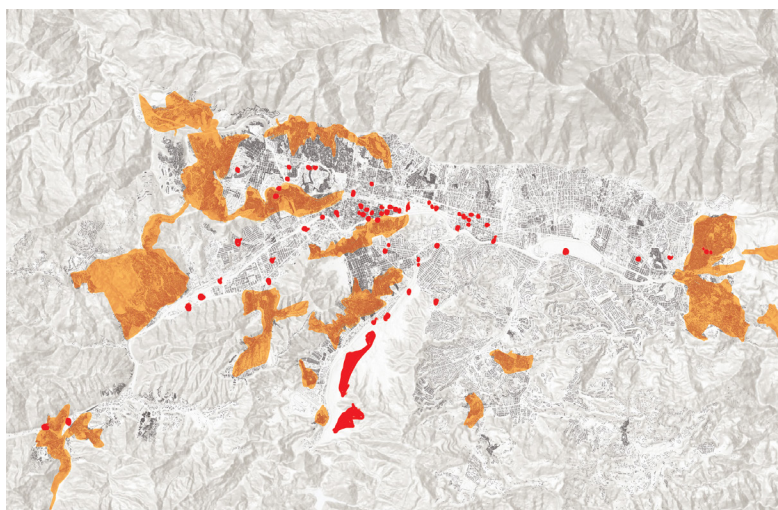
About half of the homes are located within the city's fabric, both on main avenues and within the formal fabric, while the other half are located in non-urban areas, with a significant concentration in Fuerte Tiuna. (28.56% of total homes).



Impact on parishes. Own elaboration based on (Soonets S. 2019) com/2017/11/viernes-negro-black-friday-en-venezuela.html



In red: Location of the housing complexes of the Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela. In orange the Barrios. Own elaboration based on the Caracas Metropolitan Strategic Plan 2020.



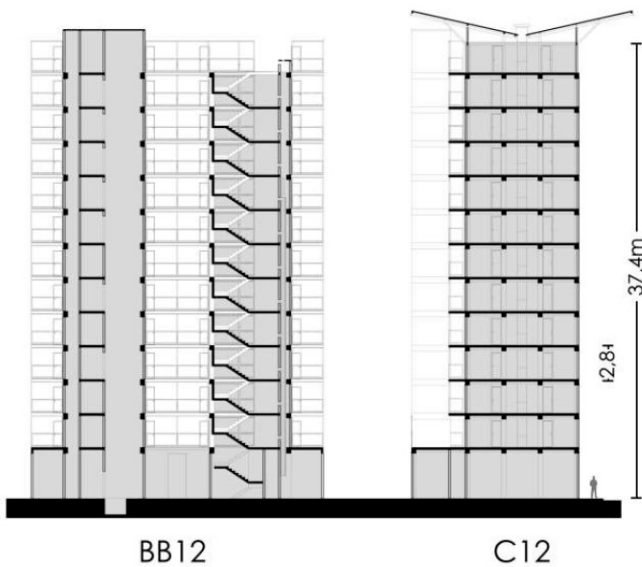
Eleven executing agents participated in the construction of houses. Some are local governments, other agencies of national scope specialized in housing, other institutions whose purposes are completely alien. And a grassroots community organization. The Presidential Office for Special Projects (OPPPE) is responsible for 36.36% of the developments and 22.59% of the homes. Efficiency (proportion between projected and built houses) tends to decrease as the construction of more houses is approached, with the Ministry of Housing and Habitat with the lowest efficiency, and the largest number of projected houses, and the agents that they built few homes with higher efficiencies. OPPPE is an exception to this trend, as it ranks second in terms of number of homes and is also highly efficient, leaving only one project unfinished.

According to the official website, the goal of the GMVV for this 2020 is the construction of 400 thousand decent homes for the Venezuelan people, as reported by the Minister of Popular Power for Housing, Ildemaro Villarroel. But it is not possible to corroborate the data of the buildings built on the official website of the housing mission. The models of the housing

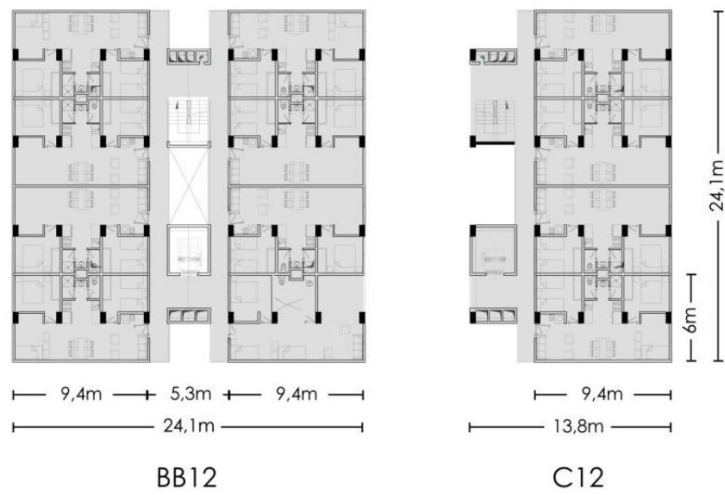
complexes have been of great controversy for academics and architects in the country. At the beginning of 2012 there were two very recognizable prototypes in the city, the c12 model and the bb12 model.



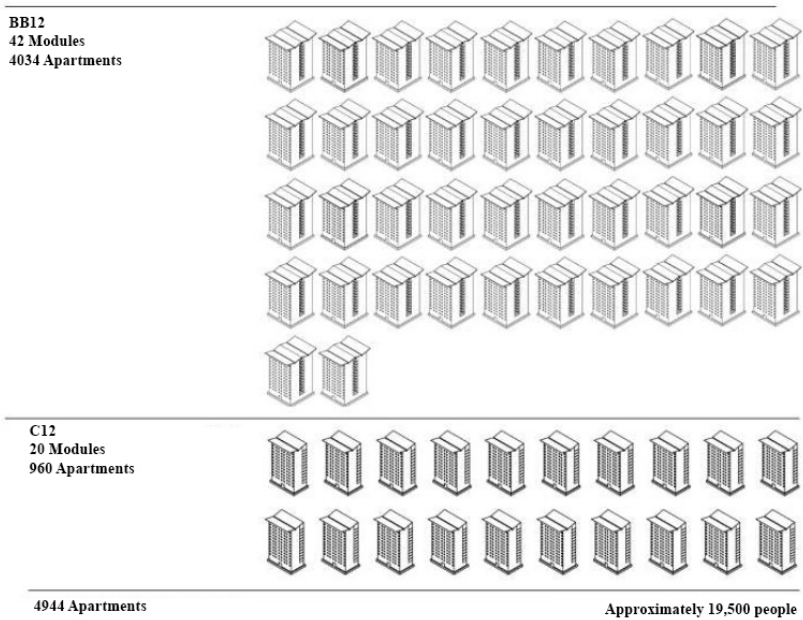
From left to right: prototype c12 and prototype bb12. Photographs of the initial tower of the Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela (Calzadilla C. 2018)



Sections of the bb12 and c12 prototypes of the GMVV (Calzadilla C. 2018)



Floor plan of the bb12 and c12 prototypes of the GMVV
(Calzadilla C. 2018)



Only of these prototypes more than 60 buildings were built that make approximately 4.944 housing units for 19.500 people. (Calzadilla C. 2018)

Later, these prototypes were diversified due to the fact that architects and engineers in the country harshly criticized not only their aesthetics but also their feasibility and durability. The GMVV may seem like a fantastic mass housing production plan as a method to address the deficit of housing units and spaces in the city, but again the state falls back on believing that it is only a numerical deficit and only It seeks a technical solution while the other problems inherent to the informality (economic and social) that prevail in the city of Caracas are not addressed.

In an investigation carried out by the information portal “Run-runes” conducted by the important journalist Nelson Bocarada, Alfredo Cilento Architect and former Dean of the Faculty of Urbanism of the Universidad Central de Venezuela among other guests and where several of the criticisms and problems resulting from the construction of the developments of the Venezuela Housing Mission are discussed and related:

“The quality of life is not determined by the house itself, but its environment and the conditions that make up the habitat”, rather than granting houses, it is necessary to guarantee living conditions. As it is social housing, it must be better projected than even those of the wealthiest classes because it is aimed at low-income families in society. “The State has a duty to better serve their needs, offer more public space because they tend to be homes with fewer spaces”. - Alfredo Cilento.

Cilento thinks that more than addressing the housing deficit, conditions must be guaranteed “so that people can access adequate housing, as well as accessible credits, urbanized land, equipment and services that work.” He adds that, in these current times of scarcity, hyperinflation and hunger, housing

takes a back seat as more urgent problems such as hunger must be addressed.

Cilento maintains that the Housing Mission does not solve the problem of poverty. “It is not enough to move the poor to these buildings; it will not change their condition if you do not offer them opportunities. Poverty is generated by the lack of jobs and / or low wages that do not allow to cover the food basket”. He highlights that poverty in Venezuela has grown 90% and critical poverty 60%, according to the Living Conditions Survey (Encovi), carried out by the Ucab, USB and UCV universities. “These are situations that cannot be resolved by building Misión Vivienda. Even by moving them from the slums and placing them in buildings, you increase people’s expenses, such as transportation in the case of ghetto cities. You isolate them, you impoverish them more”.

Since the creation of the GMVV in 2011, the Venezuelan government has insisted on presenting the number of homes built without detailing the status of the buildings or their equipment. At best, in his televised appearances he simply shows off a “model apartment” with his smiling new tenants. The government of President Nicolas Maduro, following Chávez’s line, is determined to meet the goal of 3 million for 2019, a delivery that is impossible to audit and that trade unions and professional organizations seriously question. They have not allowed union institutions such as the College of Engineers to make an evaluation of the buildings. This insistence on delivering houses without repairing the conditions is in contradiction with the aspiration of the one who laid the first stone of this project, Hugo Chávez, who during the GMVV launch ceremony that took place at the Teresa Carreño Theater on April 30 2011, defended that “beyond the quantity of houses,

it is about quality, a new habitat, a new life.”



Hugo Chávez in the GMVV launch ceremony at the Teresa Carreño Theater (2011) Retrieved from <http://www.minci.gob.ve/chavez-al-frente-de-la-gran-mision-vivienda-venezuela/>

When comparing, the references of the inhabitants of the Housing Mission are a compendium of precariousness: overcrowding, scarcity, rationing, failure of public services, lack of privacy, threats from authorities, violence, vulnerability to natural disasters. Poverty. Having a roof and a house to live in after being subjected to these conditions make a considerable difference. The shortcomings are not uniform in all the mision Vivienda blocks of Caracas. Some are in better conditions than others, a situation that is influenced -although not always- by the organizational capacity of the communal councils and the size (which allows reaching agreements and resolving differences more expeditiously, although this is not decisive).

Some urban plans have designed a coexistence manual. But it doesn't always apply. A successful example is the Omar To-

rrijos complex, located on Bolívar Avenue in downtown Caracas. According to the testimony of the neighbors, the families were organized from the shelters where they were before the transfer and even invited them to participate in the construction of their own homes. They have the peculiarity that the walls can be knocked down in order to expand it as the family grows. A home is much more than building and that quantity cannot prevail over quality. Social support must be guaranteed once families settle into their new homes, as well as education, commerce, green areas, transportation, places of recreation and work.

“There is no analysis of social behavior, you are putting people in drawers. There are no conditions to live, to give him a home. There is the case of Ciudad Caribia, located 30 kilometers from Caracas with transport and service problems. That is like taking a group of lepers to a remote place and abandoning them there. There were no technical controls or planning”, - Engineer Eduardo Madrigal, director of Infrastructure, Heavy Machinery and Energy of the Venezuelan Chamber of Construction.

The other crucial issue is the difference between the Mision Vivienda and the slums, from a conceptual point of view. A large part of these relocated families come from popular slums, which grow endogenously and build their own history as time goes by. “A family group arrives in the slums and begins to establish itself, and grows, and another arrives, and so on for years. This is how social capital is created. The GMVV is the opposite, this caused a lot of tensions initially. People who never paid for services had to get used to paying for them.

For Cilento it is essential to prepare the people who are going

to be located in the new urban developments. “The defunct Banco Obrero and INAVI (Instituto Nacional de Vivienda : Institute National of Housing) had a social action department that, in addition to the selection, were in charge of giving workshops and accompanying the newly arrived residents.” - Alfredo Cilento

In the report on the Misión Vivienda, the IMUTC records that the GMVV included comprehensive training workshops for the people to whom they awarded homes, dictated by the Caracas Foundation (Fundacaracas), attached to the Libertador mayor’s office. Their objective was to prepare families for the new coexistence and integration, helping them to incorporate themselves into new environments. They were trained on the GMVV Property Regime Law; management of socio-environmental projects for communities; identity and cultural diversity and communication for coexistence. But the extent or monitoring of these programs is not known, highlights urban planner Zulma Bolívar, former director of the institute.

The authors of the building prototypes are unknown, as well as the criteria by which they were assigned in each area. It is not possible to ensure that, if the environmental impact studies were carried out, seismic risk, as required by the regulations: “The zoning regulations were not followed. They were built in the places with the highest population density in Caracas, congesting those sectors even more”. - Zulma Bolívar, former director of the IMUTC:

“The Misión Vivienda was launched in 2011 with an electoral purpose for the re-election of Hugo Chávez who has played with the hope of the most disadvantaged people. Although necessary and pertinent to emergency care for those affected by

the rains, it is a program full of improvisation and data that cannot be verified”, - Carlos Alberto González, president of the Real Estate Chamber of Venezuela, who recalls that the Encovi survey measures that only 2% of the population has had access to the GMVV housing units, that is, about 600 thousand people, which would translate into approximately 150 thousand houses throughout the country.

González Contreras offers some numbers to compare the scope of the GMVV in Caracas. The Caricuao urbanization, the largest of popular housing built four decades ago, is made up of 20 thousand housing units. The rest of overcrowded urban developments such as el 23 de Enero, El Valle, Coche and Propatria, built between the 50s, 60s and 70s add about 40,000 more homes. “The proportion casts doubt on the GMVV figures. Until the launch of this social program, the private sector built about 40 thousand houses per year.”. - Carlos Alberto González, president of the Real Estate Chamber of Venezuela.

What the president of the Real Estate Chamber has no doubts about is the impact on the urban area where these urban developments were inserted. Although they have not measured the variation in the value of the square meter since the GMVV was founded, he indicates that there was an impact on the surrounding properties. He describes that “along Libertador avenue in Caracas, to mention one example, 3,000 housing units were erected without considering the expansion or improvement of services or equipment in the area. No more sewer systems, parks, schools were built to serve the new inhabitants of those sectors. “

Over 9 years, the GMVV numbers fluctuate contradictory. At the 29th extraordinary meeting of the Higher Body of the

National Housing and Habitat System, the head of the Capital District Jacqueline Farías affirmed that 31922 houses had been built in Caracas until September 2014. A year later, the official press affirmed that they had been delivered 46385 (December 2015), which would imply that 13 thousand more homes would have been built in one year. In May 2016, Minister Villarreal assured that 90906 houses had been delivered in the capital, which translates into twice as many as built so far in just 5 months. He contrasts with the average delivery between 2013 and 2016, which was 11500 homes per year.

Transparencia Venezuela notices the inconsistencies in the figures and the opaque information about this program. In its report on the 2015 Report and Account of the Ministry of Housing and Habitat (GMVV's governing body), it highlights that the project, which "has a great display of propaganda, but very little information". - Transparencia Venezuela NGO, announced the delivery of one million homes between 2011 and 2015, but without data to allow verification: no location of the home, conditions, characteristics and list of beneficiaries.

The Chamber of Construction also shows the inconsistencies in the data provided by the Government. The Venezuelan State published in May 2016 that in five years \$ 73 billion (Bs 461 billion) had been invested in the construction of 1.220.829 houses throughout the country. Which would give a cost of \$ 71,370 per home. Months later in November 2016, the newspaper *El Mundo Economía y Negocios* published an address by Maduro in which he assured that \$95000 million had been invested in the construction of 1160000 homes. Which would result in a cost of \$ 81,896 per household. According to calculations by the Construction Chamber, the GMVV, as a State initiative, did not require expenses for land, taxes or urban

planning. So, each home should have an average cost of \$ 21,825. The chamber also announced in its latest report that 92.9% of Venezuelans do not have the financial capacity to purchase a new home. “Those houses don’t cost what they said they cost. The number of hectares that they claim to have built represent about 100 Caricuao-type developments. And where are these houses? The idea with these missions was to do politics. This is not about a housing plan; it is a business that ended up being one of the biggest scams to the Venezuelan population.”. - Juan Sosa, president of the Construction Chamber.

The organization Provea also questions those numbers based on a contradictory factor: the figures for the shortage of construction material in a context of contraction of the sector published by the Central Bank of Venezuela (BVC). The director of the NGO, Rafael Uzcátegui, highlighted that for the last quarter of 2015 (the latest record known) construction had a decline of -20.2%, ranking as the sector with the greatest crisis in the country’s economy in that country so the lack of planning is one of the weak pillars of the GMVV. “There must be a fundamental guideline between housing policy and urban development. They have to go hand in hand. You can’t build houses but you build accessibility, services”, Cilento emphasizes. It is what condenses cases like Ciudad Caribia, turned into a ghetto. It is moving away from the center, without communication from the city. people find it costly to go out, so in the end they stay in there, like in a neighborhood.

Ciudad Caribia is 21 kilometers from the capital, which translates into almost half an hour of travel on the Caracas-La Guaira highway. One of the most frequent complaints from the residents of the complex corresponds to the irregularity of



Ciudad Caribia . (2013. Retrieved from <http://www.arquitectura-panamericana.com/ciudad-caribia-camino-de-los-indios-prime-eta-primera-fase/>)

the transport, which Runrunes was able to verify during his visit to this housing complex. Of the twenty Yutong buses, belonging to the Comprehensive Surface Transport System (Sitssa) promised by the Minister of Land Transport, Haiman El Troudi in 2014, only five were operating by March 2018. The queues of people at the stops, often low an inclement sun is the common denominator in urban planning. “Most of the times I go standing on the bus, sometimes I spend up to an hour waiting for it to pass and when it does it comes full, that’s the bad thing about living here”, Kelly Gutierrez, resident of Ciudad Caribia.

In 2018, the GMVV works are practically paralyzed throughout the country - although Maduro continues to cut tapes on the screen. “Many of the urban developments have been inaugurated without finishing some towers or adding equipment or services such as nurseries, shops, health centers, parks”.
- Alfredo Cilento.

As part of the secrecy that overshadows the GMVV, no one has

access to the data. There are no official studies on VM. “They deny requests from the College of Engineers, for example, to assess whether appropriate elementary soil studies were carried out, whether Russian, Chinese and Iranian construction companies applied Venezuelan standards or whether those that followed those projects are adapted to local regulations in a country where more than 80% of the population lives in seismic zones”. - Alfredo Cíleno.



Alfredo Cíleno Architect and former Dean of the Faculty of Urbanism of the U.C.V. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.ucv.ve/organizacion/rectorado/direcciones/direccion-de-informacion-y-comunic-dic/detalle-noticias-dic/article/arquitecto-alfredo-cilento-hablo-sobre-tecnologia-para-construccion-de-viviendas.html>

“The GMVV is supposed to promote social inclusion to low-income people who have lost their homes, but the opposite has turned out, they don’t guarantee quality of life. The lack of coordination between the national and local governments for its development is evident. There was no consultation process with the population, as dictated by the Organic Law of Urban Planning. They did not ask anyone if they were willing to put a building in what used to be the square next to their house, for example “. - Teolinda Bolívar.

For Bolívar, the mission Vivienda were not located in expan-

sion zones foreseen by the ordinance, anticipating the natural growth of the city. “A true planning would have accompanied the construction of everything else” .- Teolinda Bolívar.

No property

Until 02/15/2018, the Government had formalized 961.202 property titles for a total of 1.997.399 homes delivered according to official figures. In other words, only 48% of the certificates that accredit the inhabitants some rights to the property have been registered.

For María Isabel Peña, former director of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Central University of Venezuela, not handing over property titles, makes the Misión Vivienda an element of social control. “It is the issue of dominance, fostered with a discourse of resentment and ideological pressure.” The president of the Real Estate Chamber of the Metropolitan Area, Roberto Orta Martínez, stated that the absence of property titles in the Misión vivienda makes it impossible for people to inherit, transfer, rent or sell an apartment. “This contributes to the appearance of a black market where illegal transfers, rentals and sales are made.” On the other hand, Josefina Baldó, former president of the National Housing Council, stressed that no one knows the real number of property titles handed over to GMVV, if the government has effectively granted that benefit to people. “They speak of 1 million titles delivered, but in reality, the numbers are not known, it is demagoguery.”

Through the Housing Bank’s Protocolization Plan (Banavih), credits are granted to pay for the units granted by the program. Or the possibility of canceling the total amount of the

apartment is offered. In the Runrunes survey, it was found that the prices of the apartments ranged between 250,000 and Bs. 500,000 (which by the end of May 2018 was equivalent to a coffee served at a bar).

The new neighbors Between coexistence and integration

There is a wall between the city and the Misión Vivienda, although they are inserted in the heart of Caracas. Since its launch in 2011, it has always been a source of urban tensions due to all the pressures that it has implied. It was an imposed project, not consulted or planned, that changed the face of the city, which bypasses the urban planning law, observe the experts consulted by Runrunes. The improvisation of the project can be perceived with greater vehemence in the Libertador avenue of Caracas, where new houses of this social program were built - without previous studies - without providing equipment or expansion or conditioning of services, observes Carlos Alberto González, president of the Chamber Caracas Real Estate. In the opinion of the former director of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Central University of Venezuela, María Isabel Peña, the lack of planning in the lifting of the buildings of the Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela in Libertador caused the services in the around the Caracas artery. The study “Avenida Libertador and the model of the compact city” prepared by Peña in 2013 determined that in the section between Chacao and Maripérez there are 2770 homes (between constructions of the Misión Vivienda and a couple of buildings that were remodeled by the government), which means a total of 12.465 people.

“That putting people there in the bowels of Caracas generated immediate chaos, it was not done in a harmonious way. It

seems that far from benefiting a disadvantaged sector of the population, they are interested in having militants for the defense of the homeland in those spaces, “said Josefina Baldó, former president of the National Housing Council. “The impact on the city has been negative, in some areas the height and dimension were exceeded, the background footage was not respected, there were no parking spaces, there are problems with the elevators (in 29% of the buildings visited by Runrunes they did not work) and there are complaints about norms of coexistence ”- Roberto Orta, president of the Real Estate Chamber of the metropolitan area.

The GMVV implied a population increase. According to the 2011 census, 249.879 inhabitants reside in the central area of Caracas. With the construction of new housing developments in the GMVV, 10796 new inhabitants are added to the area (4% population increase) who will live in 2400 homes, the IMUTC (Metropolitan Institute of Urbanism Workshop Caracas) report indicates. In the surroundings of Sabana Grande, 7884 people will also live in 1752 homes, which will be added to the 65283 residents registered in 2011 (12% population increase). In other words, an extra from the population was incorporated without creating new services or conditioning.

Based on rule 151 of the Regulations for new urban developments, the IUMTC measured the impact that the arrival of the GMVV would have in some specific areas of Caracas. Taking into account that in January 2015 34.942 homes had been delivered (distributed in 74 buildings), the metropolitan institute calculated that to serve all this new population in Caracas (41776 more people) it was needed create 94 hectares of green areas; 17410 parking spaces, generate almost 250 thousand additional kilowatts of electricity and have three garbage

trucks to collect 125971 kilos of garbage per year, following the precepts of municipal ordinances. Only in Sabana Grande the population increased by 12%, with 7728 new inhabitants, according to the IMUTC. In Maracao it grew 11% (whose use of zoning was industry and commerce). “The quality of life that the people who were there have deteriorated. no more schools, more high schools, health centers or parks were built. The requirements imposed by the ordinance were not taken into account. “If the construction had been done by a private company, municipal engineering would not have approved it,” says Teolinda Bolívar.

The GMMV is also congestion. Most of the buildings in the housing mission were built in areas of higher population density in Caracas and not on land destined for urban expansion. According to ordinances, the approval of these constructions must go through the municipal councils. It is not a simple coincidence that 90% of the urban developments were built in the Libertador Municipality, governed by a mayor related to Chavismo. The decision to build precisely in the most populated areas of the city contradicts Chávez’s mandate when he announced the launch of the GMVV “We must deconcentrate the central district,” he said in 2011. 94% of the missions built in Caracas are located in the Libertador municipality, explains the former director of the IMUTC, who insists that urban planning is a misused term. “To urbanize is to parcel out on virgin land, to plan, to provide all the services. The Misión Vivientda towers are more like residential complexes”. The missions further congest the areas with high density in Caracas. They were raised above all on the subway line. Besides, they were built in the area with the greatest number of jobs, which does not imply that they can meet the demand of the new neighbors. In those areas no more jobs were created, on

the contrary, with the crisis in Venezuela they have disappeared”, confirms Bolívar.

Violence is also part of the landscape of the Housing Mission, to different degrees. Some complexes are quieter than others. It is one of the most serious problems. Between January 2011 and April 2018, there were 97 homicides, 43 thefts, 5 building falls, 23 vehicle theft, an attempted lynching and a violation in buildings of the GMVV in Caracas. The year with the highest number of incidents in these complexes was 2016. 100 cases were registered, including 34 homicides and 43 thefts. And 13 of these homicides occurred in Cacique Tiuna in La Rinconada. Cacique Tiuna is considered the bloodiest urbanism with 18 registered homicides, plus one rape / murder. It is closely followed by Ciudad Caribia with 17 murders in a seven-year period between January 2011 and April 2018, there have been 176 violent incidents in Misión Vivienda complexes in Caracas, Guarenas, Miranda and Vargas.

Conclusions

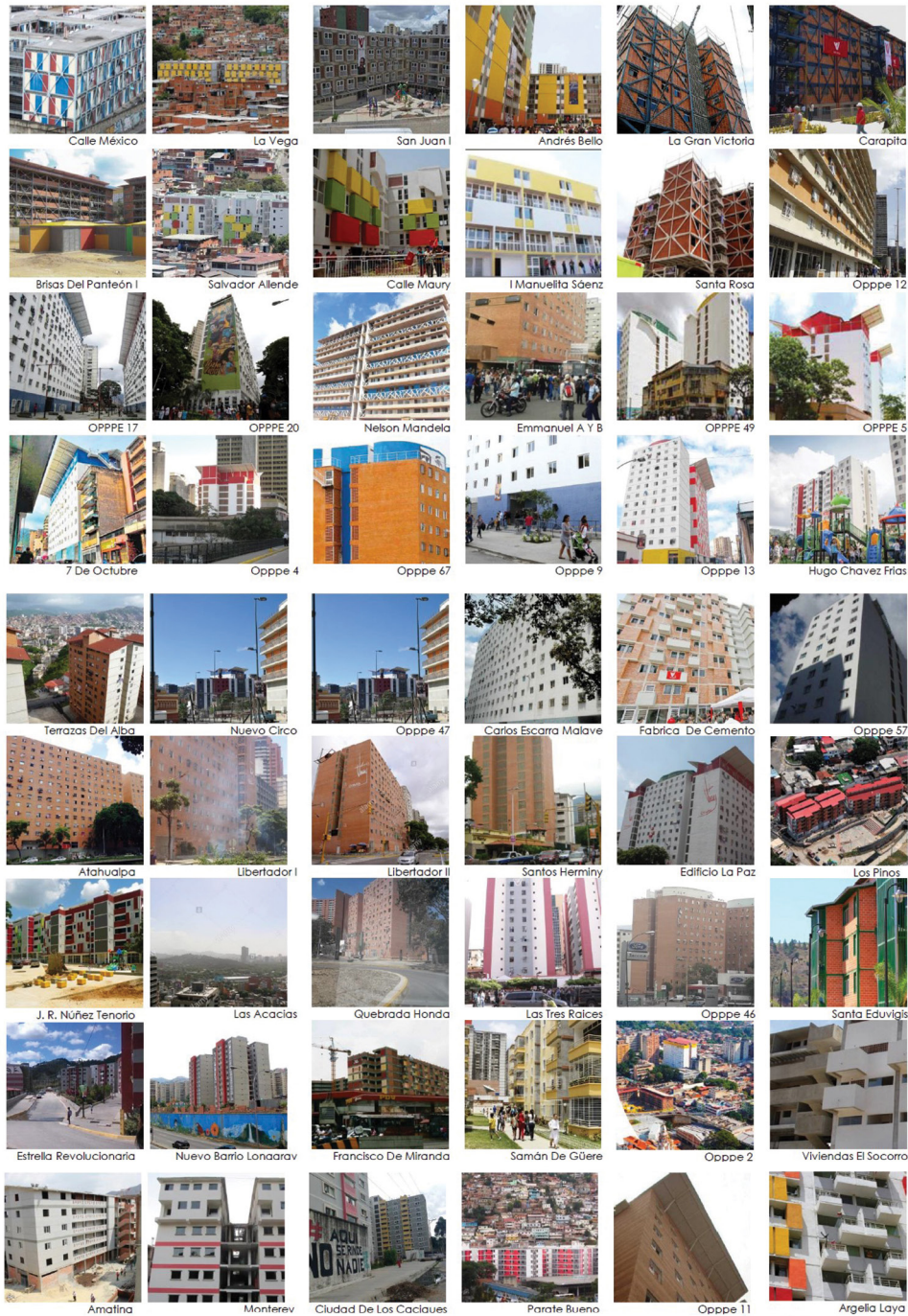
In the case of the Misión Vivienda, the spectrum of the effects of informality is very dense since it is not reflected in urban planning, physically speaking, but rather in a compendium of social, political, economic and cultural elements. From the normal right to property ownership, the problems of equipment for the new sectors, attention to spaces, the feasibility of projects, the densification of already populated and highly densified areas to the new problems of adaptation to a new form of living followed by the different types of Violence and social segregation. We could almost think that the installation and creation of the different buildings of the housing mission are a social experiment.

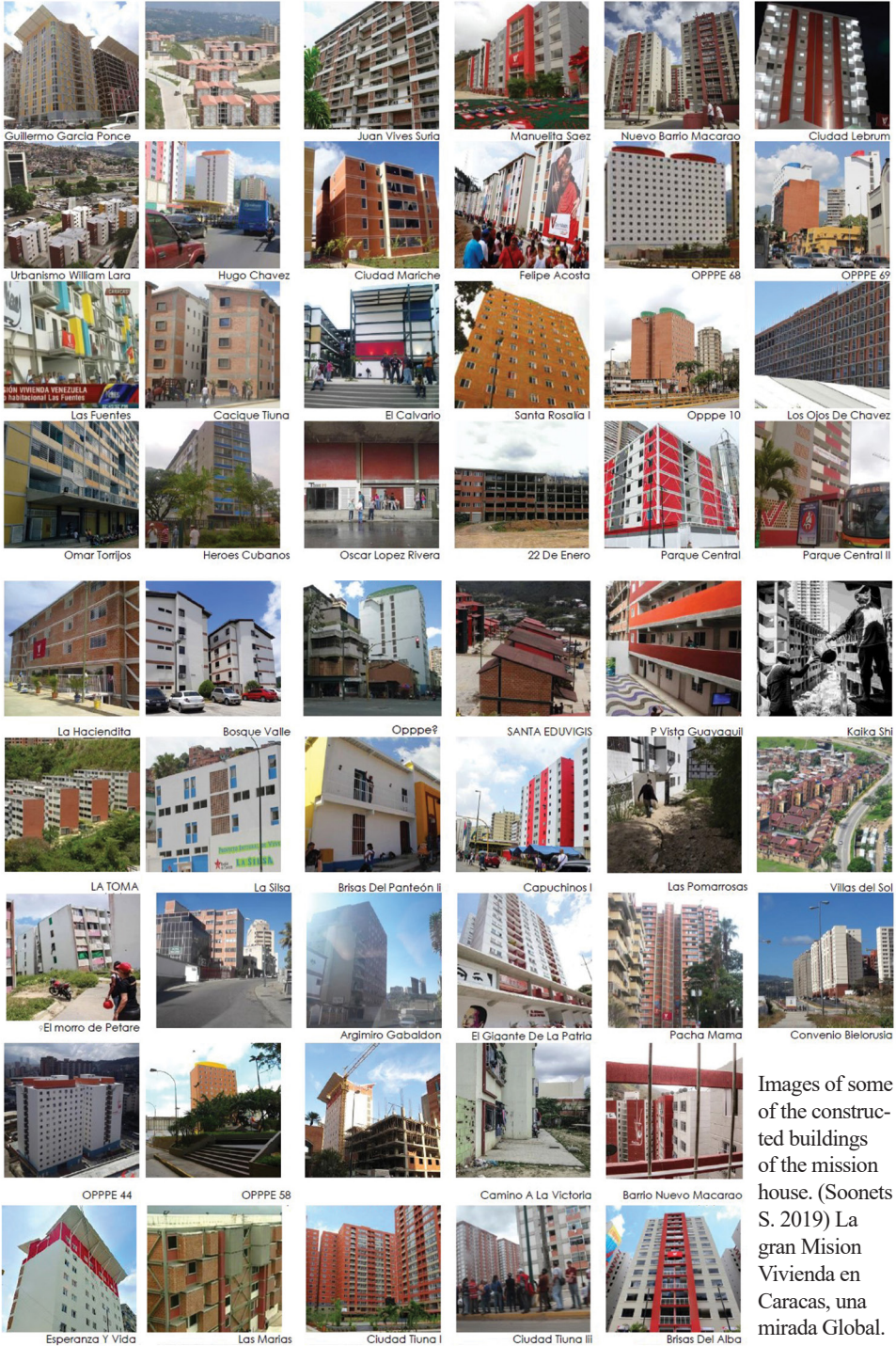
The GMVV represents a reality that improved the living conditions of a group of *Caraqueños* (inhabitants of the Caracas) who were disadvantaged, but it also represented a paradigm shift regarding mass housing developments. While it is true that an important part of the developments is intended to be developed by their own users through the participatory organization of cooperatives and community councils, the state has total control over the work, its direction and execution. From its planning to its execution there are many variables that cannot be quantified or verified, such as their official costs, how much work personnel are hired in the cooperatives or where all the materials come from?, or how quality controls are certified?. After completion of the works, how is the allocation process? How are the adaptation courses to new urban planning regulated? Who maintains the works? How are the new families organized? There are many questions that the housing program leaves in the air, not to mention that many of the developments changed the dynamics of the city by densifying sectors and leaving many facilities and services without the possibility of meeting the needs of all.

Another problem is that along with the developments of the *Misión Vivienda*, the sectors of the popular slums continue to be built, occupied and consolidated because in the development policy of the city no policies to control the growth of the city are contemplated and less contemplated sanctions for people who continue to proliferate or consolidate their developments in high-risk areas. Ultimately, the Slums has no legal limit, only physical limit and is determined by the physical space of informal development or the ability to support itself. For the theorists in Venezuela, the Slums and informal settlements of the city are no longer considered as the cancer

of the city, or as a margin, but for many citizens they are still classified as dangerous sectors, home to criminals when they are rather an area full of opportunities to learn from. Initiatives such as the Barrios physical rehabilitation plan recognize neighborhoods as an equally valuable part of the city as all the other sectors that make it up and equip them with support for basic services and connections to drainage systems and urban equipment possible.

Some of the housing mission buildings constructed





Images of some of the constructed buildings of the mission house. (Soonets S. 2019) La gran Mision Vivienda en Caracas, una mirada Global.

4.3 METROCABLE SAN AGUSTIN



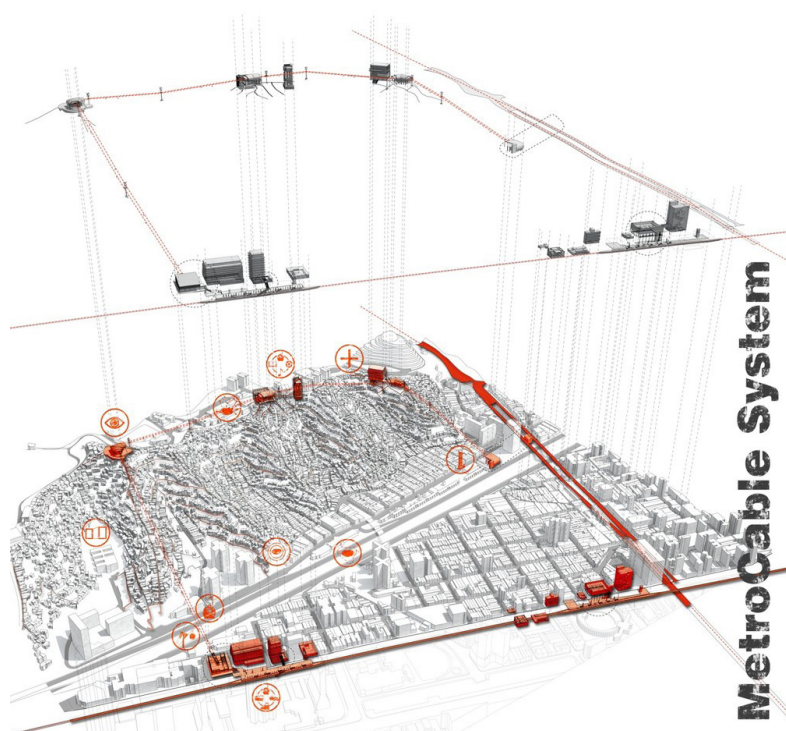
Metrocable system. Urban think tank. Iwan Baan (2011)

<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-96696/metro-cable-caracas-urban-think-tank>

“Build a cable car-type mass transportation system that meets the demand for mobility and accessibility in the San Agustín del Sur sector, in the Libertador Municipality of the Capital District...The project seeks to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the areas served, as well as to contribute to the redistribution of the population over space, promoting the insertion of the plans of the Ministry of Housing and Habitat in economically disadvantaged areas... This system will contribute to the recovery of spaces around the stations, making available to the inhabitants of the sectors new works for the provision of services, recreation and leisure areas, such as parks, libraries, school canteens, halls navigation, daily care, educational, health centers, among others”. Alfredo brillembourg

The MetroCable de Caracas is a cable car system integrated to the Caracas Metro, conceived in such a way that the inha-

bitants of Caracas neighborhoods, usually located in mountainous areas, can be transported more quickly and safely to that area of the city. It functions as a feeder route of the Caracas Metro system, imitating the style of the Metrobus. On April 20, 2007, civil works began on the first line of the system, located in the San Agustín Parish, which would be connected to the Caracas Metro through the Parque Central station. The conceptual design was started by Urban Think Tank, and was completed by D.A.C. Arquitectos Consultores, who developed the basic and detailed architecture. The construction was developed by the Brazilian company Odebrecht, together with the Austrian company Doppelmayr.



Metrocable system. Urban think tank (2011) retrieved from:
<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-96696/metro-cable-caracas-urban-think-tank>

In December 2009, the first line of the Caracas MetroCable would enter the testing phase, being subsequently inaugurated on January 20, 2010, known as MetroCable San Agustín and consisting of five stations: Parque Central, Hornos de Cal, La Ceiba, El Manguito and San Agustín. Likewise, the official inauguration ceremony was held between the San Agustín and Parque Central stations, and the first users of the system were transported, these being community leaders who made a tour between the Hornos de Cal and Parque Central stations. The cost of the project was valued at US\$318 million. The first stage of this project involves a radical new approach to urban design and planning. Working in the neighborhoods and with their community leaders who, contrary to what might be thought of as naïve, these communities are very well informed, often with expertise learned in the field, about the principles of planning and development.

In this sense, the focus of the project includes the following aspects:

- A symposium and presentation held at the Central University of Venezuela, attended by architects, urban planners and other experts in the field, activists and community leaders who were critical of the plan presented by the government.
- The creation of a working group between Urban Think Tank together with the residents of Barrio San Agustín and volunteers to explore alternatives.
- Selection of the cable car system with the task force. The decision was made based on the alternative that had the best potential, fit the terrain, minimized encroachment on the existing urban fabric, was highly sustainable and flexible.

- An intensive day of work with the community led by the group to redefine and refine the design concepts.
- Analysis, planning, a media campaign and presentations were necessary to build support and funding for the project.



Metrocable system interior (2011) retrieved from:
<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-96696/metro-cable-caracas-urban-think-tank>

The Metro Cable cable car system is integrated with the Caracas Metro system, which is 2.1 km long and uses a system of funiculars with a capacity of 8 passengers each as a means of transportation. The total capacity of the system is estimated at approximately 1,200 people per hour in each direction. With an estimated daily demand of 15,000 passengers per day.

Two of the stations are located in the valley itself and serve as connectors to the capital's public transportation system. The design of the stations is based on two typologies, the terminal stations (Parque Central 1 and San Agustín) in the form of a receiving "shell" and the intermediate stations (Hornos de Cal, La Ceiba and El Manguito) in the form of a "tube", to provide

continuity to the system. The 3 additional stations will be located on the mountain along the route in plots that concentrate fundamental needs for the community such as: accessibility, adequate pedestrian circulation patterns and constructive sustainability. All this under a criterion of minimal expropriation and demolition of existing housing.

This networking scheme has the considerable virtue of being minimally invasive to the community fabric, as it has only been integrated into it at five discrete points. The hilltop stations, located in densely built-up neighborhoods, are supported on piles to avoid all but absolutely essential demolition of housing. Like the gondolas themselves, the stations float above the ground, an almost perfect expression of an ideal intervention: one that facilitates and connects without imposing, one that emerges literally and figuratively from the community it serves.



Metrocable system cabins and wire support towers. Urban think tank (2011) retrieved from:
<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-96696/metro-cable-caracas-urban-think-tank>

The five stations of the Metro Cable system have a number of basic fundamental components in common; these are: platform level, access ramps, well-defined circulation patterns, materials and structural elements. However, each station differs in its configuration and additional functions. Each station includes cultural and social spaces as well as administrative spaces. At Los Mangitos, 40 dwellings were built, which will replace the houses whose demolition is an unavoidable necessity for the construction of the station. The station structure also includes public spaces for community meetings, outpatient sanitary facilities and other similar services, as well as a playground on top. In addition to the station itself, the La Ceibita site has a second structure that links the station to ground level, 16 meters below, and includes a gymnasium and a government-sponsored supermarket and daycare center. The station is also connected to an existing housing complex and a road with a municipal bus stop.

Structurally, the stations have a mixed system, the base is made of reinforced concrete and the platform structures (including the columns that support the roof structure) are made of metal structure because large roofed spaces had to be generated for the uses to be developed on the platform, in general the metal structure is composed of three-dimensional trusses of triangular section and composite columns. It should be noted that the use of the metallic structures was done in an integral manner with the architecture of the stations. In general, at a conceptual level, the system's stations were conceived as elevated train stations, where the platform is practically open-air, enjoying the views, lighting and natural ventilation, even though they are entirely roofed and protected from sunlight by sunshades. Public spaces, a vertical gymnasium, a supermarket and a kindergarten are also planned.

The funiculars are conceived as aluminum cabins, which operate with an electrical wiring system, connected by several towers made of steel and reinforced concrete. Each cabin has internal lighting, a communication system and an approximate capacity for 8 people, passing through the stations every 27 seconds, which would allow transporting between 15,000 and 20,000 people per day (1,200 people per hour). The cabins that make up the MetroCable were manufactured by CWA and adapted to the system installed by Doppelmayr, the same company that installed and manufactured the Caracas Cable Car system.

The key criterion underlying the award to the Urban Think Tank working group for the Metro Cable project was the issue for which the problem arose in the first place, what kind of city do we want to see in the year 2025. Just focusing on anticipating the capacity of the system, for example, did not make sense.

The entire system is designed on modular principles, like a kit of parts, using prefabricated components. The stations, which are essentially shed-like buildings, are inexpensive to fabricate and erect, allowing for economies of scale and meeting functional and aesthetic objectives. In addition, the structural and architectural design allows each station to be modified and expanded simply, economically and quickly to suit future needs and objectives. In this aspect, as in others, the UTT design team was inspired by the organic nature of the neighborhood itself, a process of endless growth and change, of potential and accommodation.

The design of the project took into account the lessons lear-

ned from the design of the Long Island Expressway project in New York, which was already obsolete before construction was completed. It cannot be built “for tomorrow”, but must be designed to be able to be built “in tomorrow”. Even more so considering the changes in the informal city, which are not only extremely rapid but exceptionally transformative.



Metrocable system internal station. (2011) retrieved from: <https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-96696/metro-cable-caracas-urban-think-tank>

On December 10, 2012, the second line of the Caracas Metro-Cable, known as MetroCable Mariche, was inaugurated. Said line consisted of a section between the Mariche and Palo Verde II stations, connecting the latter with the Palo Verde station of the Caracas Metro system. Within the expansion projects of the system, a third line is under construction, known as Metro-Cable La Dolorita (under construction), which was conceived as an extension of the second line of the system (MetroCable Mariche).

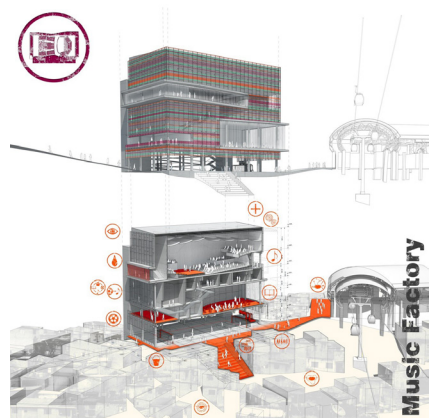
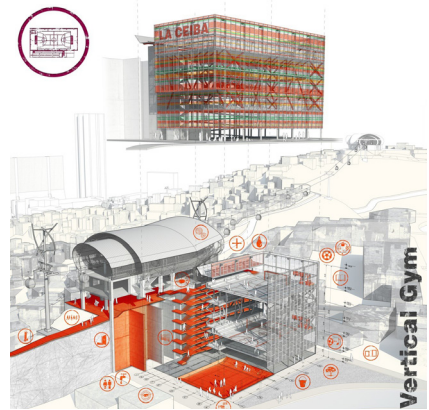
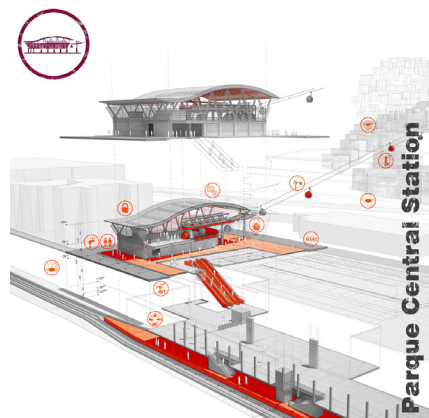
Currently, a proposal is being studied for a MetroCable line at the El Valle station of the Caracas Metro, which would have two sections: one from the El Valle station and the other from

the La Bandera station of the same system. It is also being evaluated that, through the construction of the Guarenas-Guatire Metro, another MetroCable line be built to connect the Caucagüita station of said system with the Filas de Mariche sector, located in the southeast of the Sucre Municipality.



Metrocable system. Urban think tank. Daniel Schwartz (2011) retrieved from:

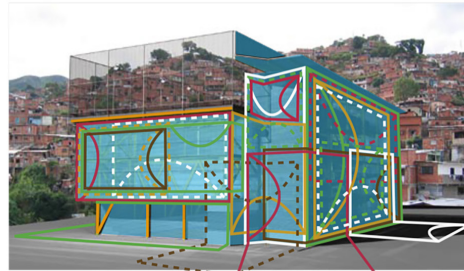
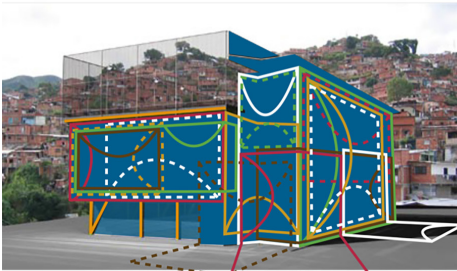
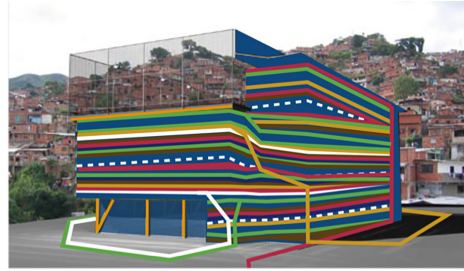
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Metrocable system. Urban think tank. Daniel Schwartz (2011) retrieved from: <https://www.10.aecafe.com/blogs/arch-show-case/2013/10/19/metro-cable-in-caracas-venezuela-by-urban-think-tank/#jp-carousel-181650>



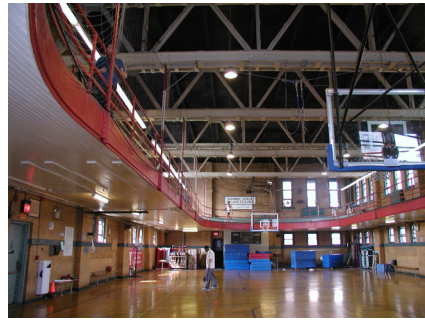
4.4 VERTICAL GYMS



Vertical gym diagrams Urban Think Tank (2004) retrieved from:
https://urban-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/vertical_gym_studies_um.jpg

The Vertical Gym is a replicable prototype, a kit of parts that can be assembled in customized contexts and modified to suit different programming, financial and ecological requirements. It consists of three floors and a rooftop track that provide a variety of extremely efficient spaces for different recreational activities. A pilot Vertical Gymnasium was inaugurated in 2004 in Caracas, Venezuela, leading to the three other Vertical Gyms under construction elsewhere in the city and several others in various stages of development around the world.

Caracas Urban-Think Tank (U-TT) conceived the Vertical Gymnasium prototype when its founders, Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner, were studying at Columbia University in New York. They were inspired by the efficient use of space in Manhattan's dense urban fabric, which led them to study recreational spaces such as the University Gym and the 14th Street YMCA.



The 14th St. YMCA, New York City and The Columbia University gymnasium, New York City

After graduating, the two moved to Alfredo's hometown of Caracas and created U-TT to study and develop strategies to improve design in the city's informal settlements, commonly known as barrios. With Klumpner's previous experience as a member of design teams that created award-winning projects for the Italian National Olympic Committee and the city of Vienna, U-TT turned its attention to developing a sports structure that would provide opportunities for healthy social activities among youth and adults in the marginalized communities of Caracas.

PILOT PROJECT

In 2000, Alfredo and Hubert made a joint trip with the Director of Urban Planning of Chacao to New York City. There, the idea of a Vertical Gymnasium germinated, and in 2001, U-TT began working on the conceptual design of a small plot of land in Barrio La Cruz that was being used as a basketball and soccer court.

Klumpner then presented initial plans to the mayor, who approved a pilot project for implementation. Caracas U-TT expanded its design team to include Mateo Pintó and Matías

Pintó. Between 2002 and 2003, the project and key elements had to be redesigned to adapt to the changing dimensions of the available land as a result of the dynamic spatial reality of the barrio. To avoid costly elevators that did not fit within the project's tight budget, the U-TT design team developed an innovative ramp system that provided a novel mode of vertical circulation.



Vertical gym La Cruz, Chacao. Urban Think Tank (2004) retrieved from: <http://u-tt.com/projects/>

By October 2004, the Vertical Gym pilot project was completed and opened with a peak of 15,000 visitors per month. Sports leagues, after-school programs and summer camps have provided a safe and healthy space for the community's youth. In the eight years since the Gymnasium opened, crime rates in the surrounding area have dropped significantly, as reported by both the government and local residents.



Vertical gym El Dorado, Sucre (Caracas). Urban Think Tank (2004) retrieved from: <http://u-tt.com/projects/>

After learning a number of important lessons from its initial gymnasium project, U-TT standardized the dimensions of the 2001 design and developed a prefabricated construction system that reduced construction time and cost. Now gyms can be completed in three months from foundation placement, and various materials and infrastructure systems can be interchanged to accommodate local resource constraints and labor skills. U-TT has also made blueprints part of the creative commons, with the hope of distributing the design to areas where it is most needed. Now, planners and architects anywhere in the world have the ability to customize, contextualize and reconfigure the design as they wish. Where ecological conditions allow for renewable energy technology, the gymnasium can be equipped with solar cells, wind turbines and rainwater harvesting infrastructure. Dimensions can be adjusted, floors changed and programming reimaged. Three other gyms are already under construction in other districts of Caracas.

U-TT focuses on prototypes and the power of plug-in solutions in general. The Vertical Gymnasium is a best practice example that serves as a guide in environments where sports, civic and cultural programming facilities are lacking. The idea is to create products and processes that address some of the common problems we are witnessing globally, but allow the design flexibility and sensitivity needed to address communities at the local level.



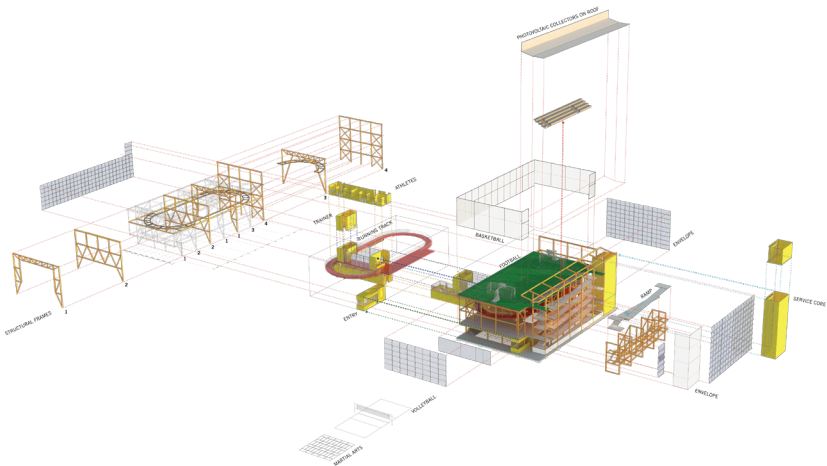
Vertical gym Santa Cruz Del Este, Baruta (Caracas). Urban Think Tank (2004) retrieved from: <https://alcaldiabaruta.gob.ve/>

U-TT's Vertical Gymnasium prototype serves as a safe haven for children and the entire community. In neighborhoods constantly caught in the crossfire of gang wars and other forms of violence, the Vertical Gym is like a safe space for exercise and social interaction. U-TT believes that exercise and social activity is the right of all citizens of the city, regardless of their social and economic background.

Given the great need for such facilities in low-income neighborhoods and informal settlements around the world, U-TT wishes to partner with municipal governments, private companies, industry and community organizations that are interes-

ted in bringing a vertical gym to their respective cities.

Currently in the city of Caracas there are 4 vertical gyms developed by U-TT. La Cruz vertical gym in Bello Campo, Chacao; El Dorado vertical gym in Sucre parish; Santa Cruz del Este vertical gym in Baruta. And the vertical gym at La Ceiba station of Metrocable San Agustín





Vertical gym La Cruz, Chacao. Internal photographs and axonometric exploded view. Urban Think Tank (2004) retrieved from: <http://u-tt.com/projects/>

4.5 A FRAGMENTED THEORY

In recent years, a new generation of architects has emerged that has restored a sense of optimism to the idea that urban planners and architects can once again make a difference in informal contexts. Through the definition of new social infrastructures, new forms of cooperation and new physical structures, it has been possible to insert the informal city into the fabric of the formal city.

“Acupuntures, Networks and Club-Sandwiches correspond to smart mechanisms that do not seem to be able to define as a whole a well-structured and explicitly critical new urban theory grounded on an antagonistic relationship not only to inherited urban knowledges, but more generally, to existing urban formations and processes. As a set of isolated actions, they do not seem capable of calling dominant visions and power relations into question, incapable of formulating a “plan” because of an obsession with the present. What these radical architects seem to get at with this line of reasoning is a conceptual short circuit where their hybrid and appeasing devices find their legitimation only if existing and tormented socio-spatial processes and conditions persist.” (Di Campli, 2017).

These projects promote an ability to combine and synthesize new urban devices with multipurpose uses capable of combining different typologies. These strategies and interventions can be considered by urban ecology as projects with a tactical approach to planning and urban design to not only address the deficit of facilities but also to address and mitigate problems such as uncertainty, social inclusion, and community participation. “Acupuncture”, “networks” and “club sandwiches”

correspond to intelligent mechanisms that do not seem to be able to define a well-structured urban theory. These interventions function as peacekeeping devices, ultimately, implicitly, serving the persistence of a dominant apparatus.

The 3 strategies can be considered as an expression of what can be described as a tactical approach to planning and urban design, aimed at tackling problems such as uncertainty, social inclusion, participation. Explicitly, these design experiences are optimistic and radical: on a deeper level, however, they can be seen as pessimistic and conservative, since it is assumed that the current characters of the Latin American city are definitely something indisputable and affirming that the main role of architects is fundamentally to negotiate cities governed by a close relationship between persistent colonial values and interests and indisputable neoliberal views.

This generation of radical architects seem to behave like “social bandits”. They are fighting for the improvement of the living conditions of the lower classes by rejecting conventional design and planning techniques, preferring to adopt tactics that often depend on the support of local populations.

As social bandits, a particular rural cunning appears in all the inventions of hybrid infrastructures, of devices conceived according to an explicit attitude of *Bricoleur*, looking for usable bits and pieces that can be recycled and reassembled with other appropriate spare parts. The *bricoleur* invents but tries to find possible answers mainly in what is already there, he does not worry so much about deep transformations since he does not focus on defining a structured discourse.

CHAPTER 05

DISCUSSION

From the beginning of the investigation, we highlighted how all the ideas inherent to the barrios and informal settlements were totally neglected by the government (in the chapters of *El Silencio* and that of the urbanization 2 de Diciembre / 23 de Enero) since the action to be taken to solve the barrios's problem was the "Tabula Rasa". The inhabitants without economic possibilities to acquire a place to live resorted to the self-construction of their own houses. The barrios were the result of the sum of those self-constructed spaces in invasions of land or occupations of vacant land in the interior and the periphery of the city. The constructions were totally developed by people who did not have the skills to develop the structures or the planning of the spaces. Without any control or regulation, over the years buildings with poor resources and inadequate structures were built, in conditions not suitable for habitability. These houses belonged to people who could barely afford to buy the building materials who had thousands of financial difficulties.

The disparity was evident: on the one hand, the experiences evidenced in the Redevelopment of *el silencio* and Urbanization 2 de Diciembre were conceived under the motto of modernizing the city. These modernist ideas left no room for the non-standardized or the vernacular idea of local settlements. These ideas were highly influenced by the idea of hygienic functionality where large corridors for cars and large open spaces completed the landscape of large highly densified residential buildings. This densification was the great change of living to which many inhabitants of the barrios sectors did not adapt and repopulated the available spaces between these giant residences, reconfiguring the Barrios again. The gesture

of the clean slate over the space of the informal settlements to build on it the new residences was a move that displaced the inhabitants with fewer opportunities to have a home to the periphery of the city. Which not only did not solve the problem but also generated a new one.

In contemporary approaches, the intention to recognize the barrios and its problems were well received, but they do not cover the problems of the settlements in all possible ways. The housing production policies continued with the construction of comprehensive plans, such as the Gran Mission Vivienda Venezuela, which on the one hand tried to supply the demand for the housing deficit in the city, but the policies of physical rehabilitation of barrios were abandoned with the passage of time. And many of the problems in the city's popular barrios continued to rage. Many of these actions were also applied near electoral elections, so the campaign promises were only used as electoral flags and were not maintained and developed as government plans over time.

SO THE QUESTION IS HOW TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS TO MAKE THEM AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CITY?

Spontaneous occupation processes are an upward trend. According to the United Nations, a total of one billion people live in informal settlements, which would be equivalent to one-eighth of the world's population. This number will continue to increase and triple during the next 10 years, reaching 3 billion by 2030. These inhabitants cannot continue to be considered second-rate inhabitants, much less can they be considered as temporary inhabitants since they have an important influence on crowded cities and on the development of countries whe-

re they will continue to grow over time. The monitoring and maintenance of informal settlements is a major challenge that has tremendous repercussions for humanity at socio-economic, political, and environmental levels. The correct understanding of the conditions and needs of informal settlements and the communities that inhabit them is totally necessary to improve the conditions of their systems and improve the quality of life of their inhabitants.

In order to achieve better approaches to addressing the problems in informal settlements, the following should be considered primarily:

- The acceptance of informal settlements as an important part of the city. The barrio is part of the city, and its inhabitants must have the same rights and duties.
- The right to the city: often due to spontaneity and rapid growth, informal settlements appear to be residential islands that are alienated from urban life. These settlements and citizens deserve equal rights to a habitable urban space with suitable conditions like the rest of their citizen peers.
- Immediate action: the size, magnitude and consolidation of the settlements make the problem very evident and action on the settlements must be prompt because their capacity for growth and organization is very fast, which exacerbates the precarious conditions and risks.
- It is necessary to understand the needs of the settlements: each neighborhood and each group or informal settlement is governed by its own order and its own logic. In order to optimize efforts and actions, critical attention to detail of

the needs of each sector is absolutely necessary. The creation of a general plan is not feasible if the specific problems of each type of settlement are not detected.

- Global solutions need to be created: isolated operations in a informal settlement only displace the problems and consolidate and exacerbate them in others. It is necessary to generate multisectoral master plans that guide the interventions so that all efforts lead to the solution of the problems.
- Deep transformations: Responses to settlements problems cannot be sporadic or temporary. They must be organized systematically and interdisciplinary to generate a change in the culture of the community and make these changes last and maintain over time.
- It is important to incorporate the barrios into the urban planning of the city with the aim of urbanizing them and fitting them into the planned fabric of the city.
- It is necessary to couple the settlements to the service charging system: it is necessary to start charging the neighborhoods for urban services to obtain the necessary resources to invest in the community and generate the obligation of the state to provide quality services and goods.
- An innovative approach is required: large-scale informal urbanization requires new approaches, new tools to respond to urban problems and inequities.

“In facing the challenge of slums, urban development policies should more vigorously address the issue of livelihoods of slum dwellers and urban poverty in general, thus going be-

yond traditional approaches that have tended to concentrate on improvement of housing, infrastructure and physical environmental conditions” (UN Habitat, 2003: 28)

All Opportunities focus on enhancing the identity of the barrios and social ties, generating solutions adaptable to the sites and having the street as the main actor in each of the projects in which to enhance efforts. According to Manuel De Solà Morales “Collective space is both much more and much less than public space, if by the latter we mean solely that which is publicly owned”. Morales believes that discussion on whether the urban space is more or less public is useless because “in our cities, the spaces of ambiguous nature are the ones that are going to play a more and more significant role in everyday in social life”. Projects should not be evaluated based on being public or private, since in their own words “the Good city is the one that is capable of giving a public value to what is private” (De Sola Morles, 2008).

Due to its fragile order and difficult number of variables (level of consolidation, amount of settled surface, deficit of useful space to build) The most effective strategy to project improvements and changes at the level of informal settlements is Decolonial Design Perspectives through tactical urban planning. Designed to address problems such as uncertainty, social inclusion, and participation. Among these strategies we can talk about 3 families of main strategies: Urban Acupuncture, Networks, and club sandwiches.

The word acupuncture derives from the Latin *accus* (meaning “needle”) and the English *Puncture*. Acupuncture has been used for over 200 years in Chinese medicine as one of the oldest known therapies to mankind. Referring to the need

for alternative strategies for urban regeneration and to supply the problem of informal settlements, the urban planner Jaime Lerner dedicated his career as an urban planner and politician to demonstrate that the city needed micro and macro interventions that would modify the way to attack the problems in the city. It is an urban design strategy, using the theoretical bases of acupuncture, which works on specific points in order to revitalize the whole. The concept of Urban Acupuncture arises in a context in which the city has undergone a transformation from the compact medieval city to an industrial city model. This model of industrial city causes a segregation of spaces according to the different uses: residential and industrial, among others. The growth of the city, and the need for large infrastructures have left obsolete spaces with potential for activity. This problem generates the need for new urban solutions.

The function of urban acupuncture is then, to work on those spaces that have been abandoned within the structure of a city. We are talking, for example, of empty lots, disused buildings, or residential neighborhoods with a low level of activity. The objective is to re-use and re-introduce these spaces in their context to compact the city and thus make it more efficient and sustainable. This solution aims to reclaim the public space as a meeting point and reduce the distances between work and leisure, creating a fluid space where mixed uses can appear between residential, commercial and office areas. It is important to think that the daily routes that are as comfortable and safe as possible for all citizens alike. From the social point of view among others, cities are defined essentially as a system of collective life. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the existing space and offer the opportunity to its inhabitants to decide on these interrelations. Many proposed solutions to attract ac-

tivity to a place are achieved through temporary or temporary structures. These structures have the advantage of having a faster and cheaper implantation, and in turn allow to see their results before implanting a fixed structure.

The Networks are a set of key interventions quite like urban acupuncture that aim to connect and enable spaces for communities. be it transport systems or simply urban facilities that generate a network of connectivity in a sector, improving its connectivity, facilities, or services. The Club sandwiches are a family of strategies that are based on the combination of different typologies and uses with the construction of interventions to provide not only functionality but also allow a constant flow of users. Avoiding building interventions that serve a single use counteracts the fact of limiting the useful life of an urban or architectural intervention, in addition to attacking problems such as insecurity, multiple programs are provided that can be combined and intersected for a more multipurpose use of space. In all these 3 strategies we can see an ability to invent new urban devices and dislocate typologies. These urban design solutions invent new urban spaces and devices that mix elements and symbols. In this sense, urban design experiences conceived as an impressive variety of spatial solutions are only an explicit attempt to generate non-colonial ways of rethinking the conditions of living in informal contexts. The ideal is to target medium or low impact sustainable projects that do not imply a “clean sweep” on the barrios and its inhabitants because displacement would only be a temporary cure. In short, the sustainability of the project is framed in 3 aspects:

- 1: Reinforce the strong identity of the neighborhood: Through collective projects, organize the settlements sectors to unite for a better use of the common space. In this aspect, the com-

munal space is the street. As a meeting and social interaction center, work should be done to achieve better articulation to adhere to the fabric of the formal city and generate improved mobility. Take care of the spaces to improve vehicular mobility by negotiating the space with the inhabitants. Remove leisure spaces that generate insecurity with facilities that promote healthy encounters, sports and that break with total residential use, these spaces can be of a commercial or sports nature to add dynamism and life to the spaces. These interventions that involve the community guarantee the support and continuous care of these projects over time as the inhabitants feel involved and identified with the works and the spaces that represent them.

2: Adaptability: Due to their intricate conditions, the projects to be carried out in the neighborhood must be as accurate and efficient as possible. Each settlement has its own conditions, and each space must be optimized in use to the maximum to meet a need. Innovative projects are needed that are not limited to net areas, but rather innovative proposals are sought such as occupying the space in height, connecting various points, reorganizing garbage dumps and wastelands, and taking advantage of each of the qualities of the space and the participation of the inhabitants of the sector.

3: Using the street as the common space: As the street is the urban catalyst and the community space, global efforts should not only focus on improving infrastructure and maintenance of spaces and mobility but should also improve quality of life based on greater enjoyment. Using the street as the meeting place fosters a sense of identity. "A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security." (Lynch k. 1960)

CONCLUSIONS

Venezuela, like any country that has lived through a large number of important moments in its history, has forced the largest concentration of the population to be located in the capital. It went from being a country that centered its economy on agriculture, the cocoa and coffee trade, to being one of the main Oil producing and exporting countries in the world. The uncontrolled urban and demographic growth in Caracas was produced thanks to the pooling of financial resources by the oil activity. People emigrated in mass to the cities seeking an improvement in their quality of life, however, these did not have enough structures to be able to respond to the strong demand for housing, so families were forced to occupy empty land and build their own their own homes in an improvised way.

At the end of the 20th century, Venezuela was mired in an incredible political and economic crisis amid devaluations, coups, corruption and an inequality that had made the city's slums grow to occupy almost 55% of the built city. As a problem that was too evident to be denied, the concentration of the efforts of professionals and planners was to recognize these informal spaces as spaces that are part of the city and part of the Urban continuum. That is why programs such as the Slums Physical Habilitation Plan are dedicated, which recognizes these slums as part of the city, adds them to the urban fabric, trying to provide them with services and systems. Unlike a slump upgrading, physical empowerment focused on

connecting slums to the existing systems of the city, giving its inhabitants the necessary notions to fight for what would be the right to their properties (the legal right to land) and how to improve the infrastructure to mitigate the lack of provision of services, the deficit of the different spaces and equipment, as well as sanitation that improves habitability. With the support of the Oil rent, the Chávez government sought to mitigate the problem of the housing deficit in the city of Caracas with La Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela. Based on expropriations and the redistribution of space for the poorest, a large number of buildings of various types and forms were built with the function of being the new “decent homes” for the organized people. Although a number of people have benefited from the important mission, there are many doubts about the distribution methods, true costs, management of the works and management of human resources, as well as their quality. Added to this, the lack of study and planning have developed new dynamics in the city due to the densification of urban areas and increased the deficit in terms of equipment and services. The expropriations and the different new laws in combination with the growing economic crisis have paralyzed the construction sector and also the affinity of the inhabitants to enter the rental market and the sale of real estate since many of them are in a situation of risk of losing their properties, due to the fact that they do not have legislation that guarantees the right to their properties after being inhabited by new occupants. Many inhabitants of the informal city have benefited from these same laws to obtain real estate to live in a way that was not possible before, but it is a strategy that is not sustainable for the future of the real estate market. On the other hand, phenomena such as the of the David tower demonstrate new forms of contemporary modern living where concepts such as communes or communal development give rise to new visions of how to

organize the appropriation of space. It is not that the mode of occupation is well seen, but there are characteristics and organizational systems that can be redeemed especially in a society that turns its back on people who do not have access to housing due to their economic conditions.

Rethinking informality in the city of Caracas is not only a task of the state, but a task of all architects and urban planners who make life in the city because, as we have outlined before, informality is a problem that has economic, legal, social, and urban characteristics. Making the Informal settlements part of the city by giving them the necessary equipment so that their inhabitants have the same opportunities as all the inhabitants of the formally built city is a means of breaking down social inequality through architecture. Informality is but one of the many realities experienced in the city, but it should not cause its citizens to be treated as second-class citizens. There are many phenomena that can be studied about the informality of the city of Caracas, as well as there are many opportunities to learn how to make a new city. The Informal city is a living laboratory of experiences on how society can organize itself so that it is a viable reality not very different from the formal city. Efforts to attack the problems in the city of Caracas and in many cities with informal settlements must be organized on 2 fronts: First, to understand that informal settlements are an active part of the city and therefore part of the solution. The inhabitants of the informal city cannot be set aside or segregated as they are part of the composition and have the same rights and duties as any other inhabitant of the city. Second, there must be a communion between the needs of the inhabitants and the actions to be taken by the state in terms of transforming the efforts and pertinent actions to provide the inhabitants of informal settlements with the quality of life they

deserve since there no should be citizens of second class.

‘Acupunctures’, ‘Networks’ and ‘Club-Sandwiches’ , the 3 strategies can be considered as an expression of what can be described as a tactical approach to urban planning and design aimed at addressing issues such as uncertainty, social inclusion, participation. These experiences seem to be able to innovate, to reverse trends and discourses with European or North American approaches. However, concepts such as ‘urban acupuncture’, ‘networks’ or ‘club sandwich’ used to frame this ‘radical’, ‘southern’ or ‘insurgent’ urbanism, are characterized by some limitations, in particular by the absence of attention to the issue of class antagonism. Little faith is placed in the ability of the lower classes to challenge the existing social relations that produce social marginality.

Explicitly, these design experiences are optimistic and radical; at a deeper level, however, they can be seen as pessimistic and conservative, assuming that the current characters of the Latin American city are ultimately unquestioned and asserting that the primary role of architects is primarily to negotiate cities unquestionably governed by a close relationship between persistent colonial values and interests and unquestioned neoliberal visions.

Like its ideological twin of ‘sustainable urbanism’, the ‘resilient city’ is a very seductive concept. The creative and resilient city can easily withstand and quickly recover from shocks and return to the desired status quo of socio-spatial production, capital accumulation and elite wealth capture as quickly as possible. The insistence on the cult of creativity and resilience has been widely criticized. In particular geographer Tom Slater (The resilience of neoliberal urbanism) argues that this

obsession with these two key concepts in many ways treats existing conditions of sociospatial injustice and the effects of capital as ‘natural’ and therefore unquestionable. This is the dark side of resilience.

Beyond subaltern resilience

This generation of radical architects seems to behave like ‘social bandits’. They are explicitly ‘fighting’ for the improvement of the living conditions of the lower classes by rejecting conventional design and planning techniques, preferring to adopt tactics that often rely on the support of local populations. Teddy Cruz’s tactics of recycling between Tijuana and San Diego, UT-T’s invention of vertical gyms or Metrocables conceived as social condensers are an explicit expression of a discourse-guerrilla. As social bandits, a particular rural cunning appears in the inventions of hybrid infrastructures, of devices conceived according to an explicit attitude of bricoleur looking for usable bits and pieces that can be recycled and reassembled with other appropriate spare parts. The bricoleur invents but tries to find possible answers mainly in what is already there. But the bricoleur is not so concerned with deep transformations as he does not seem to be particularly concerned with defining a structured discourse.

‘Acupunctures’, ‘Networks’ and ‘Club-Sandwiches’ correspond to ‘intelligent mechanisms’ that do not seem to be able to define a well-structured and critical urban theory based on an antagonistic relationship not only with inherited cities, with knowledge, and more generally, with existing urban formations. As a set of isolated actions, they do not seem to be able to question dominant visions and power relations, due to an obsession with the present. These radical architects through

their strategies reach a conceptual short-circuit where their hybrid devices find legitimization only if existing socio-spatial processes and conditions exist and persist. These clever mechanisms often implicitly, whether in the form of architecture objects, infrastructures or settlement patterns, function as peace-keeping devices, ultimately, implicitly, serving the persistence of a dominant apparatus. It is possible to start from Eric Hobsbawm's formulations on banditry by reconsidering the figure of the social bandit as a metaphor to highlight some attitudes that characterize the type of architect involved in the definition of the 3 design strategies presented.

Informality | poverty

Persistent poverty and socio-spatial inequality. do these strategies really address urban poverty, or do they implicitly reinforce persistent, colonial power and socio-economic conditions? It is important to study how paradigms construct their subjects, how some ideas come to be seen as best practice and how certain persistent colonial 'power structures' and imaginaries are perpetuated. And planners play a prominent role in the battle of ideas. They manage ideas as weapons. In managing knowledge, they also manage poverty. Thus, their work takes place not only in relation to the poor but also in relation to structures of knowledge and experience. The production of discourses is continuously controlled, regulated, by a set of procedures that regulate their circulation and guarantee their appropriation by certain categories of subjects. Not everyone is allowed to speak. For a discourse to be considered as such, it must come from specific places, that is, it must be supported by a complex of institutions. Poverty is one of the main semantic devices marking the development discourse that became hegemonic since the end of World War II. At a

time when the Western capitalist model has been proclaimed as an example of civilization and progress, concepts such as “underdevelopment” or “informality” have become functional discursive elements to maintain a precise power scheme. EXAMPLE: Urban mobility policies can be conceptualized as ‘poverty capital’ or ‘poverty capital’: a convergence of development capital and financial capital where development projects generate investment returns. The production of poverty capital also involves the reconstruction of geographies. Through the circulation of mobility policies in the countries of the Global South, new orders of urban development are emerging. It is this “other” geography that can be considered as a new frontier of capital accumulation. And the reconstruction of peripheral geographies as frontiers requires the reconstruction of truths, of poverty capital, or truths of poverty.

The cable car transportation model promises high financial and social rates of return on investment. Mobility financing is a global market niche and cities like Guayaquil, Medellin or La Paz are sites of frenetic urban development where the discourse of ‘neoliberal populism’ is fully evident, as a celebration of both free market ideologies and popular economy. Each genre of capital has its own truths, and truths are exchanges of promises. The enterprise of making the truth of poverty capital is complicated, and fraught with contradictions. There are fractures and crises in poverty capital. There are “foldings,” complicities that are also subversions, of dissension in the folds of the composition that is poverty capital. As policy makers in Latin America seek to define, for example, innovative mobility policies, it is important to pay attention to the relationships between different types of mobility injustice and the impact of changing infrastructure systems on social groups affected by what we can call “mobility poverty.”

Decolonial Design

To be sure, there are limitations to these three radical design experiences, because of their substantial indifferences to questions of social struggles. Nevertheless, they are still valuable. Their practical and astute ways in which enclaves of resistance have been conceived and secured in different contexts of Latin American informality provide us with an innovative range of spatial solutions capable of opening our imagination about what might be possible if the design of isolated fragments, devices and hybrids are rethought in a more coherent and precise discourse. What is at stake is the invention of a methodology of urban fragments conceived not as anomalies in a static body, but as a mode of generalization of a different planning. In this project, discourses and themes of postcolonial urban theory are directly recalled. This is a construction inhabited by the postmodern concepts of the hybrid, palimpsest, mestizo, creole, of the “fragment” understood as those elements of social life that cannot be easily assimilated into dominant discourses or structures.

Postcolonial urban theory is basically a set of discourses that aim at defining forms of planning ‘from below’. The issues traditionally addressed are analysis and representation of the city as a field of conflict between different social groups, ethnic and spatial polarization and fragmentation, user participation in planning practices. Traditional Western urban theory is characterized by cartographic visions and planning processes ‘from above’ symbolized by the presence of specific conceptual devices: public space understood as the main democratic element, the distinction between and private spaces, large infrastructural systems. But formality and informality, western

and southern visions in their interactions, overlaps and conflicts, constitute a 'complex adaptive system' that mutually reinforce and legitimize each other's discourses. This operational and conceptual impasse needs to be overcome. What is possible, then, is to innovate these processes of emergence and contestation to define a new discourse that is not only an expression of a position of resistance or of a subaltern resilience.

The postcolonial is a complex and layered discourse that can be used primarily to analyze and describe how a city is understood and represented, but its scope as a planning and design technique is less clear. In this sense, a different urban theory that is not limited to articulating forces against the clutches of colonization but is conceived as a tool for material articulation of innovative design visions, could be developed.

From social banditry to politics, this is the challenge. Decolonial Thinking.

In design practices decolonization cannot be a metaphor. The decolonial project is legitimized from the recognition of colonial power devices, their linkage with specific imaginaries of life and economies, making explicit the mechanisms that feed and legitimize coloniality, as a model of knowledge that crosses multiple spheres of experience: knowledge, disciplinary practices, relations between society and environment, even racial and gender relations. Decolonizing the project for the informal city means decolonizing the theory, discourses, and concepts through which we think of its space and forms of inhabiting. What is questioned are the relations of domination, inequalities and socio-spatial conflicts that trigger the prevailing design paradigms of today to transform them.

This process requires time, responsibility and above all a willingness to experience conditions of vulnerability. The reference is as much to the fragility of those who think the project from marginal conditions, moving on unstable ground, hesitating, as to the incomplete and open character of the new possible socio-spatial ecologies. Space is intrinsically violent, unequal, unjust. Its project is always linked to the configuration and circulation of models. However, this does not mean that design should operate as a colonial agent, but rather that it can be conceived as a set of practices aimed at configuring spaces in which many 'worlds' coexist, negotiating with each other, as the Zapatistas say. This does not mean to design tending to totally indeterminate, imprecise configurations, but to non-univocal, non-transparent spatial arrangements, linked to multiple and therefore non-oppressive narratives. The project as thinking about ecologies of coexistence between differences, social, ecological, economic. The decolonial project operates from the epistemic limits of modern thought is a Border Thinking, a thinking of the border, of the margin, where subjects, collectives and social groups living on the margins produce knowledge that can be transferred from one place to another, constituting an exteriority to modernity. Spatial conflicts arise from the difference of meanings associated with practices of spatial production. They arise from the gap between different forms of inhabitation and the values that govern social life in relation to space, economy, ecology, property, the body and knowledge. The struggles for meaning are fundamental in the structuring of the social and physical world. The crisis of habitability is generated by a modern thinking that operates through distinctions, separations between culture and nature, nature and society, urban and rural, male and female, black and white. To address this crisis, it is therefore useful to re-

flect on the interaction and conflict between multiple forms of spatial production, observing plural socio-eco-cultural configurations.

Therefore:

Is it possible to produce a discourse on informality and its project beyond the modernizing rhetoric of development, performance, identity?

Is it possible to overcome the traditional dichotomy between politics and natural and cultural economies?

How to act if some key words of Western thought on the city and on the territory, such as public space, nature, domesticity, production, become unreliable tools?

What to do with public space, with the *mixité*, with the rooted habitation that takes care of places?

In order to answer these questions, a reasoning around some characteristics of the decolonial project is proposed.

The ‘colonial difference’ as a matrix of design thinking. Friction, distortion, collusion. In many aspects, Western urban theory is articulated by a dualistic thinking that tends to transform space into a controlled and legible object, without shadow areas. The space of Western urbanistic thought, particularly modernist, is a finite construction. But often in Latin America this finiteness is a fiction since the interaction between paradigms and forms of knowledge, western and local, always produces twists, misunderstandings, slugging, interruptions. The hypothesis is supported that a projective de-

clination of decolonial thought should focus on the concept of ‘colonial difference’ that Aníbal Quijano defined as the product of conflictive processes of cultural exchange, that is, of frictions between local knowledge and Western paradigms. Colonial difference’ is the space in which the coloniality of power is articulated, but it is also the place where a ‘thinking of the margin’ emerges, capable of questioning hegemonic knowledge and paradigms. Externality to modernity. If the concept of interior is linked to the rhetoric of civilization and progress, the exterior, the margin, the interface, is the place of the colonized: zone of contamination, exchange and conflict: *Nepantla*, a Nahuatl word used by Gloria Anzaldúa to describe those spatial, temporal or psychic crises that occur in situations of transition. Colonial difference is always a frontier.

In Latin America, Western knowledge, paradigms and protocols are used in planning practices, but are never really followed. The application of a certain model, paradigm, is proclaimed, but it is never fully complied with. “It is obeyed, but not complied with”. However, non-compliance must do only in part with the question of the soundness and control of the applied knowledge. Unexpectedly, through this non-compliance there is an ironic form of resistance to the dominant powers and paradigms. What if this ‘distortion’ were the most interesting element to think about? If it were the result of friction between paradigms, of the collision between knowledges and places, the most fertile ground for research?

The response of design to colonial conflicts should not be sought at the level of the constitution of counter-identities, counter-paradigms, perhaps based on patrimonial reinterpretations and, therefore, again, of a Western matrix, of ancestral knowledge, but of practices of the margin, *Nepantlere* as Glo-

ria Anzaldúa would say, of the ‘cannibalistic’ and predatory incarnations of imaginaries and knowledge. All this produces betrayals, practices of difference, which have nothing to do with the exaltation of identity but allow us to prefigure compositions, assemblages between local spatial thoughts. This leads us to think the project through different practices and terms, to consider, for example, spatial fragmentation, distance between social groups, opacity, not necessarily as a problem. Likewise, instability, vacillation and even the destruction of ecologies can become paradigms of projects. The decolonial project, understood as the assemblage of worlds or the composition of a pluriverse, then, revolves around two key terms or concepts: divergence and detachment. These conceptual threads intertwine with those of dependency and generation. The decolonial project is the space of divergence. Divergence does not refer to subjects, practices, or cultures, conceived as discrete entities that share certain constitutive properties that allow us to compare them, identifying those that are similar or different. Rather, divergence is something that constitutes the very entities or practices of spatial production, both in their specificities and in the interactions between them. A space of divergence is defined by a disagreement that can never be annulled without each entity giving up what it considers important with respect to a situation of conflict over an object or a space. The decolonial project is above all a place of divergence, aware that, in a given situation where more collectives and practices of spatial production coexist, an ‘object’, a river, a mountain, is always traversed, “disproportionate”, by different interests, visions, desires.

Excess through knowledge, and therefore ignorance, can be a condition for the establishment of forms of relationship linked to forms of understanding that are not based on sharing the

same values and that rather than canceling divergence are constituted by it. In contexts of informality, it is necessary to think of forms of project capable of managing divergent epistemic practices. It is a policy in which the agreement negotiated through comparison and conflict between different visions, concepts, paradigms and imaginaries does not erase the differences between collectives but makes them visible. Basically, from a design point of view, it is about thinking spatially the theme of relational separation or Deleuzian disjunctive synthesis, a set of heterogeneous practices of spatial production assembled ecologically, negotiating to coexist. Examples: 'opaque' spatial membranes, spatial interfaces distant from Western imaginaries based on the concepts of *mixité*, fluidity and porosity. These devices can be conceptualized as an expression of a border thinking / design (Anzaldúa) that alludes to the possibility of defining design and planning strategies as assemblages of local spatial thoughts.

Divergence, in terms of design, becomes disconnection, detachment, as Walter D. Mignolo would say, a useful design strategy to configure coexistence between worlds: the pluriverse. Disconnection can be a condition for innovative research. It is not about a re-evaluation of the logic of closed communities, but about the possible operative interpretation of that critical thought around the space of a Decolonial matrix that reasons about the characters of fragmented, split and opaque space (Glissant). and about the value of the areas of contact, of the thresholds. The decolonial project is an ecological project. The dark ecology. In the West we think of ecology as something planted in the soil, revolving around place, around context. In this case, the place must be local: it must make us feel at home. Expressions like local, organic sustainable, are good for environmental policies. But ecology does not imagi-

ne that but the interconnectedness, the weaving. Weaving can mean the gaps in a web and the texture between them. It suggests solidity and delicacy at the same time. Density and rarefaction. Or a complex, tangled situation, a concatenation of limiting or restrictive forces or circumstances: a trap. In the fabric, not everything exists by itself, each entity seems strange, the fabric unites many strangers. Ecological thinking is full of shadows, it is intrinsically dark and intimate at the same time. There would be no fabric if there were no strangers. There is always something sinister, it is as if there is always something else, someone else. Coexistence, therefore, is not harmony. It is like a language. For meaning to happen, language must be noisy, messy, blurry, grainy, vague, and slippery. Ambient rhetoric is too often affirmative, extroverted and masculine. It simulates immediacy, is sunny, frank, holistic and healthy. Fragmentation, mediation, ambiguity, where are they? Ecology reflects on uncertainty, on hesitation. Interconnectedness implies separation and difference. Distance does not mean indifference and detachment. It is not coldness. Ecological thinking is not about infinite 'resources' or not but about inexplicable familiarity, it is about vulnerability and responsibility. Therefore, rather than an idea of inclusion it pursues an idea of radical intimacy. To imagine the stranger we need, therefore, thresholds, diffuse spaces.

The decolonial project, therefore, requires thinking about ecology, not nature. A distinction must be made between environmentalism and ecology. The concept of nature is linked to agricultural, sedentary societies, to the idea of land ownership. Nature has unnatural qualities such as harmony, purity, hierarchy, authority, harmony, neutrality. Ecology is something that has to do with coexistence. Ecologize a project means to bring together and compose in a diplomatic way habitats, collecti-

ves, and species. This is a discourse articulated around concepts such as: ‘colonial difference’, detachment, coexistence, predation, collusion, failure, radical intimacy. From the point of view of the prefiguration of spatial strategies, the main referents are those of:

‘Opaque space’ (Edouard Glissant).

‘Cannibalistic thought’ (Oswaldo de Andrade and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro)

‘destruction’ and ‘hesitation’ (Euclides de Cunha).

In the context of design practices, the adoption of the decolonial perspective allows us to articulate research and experiment forms of design focused on the recognition of differences, on the analysis of interactions and conflicts between different socio-spatial ecologies and on the attempt to define their relationships. Defining areas of contact between different ecologies and forms of spatial production, experimenting with the possibilities of ‘multi-sited’ and reticular practices of inhabiting, with the development of practices linked to the invention of new ecologies or the creation of strategies of connection between local economies and transnational processes.

Poverty Again

The “Barrios” are the symptomatic effect of modern development that brings social order but also brings poverty and violence. Development is a double-edged sword, and the favelas are ‘the bleeding wounds’ where the first world meets the third, as Gloria Anzaldúa says. The political narrative of “slums” as the “issue” of progress is part of a global agenda

driven by institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF, which seek to penetrate “from below”, from the urban poor themselves, and inoculate a project of subjectivation through the concept of resilience, that is, through the survival of the inevitable counter-effects of development, leaving its basic premises intact. The term informal implies an absence, the absence of any form and yet, as Ananya Roy explains, informality is rather a strategy deployed by groups trying to take control of urban production and infrastructure. Barrios have become synonymous with underdevelopment in the vocabulary and syntax of the global agenda, hence the discourse on poverty, and informality renders the daily practices of the poor “deficient”, “unproductive” and therefore problematic for global governmentality. Barrios are not a “subject” of development; rather, development is a subject of the favelas. In other words, development/modernization should be understood as a political burden that the poorest have to “carry on their backs”. The barrios are the urban materialization of that burden, places of crisis, of deviation, of hybridization of uses, that is, they are at the same time utopian and dystopian spaces.

Informality as discourse

In academia we use the term “urban informality” to name the peripheral fabric of the cities of the Global South (favelas, shantytowns, slums, shantytowns, shantytowns). From there we developed research to organize a common discourse.

Informality as a new orientalism? Without examining informality as a discourse, it is not possible to understand the disciplinary attitude by which Western culture is able to manage, and even produce, informal settlements politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically. What is the form of informal settlements? There is a relationship between for-

mal and planned city. The pioneers of urban planning were concerned about the millions of poor inhabitants of working-class neighborhoods. The result of this intention to build a social order was massive suburbanization; despite this effort to give form to the formless, the formal city has been constantly informalized. As an example, we can think of Cidade de Deus, an “informal settlement” in Brazil, which was born as a formal social housing project, but was eventually transformed in a *barrio*. What is the urban form of Cidade de Deus? As an answer we can say: “it has the shape of a favela”; but what is that? In one of her books Judith Butler linked gender and performance to develop a theoretical proposal: The effect of gender ... should be understood as the mundane form in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of a permanent gender. The self.

The same is true of urban forms; the particularities given by different names matter. Ananya Roy defines informality as “a way of life,” and from there proposes that there is no difference between formal and informal, so she argues that there is an informal city and an informal practice of planning. But, as bell hooks said, “we cannot ignore the issue of representation, as it determines who gets to speak to, with and for us”. Naming is an acute form of power. In the last decades images of informality, *barrios*, favelas, slums, shantytowns, or the tactics of reappropriation of abandoned towers, have been disseminated through international awards, tourism and films. The result has been the construction of images that emphasize the binary opposition between orderly formal cities and poor and chaotic peripheral patches. Urban informality corresponds to a unique idea of theoretical and cultural representation. Re-conceptualization of the term is necessary. There are many names to identify “informal settlements” (favelas, villas,

poblaciones, barrios populares, campamentos, shantytowns, among others), which refer to different contexts, forms, and processes. As speakers of Spanish, Italian and English, we do not have a common word to indicate these settlements. In the case of Latin Americans, I think they do not need it. They are known to be many in one, that is, these names refer to many different worlds, forms, and processes.

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