TIERRA DE NADIE

Urban imaginarum for Caracas failures and losses

A todos los perdidos que, por miedo o estigma,
nos restringimos de eso que tanto quisimos:
conectar.

Tierra de Nadie

Urban imaginarum for Caracas failures and losses

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Abstract

En.

The following thesis presents a study developed during July 2023 and July 2024 on the territory of Caracas, capital city of Venezuela, in relation to the political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis that has unfolding throughout the 2000's. The research focuses on how this crisis shaped the generation of citizens born and raised in Caracas during this period, called in this research The Lost Generation, and its impact on citizen relations and the use of the city.

The examination of how the unfulfilled promises and urban dysfunctions of Caracas manifest as urban failures that affect identity, community and historical continuity is carried out through a historical and critical analysis of Caracas spanning the periods of conquest, independence, national founding, oil discovery and exploitation, and the current crisis of the 21st Century. The study examines the series of historical and political events that led to the current state of Venezuela's social crisis, and how the overlapping of these events has given way to the creation of a fragmented urban landscape characterized by exclusion, isolation and social disintegration.

At the core of this research is the concept of Pixels City, a term used to describe the disjointed and pixelated urban environment of Caracas. The city is understood as a unbecoming metropolis, haunted by the unfulfilled visions of prosperity and modernity of its golden years. This haunting is particularly evident in the citizen relations of The Lost Generation, which experience and relates to a city marked by historical traumas, socioeconomic disparities, and stigmatization.

The research identifies and deconstructs the concepts of City Patches and Citizen Bebris as central to understanding the urban morphology of Caracas and its citizen dynamics. City Patches refer to the spatial manifestations of collective trauma, materialized in gated neighborhoods and slums, commonly known in Venezuela as barrios; while Citizen Bebris represent the residual urban dynamics and practices that have emerged in response to these conditions.

The exploration of these socio-territorial dynamics of Caracas is conducted through a projectual lens of speculative urbanism, underpinned by Judith Halberstam's concepts of Failure and Avery Gordon's theory of Social Haunting. By applying Halberstam's framework, the study seeks to reinterpret urban failure not as a negative outcome, but as a potential catalyst for creative reconfigurations and critical urban narratives. The speculative scenarios seek to imagine a city that embraces its failures, transforming them into opportunities for new forms of social and spatial interaction.

This approach advocates for a shift from traditional urban recovery strategies to a more multidimensional understanding of urban failures as integral to the city's identity and evolution. It calls for urban interventions that are not merely reparative but also provocative, encouraging a broader and more inclusive urban discourse.

Resumen

Es.

La siguiente tesis presenta un estudio desarrollado durante Julio del 2023 y Julio 2024 sobre el territorio de Caracas, ciudad capital de Venezuela, en relación con la crisis política, económica, social y humanitaria que ha estado ocurriendo a lo largo de los 2000. La investigación se enfoca en cómo esta crisis dio forma a la generación de ciudadanos nacída y crecída en Caracas durante este período, llamada en esta investigación La Generación Perdida (The Lost Generation), y su impacto sobre las relaciones ciudadanas y la utilización de la ciudad.

La examinación sobre cómo las promesas incumplidas y las disfunciones urbanas de Caracas se manifiestan como fracasos urbanos que afectan a la identidad, la comunidad y la continuidad histórica se llevan a cabo mediante un análisis histórico y crítico de Caracas abarcando los períodos de conquista, independencia, fundación nacinál, descubrimiento y explotación del petroleo y la actual crisis del siglo XXI. El estudio examina la serie de eventos históricos y políticos que permitieron el estado actual de la crisis social venezolana, y cómo la sobreposición de estos eventos han dado paso a la creación de un paisaje urbano fragmentado caracterizado por la exclusión, el aislamiento y la desintegración social.

Como núcleo de esta investigación está el concepto de Ciudad Pixeles, término utilizado para describir el entorno urbano desarticulado y pixelado de Caracas. La ciudad es entendida como una metrópolis no-convertida, atormentada por las visiones incumplidas de prosperidad y modernidad de sus años dorados. Este 'acecho' es particularmente evidente en las relaciones ciudadanas de La Generación Perdida, la cual se relaciona y vive una ciudad marcada por traumas históricos, disparidades socioeconómicas y estigmatización.

La investigación identifica y deconstruye los conceptos de Parches de Ciudad (City Patches) y Escombros Ciudadanos (Citizen Bebris) como elementos centrales para entender la morfología urbana de Caracas y sus dinamicas ciudadanas. Los Parches de Ciudad se refieren a las manifestaciones espaciales del trauma colectivo, materializados en las 'urbanizaciones cerradas' (gated neighborhoods) en los 'asentamientos informales' (slums), comúnmente conocidos en Venezuela como barrios; mientras que los Escombros Ciudadanos representan las dinámicas y prácticas urbanas residuales que han surgido en respuesta a estas condiciones.

La exploración de estas dinámicas socioterritoriales de Caracas se llevan a cabo a través de una lente proyectuál de urbanismo especulativo, sustentadas por los conceptos de 'fracaso' de Judith Halberstam y la teoría del 'acecho social' de Avery Gordon. Al aplicar el marco de Halberstam, el estudio busca reinterpretar el fracaso urbano no como un resultado negativo, sino como un catalizador potencial de reconfiguraciones creativas y narrativas urbanas críticas. Los escenarios especulativos buscan imaginar una ciudad que abraza sus fracasos, transformándolos en oportunidades para nuevas formas de interacción social y espacial.

Este planteamiento aboga por pasar de las estrategias tradicionales de recuperación urbana a una comprensión más multidimensional de los fracasos urbanos como parte integrante de la identidad y la evolución de la ciudad. Reclama intervenciones urbanas que no sean meramente reparadoras, sino también provocadoras, fomentando un discurso urbano más amplio e inclusivo.

0. Index

0.

Introduction

Caracas is not merely the political heart of Venezuela; it is the economic, cultural, and social epicenter of the country. The city has a high range of diversity which is reflected in its people, who come from all walks of life, as well as in different parts of the city, from north to south, from east to west. However, this diversity is unperceivable in the territory and the collective use of the city.

To historically and socially contextualize the research, I start from the premise that this conflictive environment refers to the crisis that has been related to the political governance during the past 25 years.

Venezuela once heralded for its oil wealth and booming economy, been in the mid-XX century one of the wealthiest countries in Latin America (Gonzalez Casas 2002), has been embroiled in a complex crisis that encompasses a confluence of interrelated factors, including economic mismanagement, political instability, social unrest, and humanitarian distress[1]. At the heart of this crisis lies a staggering decline in economic prosperity, fueled by plummeting oil prices and corruption[2]. The resultant hyperinflation, scarcity of basic goods, and a crippled healthcare system have inflicted dire hardships on the populace, triggering mass emigration and widespread societal disillusionment. Moreover, political polarization, marked by power struggles and international isolation[3], has further exacerbated the crisis, fracturing the social fabric and diminishing avenues for peaceful resolution (García-Guadilla 2003; Rebotier 2010; Gomez Herrera, Spirkoska 2009).

As one of the main consequences, the 21st-century crisis in Venezuela has seen a pervasive rise in crime and violence, affecting society across all levels. Various factors including firearm availability, political instability, drug trafficking, corruption, absence of social programs, gang involvement, basic commodity scarcity, and erosion of trust have contributed to this crisis. The fear permeating Venezuelan society has led to a tangible decline in public space use and social life. Fear has prompted self-imposed limitations, forcing people to abandon certain activities and restrict their presence in perceived risky locations and times[4]. This withdrawal from urban life has significantly curtailed social interactions and connections. Moreover, the repercussions of this crisis have reverberated through every facet of Venezuelan life, profoundly impacting the nation's citizens and signaling a turbulent chapter in the country's history.

1 - BBC News. 2019 "Venezuela: All You Need to Know about the Crisis in Nine Charts" The Visual Journalism team Venezuela - BBC News

2 - Almandoz, Arturo. 2012 "Caracas, entre la ciudad guzmancista y la metrópoli revolucionaria" Quito, Ecuador: OLACHI.

3 - Aleem, Zeeshan. 2017 "How Venezuela Went from a Rich Democracy to a Dictatorship on the Brink of Collapse." Vox

4 - Briceño-León, Roberto; Camardiel, Alberto. 2018 "El impacto de la inseguridad en las condiciones de vida" Espejo De La Crisis Humanitaria Venezolana. Encovi 2017. Universidad Católica Andrés Bello. Caracas, Venezuela.

Fig. 1
Patches and Debris.
Collage on Caracas socio-urban concepts made in Photoshop.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

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In the pursuit of understanding the consequences of the mentioned crisis in the urbanity and citizenship within Caracas, and its intricate historical, social, economic, and territorial layers of complexity, the research probes into a series of pivotal questions that underscore the urban dynamics shaping its identity and societal fabric.

The initial query comes from a personal questioning, examining the underlying reasons behind my sense of reduced agency in publicly exercising my autonomy within my city. This investigation delves into the origins of this feeling of unauthorized agency, seeking to unravel its roots within the societal structures and norms pervasive in Caracas.

Moving forward, the research endeavors to dissect the components constituting Caracas' pixelated urban image. It seeks to identify and comprehend these elements while exploring their origins, decoding how they have come to define the city's visual and cultural landscape.

The research studies The Pixels City, defined as the geographical, geopolitical, and geosocial scenario which through an urbanity of fear generated an environment where citizens – specifically The Lost Generation – and its common space – The Lost Interstice – have no access to each other.

Likewise, delving into societal complexity, the study aims to explore the socio-historical factors that have precipitated Caracas' current crisis state and how did these factors shape Caracas. The research continues to question what are the consequences of these factors and how do they express themselves in the contemporary City? The investigation unravels the historical underpinnings shaping Caracas and elucidates the consequences of these factors on the contemporary city, observing their expressions in the socio-cultural and urban spheres.

As the research unfolds, it scrutinizes the repercussions stemming from this intricate scenario, delving into its impacts on territorial dynamics within Caracas. What derives from this particular scenario, and how does it affect the society's behavior and the territory dynamics? The research seeks to comprehend society's far-reaching effects and adaptations as a response to this particular context.

Grounded in the concepts of losses and failures, The Pixels City serves to me and my research as a pivotal spatial framework to comprehend the intricate dynamics of contemporary Caracas, encompassing both its urban fabric and the spatial practices within it. This conceptual framework affords an avenue for the examination of two pivotal constituents: City Patches and Citizen Debris. These elements, integral to the analysis, enable a comprehensive exploration of the city's adaptive responses and residual remnants, shedding light on Caracas' socio-territorial intricacies arising from collective traumas and socio-urban transformations.

The concept of City Patches encapsulates a duality within the urban landscape, manifested through two distinctive typologies of space dimensions that respond to and reflect the collective trauma experienced by The Lost Generation. Firstly, a Gated Dimension, visible and manifested in the gated neighborhoods that stand as physical enclaves, symbolic fortresses shielding inhabitants from perceived external threats.

On the other hand, an Informal Dimension, concerning urban practices that represents an adaptive informal response to the historical social disparities, existing as organic, often makeshift spaces that evolve within the fabric of the city. These spaces emerge in the absence of formal planning or regulation, showcasing an intrinsic functionality shaped by immediate needs and context.

The term City Patches serves as a lens to understand how urban spaces, seclusive and segregative, exclusive and adaptive, reflect and respond to the broader socio-psychological impacts of collective trauma within a city.

On the other hand, the concept of Citizen Debris encapsulates the neglected practices and fragmented city-citizen interactions that exist outside the spatial realm of The Lost Generation. Specifically, these neglected interactions encompass unexercised citizenship practices that have been relegated to the peripheries of societal acknowledgment. The designation of these practices as Citizen Debris elucidates their categorization as remnants. These neglected facets of city life — pedestrian experiences and appropiative practices — symbolize not just the physical residue but also the sociocultural aftermath of a bygone urban narrative, overlooked and marginalized within the broader urban consciousness.
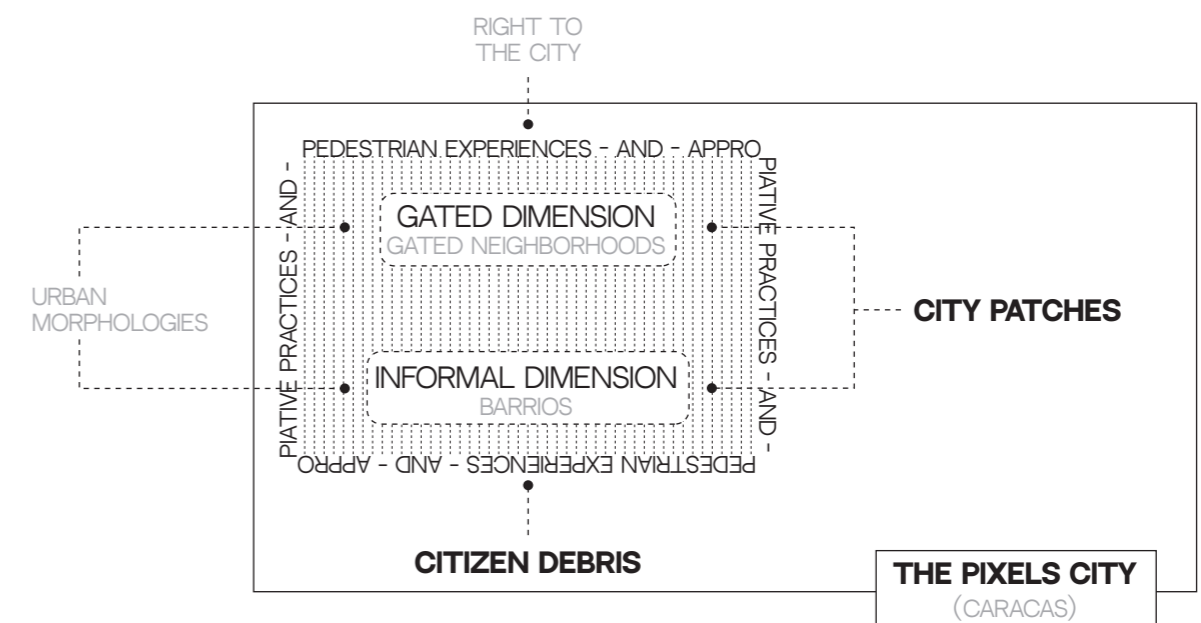
1.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

To hold the proper investigation on the topic of the urban history of Caracas and its contemporary crisis, a compilation of literature, both centered on the object of study (Caracas and Venezuela) and excentric of the object of study and the discipline, was reviewed and used as a fundamental source. From historical and theoretical books, academic papers, news articles, and recorded interviews, the main subjects of the research concern authors from the fields of architecture and urbanism history and theory, social studies, political science, and sociology.

1.1.1 Centric literature

Concerning Caracas, literature regarding the history of the country and the city was fundamental for understanding and constructing the study object. Caracas was examined from its colonial foundation until the contemporary history passage, relating to key authors such as Peña, Gonzalez Viso, Vegas, Martin Frechilla, Marcano Requena, Marcano, Almandoz, and García-Guadilla. Subsequently, for a proper understanding of the contemporary crisis in Venezuela, the support of books and academic papers where fundamental for the complete understanding of the research scenario, where authors who studied contemporary political phenomenons and social history and behavior were essential to articulate the complete contextualization, to cite some of them: McGurik, Brillembourg and Klumpner, Hawkins; as well as the support of digital new articles from newspapers as The Economist, The New Yorker and BBC.

Moreover, socio-demographic studies, socio-territorial studies, and urban morphologies transformation studies represent an important investigation field for the research to be able to show and understand the behavior of society in the territory of the city of Caracas and its representation of its urban typologies, which section was supported by the work of authors like Silva, Cardona, Galavis, García Sànchez, and Villá.

Finally, the search and investigation of data regarding population density, political and social movements, land value and class distribution, criminality, violence, and city expansion have been analyzed in order to graphically depict the political, social, and urban scenarios explained in this research. Sources such as Rebotier J., El Universal, ENCOVI, Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia, and World Health Organization, constitute the main framework from which this section leaned.

1.1.2 Eccentric literature

The interplay between social structural forms, collective trauma, geo-historical haunting, and the pressing urban dilemmas of segregation, seclusion, and the abandonment of public spaces signified also a center central topic of this research.

Accordingly, two main domains of literature, outsiders both in fields of studies and in study object yet deeply related to the social concerns and

problems of societies in crisis, were part of the main resources for the vocabulary construction of the research as well as the conceptualization of its problematic.

Within the realms of social theory and cultural critique, the main sources used in this research are "Ghostly Matters" by Avery Gordon (1997), and "The Queer Art of Failure" by Judith Halberstam (2011). The idea is to synthesize the critical perspectives of these texts within the context of Caracas.

These books converge upon a compelling exploration of social structural forms and their profound implications on spatial relationships, and citizenship practices. These texts intricately weave together nuanced inquiries into haunting specters, subordinated agency, and subversive modes of resistance within the broader context of societal structures, and therefore illuminating spatial inquiry of architecture and urbanism. Gordon's examination of haunting as a mode of unresolved social histories, and Halberstam's celebration of failure as a site of resistance all collectively shed light on the intricate relationship between individual subjectivities and the larger social structures that both shape and haunt them.

In contrast to the fact that both authors focus their research on the American culture and its hyper-capitalized societal lifestyle, the acknowledgment of the system and the state as a sort of authoritarian controller agent is related to the political scenario of Venezuela exposed in this research, which had been characterized by "serious authoritarian tendencies" (Aleem 2017), as well as the collateral social damages derived from the crime and violent crisis translated in the limitation on the free use of the city (García Sánchez, Villá 2002). Gordon and Halberstam converge in the opposition position towards the political system and its consequences over people's lifestyle determination, and a social structure that aims to influence citizenship practices.

These authors share a skepticism toward authoritarian systems and societal structures that seek to mold and dictate human agency within the context of capitalist societies. Gordon, and Halberstam highlight the restrictive nature of such systems, exposing how they curtail the sovereignty of individual action and expression.

In "Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination" (1997), Avery Gordon explores the realm of ghostly figures as a lens through which to examine social and cultural phenomena. Gordon's work delves into the intricate interplay between the past and the present, the visible and the invisible, and the individual and the collective, inviting readers to engage with the spectral forces that shape our world.

At the heart of "Ghostly Matters" lies the concept of haunting, a concept Gordon uses to illuminate the persistence of unresolved social issues, historical injustices, and collective traumas that continue to affect contemporary society. Gordon draws from a diverse range of disciplines, blending sociology, cultural studies, and critical theory to create a nuanced framework for understanding how the past infiltrates and influ-

ences the present.

"... uncanny experiences are where the unconscious rejoins its animistic and social roots, where we are reminded that what lies between society and psyche is hardly an inert empty space." (Gordon 1997, p. 49). In this sense, Gordon expresses her understanding of the unconscious as something not necessarily only related to the individual, but a matter that lies collectively.

One of the book's central arguments is that ghosts are not confined to the realm of the supernatural but are instead embedded within our social structures and everyday experiences. Gordon asserts that these spectral traces, whether they manifest as unresolved histories of, for example, slavery, colonialism, or other forms of oppression, exert a palpable influence on the present. Through this lens, the author examines how these specters haunt institutions, spaces, and individuals, shaping social relations and power dynamics.

1.1.3 Loss and Haunting

Using Gordon's concept of loss and haunting, I structure two key concepts: "The Lost Generation" and "The Lost Interstices".

The first one refers to the specific group of citizens – from where I also belong – who grew up in the XXI Century crisis period in Venezuela. To contextualize, our childhood and adolescence were years in which Caracas topped the list of the most violent cities and with the highest rate of homicides per capita in the world (The Economist 2016) (WHO 2016). Consequently, this Lost Generation spawned in between fear and stigma, which was a response to spontaneous urban practices such as seclusion and segregation were the normal environment where we grew up. Utterly detached from the sense of collectivity, The Lost Generation is shaped by a collective trauma which is reflected in two typologies of spaces: Gated neighborhoods and Informal settlements, encompassed in this research under the category of City Patches, urban dimensions that adapt formally to their immediate context and generally function intrinsically (see Chapter 2, sections 2.4.1).

The second one, "The Lost Interstices", refers to what is left outside the spatial reality shaped by The Lost Generation. The Lost Interstice recalls mainly the unexercised citizenship practices such as pedestrian life and the exercise of outdoor practices, which I have categorized as Citizen Debris (Chapter 2, section 2.4.2), the product of not only fear and stigmatization but also of the socio-urban haunting inherent from the imminent presence of modernity in the urban development produced in the golden years of Venezuela in the mid-XX Century.
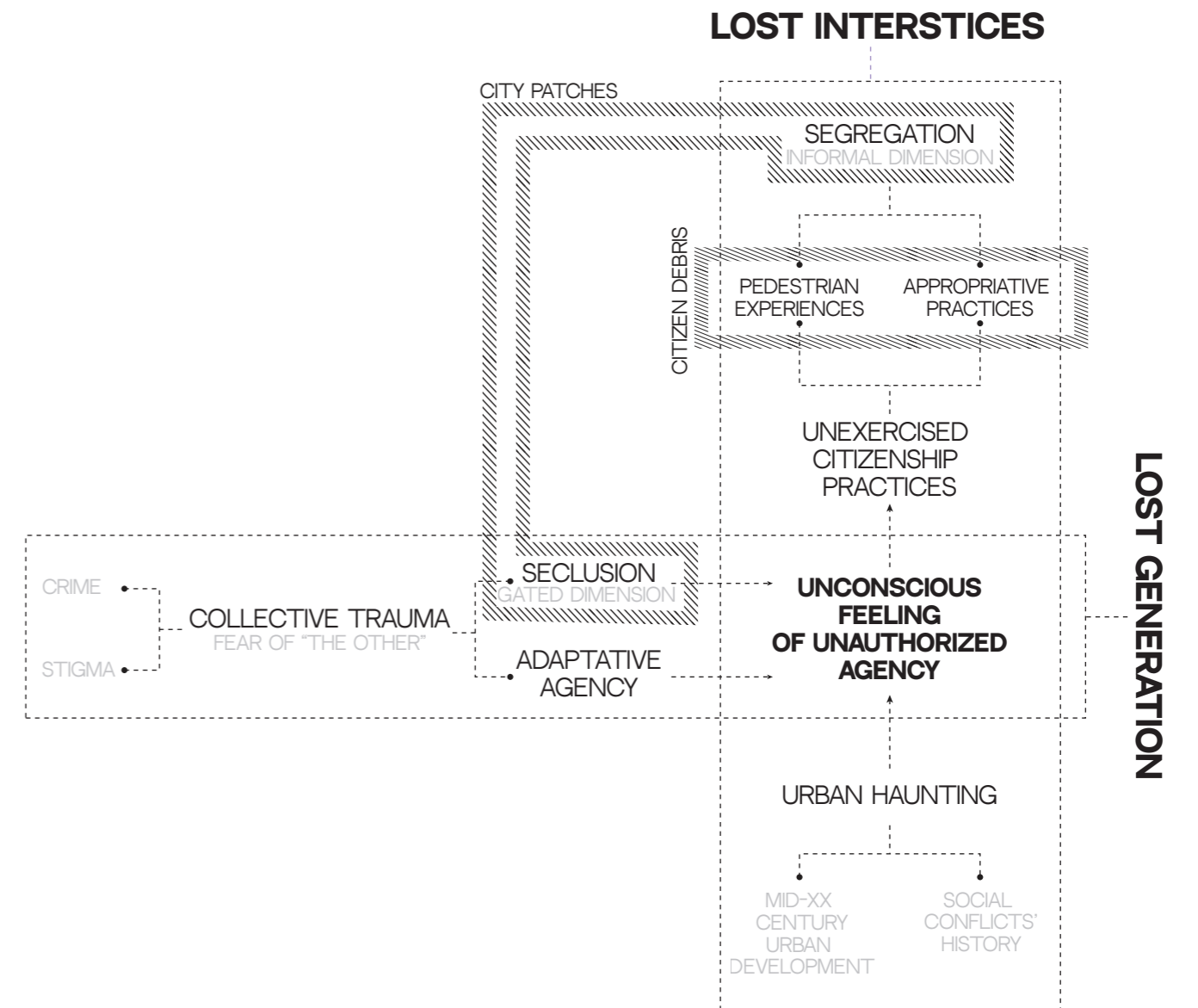

Fig. 3
Conceptual diagram.
The Pixels City framework: The Lost Generation and The Lost Interstices articulation.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Accordingly, in such conceptualization, the understanding of loss refers firstly and more simply to the disarticulation of The Lost Generation and The Lost Interstices on urban realm and in citizenship practices. Secondly, it refers to the fact that, due to the fearscape that shaped The Lost Generation, constrains it from understanding and practicing its role as an active urban agent with what I define as – and from Gordon's theories – an unconscious feeling of unauthorized agency. At the same time, the haunting concept I use in the research comes from an overlapping of historical layers that brought Caracas to its current crisis, a social conflict that in this research is taken as its critical starting point when the country's economic shift to the oil rent in the 1930s (García-Guadilla 2012), as well as the accumulation of unequal public policies (Marcano 1995), which were determining the urban landscape which was the scenario for the great problems of segregation and now seclusion that are experienced in the city.

Furthermore, Halberstam is an author who explores how US society operates under the concept of success, though the author in her overall research focuses on the embracing of failure as a way of life in order to explore diverse ways to approach and understand societal problems through the practice of "unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing." (Halberstam 2011, p. 2)

"YOU HAVE NOTHING, YOU NEED NOTHING, YOU OWN NOTHING, AND ONLY BY HAVING NOTHING, ONWING NOTHING, EXPECTING NOTHING, ONLY THEN CAN YOU THINK ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM… A FREEDOM THAT COMES THROUGH AN IDEOLOGY OF NOTHING: NO-THING" (HALBERSTAM 2020)

In "The Queer Art of Failure", Judith Halberstam presents a thought-provoking exploration of failure as a subversive and transformative force within queer theory, cultural studies, and contemporary society. The book challenges conventional notions of success and accomplishment, offering an alternative perspective that celebrates the liberating potential of failure.

Central to Halberstam's argument is the idea that conventional definitions of success often perpetuate oppressive systems, reinforcing rigid hierarchies and excluding marginalized groups.

"But along the way to these "happy" endings, bad things happen to good animals, monsters, and children, and failure nestles in every dusty corner, reminding the child viewer that this too is what it means to live in a world created by mean, petty, greedy, and violent adults. To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy. Rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead

revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures." (Halberstam 2011, p. 187)[5]

The book critically examines the pressure to conform to conventional modes of achievement and the inherent limitations of such aspirations. Halberstam advocates for embracing failure as a means of subverting normative expectations and exploring alternative modes of existence that resist assimilation and conformity.

Through a lens of queer theory, Halberstam explores how failure disrupts traditional narratives of progress and productivity. Embracing failure, according to Halberstam, opens up possibilities for new forms of creativity, community building, and modes of being that challenge the status quo.

The author exposes her statement through what she conceives as low theory[6] "as precisely one of these modes of transmission that revels in the detours, twists, and turns through knowing and confusion, and that seeks not to explain but to involve. ... we might consider the utility of getting lost over finding our way, and so we should conjure a Benjaminian stroll or a situationist dérivé, an ambulatory journey through the unplanned, the unexpected, the improvised, and the surprising." (Halberstam 2011, p. 16)

1.1.4 Failure

From this understanding of failure as the consequence of losing and getting lost, I formulated the concept of failure in this research. In the pixelated scenario where the losses of the actual city and its contemporary generation are spatialized and unexercised, the failure of the city englobes the complexity of its functioning. So, what is this failure? How it is expressed in concrete urban matters? The failure conceived in this research refers firstly to the unbecoming metropolis that was once promised to Caracas, meaning the haunting of the golden years of the country and its bombastic expression in the capital during the long second half of the twentieth century that resonates in the collective imaginary, of all Venezuelans but especially in The Lost Generation, which was never delivered to us and which we never lived, nor enjoyed. Secondly, the failure discussed in this research expressed itself in the normalized urban dynamics practices in today's Caracas which involve spontaneous and autonomous security practices for the adaptation to criminal activity, submission of citizenship rights like public mobility, walkability, and free human or – as Berlant calls it – sovereign agency.

Through this lens, failure becomes a multidimensional construct, not merely a lack but a haunting specter encompassing unmet promises, socio-historical echoes, and compromised urban dynamics, ultimately unveiling the intricate complexities underlying Caracas' urban functioning and societal psyche.

However, and leaning again on Halberstam's investigation, by celebrating failure as a site of potential and exploration, the idea is to reconsider

5 - *Throughout the whole book, Halberstam analyses children's animated movies as a research methodology for the conceptualization of Failure. The author uses these movies as cultural artifacts that often portray characters who deviate from conventional norms and challenge traditional notions of success. By analyzing these films, Halberstam illustrates how they serve as vehicles for understanding alternative modes of existence, subversion of norms, and the celebration of unconventional journeys.*

6 - *"Low theory is a model of thinking that I extract from Stuart Hall's famous notion that theory is not an end unto itself but "a detour en route to something else" (1991: 43)" (Halberstam 2011, p. 15)*

the dominant cultural narratives that stigmatize failure and limit our understanding of the human experience and find a way that, by its historical and social acknowledgment, the concept of failure – and its implicit relation with the loss – works as a project detonator.

The investigation then transitions towards a forward-looking perspective, aiming to comprehend Caracas' socio-territorial losses and failures. How should Caraca's socio-territorial losses and failures be projectually understood in order to be able to re-approach urban discussion in which allow us to evidentiate actual social concerns in the physical city image? It strives to construct a projectual understanding that fosters a shift in urban interventions, transforming the city into a speculative scenario for collective reclaim.

In this way, I go back to Halberstam since she also speculates how these concepts can applied as tools for architectural projections, approaching it as "a project in which we recognize that, in a kind of way runs against past utopians projects that were all about building, and creating, and worlding, and imagining, we're actually at a different moment right now. We are at a moment where we have to figure out how to unmake the world in which so much is wrong and so many are left out and so few profit" (Halberstam 2020). By advocating for a new understanding of the notion of failure and by embracing it we can obtain valuable insights, resilience, and alternative strategies for navigating a world that often demands conformity.

1.2 Methodology

The idea is to establish a causal relationship between the crisis of the XXI century that is facing Venezuela, its manifestation within the urban landscape of Caracas, and the resultant impact on the contemporary socio-generational framework. To comprehensively address these interlinked facets, the applied methodology works through the gathering, selection, and analysis of a diverse array of sources and data.

The material used in this analysis was curated from various sources, in order to provide a broad spectrum of knowledge areas. A compilation of books in urban history and socio-territorial studies of Caracas were used as groundwork to provide data of Caracas' historical evolution and the factors shaping its spatial and social landscape. Academic papers focusing on themes of violence and fear in Latin America and specifically in Venezuela augmented this understanding by contextualizing regional dynamics, particularly relevant to Caracas' contemporary context.

Supplementing these academic sources were news articles, specifically addressing the ongoing crises in Venezuela, focusing in the roles of the key political figures of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro. This range of information was further supported by database sources stemming from governmental census records, mapping datasets curated by other authors – among them García-Guadilla, Rebotier, Irrazabal, and Foley –, and insights from social observation centers concentrating on Venezuela, like Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia and ENCOVI. This varie-

ty of sources allowed me to provided a interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating social, economic, and political studies pertinent to Caracas.

Crucial to the selection process was focusing on materials on social, economic, political, and urban factors prevalent in Caracas during the 2000s. Additionally, emphasis was placed on sources explicitly examining the urban and social transformation within Caracas under the governance of Chavez and Maduro. This criterion ensured a targeted and relevant selection of materials conducive to addressing the research objectives in its timeline and generational focus.

The raw data extracted from these sources underwent a meticulous process of analysis and territorial translation. This interpretation of this information signified the creation of diverse maps, and the overlapping layers of social, economic, and political data to create a visual representation of Caracas' territory. These maps were complemented by data visualization graphs, intended to accentuate specific crisis-related characteristics within the city. Cartographic analysis, statistical data, and photographic evidence worked as the supporting material for this research, offering different lenses to scrutinize Caracas' territorial dynamics.

In addition, the introduction of Venezuelan pop culture resources was used to capture and depicted the generational sentiments and the intricacies of content production in relation to the socio-political environment we grew up. Weaving these cultural elements into the analysis allowed me to gain profound insights into how the collective consciousness of my generation has been shaped throughout the prolonged crisis in Venezuela. Pop culture, in its varied forms—music, comedy, short films—reflects and critiques the lived experiences, aspirations, and frustrations of the populace, particularly within the urban confines of Caracas. This methodological approach not only enriches the understanding of the socio-territorial dynamics but also underscores the resilience and creativity that characterize our generational response to adversity. By synthesizing traditional academic resources with contemporary cultural expressions, this study offers a comprehensive narrative that bridges historical analysis with the contemporary reality of Venezuelans. This interdisciplinary approach evidenciate the profound connection between our socio-political environment and the cultural artifacts that both influence and are influenced by it, thereby offering a broader perspective on the generational experience of navigating and documenting a nation's ongoing struggle.

Following the analysis of the comprehensive cartographic data and qualitative pop culture resources gathering, the identification of the project's focal area along the east-west axis spanning from Chacaito to Parque Central – which I call Caracas' Central North Axis, constituted the subsequent phase in finalizing the research scope. In terms of practical methodology, a photographic survey was undertaken along this chosen axis in December 2023. This on-site exploration aimed to immerse firsthand in the specific challenges related to pedestrian connectivity and the sense of spatial ownership within the selected case study.

Additionally, as a central component of the research's methodology was the work on a speculative urbanism, which involved imagining potential futures for Caracas based on the previously analyzed data and trends, focusing on how this information could materialized within the axis on study.

For this purpose, the study proposes an Urban Imaginarium, a conceptual tool that visualizes and explores speculative urban scenarios with collage as a projectual tool. This Imaginarium was utilized to propose and visualize changes in the urban landscape, focusing on how different interventions could be rethought to address the existing socio-urban challenges.

Further, this methodology involved the identification of specific areas within the Caracas' Central North Axis, referred to as Glitching Areas, and the proposal of the implementation of Urban Artifacts that materialized differents social aspirations into urban elements. These interventions aimed to address particular urban problems and test theoretical proposals in tangible forms.

Therefore, the methodology includes establishing feedback loops where the impact of proposed interventions can be analyzed and iterated upon. This dynamic approach allows for the continuous refinement of strategies based on actual outcomes and community feedback, ensuring that theoretical insights are transformed into practical urban interventions that address the complex challenges faced by Caracas.

In summary, the overall methodology adopted a hybrid approach, merging quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data underwent rigorous comparison across diverse sources to fill gaps, validate, and ensure reliability and non-biased tendencies. Conversely, the qualitative approach entailed thematic analysis rooted in observational studio and speculative approaches. This involved closely examining cartographic outcomes, identifying overlapping transversal study fields, visually representing Caracas' contemporary social environment, and on-site observation to underscore territorial divisions within the city and explore different project approaches.

2

THE
PIXELS
CITY

Caracas
Fragments of an Urban History

Fig. 4
View from the meadows of the Guaire River.
Watercolor by Anton Goering, 1892.
https://guiaccs.com/zona-3/

Caracas has been the country's political and economic center since its foundation. Its role in the colony as the core of economic transactions and political power has accompanied it since then.

The importance of the city, not only nationally but for Latin America in general, relies on its geographical location as well as on the administration of one of the richest countries in oil reserves in the world.

In the annals of history, Caracas stands as a city steeped in a diverse narrative of epochs of foundation, colonial legacy, the birth pangs of republicanism, and the ardent quest for democratic ideals.

The city's journey through the ages is marked by pivotal moments that echo the resounding calls for freedom and sovereignty. From colonial rule to the shift towards independence in the 19th century, the explanation of the metropolitan growth of Caracas takes place.

The narrative of Caracas intertwines intimately with the 20th-century oil boom, an era that heralded both prosperity and profound social upheaval. As the oil economy shaped the nation, transforming the landscape and catapulting Venezuela into the global economic sphere, Caracas emerged as a metropolis, reflecting the newfound wealth and modernization brought forth by the oil industry.

However, the latter part of the 20th century bore witness to socio-political convulsions that reverberated throughout the city of Caracas, culminating in defining moments of social conflicts and political turbulence. The clash between differing social class factions and socioeconomic disparities within Caracas mirrored the broader struggles faced by Venezuela, casting shadows over the quest for stability and democratic governance.

This chapter delves deep into the intricate Caracas' history, tracing its evolution from foundation to modernity, navigating through the ebbs and flows of colonialism, the fervor of nation-building, the transformative oil boom, and the seismic social clashes that have left an indelible imprint on the city's landscape and collective memory. Throughout this chapter, the analysis and comparison of Caracas maps on different historical periods is key to understanding and depicting the city's growth.

2.1.1 Colonial Caracas and Venezuela's Independence Movement

When its foundation, the city was planned to fulfill three main functions: first, the city was designated as the center for the political government and economic administration of the natural resources of the province of Venezuela, secondly, it had the task of populate limitedly the surrounding territory, and thirdly, to input commerce activities in Caracas to work as a node between the Spanish metropolis and the port of La Guaira. These functions limited its connection with the rest of the territory and the other cities of the province since its main link was established with Spain (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 160).

Likewise, Caracas, like many colonial cities, was designed following the grid model, which started from the main square outward in square blocks, which facilitated administration and control (Almandoz 2012). This urban pattern not only reflected an aesthetic and functional order, but also manifested a social and political hierarchy: the most important buildings of political and religious power were located around the main square, symbolizing the centrality of colonial power.

At the same time, the social system in Caracas was clearly stratified into defined estates: Peninsular whites - Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula -, who occupied the highest positions in the political and administrative hierarchy; Criollos - descendants of Spaniards born in the Americas -, who often possessed significant economic power and resided both in urban areas and on their rural haciendas;

Pardos and mestizos - a mixture of Europeans, Africans and Indians -, who generally lived on the periphery of the city and occupied service roles or small businesses; and Indians and African slaves, who formed the base of the labor pyramid, working mainly in agriculture and domestic services.

In this period, different social and political movements were taking place in the Venezuelan territory. On the one hand, there were the movements of Creole elites, which sought more autonomy or independence from the Spanish crown, and which were mainly concentrated in the capital, where the Creole elites had influence and power to organize and lead. On the other hand, there were the movements of slaves and peasants, although less centralized and with less direct political impact, these movements reflected the tensions and discontent of the most marginalized groups of colonial society.

Frédérique Langue (1992) in her essay "Antagonisms and Solidarities in a Colonial Cabildo: Caracas, 1750-1810", explores the crucial role played by the Caracas elites in shaping the historical and social processes of Caracas during the colonial period. These dominant groups, consisting mainly of landowners and merchants, not only exercised significant control over the local economy and politics, but also shaped the city's institutions and social life.

The elites exercised significant control over the Cabildo of Caracas, which was the local governmental body. Using their economic and social influence, these elites manipulated political decisions to benefit their personal and commercial interests (Langue 1992).
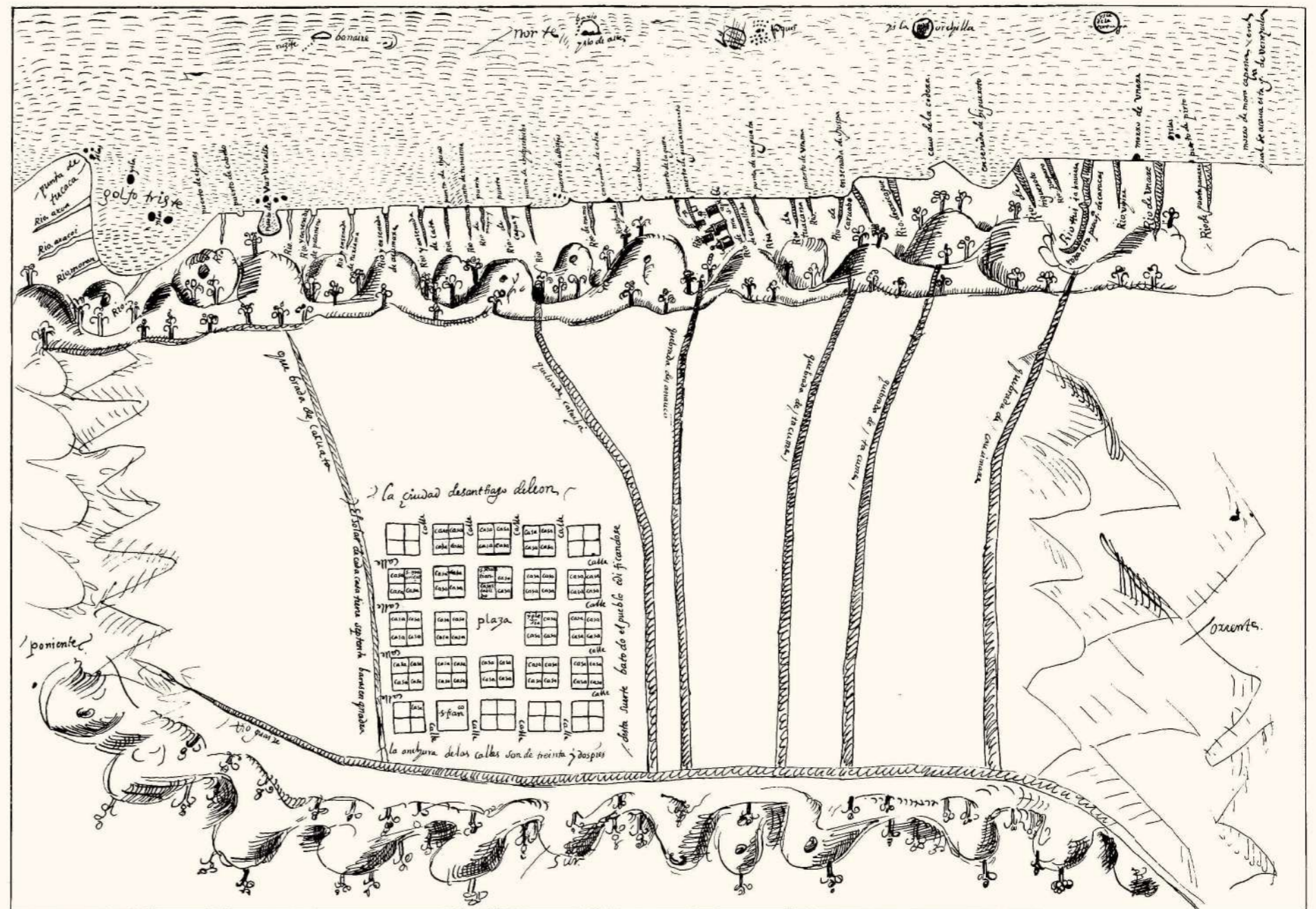
In this way, the elites strongly defended the existing social structure, which favored white Creoles and peninsulares over other ethnic groups (Ferry 1989). Through practices such as the control of public offices and the limitation of access to them for mestizos and other castes, they ensured the perpetuation of their dominance and the exclusion of non-whites from political and economic life.

The reforms implemented by the Spanish crown to modernize and centralize control over its colonies met with resistance from the Caracas elites, who saw these measures as a threat to their autonomy and local control. This conflict between centralizing reforms and local interests manifested itself in ongoing tensions and eventually contributed to the discontent that would lead to independence movements (Langue 1992).

Consequently, the Caracas elites played a central role in shaping colonial Caracas society, defending their economic interests and maintaining a social structure that was favorable to them. Their actions and decisions had lasting impacts on the history and development of Caracas, not only during the colonial period but also on the power and class dynamics that would influence the independence movements and the formation of post-colonial Venezuela.

The process of transition to Venezuelan independence was a complex and tumultuous phenomenon, marked by internal and external conflicts, reflecting both local aspirations for autonomy and tensions arising from colonial structures imposed by the Spanish empire (Almandoz 2012). This transition can be understood through several key aspects that include the socio-political context of the time, the role of prominent figures such as Simón Bolívar, and the socioeconomic and cultural consequences that followed independence.

Prior to independence, Venezuela was part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada under the Spanish Empire. The economy was based mainly on agriculture and the exploitation of natural resources, with a society structured in a rigid colonial hierarchy that included peninsular Spaniards, Creoles (Spaniards born in America), mestizos, indigenous people and African slaves (Liscano Velutini 1993). This social division was fundamental, as inequalities and discontent fostered the desire for political and social change.

On July 5, 1811, the Venezuelan Congress formally declared its independence from Spain, the first country in Spanish America to do so. This act was followed by a long and brutal war of independence, which was much more than a military conflict; it became an intense social and racial struggle, described by Liscano Velutino (1993) as a "war to the death", reflecting deep racial and social resentments. The war was characterized by extreme and disintegrating violence, which not only sought independence from Spain, but also transformed the internal structure of Venezuelan society (Almandoz 2012).

Simón Bolívar, a Creole from Caracas, emerged as a central figure in the struggle for independence in South America. His vision of a united Latin America free from European domination led him to lead multiple military campaigns across the continent. Along with
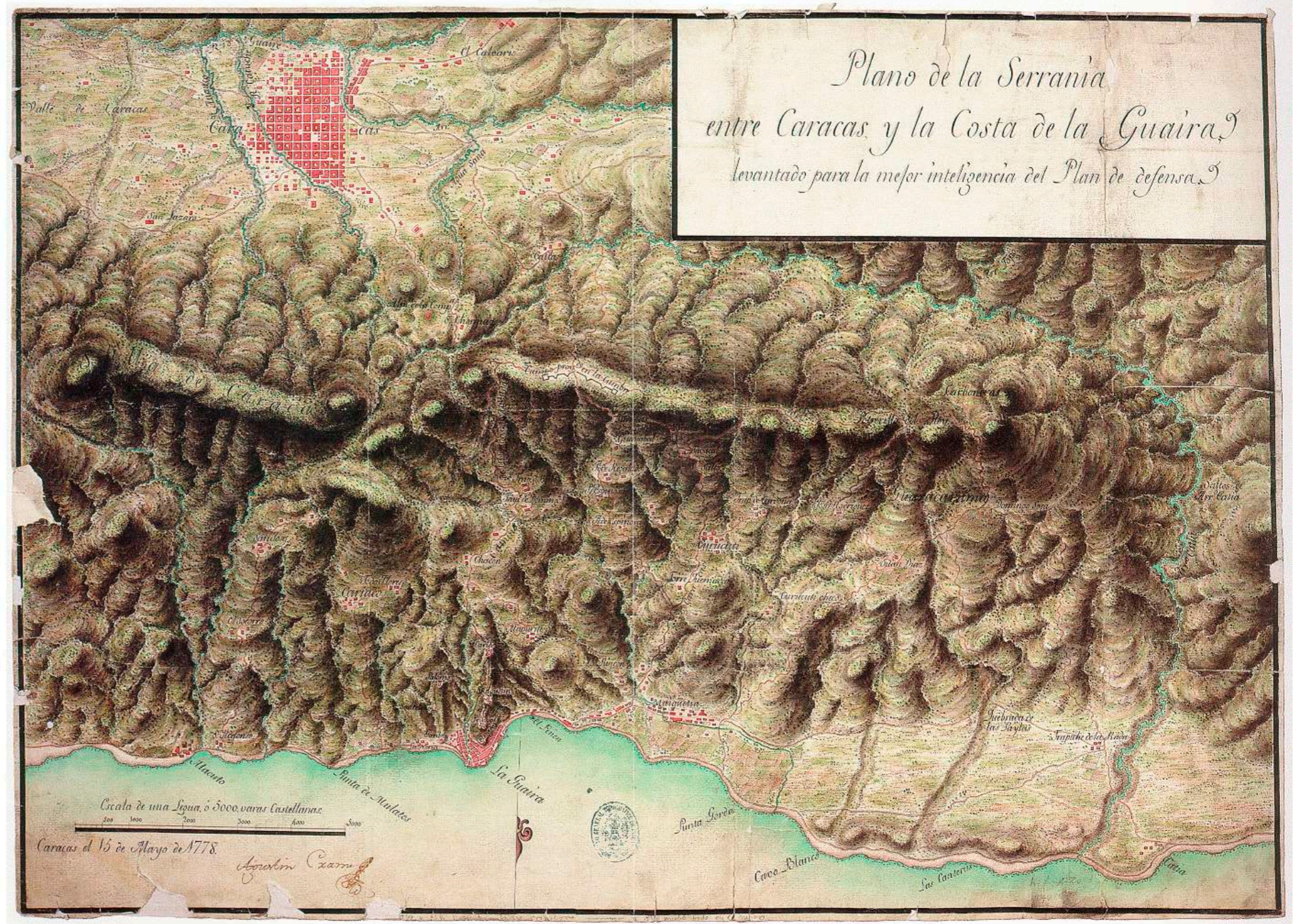
Fig. 6
Map of the mountain range between Caracas and the coast of La Guaira. Agustín Crame, 1778. https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

other leaders such as Francisco de Miranda and José Antonio Páez, Bolívar was instrumental not only in the Venezuelan struggle, but in the liberation of several other colonies such as Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru.

Venezuela's independence was finally secured after the Battle of Carabobo in 1821. However, the new nation faced significant challenges: the country's infrastructure was devastated by years of war, the economy needed diversification beyond plantation agriculture, and society was deeply divided and scarred by internal conflicts. Moreover, independence did not solve the problems of inequality and social exclusion; the liberators failed to implement profound reforms that would alter colonial power and property structures (Liscano Velutini 1993).

The wars of independence led Caracas into a period of impoverishment and population loss due to the prolonged conflict, which affected the economic and social structure of the city. This period was crucial for the readjustment of power structures and the social and political reconfiguration that would follow in the republican period.

The legacy of this period was therefore ambiguous. On the one hand, the elimination of the colonial yoke and the birth of a republic were celebrated. On the other, the aftermath of the war and the lack of substantial reforms led to continuous cycles of instability and authoritarianism that have marked Venezuelan political history to the present day (Liscano Velutini 1993).

2.1.2 Pre-Oil State

After independence, Venezuela not only had to rebuild a war-torn nation, but also faced the challenge of constructing a stable government and a cohesive national identity. Power struggles between different factions, many of them led by former military caudillos who had participated in the war of independence, characterized the early years of the republic (Liscano Velutini 1993).

One of the greatest challenges Venezuela faced after independence was the construction of an integrated national state. According to author Liscano Velutini (1993), the vast regions of the country were isolated from each other due to difficult geography and inadequate infrastructure, which complicated efforts to centralize administration and extend governmental control. In addition, the author also explains that Venezuelan society was deeply fractured along class, racial and regional lines, a legacy of the colonial social structure that had not been completely dismantled at independence.

Although Venezuela had gained political independence, it continued to face forms of economic dependence. The new nation's economy remained centered on export agriculture, especially coffee and cocoa, which made it vulnerable to fluctuations in international markets (Garcia-Guadilla 2012). In addition, the lack of industrial development meant that Venezuela remained dependent on imports for many essential goods and services, perpetuating a pattern of economic dependence that the paper suggests was not far removed from colonialism (Almandoz 2012).
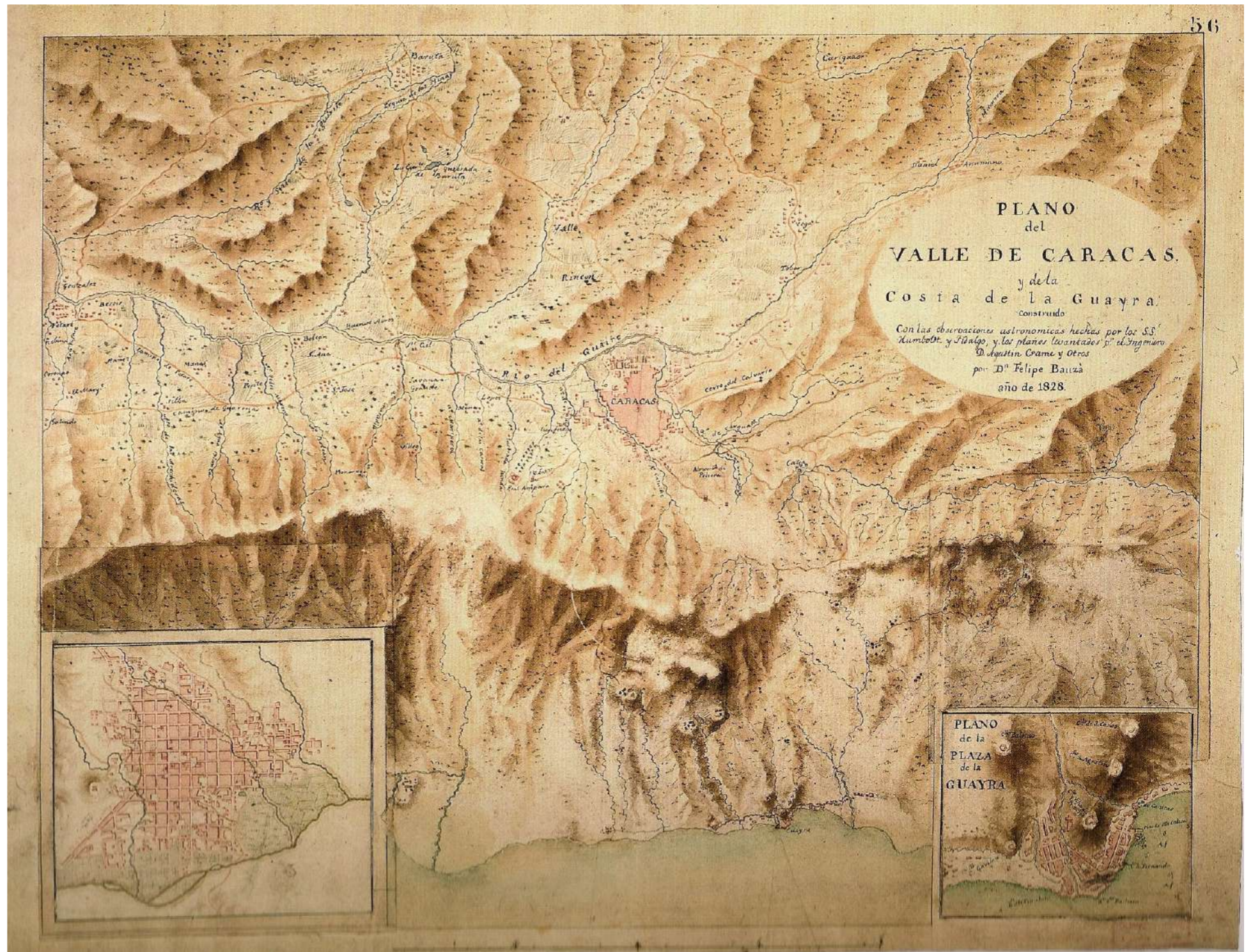
Fig. 7
The Atlas for North America.
Felipe Bauzá y Cañas, 1828.
https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

Culturally, independence spurred a flowering of national expressions in literature, art and music, which sought to define a distinct Venezuelan identity (Liscano Velutini 1993). However, this cultural renaissance often coexisted with persistent inequalities and the continuity of pre-existing cultural and social practices that had been imposed during the colonial era. This cultural syncretism reflected the complexity of Venezuelan society, which was still grappling with its diverse indigenous, African and European heritage.

Venezuela's transition to independence was a process marked by violent struggle, profound social transformation, and the ongoing challenge of building a viable state and economy in a context of deep internal division and external vulnerability (Martinez Mauci 2006). The legacy of this period has left lasting imprints on Venezuelan society and politics, highlighting the complexities and challenges of undoing colonial legacies and building an independent and unified nation.

The political landscape of pre-oil Venezuela shows a nation in which the centralization of political and economic power played a crucial role in shaping its institutions and socioeconomic structure (Martinez Mauci 2006).

In the decades before oil exploitation, specifically between 1870 - 1920, Venezuela experienced a process of centralization of economic and political power in the hands of the central government. This phenomenon was critical for the formation of political structures that would influence the allocation and distribution of future oil revenues (Rodriguez 2004). Centralization

allowed the state to effectively control resources, which, while increasing administrative efficiency, also concentrated power in a few hands and limited broader political participation.

According to Hernández-Grisanti (1974), life in pre-oil Venezuela was extremely difficult for the majority of the population, with the exception of a small elite composed of landowners and importing merchants. This disparity deeply marked the social structure of the country.

Venezuela's economy in that period was mainly agrarian and subsistence (Garcia-Guadilla 2012). Production methods were described as semi-feudal and pre-capitalist, dominated by gamonalismo where the meager wages were often paid in kind (Hernandez-Grisanti 1974).

In political and economic terms, a very small landowning class exercised dominant control, often associated with semi-legitimate caudillos who emerged from their own ranks or, in exceptional cases, from lower strata of society that eventually assimilated into this ruling class. This concentration of power contributed to the country's political instability, exacerbated by state institutions characterized by inefficiency, rudimentary and personalistic administrative methods, and the lack of a professional and trained bureaucracy that could adequately manage public administration (Hernandez-Grisanti 1974).

Socially, society was divided into two very marked classes: on the one hand, the landed elite and merchants, and on the other, a vast marginal peasant population living
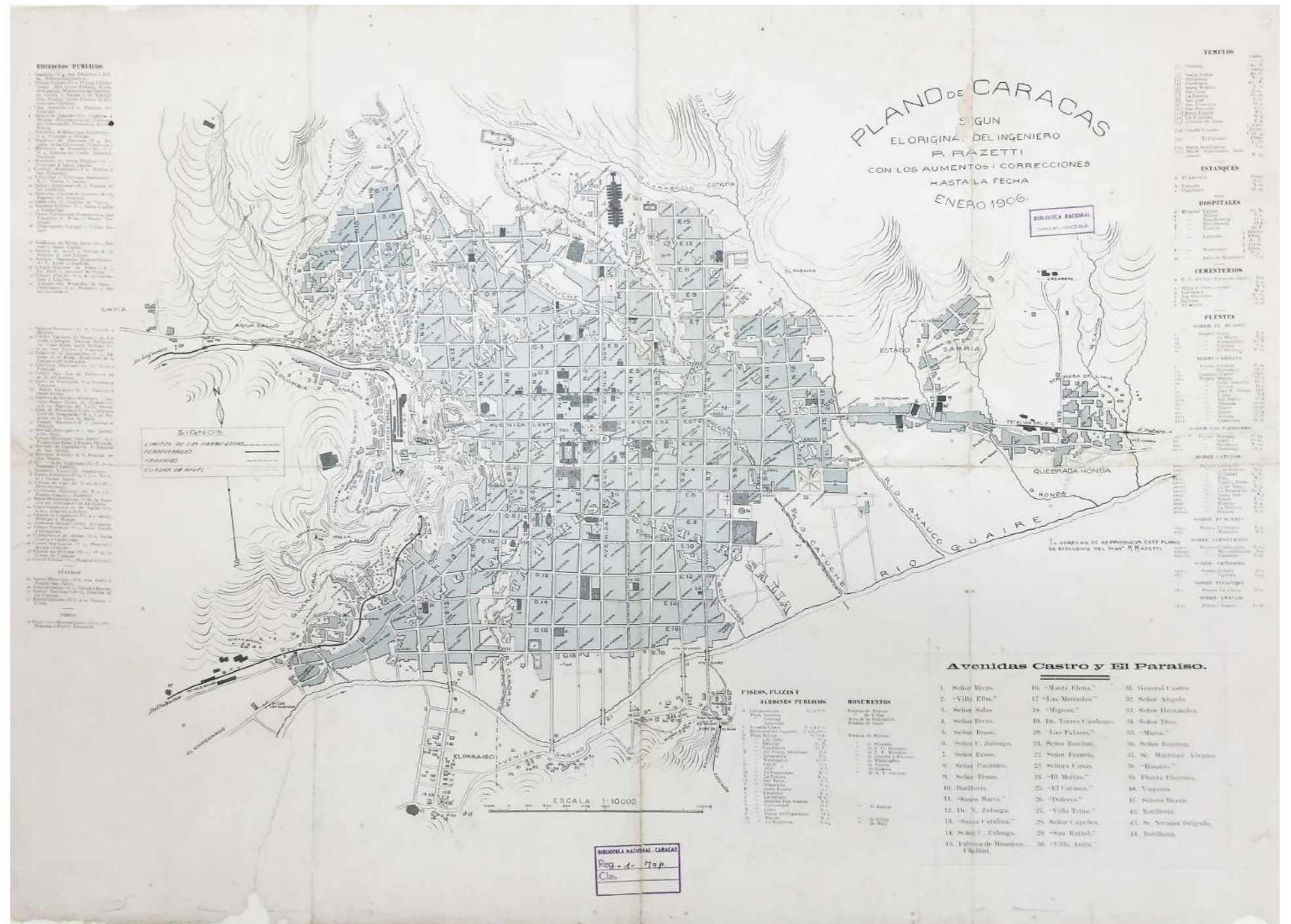
Fig. 8
Map of Caracas.
Ricardo Razetti, 1906
https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

in villages and small towns. There was no professional, technical and administrative middle class, since the economic structure did not favor its development.

Likewise, during the 19th century, property rights in Venezuela were weak, which facilitated the concentration of resources in the State and supported the perpetuation of authoritarian political structures (Rodriguez 2004). This weakness in the protection of property rights negatively impacted economic efficiency and fostered a political use of resources to maintain power instead of seeking inclusive and sustainable economic development (Martinez Mauci 2006).

At the same time, pre-oil governments faced significant challenges in effectively providing public goods, which skewed the use of resources to the benefit of a few and limited more equitable and diversified economic development. This situation, according to Rodriguez (2004) also had repercussions on the way in which oil revenues would later be used.

In this context, Caracas, as the capital and political center of Venezuela, reflected and amplified these national processes. The city became the epicenter of political life, where centralized decisions and structures directly affected the distribution of resources and social and economic life (Rodriguez 2004). The centralization of power in Caracas helped mold a political and economic elite that controlled access to resources and opportunities, limiting the development of more inclusive and diversified policies.
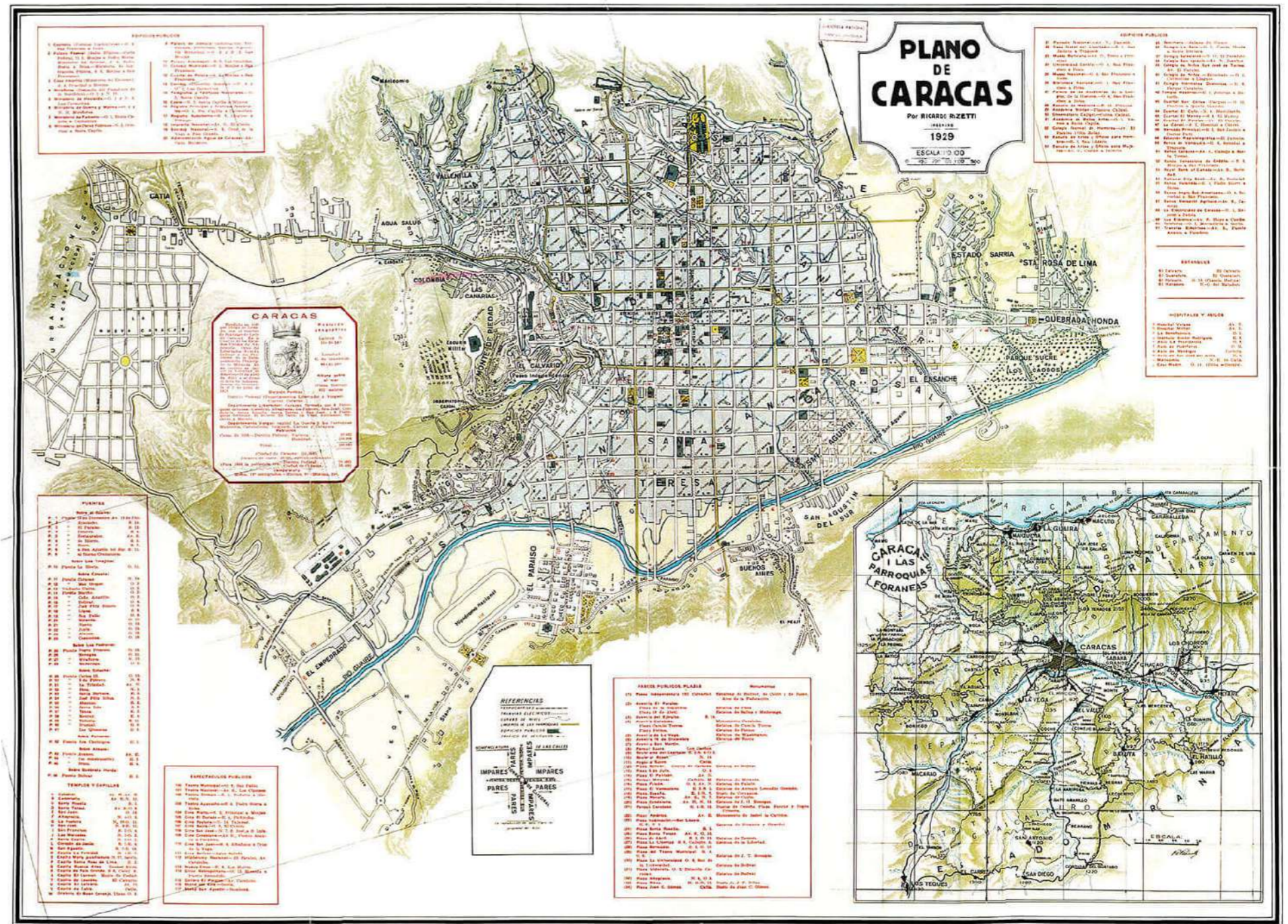
Fig. 9
Last map by Razetti.
Ricardo Razetti, 1929.
https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

1567
1940'S
1970'S
1970'S
1980'S
1990'S

1KM | MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES | COLONIAL CITY CENTER | GUIAIRE RIVER | HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS | RURAL AREAS | PARKS AND GREEN AREAS | OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

✕ ECONOMIC CENTER DISPLACEMENT (REBOTIER. 2009)

1966 | 1984 | 2000 | 2014

GROWTH OF THE CITY OF CARACAS FROM 1966 TO 2014
(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA; GALAVIS. 2015)
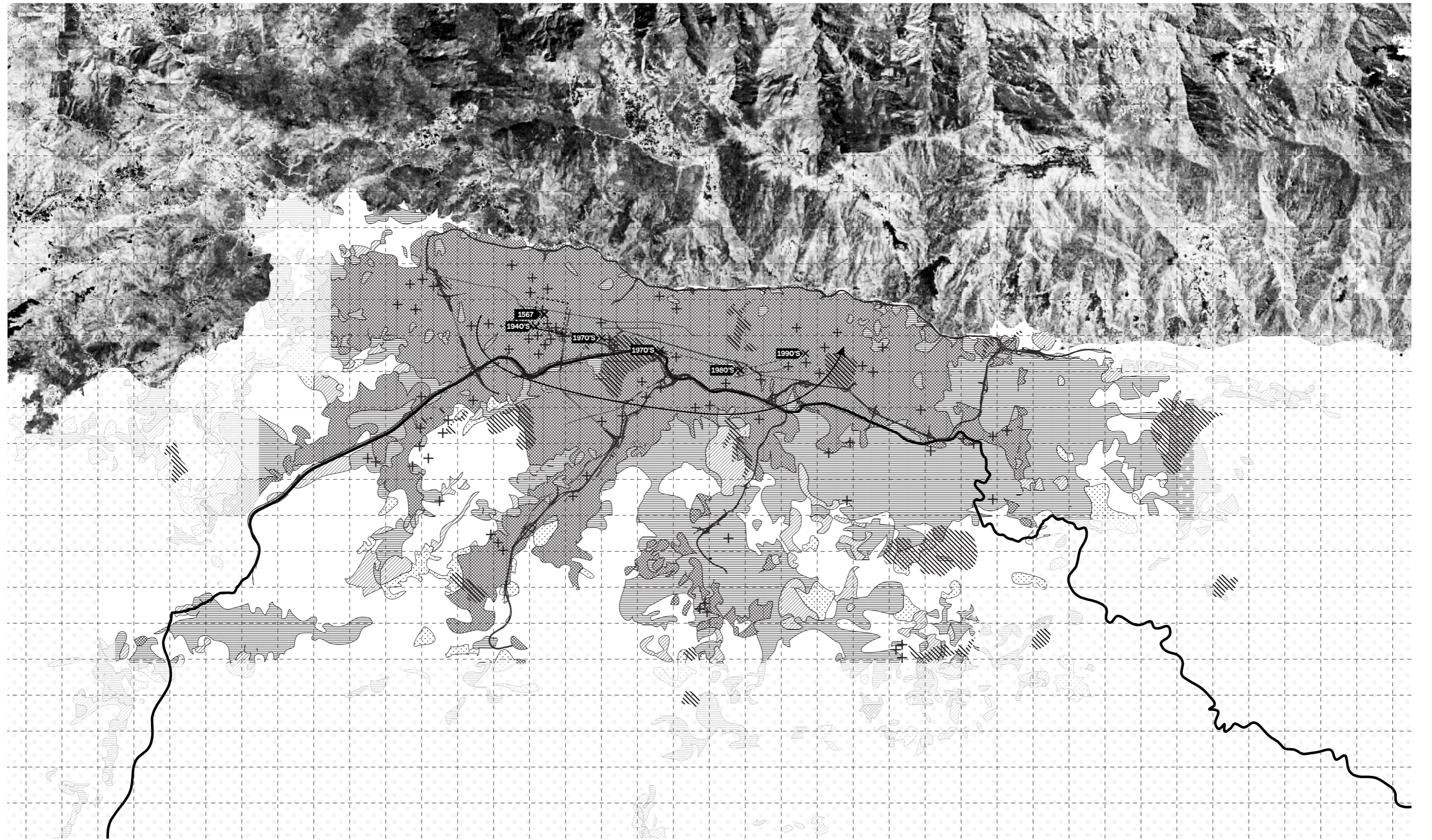
2.1.3
Golden years: the Oil Boom

It was in the second half of the XX Century that Caracas faced an extremely fast urban development, specifically during the 1950s until the 1970s, when in the 1930s oil reserves discovery transformed the whole country's economy. From an agricultural economy, Venezuela became a rentier state, as the sale of oil barrels became the economic base of the country (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 157).

Accordingly, this historical moment in Venezuela, commonly called the "Oil Boom", signified an important and rapid development of the country's administrative center, Caracas. During this period the city's urbanization increased markedly, with the development of numerous neighborhoods thought to respond to the great migration from the countryside to the city.

These urban development processes meant great advances for the capital, as said by Almandoz (2012, p. 12), Caracas emerged as a Latin American "sudden metropolis", a term that refers to the rapid and surprising urban development that Caracas experienced in a relatively short period, between the 1940s and the 1980s. Before this accelerated growth, the city was considered a capital of little relevance in Latin America. However, the oil bonanza of the early 1930s prompted a dramatic change, turning Caracas, which had previously been less developed compared to other Latin American cities, into a modern and seemingly innovative metropolis (Almandoz 2012). This term captures the sudden and significant transformation that the city underwent in the second half of the XX Century, moving from a

less prominent state to becoming a notable city in the region. Nevertheless, the urbanization process brought with it important social consequences.

The dawn of the 20th century found Venezuela in a state of relative economic underdevelopment, with its economy largely based on agriculture and a predominantly rural society.

By the 1930s the distribution of the Venezuelan population was 30% urban, a percentage that was reinvested in the 1960s, becoming 30% of the rural population, according to García-Guadilla (2012, p. 160).

The finding of these vast petroleum deposits set in motion a series of events that would ultimately lead Venezuela to become one of the world's major oil-producing nations. The development of the oil industry quickly became a focal point of the nation's economic policy, and foreign companies entered the country to capitalize on its oil wealth. And so, "Saudi Venezuela"[1] developed, becoming Caracas "one of the most concentrated occupation patterns in Latin America" (Almandoz 2012, p. 15)

This sudden influx of wealth fueled economic growth and modernization, particularly in the capital city. The urban landscape of Caracas began to evolve rapidly to accommodate the needs of a growing, oil-driven economy. The city saw a surge in construction and infrastructure development, being the largest and main urban transformation of the system for motorized infrastructure (Martin Frechilla 1995).

Therefore, in the mid-twentieth century, the most important
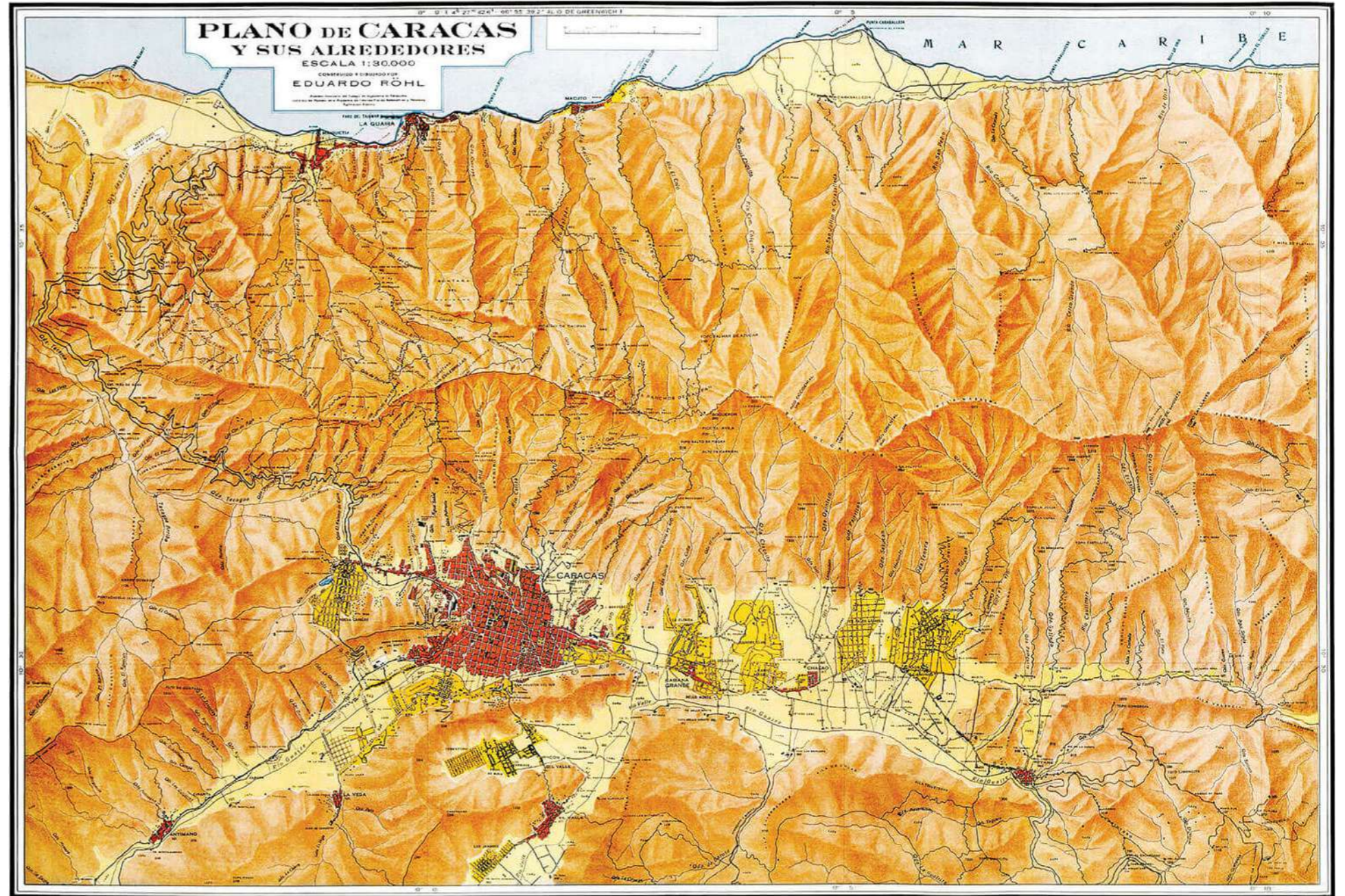
Fig. 11
Map of Caracas and its surroundings. Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio. Eduardo Röhl, 1934
https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

1 - "The adjective "Saudi" is generally applied in Venezuela to connote the country's oil prosperity period between the 1970s and 1980s." (Almandoz 2012)

construction development of the Country took place, and the majority of them were in Caracas. However, with oil as a seemly infinite resource, it is not a surprise that the main focus of the public works was mainly on developing a city with first-of-the-line automobile infrastructure, a synonym of wellness and modernity by the time. "Modernization, beautification, great works are the symbol of national power, the concept of the city meant the representation of power, of the government of the day" (Marcano 1995, p. 250).

Marcano (1995, p. 250) explains in her essay "¿Una Ciudad o un Pedazo Incoherente de una Actuación Pública?" that within the framework of this political perspective, there was no general interest in preserving the old historic core of the city; instead, priority was given to the promotion and expansion of a new city characterized by prosperity, the proliferation of automobiles and opportunities for real estate speculation. This approach moved away from preserving the historic heritage in favor of promoting the growth and transformation of the

city towards a more modern and economically lucrative model, dismissing the importance of the past in favor of a future driven by economic development and accelerated urbanization (Marcano 1995, p. 250).

 In this sense, the policies started to shift to the incentivization of automobile route development. "Another decree stipulated, as of 1910, that 50% of the public works budget should be dedicated to road construction" (Martin Frechilla 1995, p. 88).

As a consequence, the city of Caracas began to suffer unprecedented urban development, generating a new range of jobs, and bringing the migration of a large rural group to the city. Independently of this factor of social mobilization, the Municipal Office of Urban Planning (OMPU) concentrated its focus on the development of a zoned city. "From the structure based on a reticulum, it moved to an urban structure organized based on self-sufficient units within the city, with separation of functions, separation of the pedestrian from the vehicle, that is, accepting the city model advocated by the CIAM" (Marcano Requena 1995, p. 119).

By the late 1920s, the city model in Caracas was based on the traditional center of the city and its neighboring towns, which were located in the vicinity of the city but did not form a system, those that throughout the twentieth century will be encompassed by the metropolis, many of them also based on checkerboards: Chacao, Petare, Antímano, El Valle, La Vega, Baruta, El Hatillo (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017).

Already by the mid-1930s the de-

velopment of the city began to encompass these surrounding towns, and they were beginning to invest in the development of city models guided by European models. "With money to buy, money to build or to contract, in the hands of the state, the combination of politics and business was shown to the full in the process that culminated with the hiring of French urban planners for the elaboration of an urban plan for Caracas and the structuring of the first municipal organization (OMPU) for urban planning in the capital" (Martin Frechilla 1995, p. 90). After years of dictatorship, and with the unstoppable economic boom due to oil exploitation, great changes began to be felt in the country's political, economic, and, of course, urban environment. The investment in urban developments was generated by great figures of the urbanism of the moment, such as Francis Violich, Maurice Rotival, Josep Lluis Sert, Robert Mosses, etc.

2.1.4 Urban Morphology

In 1938, Maurice Rotival proposed a project for the first studies related to the planning of the new avenues, streets, and highways of Caracas. This urban project in the center of the city and the logic of the road infrastructure for the surrounding valley reflect the vision of a capital city that enriches itself with monumentality in its historic core while developing new peripheral settlements. Rotival's plan for future roads, which incorporates new avenues and streets, replaces the traditional checkerboard street pattern that had prevailed since the colonial founding of Caracas, with an east-west linear axis linking to peripheral areas through a hierarchical road system supported by connecting points to link
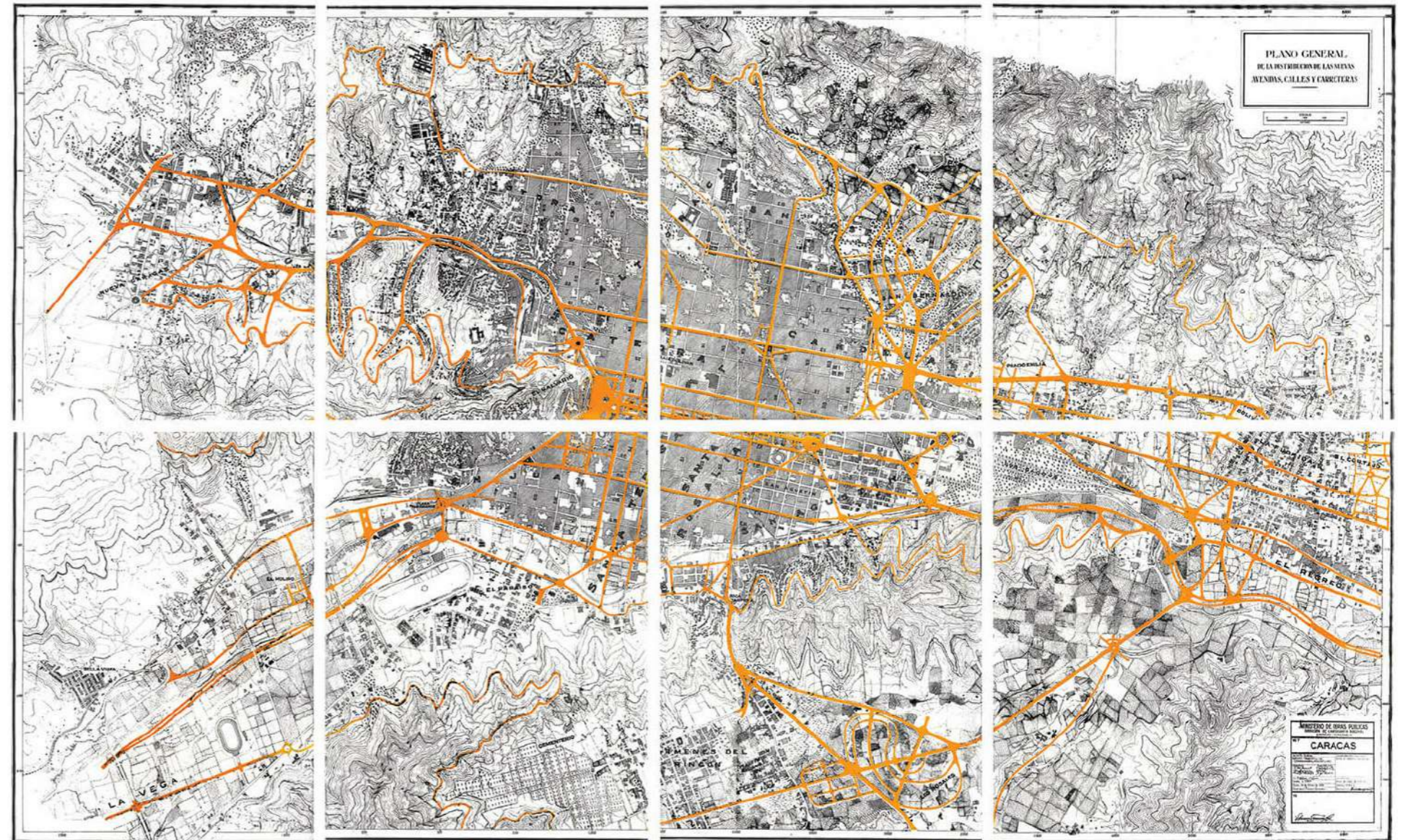
Fig. 12
The Rotival Plan.
General plan of the new avenues, streets and roads.
Ministry of Public Works, 1938.
https://guiaccs.com/caracas-a-traves-de-sus-planos/

dispersed fragments in the territory (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017).

Highways, vias, streets and avenues intended for automobile use begin to emerge in the city image, a system that will become the most iconic element of the urban landscape of Caracas. "With the road system, for the first time the space of the valley is integrally taken into account, that is to say, never before had a totalizing vision of the urban structure in relation to its geographic space been proposed" (Marcano Requena 1995, 191). The road projects not only characterize the city for their imminent appearance but also for being the first urban model that pretends to

connect the valley of Caracas in its totality.

The Rotival Plan proposes the creation of a city different from the original grid, supported by the Haussmannian notion of demolishing a significant portion of the blocks in the historic center and the introduction of diagonals that, following the example of other major cities, establish a connection between the center and the peripheral areas (Marcano Requena 1995). However, unlike the grid logic that guided the original city, the urban structure that emerged from Rotival's 1939 plan, instead of being a comprehensive organization, as was its original intention, results in development through

the aggregation of large isolated agricultural areas. These areas are connected by east-west direction axes - with the largest and most definitive intervention of the plan: the Francisco Fajardo highway that finally connects directly the east and west of the city - and often have abrupt borders in their relationship or weaving with the surrounding spaces, which causes discontinuities and frictions when they meet other urban plots and elements (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017). The plan does not foresee the extension of the city through the expansion of the original grid, but the creation of a new urban center that is inserted into the historic layout and whose expansion is based on road infrastructure operations that facilitate the connection of this center with the new peripheral developments.

The establishment of a new monumental axis confirms the expansion of the city in the valley and the recognition of new peripheral areas that act as satellites in relation to the central urban core.

In the context of urban planning, the concept of what Marcano Requena (1995) calls "espacio de movimiento" (movement space) was exploited by taking advantage of the road infrastructure as a solid and powerful tool to provide the necessary resources to shape the image of the city. The space of movement, explains Marcano Requena (1995, p. 192), then becomes the "leitmotif" of the city. The function of roadways, instead of being limited to connecting the various activities within the urban fabric, underwent a fundamental transformation as it evolved into a key element that not only structured the city but also acted as a barrier separating the different units

that made it up. The introduction of highways into the urban fabric represented an internal element that introduced new parameters for the organization and structuring of the urban fabric, generating a significant impact on the overall configuration of the city. "From a roadway that maximizes crossings and therefore the possibilities of contact, the roadway that privileges speed and reduces the number of interchange points" (Marcano Requena, 1995, p. 192).

The Rotival Plan opens up a new urban planning framework for the city of Caracas. The system of thought for the expansion of the city, from the late 1930s to date, mainly focused on the automobile. The street is then a stage whose protagonist is the machine, and the pedestrian has disappeared from the thinking process for urban development. The growth of the city was designed on the basis and scale of the automobile, leaving aside the interest in the advancement of the many other diverse environments that make up the street not related to the vehicle.

Due to the morphology of the city and its territorial and geographical conditions, Caracas grew as an "elongated linear" development (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 161), from north to east, segregating and, to a certain extent, spatially privatizing the distribution of services.

This growth of the new city was strongly influenced by the upper social classes, who, based on landscape and territorial conditions, settled as they saw fit in a horizontal organization with a northeast direction.

As a bustling metropolis, Caracas
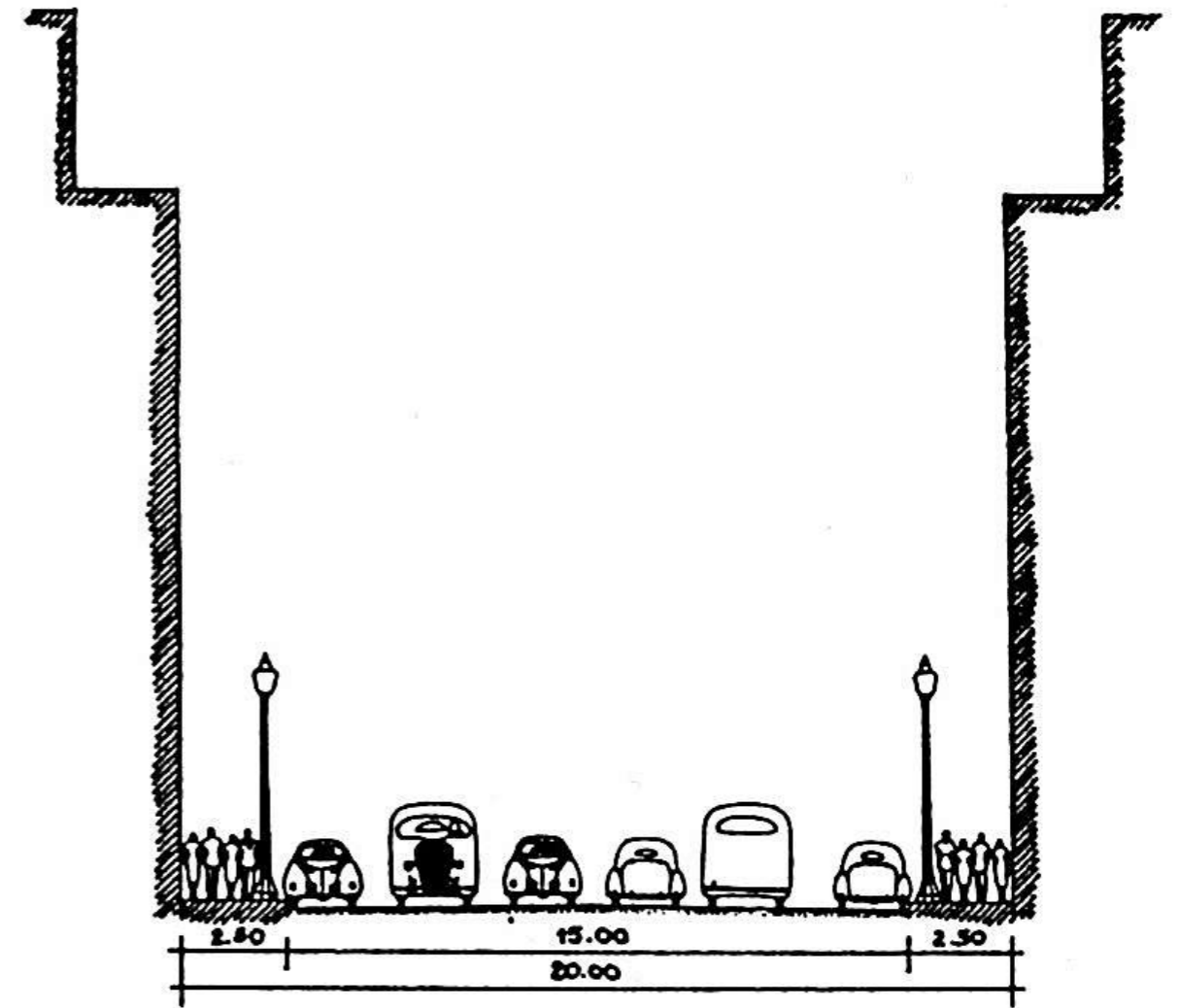
experienced a surge in infrastructural advancements, attracting the affluent class to establish themselves in the expanding northeastern side of the city. The northeast was the sector where wealth was concentrated in terms of landscape and distance from the city center, and so it gradually became the area where the elites established their residences. This new city agglomeration developed progressively becoming a new core of the city, mainly regarding business and economic activities. This pattern of urban growth led to the development of upscale neighborhoods, which became synonymous with luxury and exclusivity (Marcano 1995).

In contrast, the west side of the city where the city started growing in its colonial period, predominantly occupied by lower-income residents, witnessed limited urban development after the fast city development due to the Oil Boom in Venezuela. These geographical disparities between the northeast and west reflect the social and economic divisions that persist in Caracas to this day.

At the same time, "the snobbish Caracas of the 1960s and 1970s grew up without paying much attention to pedestrian and public transport circuits, and thus ignored the essential need for public life in squares, streets, and pavements" (Almandoz 2012, p. 14).

2.1.5 Golden clashing: 1980s social upheaval

By the mid-1980s, the urban discourse was starting to pay attention to the mismanagement and the disproportionate importance given to the development of highways, avenues, and roads by the state, as well as the relation of the decision on land use and management (Marcano 1995).

In this way, Venezuela's oil boom and prosperity reached its breaking point in the early 1980s. February 18, 1983, was the day popularly known in Venezuela as "El Viernes Negro" (The Black Friday), which consisted of the announcement by the Venezuelan state of the introduction of the exchange control in response to the 30% devaluation of the bolivar (Venezuelan currency), as well as the increase of the fuel price.

This episode signified the beginning of the economic crisis of the 1980s, a period in which social discomfort spawned progressively and intensely. Subsequently, by the end of the same decade, Caracas hosted the major social conflict ever seen in the country by then, known as the "Caracazo".

The Caracazo was a series of violent protests and riots that occurred when critical poverty was already close to 40% of the population (Almandoz 2012, p. 16). The riot protagonist was the working class, who took to the streets to voice their anger and frustration. The Caracazo was significant not only for its scale and violence but also for its impact on Venezuela's political and social landscape. It marked the beginning of a period of social and political turmoil that would continue throughout the 1990s, and it exposed the deep divisions and inequalities that existed within Venezuela's society.

It is colloquially said that in the Caracazo "the *barrios* came down from the hills", an expression that only evidences the existing relationship in the collective socio-territorial sectorzation.

The urban organization of Caracas displays stark contrasts between the sprawling *barrios* and the planned city areas, manifesting in a distinct separation between the two morphologies. The *barrios* are predominantly located in the hills surrounding the city with a lack of formal planning and basic services. On the other hand, the planned city is situated in the valley and is characterized by well-structured neighborhoods, modern infrastructure, and organized urban design. This dichotomy made the socio-urban functioning of Caracas a complete bipolarity, making it livable under two different and very detached dimensions.

The disconnect between these two city morphologies is visibly evident not only in the physical territory but also in the way the city is utilized and experienced. The *barrios* have developed irregularly, often lacking proper roads, sanitation systems, and access to public services. Their informal nature has led to a fragmented and challenging living environment for the residents, making it impossible to work under the dynamics of the formal city and therefore conducting it to have its own urban rules, becoming an "intracity". In contrast, the planned city, which in its golden age was developed by national and worldwide known urban planners, between Robert Moses and Josep Lluis Sert, presents a stark contrast. The planned areas showcase organized urban development and better access to basic services such as healthcare and transportation. The disconnection between these two city forms has created social and economic disparities, exemplifying the uneven urban development in Caracas.

Moreover, "the Caracazo marked the beginning of the fear of 'the other'" (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 168), which for the middle and upper class was the labor sector, and which on the other side signified hatred of privileged groups.

According to García-Guadilla (2012, p. 166), by the end of the 1980s 50% of the population lived in *barrios*. Ultimately, the Caracazo was a clear sign that the people of Venezuela were no longer willing to accept the status quo, paving the way for the rise of populist leader Hugo Chavez in the years to come.

Fig. 14
La Urbina neighborhood, Francisco
Fajardo highway, and barrio Petare.
own elaboration
Google Earth.

XXI Century Venezuela

Grounding the Crisis

The complex narrative of Venezuela's modern history is profoundly entwined with the political legacy of Hugo Chávez. His ascendancy to power in 1998 marked a significant turning point in the country's socio-political landscape. However, the trajectory of Chávez's presidency, which extended to the mandate of his successor Nicolás Maduro, encapsulates a tale of promise, ideological fervor, economic mismanagement, and societal polarization that has reverberated across the fabric of Venezuelan society.

This academic text aims to meticulously dissect the multifaceted layers of the crisis that has beset Venezuela, intricately weaving together the overarching influence of Chávez's governance within the society.

The following section dissects Chávez's use of hate speech, a key driver of the political polarization defining his rule. Furthermore, it sketches the socio-political landscape of the 1990s, notably marked by the Caracazo, a pivotal event sparking social unrest and discontent against entrenched political structures. The waning legitimacy of existing institutions and the emergence of fresh social movements set the stage for Chavez's ascent as a figure promising recognition, representation, and empowerment for marginalized sectors.

The narrative meticulously traces Chavez's trajectory. It scrutinizes the profound emotional bond he cultivated with his supporters, giving rise to "Chavismo" as a distinctive political ideology centered around his character and principles. Additionally, it scrutinizes Venezuela's contemporary crisis.

In essence, this chapter dissects the complex layers of Chávez's influence, from his rise to power, and ideological impact, to the enduring legacy that continues to shape Venezuela's socio-political landscape. To suport the literature material, the gathering of images exposing Caracas conflicts and the political support of Chavez's campain is used as main material on this chapter, togethr with the analysis of self-developed maps and graphs.

Fig. 15
Avila mountain, Torre Mercantil, Torre David, Mision Vivenda social housing, and Chavez propaganda. North view of Simon Bolivar Avenue.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023.

2.2.1 The Red Beret: molding a Generation

Hugo Chavez Frías, elected president of Venezuela in 1998, was the leader and central figure of the political movement called the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement of Venezuela, which the governments that had led Venezuela since his arrival into power aligned with.

Chávez stands as a significant figure whose impact resonates deeply with the generation that came of age during his tenure as Venezuela's president. His charismatic leadership[1], impassioned rhetoric, and populist policies[2] left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of this era. However, a critical aspect of Chávez's influence lies in his deployment of hate speech and the subsequent political polarization that marked his regime.

Firstly, Chávez's ascendancy to power represented a shift in the country's political landscape. His impassioned speeches resonated with the unacknowledged social groups – the majority working class –, offering hope and promising a voice to those marginalized by previously neoliberal political structures (Almandoz 2012). Yet, his speech approach often took a divisive tone, employing fiery rhetoric that labeled adversaries as enemies of the state (Hawkins, 2003). This rhetoric fueled a deeply polarized environment, pitting supporters against dissenters, and fostering a sense of animosity between opposing factions.

Chávez's hate speech wasn't confined to mere political disagreement; it extended to demonizing those who opposed his ideology (Gracía-Guadilla 2012). This adversarial approach seeped into Venezuelan society, influencing not just political conversations but also societal interactions. As someone who experienced it in the first person and during my whole process of becoming an adult, it clearly led to a cultural divide, impacting how individuals identified themselves, with allegiances often tied more to political beliefs than shared national identity.

The legacy of Hugo Chávez's hate speech and political polarization continues to reverberate within Venezuela's social and political spheres. It significantly shaped the generation that grew up during his mandate, leaving a deeply divided society grappling with the lasting impact of these entrenched divisions and the challenge of fostering unity and reconciliation amidst such deep-rooted polarization.

2.2.2 Social Atmosphere of the 1990s

The Caracazo was a crucial milestone in Venezuela's contemporary history. The social consequences were determinative and its political implications resonated deeply in Venezuelan society.

The low credibility of political parties was a key factor in this context. These parties had previously established neighborhood bureaus and neighborhood participation secretariats to broaden their base of followers (Garcia-Guadilla 2012). Taking advantage of their organizational structure, they tried to infiltrate citizen organizations, with notable success in the case of popular organizations.

However, the Caracazo marked a turning point. The social mobilizations that arose in response to the economic crisis and the gener-

1 - Aleem, Zeeshan. 2017 "How Venezuela Went from a Rich Democracy to a Dictatorship on the Brink of Collapse." Vox

2 - Hawkins, Kirk. 2003 "Populism In Venezuela: The Rise Of Chavismo" Third World Quarterly

Fig. 16
Hugo Chavez Frías by Platon.
http://byricardomarcenaroi.blogspot.com/2013/08/photos-fotos-platon-antoniou-part-2-15.html
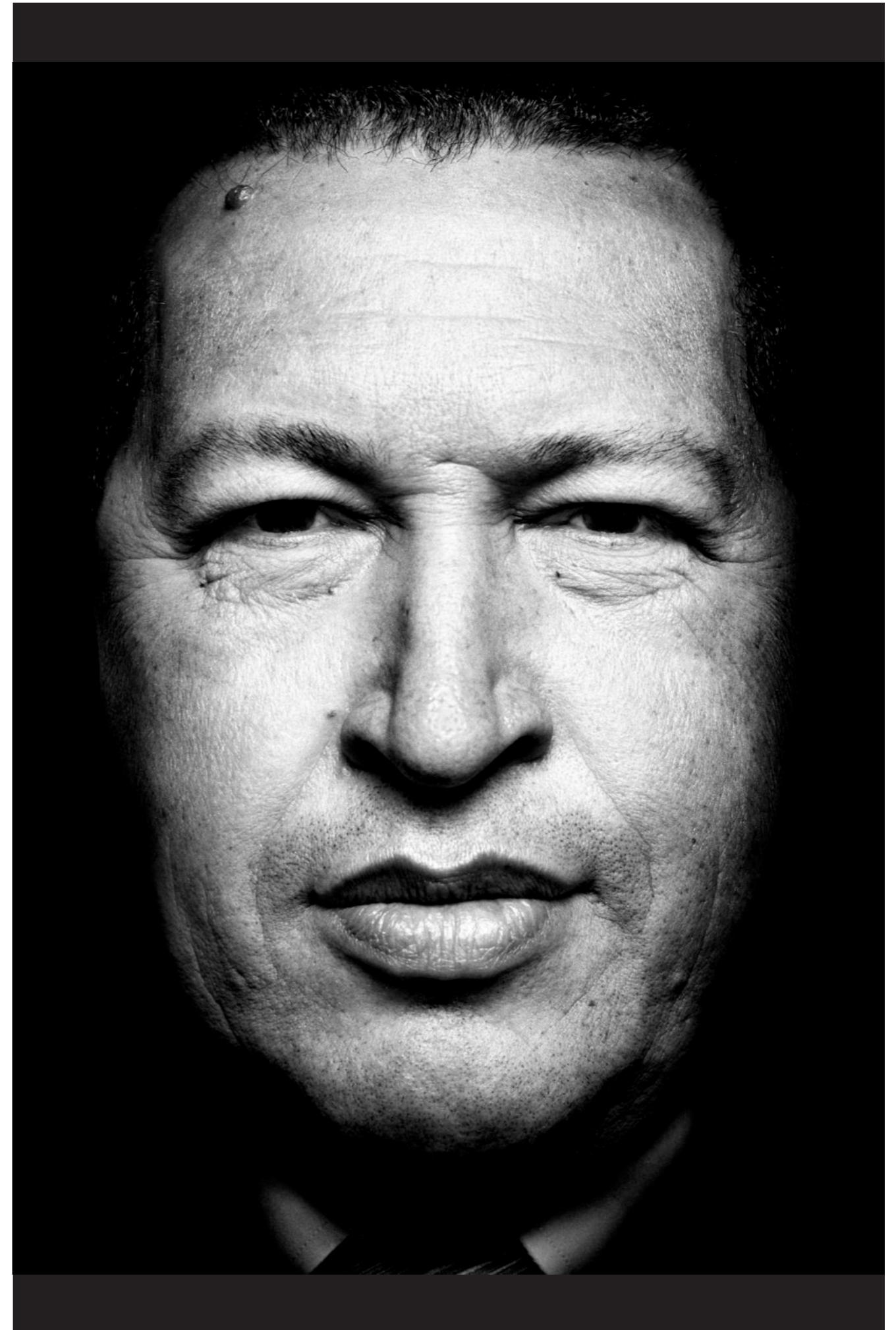
Fig. 17
The Caracazo riots, 1989.
www.eluniversal.com/gastronomia/175893/
padrino-lopez-recuerda-los-35-anos-de-la-re-
belion-popular-de-el-caracazo

Fig. 18
The Caracazo riots, 1989.
www.eluniversal.com/gastronomia/175893/
padrino-lopez-recuerda-los-35-anos-de-la-re-
belion-popular-de-el-caracazo

alized discontent against the government and traditional political parties generated a significant decrease in the legitimacy of these institutions (Garcia-Guadilla 2012). The government's repressive response to the protests further exacerbated the situation, increasing distrust and lack of credibility in the existing political structures.

As a result of these mobilizations and the loss of legitimacy, the co-optation of citizen organizations by political parties began to weaken. However, despite this initial decline, it became evident in the 1990s that about 70% of the neighborhood associations had succumbed to the influence of political parties or had adopted non-democratic practices, such as presidential and personal projection (Garcia-Guadilla 2012, p. 177).

The social consequences of the Caracazo were profound and long-lasting. The social fabric was affected by the distrust of political institutions and the loss of faith in traditional parties. This crisis of legitimacy not only weakened the existing political system but also opened space for the emergence of new social movements and leaders seeking a profound transformation in Venezuela's political and social structure.

By the 1990s, the social discomforts were spawning more and more, thus marginalized groups clung to any sign of recognition. The people aimed for belonging, acknowledgment by the state, and the desire to be heard, and Chavez arrived promising that.

Born in July 1954, Chavez, from a poor background, started his military career at seventeen, and developed his path into politics (Minster 2019). After finishing his studies at the Venezuelan Military Academy, he joined the National Armed Forces, where in 1983 created the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200 (MBR 200 – acronymous for Spanish Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200), a military movement where members operated clandestinely by making plans for a civil-military revolution (Hawkins 2003, p. 1141), which result was The Coup of February 1992.

"CHÁVEZ WAS FAMOUSLY CHARISMATIC — A ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION KIND OF POLITICAL CHARMER WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY TO PERSUADE PEOPLE FROM ALL DIFFERENWT BACKGROUNDS TO JOIN HIS CAUSE. HAVING GROWN UP AS A POOR CHILD IN THE VENEZUELAN COUNTRYSIDE, CHÁVEZ HAD AN ORGANIC AND INTUITIVE CONNECTION WITH THE POOR AND WORKING-CLASS CITIZENS HE CAME TO CHAMPION. A SAVVY POLITICIAN, HE COBBLED TOGETHER A COALITION OF LEFTISTS, MILITARY OFFICERS, BROAD SWATHS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, AND VENEZUELA'S LONG-NEGLECTED POOR." (ALEEM 2017)

The boot, the smile, the beret. The violence, the hope, the speech. The authoritarian, rebel, fearless figure arrived with the most empathic smile ever, providing nothing but bombastic promises.

Preceded by governments led by the upper class, which ignored the most disadvantaged social groups, Chavez emerged as a public figure in 1992 when he attempted a coup against then-President Carlos Andres Perez.

Chávez, along with a group of army officers and citizens, felt compelled to take action against the corrupt political climate in Venezuela. On February 4, 1992, Chávez led a soldiers squad in an attempted coup to seize important targets throughout Caracas, including the Presidential Palace, the airport, the Defense Ministry, and the military museum, while similarly, sympathetic officers took similar action in other areas of the country (Minster 2019). Nevertheless, the coup was contained by authorities, and Chavez was sent to prison for 2 years.

After The Coup, it did not take long for Chavez to become an outstanding and controversial figure for the whole country, as well as a leading figure and a sense of hope for the working class. He could speak on television after The Coup, a fact that helped him win social visibility. His message focused on the issues that mattered most to Venezuela society's biggest group: social justice, economic equality, and democratic reform.

Unlike previous governments, Chavez's approach was like peer-to-peer, allowing him to generate emotional bonds by showing himself as a reflection of the people.

His patriotism in addition to his confidence that change would still come after he was taken down, allowed him to generate empathy toward the people (Hawkins 2003, p. 1149), which ended up creating a big and important group of followers.

In this sense, the affinity that people had toward the figure of Chavez found its core in a strong bond of hope, emotional empathy, and the ability to see "themselves" in a power figure, however, this affinity was not based on political ideologies or sympathies yet on the person and his charisma.

2.2.3 Chavismo

As a result, one of the most distinctive aspects of Chavez's political career was the conversion of him-self into a political ideology of his own: Chavismo.

The strong devotion of Hugo Chávez's followers can be attributed to a myriad of factors that encompass his charismatic leadership, populist rhetoric, and promises of social justice and equality. Chávez successfully connected with the marginalized and impoverished sectors of society, speaking directly to their grievances and offering them hope for a better future. His charismatic personality and ability to connect emotionally with his followers created a deep bond that went beyond mere political support.

As explained by Hawkins (2003, p. 1138), Chavismo is considered a populist phenomenon, characterized by two main aspects: "the presence of a charismatic mode of linkage between voters and politicians, and a democratic discourse that relies on the idea of a popular will and a struggle between the people and the elite", making them quintessential enemies.

Thus, Chávez inspired a sense of empowerment and belonging among his constituency, fostering a collective identity centered around his persona and ideals. This emotional connection fueled a "with me or against me" mentality, where loyalty to Chávez became intertwined with a wider rejection of opposing parties, ideologies, and/or upper social class. This divisive logic further entrenched and intensified the social environment in Caracas and Venezuela for generations to come.

Fig. 19
Chavez political propaganda.
https://21stcenturysocialcritic.
blogspot.com/2015/12/star-wars-
and-miss-universe-are.html

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES

COLONIAL CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS

RURAL AREAS

PARKS AND GREEN AREAS

OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

INDEX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION (SOURCE: REBOTIER. 2009)

MAIN PRO GOVERNMENT POINTS

PRO GOVERNMENT POINTS

MAIN OPPOSITION POINTS

OPPOSITION POINTS

USUAL POINTS FOR POLICE CONTAINMENT

SECURITY ZONE

POLITICAL MANIFESTATION
(SOURCE: GARCÍA-GUADILLA. 2003; UNIDAD DEMOCRÁTICA. 2017)
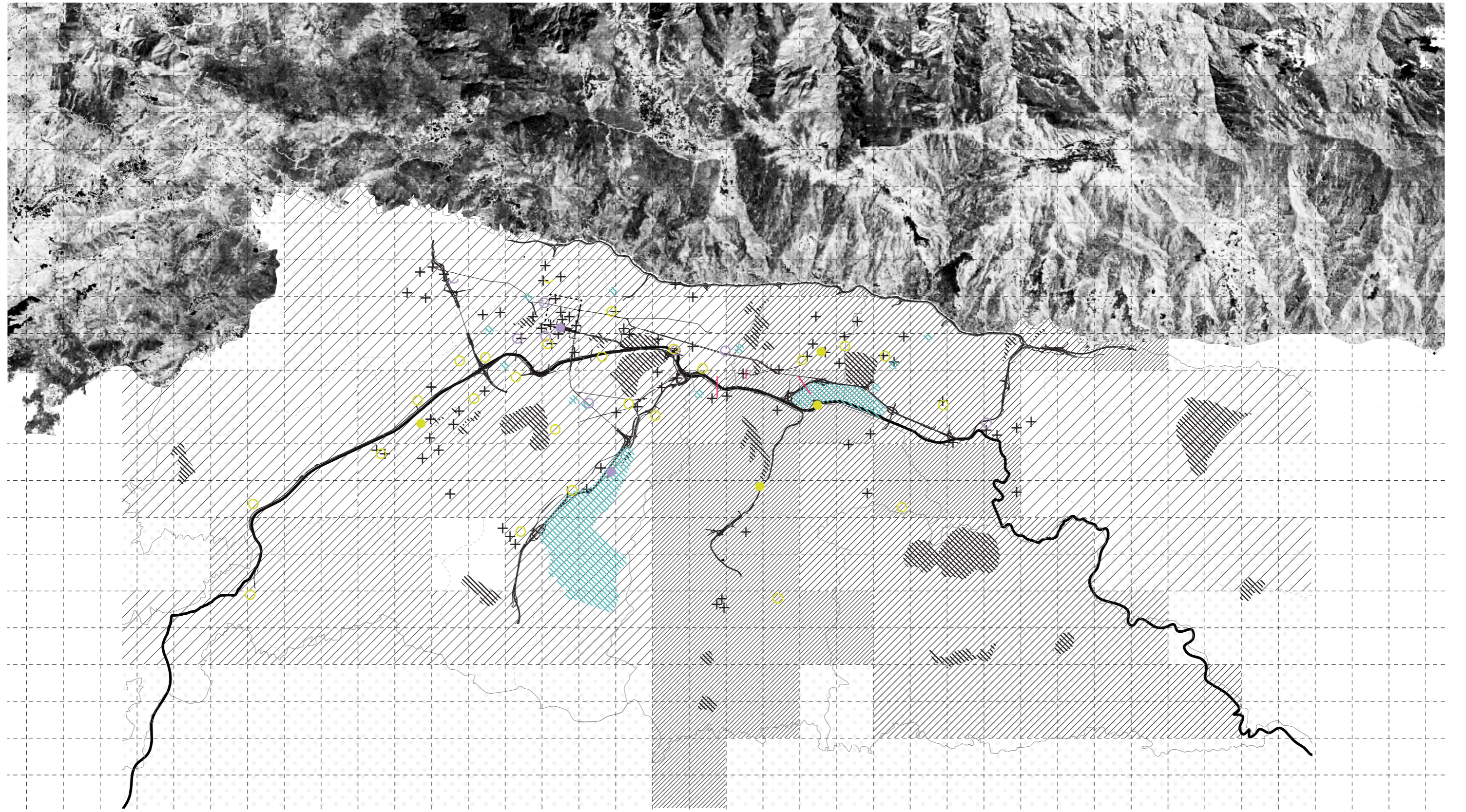
"(CHÁVEZ'S) BIASED PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSE, TOGETHER WITH THE ATTEMPTS TO DISMANTLE THE LIBERAL CAPITALIST MODEL TO MOVE TOWARDS THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL, EXACERBATED THE SERIOUS CRISIS OF POLITICAL GOVERNANCE THAT HAD BEEN BREWING SINCE THE 1990S; THIS CAUSED THE LATENT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION THAT HAD EMERGED MOMENTARILY WITH THE EVENTS OF THE CARACAZO TO SURFACE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2000S" (GARICA-GUADILLA 2012, P. 178)

The rejection of the other, which emerged from this bond with Chávez, permeated social and political interactions, creating a deeply polarized society. Supporters of Chávez viewed themselves as the champions of the poor and oppressed, while dissenting voices were portrayed as enemies of progress and champions of the elite. This rejection of "the other" solidified divisions within Venezuelan society and hindered constructive dialogue and cooperation between different groups.

Chávez's constituency also found solace and collective identity through the Bolivarian Revolution, which sought to challenge the existing political and economic order. The promise of social justice, wealth redistribution, and participatory democracy resonated deeply with those who felt marginalized and excluded from mainstream society. The emotional bond between Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution grew stronger as followers saw him as their champion against systemic inequality and corruption.

Furthermore, this emotional linkage also persisted beyond Cahvez's lifetime. Even after his death, his supporters continued to view him as an almost mythical figure, attributing him with superhuman qualities and an almost messianic role in the country's history. This emotional attachment kept his legacy alive and contributed to the perpetuation of the "with me or against me" mentality and the rejection of alternative viewpoints.

In essence, the deep emotional bond between Chávez and his constituency created a powerful sense of identity and belonging. However, this bond also engendered a divisive social environment where rejection of the other became the norm. The legacy of Chávez continues to shape the social and political landscape of Caracas and Venezuela, making reconciliation and the healing of societal divisions an ongoing challenge.

By this time, Chavez's figure signified a new spirit of leftism in Latin America (Anderson 2013). The intention to uplift the working class was reflected in his missions, quasi-governmental organizations aimed to reply to the people's needs. Education, healthcare, and housing were the main issues the missions tackled.

Fig. 21 + 22
Chavez presidential victory, 1998.
https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noti-cias-america-latina-46463299

POLITICAL EVENTS AND HOMICIDE NUMBERS AND RATES IN VENEZUELA AND CARACAS, 1986–2021

HOMICIDE RATES

CARACAZO
CHAVEZ' COUP
CHAVEZ RISE TO POWER
COUP AGAINSY CHAVEZ
OIL STRIKE
RECALL REFERENDUM
CHAVEZ GOT RE-ELECTED
CHAVEZ GOT RE-ELECTED
CHAVEZ' DEATH
MADURO RISE TO POWER
PROTEST 2017
PROTESTS 2014
PRESIDENTIAL CRISIS 2019
ELECTRIC BLACKOUTS
COVID-19

150
125
100
75
50
25
0

CARACAS

HOMICIDE NUMBERS

30000
20000
10000
0

VENEZUELA

1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021
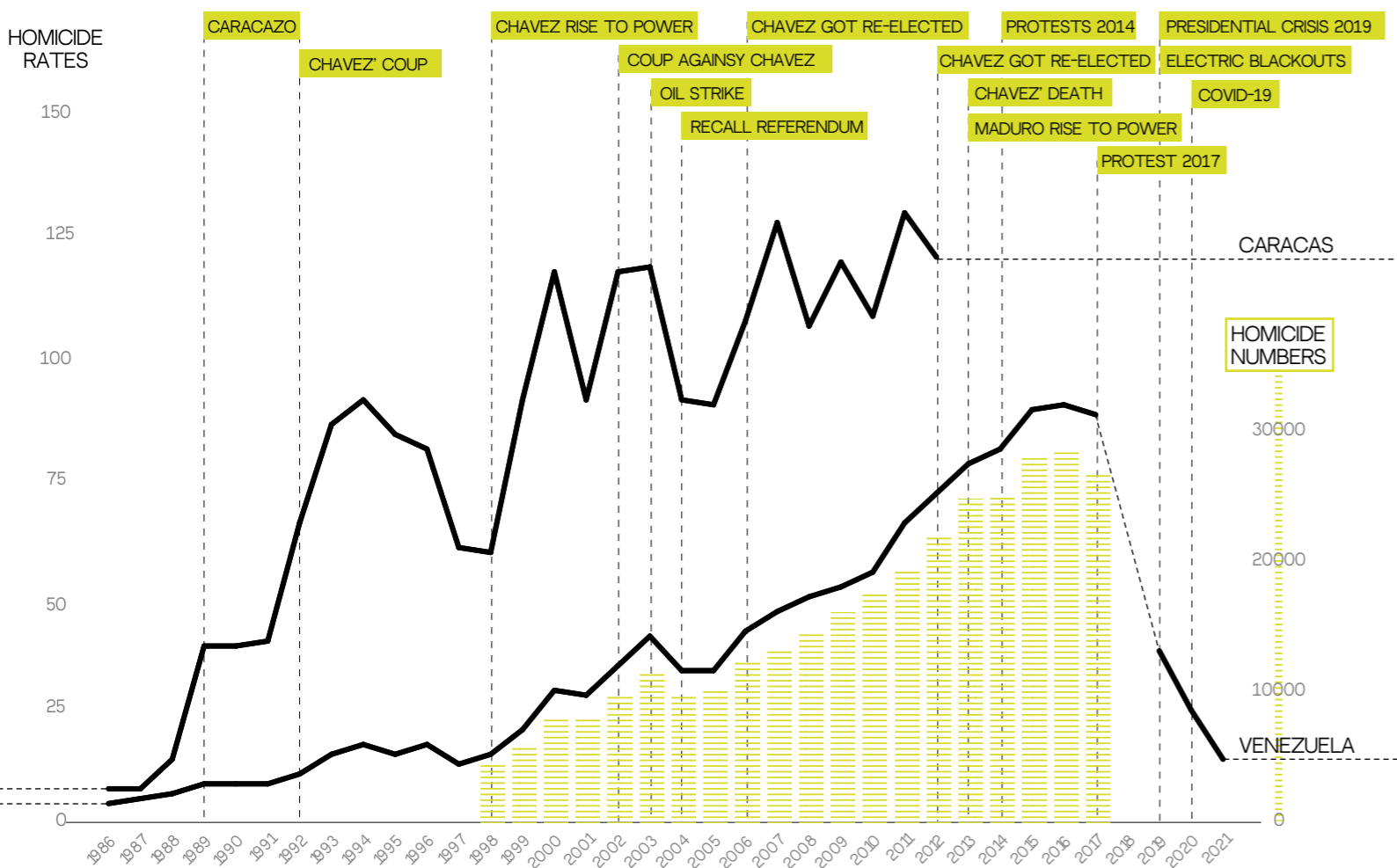
Fig. 23
The graph depicts the relationship between political events and homicide rates and numbers in Venezuela and Caracas from 1986 to 2021.
The black lines represent the homicide rates of Venezuela and Caracas as pointed out, while the blue bats rephere to exact number registrated in Venezuela.

Own elaboration with sources from: ENCOVI 2017; WHO 2016; Alvarez 2010; Tremaria 2016

Moreover, the urban and territorial division in Caracas could be defined by the socio-political polarization that has permeated the city. This division is manifested through intense contrasts in the urban landscape, both physically and mentally. Neighborhoods and areas with different political leanings tend to segregate from one another, creating distinct enclaves that cater to specific ideologies. In some cases, neighborhoods become strongholds of either pro-government or opposition supporters, reinforcing the sense of polarization and deepening the divide between communities, dividing the city in general terms between the East and the West. This territorial division based on socio-political polarization fractures social cohesion, and perpetuates a sense of exclusion, and limited social mobility, and challenges the creation of a cohesive and inclusive city.

2.2.4 The contemporary crisis

On March 5, 2013, the official announcement of Chavez's death was broadcast on national television. After 15 years in office, Chavez left Venezuela not only with a devastating economic crisis but also with a fragmented, segregated, and disparate city, a response to the social environment created during this political period[3]. A fragmented city, the cradle of a lost generation.

One of the primary catalysts for Venezuela's ongoing crisis was the profound mismanagement of its oil-dependent economy. Despite enjoying substantial oil revenues during Chávez's tenure, the government failed to diversify the economy or invest in essential infrastructure and industries. Overreliance on oil exports left Venezuela vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, and rampant corruption exacerbated the economic woes, resulting in severe hyperinflation, dwindling foreign reserves, and a staggering decline in GDP [4].

Additionally, Chávez's policies, including widespread nationalizations, price controls, and currency manipulations, exacerbated economic distortions and discouraged private investment. The lack of incentives for businesses, coupled with expropriations and stringent regulations, crippled productivity and led to shortages of essential goods, exacerbating social unrest and deepening the economic quagmire.

The erosion of democratic institutions and the concentration of power in the executive branch under Chávez undermined checks and balances, limiting political pluralism and fostering an environment of political polarization. The government's crackdown on dissent, curtailment of press freedom, and manipulation of electoral processes raised concerns about the erosion of democratic norms, leading to widespread international condemnation and isolation.

Socially, despite initial efforts to address poverty and social inequality through the social program "Misiones," the gains made in the early years of Chávez's presidency were overshadowed by systemic corruption, inefficiency, and lack of sustainable policies[5]. This resulted in a paradoxical situation where poverty and inequality persisted or worsened, even amidst vast oil revenues, leading to heightened social tensions and discontent among the populace.

Parallelly, Venezuela has grappled with an alarming surge in crime and violence since the rise of Hugo Chávez to power. This period witnessed a stark escalation in criminal activities, transforming the country into one of the most perilous and crime-ridden nations globally[6]. Chávez's presidency marked the onset of this crisis[7], due to the rampant social and economic disparities. The inability to address the root causes of crime, coupled with the proliferation of illicit arms, contributed to an environment of lawlessness, fostering an unchecked wave of violence that seeped into every facet of Venezuelan society.

Moreover, the exodus of skilled professionals and educated Venezuelans seeking better opportunities abroad exacerbated the brain drain, depleting the country's human capital and impeding its ability to recover from the multifaceted crisis. The health and education systems once heralded as successes of the Chávez era, faced severe neglect and deterioration, further exacerbating the suffering of ordinary citizens.

Following Chavez's death in 2013, Nicolas Maduro assumed the Presidency and continued the socialist policies and governance ideology that his predecessor had established. Maduro's presidency has been marred by controversy, with allegations of electoral fraud, rampant corruption, economic mismanagement, and human rights abuses[8]. Despite these criticisms, Maduro maintains that he is car-

3 - Neuman, William. 2013 "Chávez Dies, Leaving Sharp Divisions in Venezuela." The New York Times

4 - BBC News. 2019"Venezuela: All You Need to Know about the Crisis in Nine Charts" The Visual Journalism team - BBC News

5 - Aleem, Zeeshan. 2017 "How Venezuela Went from a Rich Democracy to a Dictatorship on the Brink of Collapse." Vox

6 - Statista Research Department. 2023 "World's Most Dangerous Cities, by Murder Rate 2023" Statista

7 - Almandoz, Arturo. 2012 "Caracas, entre la ciudad guzmancista y la metrópoli revolucionaria" Quito, Ecuador: OLACHI.

8 - Lozano, Daniel. 2020 "Día 1 Tras El Fraude Electoral En Venezuela: Sin Celebraciones y Sin El Apoyo Popular Que Heredó de Hugo Chávez." ELMUNDO
BBC News. 2017 "Smartmatic, La Empresa a Cargo Del Sistema de Votación En Venezuela, Denuncia 'Manipulación' En La Elección de La Constituyente y El Cne Lo Niega." BBC News Mundo
Hassa, Tirana. 2022 "World Report 2023: Venezuela" Humanitarian Rights Watch

rying on the legacy of Chavez, and with it the prolongation of its crises.

During Nicolás Maduro's presidency, the violence and criminal crisis escalated to unprecedented levels. The economic downturn, hyperinflation, and worsening social conditions further fueled criminality, pushing Venezuela into a state of social disarray. Criminal gangs, drug trafficking networks, and paramilitary groups flourished amidst the chaos, exploiting the systemic weaknesses and thriving in the vacuum created by institutional breakdown. The government's inability to curb this surge in crime significantly eroded citizens' trust in public institutions, exacerbating the sense of insecurity and vulnerability among the populace[9].

In summary, Venezuela's trajectory since Hugo Chávez's rise to power, and prolongated to Maduro's mandate, has been marred by economic mismanagement, political turmoil, social upheaval, and a humanitarian and criminal crisis of colossal proportions. The legacy of Chavez's presidency is one of promise unfulfilled, marked by systemic failures and a country grappling with the devastating consequences of prolonged crises that continue to reverberate through its society.

In this way, a pervasive defensive culture emerged, fragmenting communities and fostering a lost generation navigating the pixelated urban environment shaped by historical layers of crisis. Thus, Venezuela remains haunted by the unresolved echoes of a prolonged and multifaceted crisis, leaving an indelible mark on its society.

9 - Anderson, Jon Lee. 2013 "Slumlord. What has Hugo Chávez wrought in Venezuela?" The New Yorker.

Fig. 24
Venezuela: a country between corruption and the people's famine, by Oliver Schof, 2019.
https://oliverschopf.com/html/c&ed-cart/single&w/maduro&people&hungry.html

The Other
Mapping the Gap

Through the analysis of Caracas by its political, social and urban history, one conept that emerged as key to uderstand the city's contemporary framework is the social construction of "the other". Principally exposed by García-Guadilla, the concept of the other represents a big idea engraved in the collective imagination of the citizens of Caracas that can be said it existed since the decade of the 1980s.

The concept of "the other", according to García-Guadilla (2003) refers to the perception and construction of identity based on socioeconomic, ethnic, or gender differences. In the context described above, deficiencies in the democratic political culture in Venezuela have influenced the persistence of entrenched perceptions of "the other". Socioeconomic inequalities have exacerbated these perceptions, generating tensions and conflicts in the urban space.

In an environment of worsening poverty and inequality, class differences have become a key factor in the struggle for access to and appropriation of urban space (García-Guadilla 2012). These differences, far from being simply socioeconomic, have become intertwined with political-ideological divisions. This equating of class differences with political stances has contributed to greater polarization in society, making cohesion and understanding between groups with different visions difficult. In short, "the other" has become a complex social construct, where socioeconomic and political differences intersect, influencing the perception and use of urban space in Venezuela.

To have a clear understanding of the concept of the other in the contemporary social environment of Caracas, its explanation through its socio-territorial manifestation during Chavez's mandates is the starting point for the structuring of the concept, followed by its depiction in the collective imaginary and its formation of the fearscape. By using pop culture resources combined with overlapped territorialized data, the theorization of the social construct of the other is explained throughout this chapter, focusing on the idea of fear and its expression within the city.

Fig. 25
Francisco Fajardo Highway.
Terrazas del Ávila neighborhood and Petare.
https://www.forbes.com/pictures/5a3440d1a7ea4314ae850380/worst-countries-144-venez/

DESDE LOS ANOS 50'S
CON LA MISMA P**DEJA'
NO SOY DERECHA NI IZQUIERDA,
VAYANSETODOS A M'*.

NO HAY NADA QUE DEBATIR,
CUANDO TODOS LA EMBRARRARON
ME SORPRENDE TU ACTITUD
DE RETRÓGRADO FRUSTRADO

UY, QUE LOCO PORVENIR.
BRINDO POR NUESTRO **FRACASO**.
BRINDO POR LA LIBERTAD
DE EVADIR A LOS TARADOS

2.3.1 Socio-territorial manifestation

The main drive of the so-called XXI Century Socialism auspicated by Chavez, and the main aim during his 15 years of governance was to redistribute wealth to the poor and increase social justice in the country (Almandoz 2012). During his mandate, Chavez aggressively nationalized vital industries, including oil, and used the revenue to fund social programs, so-called "missions". The fight between the government and the private sector has been a constant in the past 25 years of Venezuelan history (Anderson 2013), a fact that exposes and supports the "with me or against me" modus operandi.

As Anderson (2013) exposed, Chavez's figure signified a new spirit of leftism in Latin America. The intention to uplift the working class was reflected in his missions, quasi-governmental organizations aimed to reply to the people's needs. Education, healthcare, and housing were the main issues the missions tackled.

Venezuela has a highly urbanized population, with approximately 90% living in urban areas, whereas the city of Caracas has the most significant proportion of people residing in *barrios* in all of Latin America, with around 60% of its population living in these areas (McGuirk 2014, p. 140).

Caracas' dwelling deficit has been an issue for the city since its growth peak in the 60s, meaning that dwelling mission (in Spanish Misión Vivienda) was one of the keystones of Chavez's policies. However, despite the high interest from the government in this issue, the mismanagement signified a

deficit growth of about a million since 1998, leaving the city with a 2 million deficit by 2014 (McGuirk 2014, p. 180).

At the same time, the willingness of XXI-Century Socialism to provide the people with decent housing was based on the expropriation of the private sector construction goods, a fact that also characterized the whole mandate of Chavez.

Consequently, while the dwelling deficit had been tackled with expropriation and mediocre architectural projects by the official measurements, and by unofficial measurements (but very well known by the government) with invasions, control, and surveillance as a way to preserve the sense of self was exacerbated in the social functioning.

In this sense, another spontaneous mutation sprawled in Caracas' urban typologies: the gated neighborhood, being in togetherness with the *barrios* the two fastest-growing forms of housing in Caracas (Brillenbourg, Klumpner 2010, p. 121).

2.3.3 Fearscape

"Venezuela is a disaster", "The people are lazy, rude, thieving, alive...". This statement usually does not refer to one, to the speaker, but to the other, to the others. We do not admit ourselves as a collective. We blamed the other for our faults, and those faults justified us in committing our own. (González Téllez 2012, p. 208).

The birth of this typology was triggered by the high violence rates which exacerbated since 1999, in the whole country and especially in Caracas, and has had a constant

and exponential growth since then.

In this sense, by the first year of Chavez's mandate, the country's homicide rates with firearms increased by 500%, where its protagonist scenario has been expressed in Caracas, "unfolding a criminal catalog that has configured a sort of new capital city urbanity" (Almandoz 2012, p. 208). Accordingly, by 2009 the homicide rate in Venezuela was 49 per 100,000 inhabitants (UNODC 2011), a number that by 2019 increased to 200 (UNODC 2019).

As crime rates soared, residents began seeking ways to protect themselves and their properties, leading to the rise of gated communities. These enclosed neighborhoods offered a sense of security and exclusivity, with controlled access points, private security measures, and restricted access to outsiders. The desire for safety and control drove the demand for gated communities, as residents sought to shield themselves from the rampant crime that had become a daily reality in Caracas.

However, the proliferation of gated neighborhoods has had significant implications for the city as a whole. The enclosures created by these gated neighborhoods exacerbate social divisions and contribute to the fragmentation of urban space. The physical barriers, such as walls, fences, and security checkpoints, reinforce a sense of separation and exclusion, isolating these neighborhoods from the rest of the city. This encroachment towards the city further deepens social inequality and hampers the creation of a cohesive urbanity, as some areas become disconnected and inaccessible to the wider population, physically and mentally. The rise

of gated neighborhoods reflects not only the crime crisis but also the growing social fragmentation within Caracas, symbolizing the socio-economic disparities and the retreat of various social groups behind their protective walls.

The capital city has been heading the rankings of the world's most dangerous cities during the XXI Century, from robberies, kidnappings, and homicides. Poverty, corruption, and social inequalities had been the main factor of this violent environment sustained by a political division that turned into a battle of ideologies fueled by the hate speech promoted by the government.

In this sense the distinction of "the other" started to grow and it developed as a state of mind. The fear and the discomfort of being with "the other" scale to the use of the common space of the city. At the same time, the risk of being identified as "the other" incentivizes the relationship between citizen-city to have a more homogenous tendency, creating "strong spatial segregation processes and social polarization" (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 180), since the necessity to belong to restricted dichotomy side is demanded by a broader status quo.

Therefore, the fear generated by crime and violence, and the rejection of "the other" sponsored by the political division, has generated a collective imaginary that has never been defined but is perfectly understood by the caraqueño (2).

Venezuelan society functions under an overlay of classifications, resulting in a very restrictive social panorama: me and the other. In terms of security, it is divided between the aggressor and the vic-

1KM   MUNICIPALITIES   COLONIAL   GUIAIRE   HIGHWAYS AND   RURAL   PARKS AND   BARRIOS
       AND PARISHES   CITY CENTER RIVER   MAIN ROADS   AREAS   GREEN AREAS

(SOURCE: SILVA:
CARDONNA: GALAVIS. 2015)

2   3   4   5   6   18   22

VIOLENT DEATHS BY PARISH BETWEEN JANUARY - JULY 2021
(OVV. 2021)
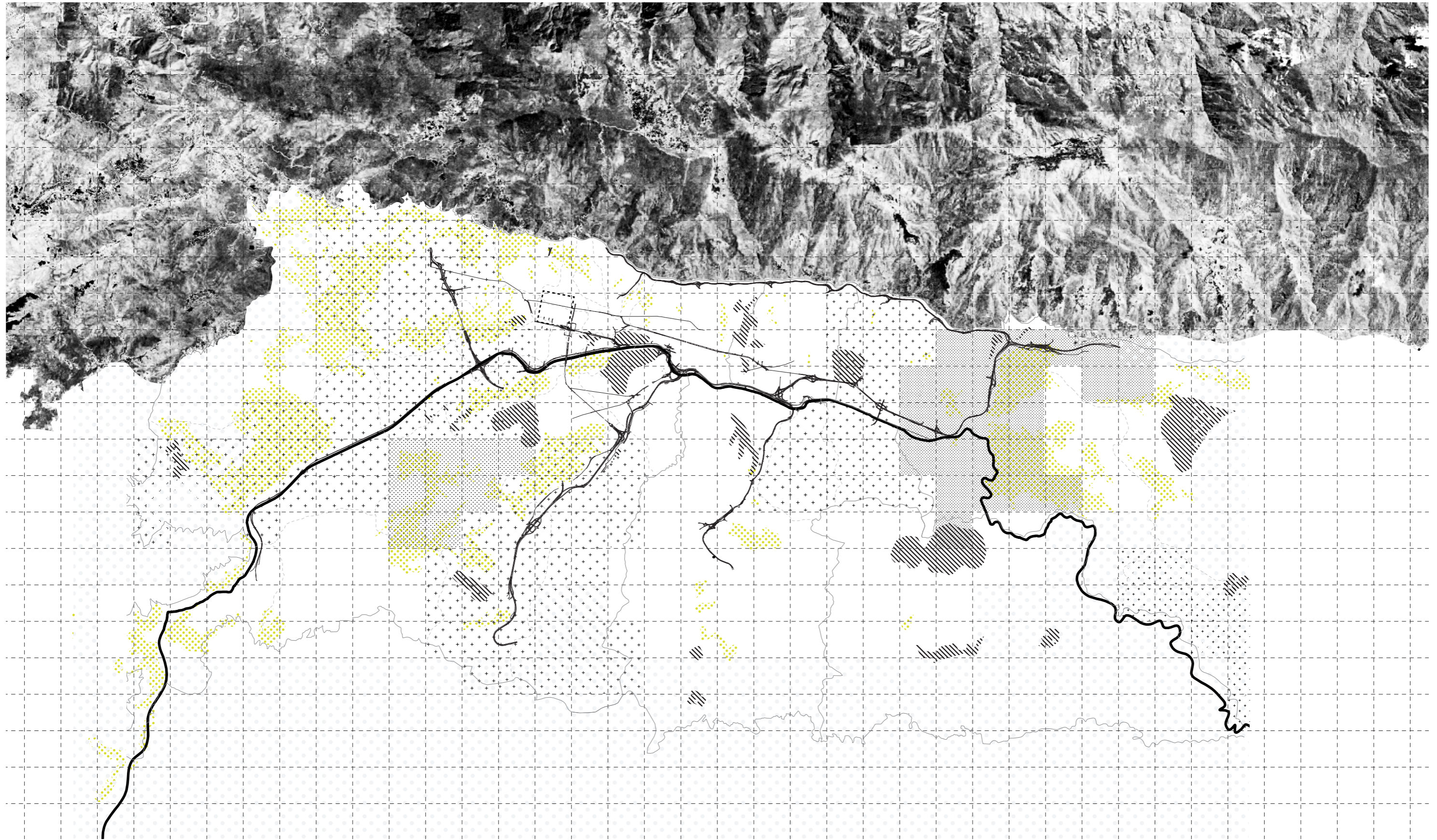
tim, in ideological terms between Chavistas and the opposition, in socioeconomic terms between the wealthy and the non-wealthy, and in urban terms between the inside and outside.

These distinctions manage to manifest themselves in the capital's territory in a gross and evident way between "from the east" and "from the west". If you are poor, you tend to be a Chavista and live in the West, while if you are more affluent, you settle in the East and support and follow the opposition (García-Guadilla 2012, p. 185). These two rough territorial classifications live in the collective imaginary as the spontaneous, and the gated city, one making it impossible to adapt if you are not from there, the other enclosure itself for their control.

Fig. 28
"Paraíso Perdido" project by Adriana Loureiro Fernandez. 2017. https://www. adrianaloureiro.com/paradise-lost

Pieces of a city
Pixelation

During the 2000s, the city of Caracas developed as a territory where two cities converged and coexisted at the same time: the popular and the surveillance – each with its inhabitants.

The modern Caracas that derives from the crisis is a pixeled city, an unclear urban image that emerges through its unsew patches. Among the remains of what was once the capital of "Saudi Venezuela", two parallel dimensions operate – two city dynamics that do not meet, in which the inhabitants of each grew apart.

These two dimensions were mainly defined by the living conditions and the political order, showing "two kinds of social enclaves that outline space in Caracas: the segregated with a limited access to a private based service life and the isolated with no sense of public life" (Gomez Herrera; Spirkoska 2009, p. 44).

This divided reality expresses itself in diverse ways in the city, conceptually and territorially.

Conceptually speaking we can refer to the collective imaginary and state of mind linkage to the sense of popular and the political ideologies differences. In general, every entity, activity, and place of public character is considered by the afflu-ent class as dangerous and of poor quality. The adoration for privateness is exacerbated by the mismanagement of public bodies and the untamed popular lifestyle, ending in an obsessive search for control, creating a monodimensional where everything and everyone that makes life within it shall behave accordingly. At the same time, the political ideologies are also linked to this distinction: on one hand, the government constituency that by its socialist sympathy are the citizens of the popular dimension in the collective imaginary of Caracas, meanwhile the opposition "have no other option" that to live in the monodimensional, searching for a life apart from "the other".

Likewise, the territory of Caracas also manifests the city division. On a gross scale the difference between East and West, as previously explained, signifies the primary social division in Caracas.

Moreover, the several typologies of dwellings and community living started to be another territorial distinction in the city. Both the *barrios* and the social housing versus the gated neighborhoods draw the social disparities of Caracas' ways of inhabiting it. Being urban settlements that live within themselves, the differences in the collective understanding of the city hierarchy have a specific image.

In addition, the theme of the *barrios* in Caracas is recognized as one of the main features of the urban landscape of the city. The Caracas *barrio* is by definition an intrinsic system, independent of the outside world and with its own organizational system, detached from that of the city, an intracity organism. The formal city is completely incapable of obviating this reality (McGuirk 2014, p. 147) and as a response to this incapacity, ignoring and marginalizing the *barrios* has been its strategy so far.

On the other hand, the problem of squatting has also conquered much of the city, encouraging rivalry between the private and the popular sectors. The whole city is markedly divided, and this division is composed of different layers of distinction.

Contemporary Caracas failed as a system. The common integrated city is a concept that is not even thought of as an option. Fragments of a society define the patched-up image of the city and its failure. The city is defined by disparities and segregation, with a murky atmosphere where social differences are solved in a fight that is won or lost. The sense of collectivity is lost, and the fear and hate for "the other" are strengthened.

The city of Caracas ended up being an agglomeration of intrinsic organisms, detached from each other. The city failed to be common for its citizens, a failure that shaped Caracas throughout the past 25 years. This long period of urban pixelation provided a distorted environment for a whole generation, leaving it without a public domain, or even the sense of it.

ON A PIXELATED FRAME IS WHERE NOWADAYS CARACAS FINDS ITS IMAGE.

Fig. 30 - Left: Gran Mision Vivienda, Vargas, Caraballeda.

Fig. 31 - Right: Gated neighborhood in Prados del Este, Caracas. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023
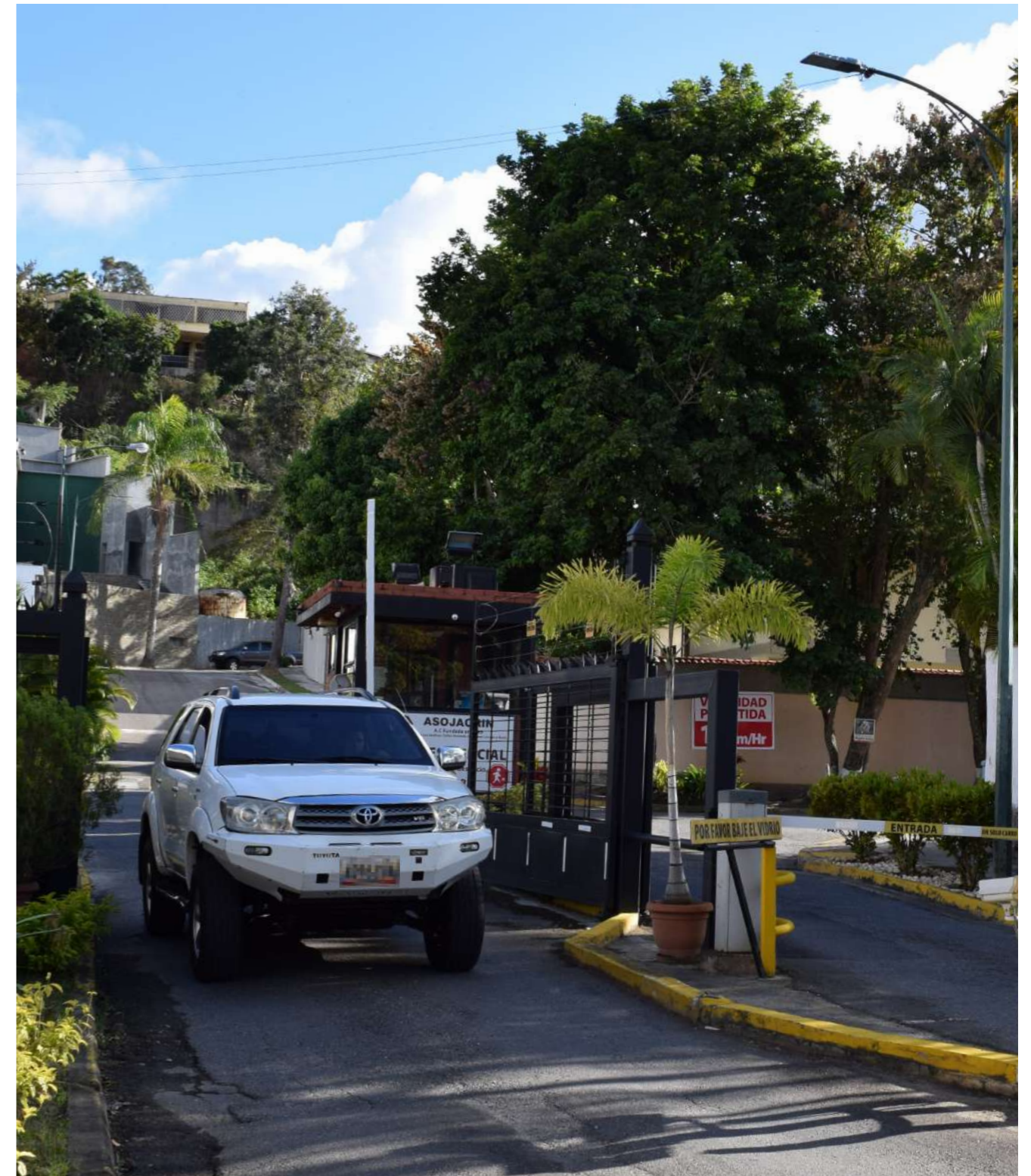
This chapter delves into the profound socio-spatial dynamics of Caracas during the 2000s, examining the concept of City Patches, – highlighting the duality of gated communities and informal settlements as adaptations to collective traumas–; and the notion of Citizen Debris, reflecting the overlooked aspects of civic life and the neglected public spaces that have contributed to the disintegration of a cohesive urban environment in Caracas. Through this analysis, the text provides a comprehensive understanding of the city's socio-territorial intricacies and the enduring impact of historical and contemporary urban challenges, with photography and selft develop mapping as key material.

2.4.1 City Patches

Unders this pixelation, the city of Caracas exposes different elements that make up this frame, becoming theoretical elements within the research: City Patches and Citizen Debris. These fragments of the city image represent typologies and urban dynamics that, due to their disagreement, are the protagonists of the socio-urban panorama of Caracas. These elements, integral to the analysis, enable a comprehensive exploration of the city's adaptive responses and residual remnants, shedding light on Caracas' socio-territorial intricacies arising from collective traumas and socio-urban transformations.

The concept of City Patches refers to distinct urban forms that arise as a dual response to the collective traumas experienced by The Lost Generation. This duality encompasses two main spatial typologies: the Gated Dimension and the Informal Dimension, each representing different adaptations to urban challenges.

The Gated Dimension pertains to the gated neighborhoods that physically encapsulate their residents, serving as both literal and symbolic fortresses. These enclaves are designed to offer protection from perceived external dangers, creating a controlled and isolated environment. This dimension of City Patches represents a deliberate withdrawal from the wider urban context, where the sense of safetiness is prioritized through physical barriers and restricted access.

Moreover, the proliferation of gated neighborhoods in Caracas during the 21st century is directly linked to the extensive crime and violence crisis that the city has experienced. This escalation in criminal activity, includes soaring crime rates, heightened murder rates, and widespread kidnappings (WHO 2016), which have profoundly impacted all aspects of life in Caracas. The intensity and frequency of these criminal activities made personal and communal security a paramount concern for the city's residents (Briceño-León; Camardiel 2018).

In response to this volatile environment, gated neighborhoods emerged as a popular solution among Caracas citizens, particularly those in middle and upper socio-economic classes. These gated neighborhoods feature strict access controls, high walls, surveillance systems, and often private security personnel, offering residents a sense of safety and isolation from the broader societal issues.

The move towards gated living reflects a broader urban strategy where privacy, security, and surveillance become central themes in residential planning. The security measures and the physical design of these communities serve not only to protect but also to create a distinct separation from the city's public spaces, perceived as unsafe.

The Gated Dimension, as one part of this patches, highlights these neighborhoods as physical and symbolic fortresses, encapsulating a community within protective barriers. The growth of these neighborhoods has thus been propelled by the desire for a safe haven, a patch within the city that provides a buffer against the external disorder. This development pattern signals a shift in urban living, where the integration and openness of city life give way to segmented, isolated patches that prioritize security over communal urban interaction.

Conversely, the Informal Dimension refers to the spontaneous and adaptive urban practices of *barrios* formation that arise out of historical social disparities. These areas often materialize as makeshift solutions to urban living, evolving directly from the needs and resources of the local community. Such spaces demonstrate an intrinsic functionality that is deeply influenced by their specific context and the immediate needs of their inhabitants.

At the same time, the Informal Dimension involves adaptive urban practices that have emerged organically in response to the city's historical social disparities. These informal settlements, often arising from a lack of formal planning and regulation, demonstrate an intrinsic functionality and resilience, shaped by the immediate needs and constraints of their residents (Gouverneur 2016).

In Caracas, the *barrios* have become embedded within the city's identity, providing stark contrasts to the gated neighborhoods and the Gated Dimension. These *barrios* are not merely residential areas but are deeply interwoven with the city's socio-economic fabric, often located on the peripheries or interstices of formal urban planning. The informal dimension showcases how communities adapt to and navigate the systemic exclusions and socio-economic segregations imposed by more formal urban structures. This has led to a form of urbanity where the unresolved issues of inequality and spatial justice continue to pervade the cityscape, affecting its development trajectory and collective memory.

Moreover, the existence and expansion of these informal areas are a testament to the city's uneven development. They highlight the limitations of formal urban planning and the resilience of marginalized communities in creating livable spaces amidst adversity. The informal settlements reflect a response to the urban haunting of Caracas — a haunting characterized by a history of exclusion, neglect, and the ghostly presence of past policies that have failed to integrate or uplift vast segments of the population (Silva; Cardonna; Galavis 2015). As such, the informal dimension is not just a physical space within the city but also a manifestation of historical and social dynamics that continue to shape Caracas's urban landscape.

While gated neighborhoods represent one response, focusing on isolation and security, they contrast sharply with informal settlements, which embody a different kind of urban patch formed out of necessity and lack of formal support. Both types of patches, though starkly different in their formation and appearance, are responses to the underlying urban crises—namely, security and inequality. This patchwork pattern of urban development highlights the fragmented nature of the city, where different groups adapt to their environments in markedly different ways, often at the expense of a cohesive urban community.

The overarching term City Patches thus serves as a framework to understand how these two urban forms—seclusive and segregative in gated communities, and excluded and adaptive in informal settlements—mirror and react to the

deep-seated socio-psychological effects of collective trauma within a city. This concept helps in analyzing how urban spaces are not just physical locales but are also imbued with the psychological and social echoes of past events, shaping and reflecting the life within a city in profound ways.

Expanding further, City Patches can be seen as a microcosm of urban trauma and vulnerability, highlighting how different enclaves within a city adapt to socio-economic challenges and threats to personal and communal safety.

2.4.2 Citizen Debris

On the other hand, the notion of Citizen Debris refers to the overlooked fragments and abandoned pracitces that lie beyond the spatial boundaries of the City Patches. These practices include aspects of civic life that have been pushed to the fringes of social recognition. Describing these elements as Citizen Debris highlights their status as remnants. These overlooked aspects of urban living—such as pedestrian experiences and appropiative practices —represent not only the tangible leftovers but also the sociocultural fallout of a past urban storyline that has been neglected and remains on the margins of the wider urban awareness.

As Caracas expanded and developed a reliance on automobiles, the city's infrastructure and layout evolved to support vehicular traffic rather than pedestrian mobility (Marcano Requena 1995). Wide roads and sprawling highways became the norm, often at the expense of sidewalks, public squares, and other pedestrian amenities. This trend in urban planning priorities reflected a growing societal dependence on private transportation, influenced by crime concerns and the convenience of personal vehicles (Gomer Herrera; Spirkoska 2009).

The subsequent neglect of pedestrian infrastructure has meant that the spontaneous, informal encounters that once animated the streets of Caracas have been replaced by a more insular, vehicle-dependent culture (Martin Frechilla 1995). Pedestrian experiences, which are essential for the appropriation of public spaces, became limited. Appropriative practices—those which enable citizens to make personal or communal use of urban spaces, to engage in leisure activities, and to develop a sense of ownership over their environment—have been stifled by the prioritization of car mobility.

As residents moved through the city encased in their private vehicles, the streets became less of a communal domain and more of a conduit for cars. This transformation led to the abandonment of the public realm as a place of social exchange and interaction. These developments not only diminished Caracas's urban life as a plural citizen practice but also impacted the city's social cohesion, as the opportunity for different social groups to mingle and interact within the city as a common ground became increasingly rare (Marcano 1995).

Accordingly, Caracas's urban development, guided by the idealization on modern urban approaches focused on vehicle infrastructure development and privatized car mobility, has had profound effects on the city's social dynamics. It has led to an urban landscape where the appropriation of shared spaces by pedestrians is overlooked, and the once-common pedestrian activities and spontaneous social exchanges have become collateral damage to the city's quest for modernization and security.

In other words, Citizen Debris refers to unexercised citizenship practices, coming from unconscious feelings of unauthorized agency, indicating that these abandone city dynamics are the result of citizens feeling disempowered and disconnected from the urban narrative and common social engagement (Garcia-Guadilla 2012). Thus, this disconnection results in a failure to engage in active citizenship and a sense of not having the authority or agency to influence or contribute to the urban space.

At the same time, Citizen Debris is framed within the larger concept of Lost Interstices, which implies gaps or voids within the urban life in Caracas that have resulted from historical urbanization processes, spatially the urban development regarding the golden age of Venezuela in the Mid-XX Century period. These gaps represent missed encounters for social inclusion and community development, contributing to a fragmented urban environment marked by an Urban Haunting, where the unresolved issues and disparities of the urban, political and social history of Venezuela continue to loom over the city.

In this research, the concept of Lost Interstices refers to the overlooked or neglected spaces and dynamics within Caracas' urban environments. These areas are often the result of urban sprawl and poor planning, leading to disconnected and underutilized spaces that do not serve the social, economic, or environmental needs of the City dwellers. As the city has grown, it has largely neglected the improvement and development of shared public spaces, resulting in disorderly expansions and a lack of cohesive urban structure (Marcano 1995). These conditions have led to a marginal city configuring a multiform and unifunctional network.

A critical component of this framework is acknowledging the significant role that these neglected urban areas play in the city's overall fabric and considering them in broader urban development and revitalization strategies. The Lost Interstices concept calls attention to the critical urban spaces that have been ignored or left behind in urban planning processes in Caracas.

Understanding and addressing the phenomena of Citizen Debris and Lost Interstices are crucial for Caracas to navigate its way towards a more inclusive and cohesive urban future. Citizen Debris, encapsulating the neglected facets of urban existence, and Lost Interstices, the physical and social gaps within the city that developed these citizen practice to become debris. By re-engaging with these overlooked aspects and spaces, there is a potential to revitalize Caracas's urban landscape into a more integrated environment.

1KM MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES COLONIAL CITY CENTER GUIAIRE RIVER HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS RURAL AREAS PARKS AND GREEN AREAS OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

BARRIOS GATED NGHBH.
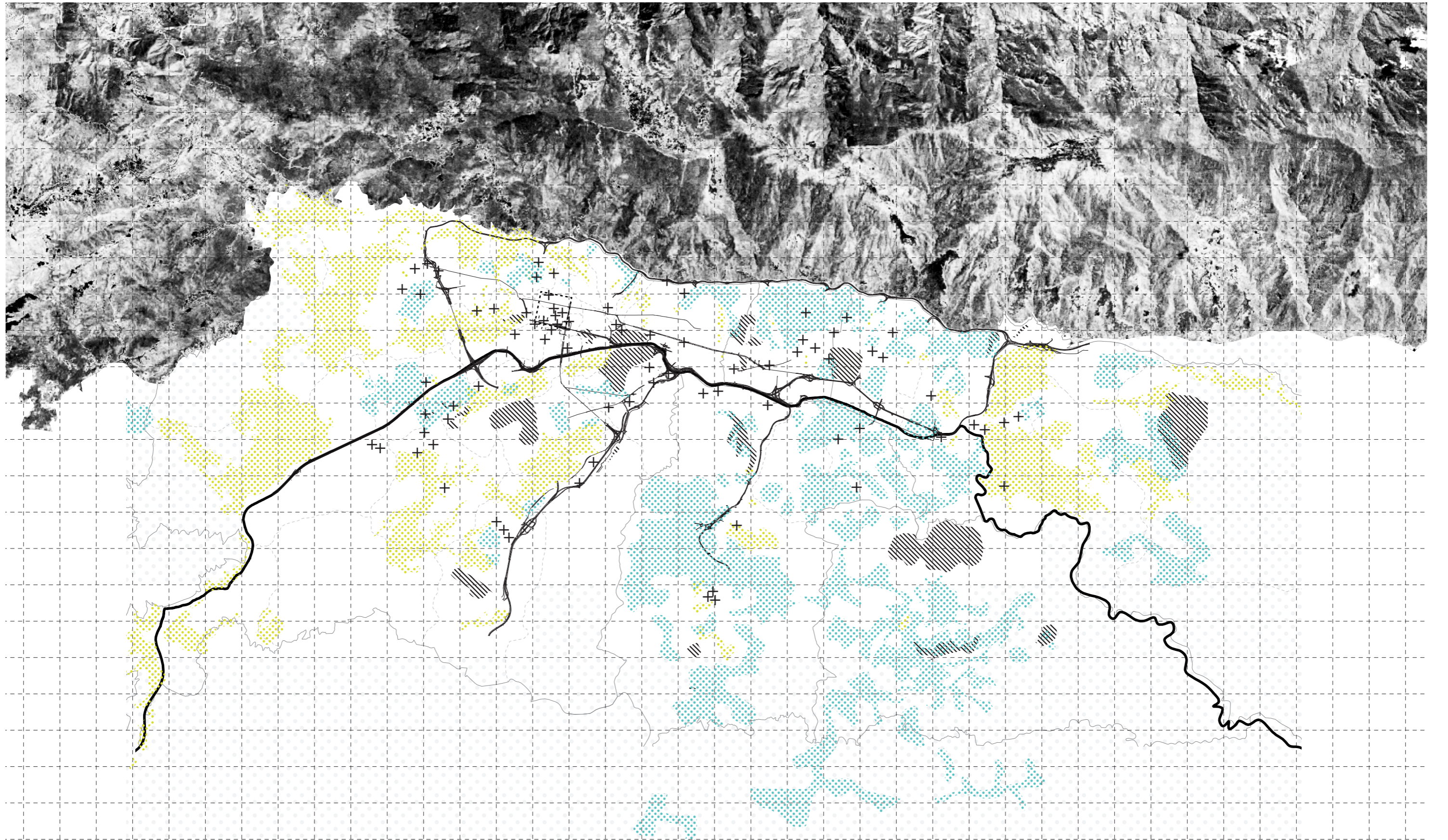
(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA; GALAVIS. 2015)
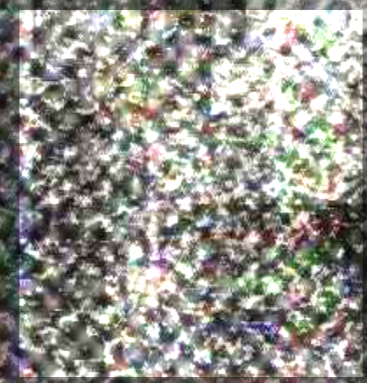
THE LOST GENERATION

Crime and Violence
A State of Mind

Venezuela's crime and violence crisis during the XXI Century is a significant aspect that has plagued the country for years. From 1999, crime rates began to surge, and this trend continued and worsened throughout the years to come. This crisis has impacted all aspects of Venezuelan society, including escalating murder rates, rampant kidnappings, and skyrocketing levels of violence.

Between 2000 and 2014, the United Nations reported a rise in homicide rates within the country, with an increase from 32.9 to 61.9 per 100,000 individuals (García; Aburto 2019, p. 1594). Additionally, during this period, In 2010, approximately 13% of fatalities resulted from violence and injuries, making the country ranked fourth globally in terms of crude mortality rate caused by external factors. (WHO 2016).

It is known that the sector where these violent crimes occurred in the country was located in the capital region, leaving Caracas in the top 3 most violent cities from 2012 until 2016 (The Economist 2016), and spinning around the top 20 in the next years until nowadays (Statista Research Department 2023). Sadly, For the past twenty years, there has been a stringent policy of secrecy imposed on public institutions in Venezuela, making the last official annual homicide data publicly available in 2003 (García; Aburto 2019, p. 1597).

The consequences of the crime and violence crisis in Venezuela brought severe outcomes. The crisis not only affected the safety and security of Caracas citizens but also had a negative impact on the country's economy, as investors and tourists shied away due to safety concerns. Moreover, the proliferation of violence led to a breakdown in the social fabric, where citizens lived in constant fear, trust eroded, and communities became increasingly fragmented, further exacerbating the crisis.

Even though Caracas at its core is a car-based design city, like the majority of cities in America in general, the common and plural use of the city is a constant exercise in fear, as residents are always on high alert for potential dangers. The prevalent robbery and homicide rates have created an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, where one can never be too cautious. Whether it's avoiding certain neighborhoods or taking elaborate precautions to protect themselves and their belongings, the inhabitants of Caracas have become accustomed to living in constant fear and paranoia, which in terms of urbanity can be seen in the obsessive desire and will for control and surveillance, represented in its gated neighborhoods as well as in the intrinsic and independent functioning of *barrios* and invasions structures.

This widespread paranoia has seeped into every aspect of daily life in Caracas. The fear of becoming a victim of crime led many citizens to drastically alter their routines and habits, a method of working and living in the city that had become normalized for many years. Simple activities such as going to work, taking public transportation, or even going out for a meal had been understood and acknowledged as potential life-threatening situations, a fact that condition the use of the city and its relationship with it. "This is a city where you'll see metal grills on a window ten stories up a tower block – not protection against an actual threat, but the symptom of a state of mind" (McGuirk 2014, p. 141). This pervasive sense of paranoia has not only impacted the physical and emotional well-being of the citizens but has also hindered social interactions and the overall quality of life in Caracas, becoming part of its daily state of mind and collective imagination.

This chapter explores into Venezuela's severe crime and violence crisis throughout the 21st century, delving into its profound impact on society and the economy through the analysis of different self developed graph base on private censuses, together with the gathering of pop culture material. This analysis includes statistical data on homicide rates, the effects of economic instability, and the prevalence of corruption and organized crime. Additionally, it examines the socio-psychological consequences on citizens, particularly how fear and paranoia have reshaped urban life and led to a fragmented society by addressing the political factors contributing to the crisis and the long-term repercussions on The Lost Generation

Fig. 34
Ranking of Venezuelan cities among the fifty cities with highest homicide rates globally in 2012.
Own elaboration with sources from Tremera 2016.

RANKING OF VENEZUELAN CITIES AMONG THE FIFTY CITIES WITH HIGHEST HOMICIDE RATES GLOBALLY IN 2012

OWN ELABORATION (SOURCE: TREMARIA 2016)

CITIES RANKING

N. OF HOMICIDES

HOMICIDE RATE X 100000

Ranking	City	N. of Homicides	Homicide Rate x 100000	HAE
3	CARACAS	3,973	122.32	3,247,971 HAE
9	BARQUISIMETO	804	71.74	1,120,718 HAE
20	CIUDAD GUAYANA	578	55.03	1,050,283 HAE
31	VALENCIA	977	43.87	2,227,165 HAE
39	MARACAIBO	784	35.44	2,212,040 HAE

3.1.1 Economic environment

Subsequently, the political instability and economic collapse of the country in the current crisis period represent one of the most significant factors for the crime and violence crisis that the country faced. The deteriorating economy and soaring inflation rates resulted in widespread unemployment and poverty. The dire economic circumstances forced many individuals to resort to criminal activities as a means of survival, exacerbating the already critical crime situation.

According to the National Survey of Life Condition (ENCOVI) of Andres Bello Catholic University, Almost 40% of the highest-income households are in Caracas, and Caracas only concentrates 16% of the households in the country (ENCOVI 2022, p. 43). At the same time, until 2017 the of defending household income was by incorporating more household members into economic activity, which meant young people dropping out of school prematurely (ENCOVI 2022, p. 34), leaving uneducated young people having to face income struggles with premature judgment of good or bad, surrounded by an environment that constantly made its recognition very cloudy.

At the same time, the scarcity of basic commodities and food shortages also contributed to the crime crisis. As the country's economic situation deteriorated, the scarcity of essential goods led to an increase in crimes related to theft and robbery. For many impoverished Venezuelans, stealing to survive became an unfortunate reality.

Hugo Chavez's rise to power marked a turning point in the country's history, with promises of social justice and wealth redistribution. However, the implementation of his policies, such as nationalizing industries and previously mentioned "misiones", had unintended consequences. The inflation in togetherness with the devastating scarcity that the country was going through led to the dismantling of law enforcement agencies, corruption, and the erosion of the justice system creating an ideal breeding ground for criminal activities to thrive.

The scarcity of goods and resources has significantly contributed to the rise of corruption within the country's law enforcement bodies[1]. With limited access to basic necessities such as food, medicine, and even fuel, the demand for these scarce items created a lucrative black market. Consequently, this scarcity has created an environment where law enforcement officials are easily tempted by bribes and corruption to participate in the illegal trade of scarce goods as well as extortion for economic resources.

Moreover, while the government introduced various social programs to address poverty, such as education and healthcare initiatives, it failed to address the underlying causes of the violence effectively, in other words, the government's focus on strengthening political power rather than tackling crime only exacerbated the crisis. Meanwhile, the government also adopted a confrontational approach, labeling anyone who criticized their policies as enemies of the state and stifling dissent, which further eroded trust in the government and weakened law enforcement's ability to effectively combat crime.

1 - Herrera, Isayen; Frances Robles. 2023 "Ferraris and Hungry Children: Venezuela's Socialist Vision in Shambles" The New York Times

Fig. 35 - Up: water crisis in Caracas.
Fig. 36 - Down: Street market, 1 dolar per platic bag.
Adriana Loureiro Fernandez, 2021.
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/home/

Additionally, the politicization of law enforcement agencies and judicial systems during the Chavez and Maduro era further worsened the crime crisis. These agencies became heavily infiltrated by corruption, thus diminishing their ability to effectively combat crime. Consequently, criminals often enjoyed impunity, with many escaping justice due to their connections or political affiliations.

The collapse of Venezuela's justice system worsened the crime crisis, as criminals operated with impunity. Corruption, lack of resources, and political interference hampered the proper functioning of police forces, rendering them inefficient and unable to respond to the growing threats. The erosion of trust in the judiciary further exacerbated the situation, as criminals operated knowing that there would be few or no consequences for their actions.

According to Briceño-León and Camardiel (2018, p. 138), in view of the widespread distrust, the general population consistently considers that the national government's management of the fight against insecurity and crime has been deficient rather than successful. Quantitatively analyzing this relationship between 2014 and 2017, it was found that for every person who considered it good, there were seven who labeled it as bad on average. Specifically, in 2017 more than half of those interviewed (54%) evaluated government management against insecurity and crime negatively, compared to 43% who did so in 2014.

All indicators presented in this

section point to the loss of trust in the protection and criminal justice system, which is due to the fear caused by the actual victimization of families. This loss of trust justifies the restrictions that citizens impose on themselves to avoid being victims of crime and violence, although this implies a significant loss of freedom (Briceño-León; Camardiel 2018, p. 138).

At the same time, the modus operandi of the state responded to the crime crisis with policies that often highlighted political priorities instead of addressing the root causes. Militarization of law enforcement, coupled with heavy-handed tactics, only led to further human rights abuses and violence, without achieving any significant results in curbing criminal activities. Meanwhile, the international community, increasingly alarmed by the situation, imposed sanctions and expressed concerns about the state of human rights and democratic institutions.

In this sense, the erosion of trust in public institutions has played a part in exacerbating the crime and violence crisis. Under Chavez and Maduro, the government's inability to address the growing problem eroded citizens' confidence, causing many to take matters into their own hands. Some resorted to vigilante justice, contributing to a cycle of violence and insecurity.

*Fig. 37
Mother Grieving teenage daughter.
From "Paraíso Perdido" project by
Adriana Loureiro Fernandez. 2017.
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/
paradise-lost*

"DE ESTA LEY EL ARTICULO 4 TE VOY A LEER
PORQUE HOY CONTIGO VAMOS A PROCEDER.
LLEVARÁS BOTAS EN VEZ DE ZAPATOS
Y TE SENTIRAS COMO UN VERDADERO PACO.
SIN CHALECO ANTIBALAS TE QUIEBRAN
PORQUE CON TODOS TENDRAS CULEBRA.
PORTARÁS UN ARMA DE REGLAMENTO
PA' CUANDO QUIERAS PONERTE VIOLENTO.
TU ACTIVIDAD FAVORITA SERÁ LA EXTORCIÓN
CUANDO VEAS A UN JOVEN CON CARA 'E FUMÓN.
SIEMPRE TENDRÁS QUE PEDIR PAL FRESCO
PORQUE PARA TU SUELDO NO HABRÁ PRESUPUESTO.
Y NADIE NUNCA TE RESPETARÁ
PORQUE EN BRUJA TE CONVERTIRÁS."

"FROM THIS LAW,
ARTICLE 4 I'M GOING TO READ TO YOU
BECAUSE TODAY
WE ARE GOING TO PROCEED WITH YOU.
YOU WILL WEAR BOOTS INSTEAD OF SHOES
AND YOU WILL FEEL LIKE A REAL COP.
WITHOUT BULLETPROOF VEST
YOU WILL BE BROKEN
BECAUSE WITH EVERYONE
YOU WILL HAVE A PROBLEMS.
YOU'LL CARRY A REGULATION WEAPON
FOR WHEN YOU WANT TO GET VIOLENT.
YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITY WILL BE EXTORTION
WHEN YOU SEE A YOUNG MAN
WITH A STONER LOOK.
YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE TO ASK
FOR HELP TO BUY A "SODA"
BECAUSE THERE WILL BE NO BUDGET
FOR YOUR SALARY.
AND NO ONE WILL EVER RESPECT YOU
BECAUSE YOU WILL BECOME A WITCH"
(VENEZUELAN FOR POLICEMAN)

Venezuela's crime and violence crisis during the presidencies of Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro represents a painful chapter in the nation's history. Their misguided policies, economic mismanagement, and political polarization fueled the growth of criminal activity, leaving the Venezuelan people trapped in a state of constant fear and insecurity.

During the Chavez and Maduro years, Venezuela's homicide rates reached unimaginable heights. The state's inability to maintain law and order allowed criminal organizations and gangs to control vast territories, leading to the rampant violence witnessed across the country. Citizens, overwhelmed by insecurity, resorted to self-defense mechanisms, violating their own rights and deepening the cycle of violence.

In Venezuela, fear has become a constant in daily life. This feeling of fear is manifested in all social spheres and in all corners of the country. Although places considered less dangerous, such as the home and the streets of communities, offer a certain degree of security, more than half of the population still experiences latent fear in these spaces (Briceño-León; Camardiel 2018, p. 133). However, the highest level of fear is present when people move away from their community and into other parts of the city, or even when using public transportation.

Accordingly, citizens of Caracas, opt for a control and surveillance lifestyle as a means to maintain their safety amidst the pervasive risk of crime. It has become a necessity for the people of Caracas to adopt stringent measures to protect themselves and their be-

longings. The city's appearance is drastically altered by an assertive initiative, where various security measures like walls, fences, barriers, broken glass, electrified and barbed wire, surveillance cameras, and gated community checkpoints are hastily implemented (Kairuz 2010, p. 107). The citizens of Caracas have reluctantly embraced this lifestyle, where constant vigilance offers a semblance of peace and security in an otherwise volatile city. While this control and surveillance approach adoption remains necessary for individuals to safeguard their lives and property in Caracas' high-crime environment, it also limits personal and collective freedoms.
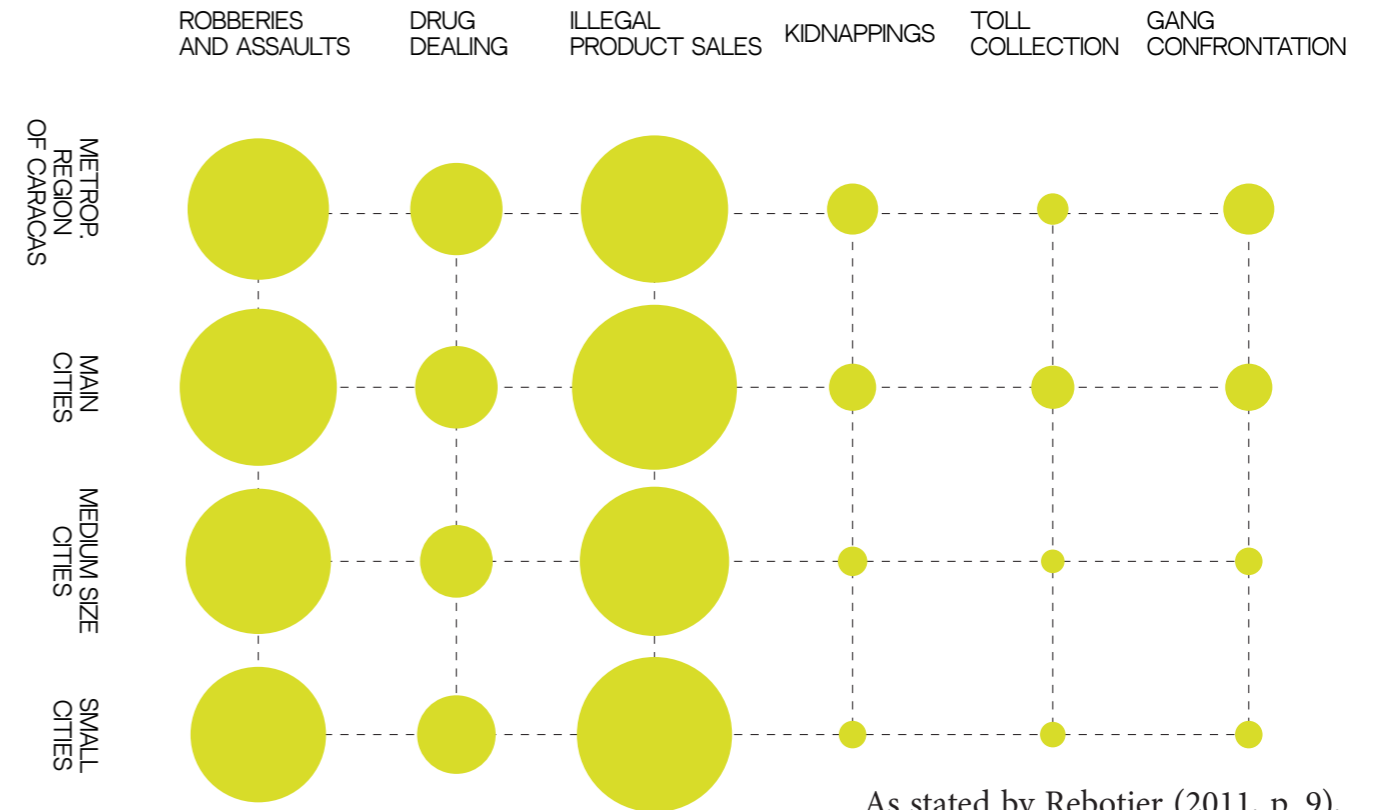
These additions disrupt the integrity of the existing buildings and urban structures, leading to the emergence of spatial divisions and social fragmentation that define the city. This fragmentation limits the possibilities of embracing an urban culture of fluid continuity; it underlines the opposing ideological beliefs that divide Venezuela's contemporary society (Kairuz 2010, p. 107).

At the same time, another key factor contributing to the crime and violence crisis was the widespread availability of firearms. During Chavez's presidency, there was an increase in the number of arms circulating in the country due to relaxed gun regulations. This, coupled with a lack of effective control and regulation, led to an abundance of illegal weapons in the hands of criminals and gangs.

Gangs and organized crime syndicates have thrived amid the crisis, perpetuating violence and criminal activities. The lack of effective governance, coupled with the dete-

Fig. 39
Frequency of occurrence of criminal situations between robberees, assults, drug dealing, illigal seles, kidnapping, toll collectio, and gang conflicts.
Own elaboration with ENCOVI 20217 as source

Fig. 40
Percentage of people who did not report crimes to aouthorities between 2014 and 2017
Own elaboration with ENCOVI 20217 as source

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF CRIMINAL SITUATIONS
OWN ELABORATION (SOURCE: ENCOVI 2017)

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO DID NOT REPORT CRIMES TO THE AUTHORITIES BETWEEN 2014 - 2017
OWN ELABORATION (SOURCE: ENCOVI 2017)

As stated by Rebotier (2011, p. 9), the presence of widely accepted and seemingly uniform security measures works as a basis for unjust social structure and underlying disparities. These inequalities manifest visibly through surveillance systems, and territorially on barriers, alterations in territorial practices, or the utilization of public spaces and public transportation. Additionally, these inequalities contribute to the promotion of fear as a means to enforce social and spatial control, which consequently perpetuates certain societal behaviors and justifies the segregation, distance, and stigmatization of certain groups.

The creation of spaces is closely tied to security practices, which not only serve to validate actions or intentions but also shape and define the reality on the ground. Security practices have a significant impact on urban environments, perpetuating inequalities and marginalization (Rebotier 2011, p. 9).

rioration of social structures, created an environment in which gangs became more powerful, infiltrating neighborhoods and exerting control over communities.

These practices generate a collective misconception of the city, spatially for those who grew up in this violent and criminal environment understood as normal. Instead of understanding the city as a system where diversity converges, it is seen as remains and patches, an agglomeration of different typologies of urban life where the less you interact with it the safer you are.

With a homicide rate consistently ranking among the highest in the world, Venezuelans grappled with daily fears of kidnapping, robbery, and violent crime. Gangs and cartels proliferated, exploiting the weakened institutions to expand their illicit activities, such as drug trafficking and organized crime. The crisis also fueled corruption within the police force, hampering any effective law enforcement efforts.

These groups emerged as a direct consequence of the economic decline and scarcity exacerbated by government mismanagement and failed policies. Financially deprived and with limited opportunities, many young Venezuelans turned to a life of crime, joining armed gangs involved in drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping.

FEARSCAPE N. 1

RELATIONS ON PERCEPTION ON FEAR IN DIFFERENT CITY SCENARIOS REGISTRATED BETWEEN 2014 – 2017
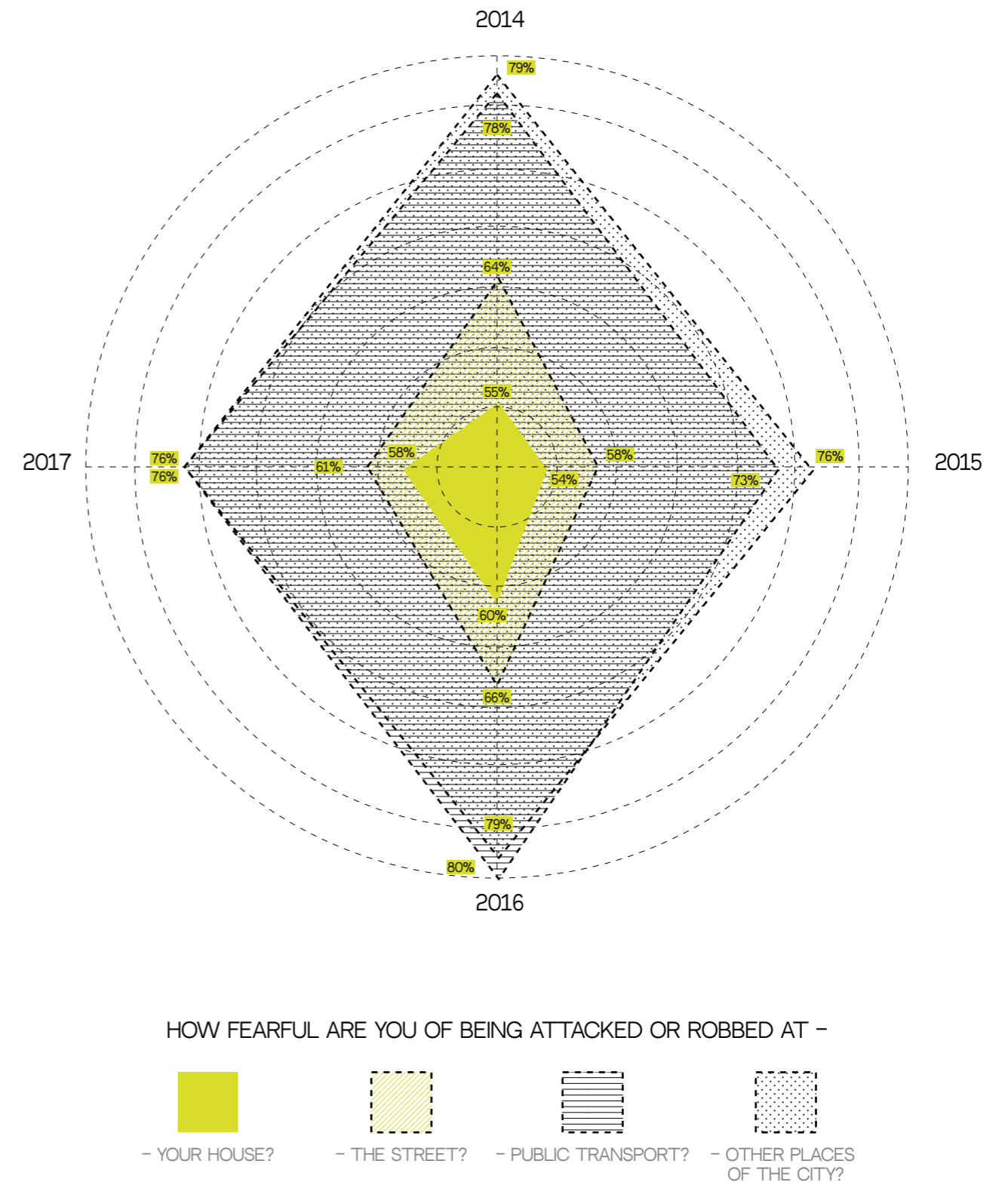
OWN ELABORATION (SOURCE: ENCOVI 2017)

HOW FEARFUL ARE YOU OF BEING ATTACKED OR ROBBED AT –

– YOUR HOUSE?   – THE STREET?   – PUBLIC TRANSPORT?   – OTHER PLACES OF THE CITY?

VIOLENT DEATHS RELATIVE RATE
BY MUNICIPALITY (D'HOY, 2023)

− +

VIOLENT DEATHS BY PARISH BETWEEN JANUARY - JULY 2021
(OVV, 2021)

2 3 4 5 6 18 22

RED
ZONES

ORGANIZED
GANG HQ

2021 RED ZONES FOR ASSAULTS,
ROBBERIES AND THEFTS (CAMARGO, 2021)

26   13
5

PARAMILITAR ARMED GROUPS
(OVCS, 2015)

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES
AND PARISHES

COLONIAL
CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE
RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND
MAIN ROADS

RURAL
AREAS

PARKS AND
GREEN AREAS

− +
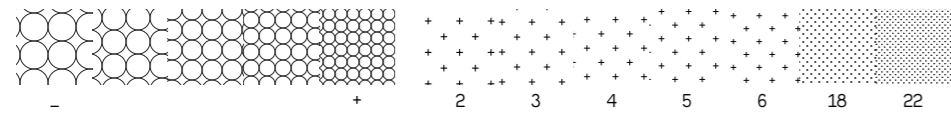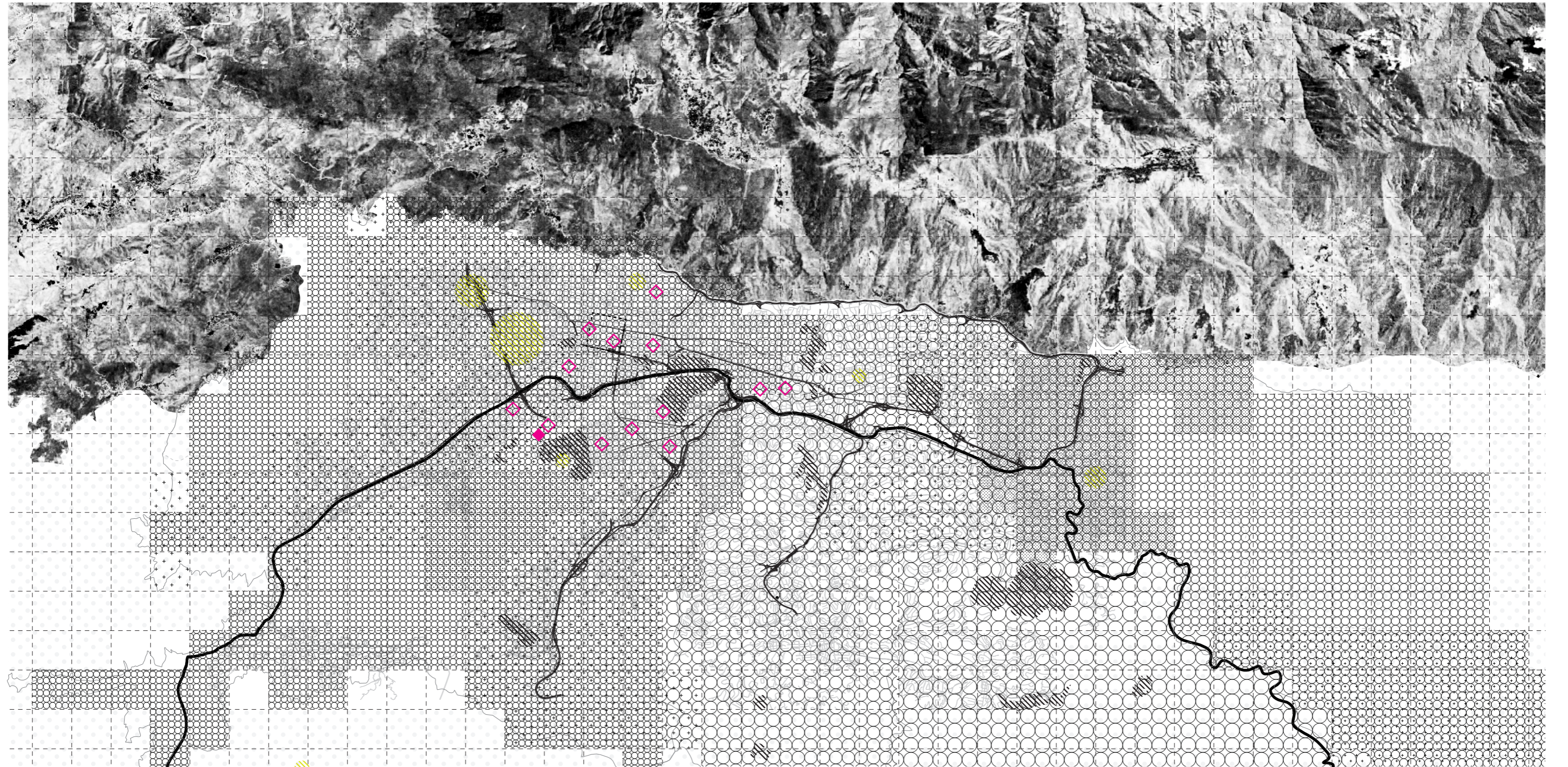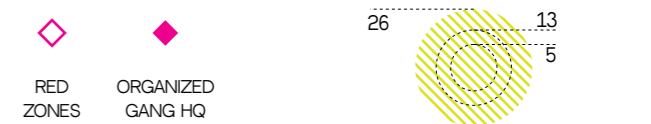
INDEX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCENTRATION
OF POPULATION (SOURCE: REBOTIER, 2009)

3.1.3 Losing a generation

The crime and violence crisis that has developed during the 21st century in Venezuela has been pervasive, impacting all levels of society. Factors such as the availability of firearms, political instability, drug trafficking, corruption, lack of social programs, gang activity, scarcity of basic commodities, and erosion of trust have all contributed to this crisis.

Accordingly, the 2022 monitoring exposed some crime trends in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas, stating that young people continued to be the main target of violence: of 232 events in which the age of the victims was known, 40% were between 15 and 29 years old (OVV 2023).

Hundreds of thousands of citizens fell victim to violent crimes, with countless families shattered by loss, trauma, and insecurity. The exodus of professionals increased as they sought safety and economic stability elsewhere.

The disuse of public space and public life in Venezuela has become a palpable reality due to the fear that has permeated society. As explained by Briceño-León and Camardiel (2018, p. 134), fear has led to self-limitation, resulting in the abandonment of certain activities and the restriction of times and places considered dangerous. This situation has generated a withdrawal from urban life and the limitation of social relations, affecting both the country's economy and sociability.

This surge in crime and violence had profound socio-economic repercussions, impeding social cohesion, economic stability, and overall development. The pervasive climate of fear and insecurity significantly impacted daily life, forcing communities to adopt defensive measures and fostering a culture of distrust and suspicion. This defensive mechanism cultivated an environment that nurtured what's conceptualized as "The Lost Generation". Coming of age in a time when Caracas ranked among the world's most violent cities with the highest homicide rates per capita (2), this Lost Generation grappled with fear and stigma, navigating a landscape marked by prevalent urban practices of seclusion and segregation as commonplace.

The conceptualization of loss, within these constructs, recalls Avery Gordon's framework of loss and haunting as expounded in her book "Ghostly Matters", and it refers to the constraints imposed upon The Lost Generation by the fearscape that enveloped their formative years, hindering their understanding and enactment of an active urban role, thereby fostering an unconscious sense of unauthorized agency.

Fig. 43
Funeral House.
From "Paraíso Perdido" project by Adriana Loureiro Fernandez. 2017.
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/paradise-lost

The Loss
A Collective Trauma

In the two previous sections, we explained what the environment of Caracas has been like in the last 15 to 20 years. The criminality, its effect on the society, and its representation in the territory are evident when you look at it with a focus on the social landscape.

The chapter focus on alayzing the profound transformations in the social and urban landscape of Caracas over the past 25 years. The intention is to explore the escalating crime rates and societal crises that have significantly impacted the city's residents, shaping their interpersonal relationships and overall urban experience. The focus is on the emergence of gated communities and the retreat into private living as a response to pervasive insecurity.

By examining these changes through the lens of theories on public and private identities, I aim to offer a comprehensive understanding of how Caracas' urban environment has adapted to its challenging circumstances. This adaptation has had significant repercussions on the collective social health and civic identity of its inhabitants. The narrative seeks to illuminate the ways in which these developments have reshaped public life, emphasizing the consequences of prioritizing safety and exclusivity over communal engagement and diversity.

The territory of Caracas has been adapting to the different crises that the country has faced in the last 25 years: economic, political, social, and urban. The increase of privacy and private living among small neighborhood groups has not only been a pattern commonly adopted by Caraqueños, regardless of the urban typology in which they live, but it has been a state of mind in which the citizens of Caracas have functioned for many years, and under which The Lost Generation grew and understood both interpersonal relationships and the citizen-city relationship of a suspicious, murky, mysterious and secretive nature.

The Lost Generation was born in important political revolutions for the country, under an intention of social restructuring that sought to put the national focus on the most disadvantaged groups, all this done through a social discourse of resentment. This environment, a legacy of a past generation, a conflict alien to today's generation, was the framework that shaped us as individuals, citizens, and members of communities, on a neighborhood and urban scale. The trauma of The Lost Generation is not only a collective trauma not only because it impacted a specific group in the same way, but also because it is an inherited trauma, from generation to generation, and the social consequences of its breaking point were suffered by people born and raised around the 1990s.

The contempt and fear of the other, the obsession for control, surveillance, and exclusivity over social circles are conflicts that existed for decades before the arrival of Chavez to the country's mandate, but today's generation lived them in an exacerbated and aggressive way in the social and territorial environment of the city.

The exponential growth of neighborhoods and gated communities has been a phenomenon of the Caracas of the XXI century, which does not affect the city by the mere existence or growth of these urban typologies, but by the abandonment and deterioration of the public life necessary for any city.

3.2.2 Adaptative Agency

We grew up in an environment where being exposed to public life was dangerous for our physical integrity and at the same time for our identity creation. Being exposed to the observation of others is an attempt against our person, either for being possible victims of any type of crime or for being discriminated against for not sharing the characteristics of the predominant social group of the place where we are.

The landscape of Caracas, like any large city, fluctuates dramatically throughout it, both the natural landscape as well as the urban and social landscape. Each sector of the city has its identity, its predominant group, and its dynamics. To put the focus on the criticism about the distrust of privacy as individuals and social groups, the intention is not to imagine a homogeneous city where "we are all the same", a naive and completely out-of-place premise that is commonly heard in the speeches of the union of the country, but on the contrary, to encourage heterogeneous and diverse public life, where the differences are celebrated throughout the city.

As a theoretical reference, Richard Sennett's concepts of "Personality in Public" and "Collective Personality" developed in his book "The Fall of the Public Man" (1976) offer a pertinent lens to examine Caracas' social landscape. The evolution of Caracas' urban and social fabric, shaped by political upheavals, economic crises, and increasing crime rates, reflects a profound shift in how its residents engage with public life and express their personalities in public spaces.

Sennett's "Personality in Public" reflects the modern tendency to express personal and private identities in public realms. This shift is evident in Caracas, where the fear of crime and the need for safety have led residents to retreat into private, controlled environments like gated communities and small neighborhood groups. This retreat signifies a move away from a collective public persona towards a more private, individualistic self. In public spaces, Caraqueños are constantly conscious of their safety and identity, leading to interactions that are cautious and guarded rather than open and engaging.

The "Collective Personality," as envisioned by Sennett, involves adopting roles and behaviors guided by social norms in public settings. Historically, this allowed for rich public engagement and discourse. However, in Caracas, the concept of collective personality has been eroded. Caracas' social environment, marked by distrust, surveillance, and social segregation, indicates a decline in shared public roles and interactions, since residents have become more inward-looking, prioritizing personal safety and identity over collective engagement in public life (García Sánchez; Villá 2002).

The challenges faced by Caracas further illustrate this shift. The trauma and social restructuring experienced by the Lost Generation have deeply influenced how we perceive and interact with others in public spaces. There is a heightened awareness of being observed or judged, which in turn affects their willingness to engage openly in public life. Therefore, the concept of adaptative agency reflects a survival mechanism in a city where public exposure can be risky.

This retreat into private enclaves and the emphasis on individual safety and identity over collective public engagement align with Sennett's concerns about modern public life. In Caracas, as in many contemporary cities, the erosion of collective personality and the rise of personal identity in public spaces have contributed to the weakening of the public realm as a place of diverse social interactions and robust civic life.

Continuing from the analysis of Caracas' social landscape, it becomes evident how the city's public realm now advocates more for a homogeneous and individual modus operandi, rather than a collective and diverse public life. This shift forces citizens to adapt their behaviors to fit in and avoid being identified as different, impacting the very essence of public interaction and communal life.

The growing preference for gated communities and private neighborhoods in Caracas is a testament to this change. These spaces, designed to offer safety and exclusivity, also inadvertently promote a homogeneous way of life. The interactions within these enclaves are often limited to those who share similar socioeconomic statuses, further reducing the diversity of experiences and interactions that once characterized public life in the city. This self-imposed segregation nurtures a sense of 'us versus them', which is contrary to the rich, inclusive public life idealized in urban societies.

Furthermore, in Caracas, there is an observable tension between the desire for privacy and the need for public engagement. While privacy is sought after for safety and comfort, it comes at the cost of public engagement and communal interactions. This dynamic has led to a public realm where uniformity and individualism are more pronounced, leaving little room for the spontaneous and diverse inter-

actions that are vital for a vibrant urban life.

In this context, the city's inhabitants have found themselves conforming to a set of unwritten rules and behaviors that align with the predominant social norms of their immediate environments. The fear of crime and the need to belong have compelled individuals to adopt behaviors and appearances that do not attract undue attention or mark them as outsiders. This adaptation is a survival strategy, but it also signifies a loss of individuality and diversity in the public sphere.

Sennett's observations about the decline of collective personality and the rise of personal identity in public spaces are starkly relevant in Caracas. The city's public realm reflects a more guarded, controlled, and uniform environment. The richness of public life that thrives on diversity and spontaneous encounters is being replaced by a more sanitized, predictable, and private way of living.

Accordingly, Caracas citizens, in response to the pervasive atmosphere of criminality, political upheaval, and economic crises, have increasingly preferred a less socially active role in the public realm. This preference is not merely a choice but a survival strategy shaped by the necessity to navigate a city marred by fear and suspicion. The emergence of gated communities and private neighborhoods symbolizes a retreat from the collective life of the city. This retreat is exemplified by homogenization and segregation of gated neighborhoods, where the implementation of security measures and private enclaves indicates a shift towards privacy and controlled interaction over communal urban experiences.

As a result, Caracas' citizens find themselves disengaging from the public life of the city, diminishing their role in the collective framework of Caracas society. This withdrawal from public engagement is a significant transformation that reflects broader changes in the urban social landscape, where the richness and diversity of public life are being replaced by a more sanitized and predictable existence within the confines of privatized and secured spaces.

Thus, García Sánchez and Villá (2002) address in detail how social and urban changes in Caracas have led to a process of residential homogenization and urban segregation. This phenomenon has manifested itself mainly through the proliferation of private security devices and urban barriers, such as residential check points, installed by civil associations of neighbors in middle and upper class neighborhoods to protect themselves from urban violence and personal insecurity. These practices have profoundly modified the use and perception of public and private spaces, contributing to a model of urban life where a privative urbanity is privileged over other forms of social interaction.

This phenomenon has resulted in a public space characterized by surveillance and exclusion, where social interaction is limited and governed by a generalized fear and distrust of the other.

The adaptative agency observed in Caracas, as a response to the city's challenging social and urban landscape, illustrates a profound shift in the citizens' approach to public life. Faced with threats to their physical integrity and identity, residents have increasingly

constrained their human agency in public spaces. This tendency, as highlighted in García Sánchez and Villá's study, reflects a broader pattern of residential homogenization and urban segregation, marked by heightened security measures and restricted social circles. The retreat into private, homogenous enclaves, while a rational response to prevailing threats, represents a significant departure from the diverse and dynamic public realm traditionally associated with urban life. The citizens of Caracas, in adapting to their environment, have inadvertently contributed to the erosion of a collective, diverse urban experience. This transition, aligning with Sennett's concerns about modern public life, indicates a transformation of the urban fabric, where the public realm is no longer a space for free, spontaneous social interaction but rather a domain of controlled, predictable, and private existence. Such changes not only redefine the physical landscape of the city but also reshape the social dynamics and collective identity of Caracas society.

3.2.1 Exclusion Practices

Accordingly, the phenomenon of gated neighborhoods started to exacerbates alongside the crime crisis in Caracas and other major cities of Venezuela during the XXI century (McGuik 2014).

Together with the avoidance of public life in the common spaces of the city, dwellers advocated for a more control urban environment searching to minimaized crime, sense of insecurity, as well as perception of perceived possible threads on other's unusual behavior and appearance. In this sense, the proliferation of these dwelling

typologies represented the social desire of wealthier classes of social homogenization and urban exclusion of "the other" (Rebotier 2017).

Due to avoiding public spaces, various neighborhoods in Caracas have sought alternative means for recreation, coexistence, and social interaction to maintain a sense of normalcy. This has been achieved by transforming gated neighborhoods' private streets into communal areas for activities like running, playing, and exercising, creating a new pattern of daily social interactions. However, This scenario represents a corruption of the urban system, where a distorted image dominates and disrupts the dynamics of Caracas, leading to a further neglect of previously known public spaces.

Even though these controlled environments offer safety and well-being, they also give rise to social isolation issues. In these neighborhoods, the community becomes everything for its residents, fostering a disinterest in the external world, the actual city.

These gated neighborhoods act as physical barriers that reinforce social boundaries, contributing to a segmented urban landscape (García Sánchez; Villá 2002). This division is profoundly social, embedding a sense of exclusivity and elitism within the urban fabric (García'Guadilla 2012). Residents of gated neighborhoods are often part of a socio-economic class that seeks to protect itself from external threats, perceived or real, by fostering environments where interaction is largely controlled. Therefore, this approach to urban living cultivates an environment that stifles the diversity and spontaneity that are essential for a common

urban life.

As a result, by physically gating a community, the design excludes non-residents, effectively determining who is allowed access based on residence rather than public right. This form of urbanity does not merely affect the dynamics of social interactions; it fundamentally alters the residents' perceptions of community, and belonging. It engenders a community atmosphere where "the other" is percieved suspicion or disdain, reinforcing societal divisions based on appereance.

Moreover, the residents' reliance on private security measures, such as surveillance cameras and guarded entry points, underscores a broader societal trend towards privatization of public goods and services (García Sánchez; Villá 2002). These practices not only limit public access but also foster an environment where public interactions are surveilled and controlled, further deterring the spontaneous and organic public gatherings that contribute to a dynamic urban life.

This retreat into privatized living spaces is not just a reaction to crime and insecurity but also a proactive measure by those who can afford to isolate themselves from the broader societal problems. The result is a city segregated by fears and prejudices, where the potential for meaningful public interaction and social integration is significantly reduced.

This model of urban development, focusing on exclusion and restriction, suggests a bleak outlook for the collective social health of Caracas. Instead of fostering a sense of community and mutual responsibility, it encourages a withdrawal

into self-contained bubbles, where interaction with different social groups is limited. The overarching impact is a city where the shared spaces that are essential for fostering communal relationships and civic identity are neglected, leading to a weakened social fabric and a diminished sense of belonging among its citizens.

Gated neighborhoods of Caracas serve as a stark representation of a broader trend towards urban exclusion and social segregation. These developments, driven by fear and a desire for control, do more than just segregate—they alter the very essence of urban life, turning public spaces into zones of exclusion that challenge the fundamental urban rights of access, participation, and engagement.

In the upcoming chapter, we will delve into the development of gated neighborhoods in Caracas, examining the social dynamics influenced by their expansion. This investigation will illuminate a crucial element of Caracas's urban trend and highlight the social issues associated with arbitrary urban developments disguised as safety measures.

Fig. 45
Gated neighborhood in Prados del Este, Caracas.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

The Gated Dimension

Seclusion in Practice

For the ones who were born and grew up in Caracas during the previously explained violent period, the city is a distorted concept. The unbecoming metropolis that was once promised to us, meaning the haunting of the golden years of the country and its bombastic expression in the capital during the long second half of the twentieth century resonates in the collective imagination of The Lost Generation, which was never delivered to us and which we never saw, nor enjoyed. The story of a paradise city that never was, is well better known to this generation as a landscape perceived firstly by its social and political landscape, leaving paradise as a very far secondary matter.

This is demonstrated in the city, seeing it as an urban agglomeration that functions by isolated and intrinsic nuclei, obsessed with privacy and control. Under this premise, the city of Caracas does not function as a system but as a network of patches that are formed depending on their immediate context, City Patches with a private, isolated, and satellite urban life.

Let's describe in this chapter the complex social and urban dynamics of Caracas, particularly focusing on the period of escalating violence that has reshaped the city over the past decades. WeThis chapter explores how this violence has created a distorted perception of the city for those who grew up in this era, leading to the proliferation of gated neighborhoods and other isolated urban enclaves. These City Patches are characterized by heightened security measures, seclusion, and social homogeneity, which have profound socio-territorial consequences. Through an examination of these gated neighborhoods, its aim to understand their impact on the urban fabric, the social dynamics within them, and the broader implications for the city's societal structure. The text also draws comparisons between these affluent gated communities and the self-sufficient but marginalized barrios, highlighting the similarities in their insular nature and the resulting fragmentation of Caracas. By analyzing the interplay between security, freedom, and social division, this chapter seeks to illuminate the challenges of urban living in a city marked by fear and inequality.

1KM   MUNICIPALITIES   COLONIAL   GUIAIRE   HIGHWAYS AND   RURAL   PARKS AND   GATED NGHBH.
       AND PARISHES   CITY CENTER RIVER   MAIN ROADS   AREAS   GREEN AREAS
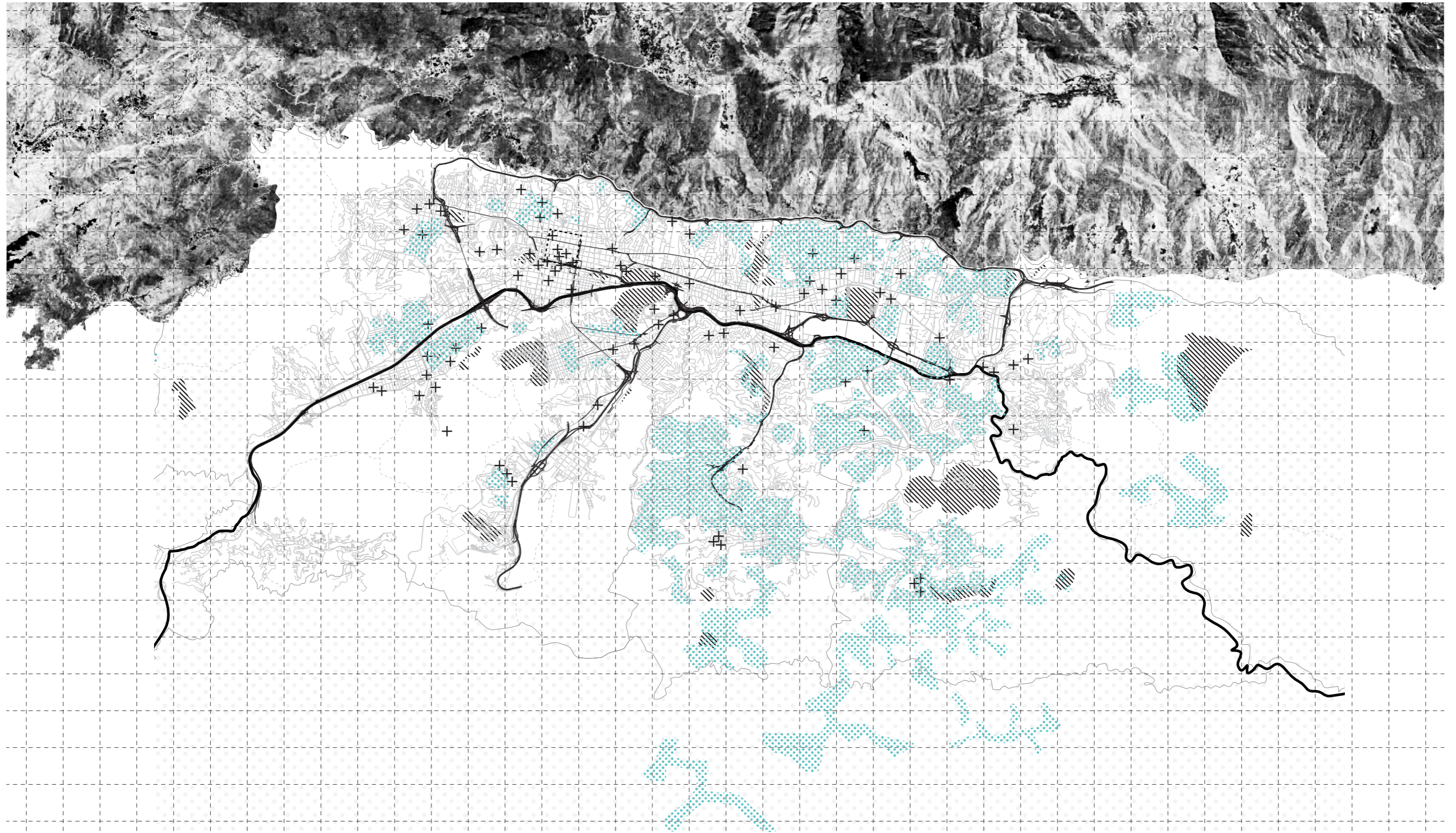
(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA;
GALAVIS. 2015)

3.3.1 Gated Neighborhoods

Due to the escalating crime and violence crisis, Caracas searched for a more controlled and surveillance-oriented lifestyle. While these measures – in theory – aimed to enhance security, they also raised important ethical and social impacts about the erosion of privacy and individual freedoms.

"In Caracas, the fights for the so-called "participatory democracy"[1] have become "spatialized", expressing themselves dynamically both in the private spheres of the residence or family home and the public spheres of the street, square, or highway of the cities. The consequences have been the creation of urban fiefdoms and ghettos in the city that respond to social and political differences; the territorialization of political conflicts; the emergence of highly segregated spaces; the loss of freedom of movement in the metropolis, given the high risk of being identified with the "other"; the growing deterioration of services and the quality of life of citizens; and the emergence of spaces of fear and violence." (Garcia-Guadilla 2012, p. 181)

As Caracas grappled with this new way of urbanity, the tension between security and personal liberty became a defining characteristic of the city's society in the 21st century. The legacy of this surveillance modus operandi continues to shape the social and political landscape of Caracas and serves as a cautionary tale for other regions facing similar challenges.

The increased surveillance and control measures implemented in Caracas came as a consequence of the fear generated by the skyrock-

eting crime and violent environments happening in the city. It is known that the social discomfort and increasing crime rates came first place from the social disputes and riots that occurred in 1989 with the Caracazo as the main detonating event (García Sanchez; Villá 2002, p. 211), nevertheless, the numbers exponentially increased after the incorporation of Chavez into power and developed throughout the 2000s and beyond, as we saw in the previous section, exacerbating the security concerns since then.

"... THE INHABITANTS (OF CARACAS) DO NOT DARE TO GO OUT ON THE STREETS AFTER NIGHTFALL AND EVEN DURING THE DAY, WHEN THEY GO WITH FEAR AND RESERVE TO INSTITUTIONAL PUBLIC SPACES FOR ENCOUNTERING "THE OTHER", WHO IS SEEN AS THE ENEMY, SINCE THE IMAGINARIES RESULTING FROM POLARIZATION LEAD THEM TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN BE THE OBJECT OF AGGRESSION" (GARCIA-GUADILLA 2012, P. 188)

Fig. 48
The chart depicts the limitations on the use of different city spaces due to fear from 2014 to 2017, based on data from ENCOVI 2017. The chart includes three categories: work or study, shopping, and fun or recreation. Overall, the chart shows how fear has influenced the reduction in the use of these city spaces over the specified years.
Own elaboration with ENCOVI 20217 as source

1 - "These are territorial-based organizations whose formation has both positive and negative impacts on the conformation has positive and negative impacts on the spatial and social configuration and on the decision-making process about the local space of Caracas." (Garcia-Guadilla 2012, p. 190)

FEARSCAPE N. 2

RELATIONS ON THE LIMITATION ON THE USE OF DIFFERENT CITY SPACES REGISTRATED BETWEEN 2014 – 2017

OWN ELABORATION (SOURCE: ENCOVI 2017)

2014

60%
57%
40%
2017   71% 69% 50%   37%   63% 65%   2015
43%
67%
69%

2016

OUT OF FEAR YOU CURRENTLY HAVE LIMITED FREQUENTING PLACES FOR –

WROK OR STUDY?   SHOPPING?   FUN OR RECREATION?

Caracas as a city characterized by a striking paradox of wealth and poverty, together with the violent modern phase, has this one growing phenomenon that has become increasingly visible in the city's landscape: gated neighborhoods. These enclaves of privilege are distinctive not only for their appearance but also for their significant impact on the urban environment and the societal fabric of Caracas.

This concept is commonly known in the English vocabulary as "gated community" (Almandoz 2012; Gomer Herrera, Spirkoska 2009; Rebotier 2011; Garcia Sanchez, Villa 2002), however, I decided to call them gated neighborhood since it is the closest translation to the Spanish word we use in Caracas to refer to this typology "urbanización cerrada". The decision to change the word "community" to "neighborhood" came from the desire to depict most accurately the environment that occurs inside them. Not a community but an enclave of residential houses or buildings, referring mostly to the urban typology which creates a specific urban and social phenomenon, which does not necessarily have as a consequence a sense of community.

The most obvious and defining feature of these neighborhoods is their imposing walls and high fences (Rebotier 2009). These barriers serve to physically seclude the residents from the surrounding urban environment, creating an exclusive and protected enclave. The walls are often adorned with surveillance cameras and barbed wire, emphasizing the desire for security and seclusion.

Likewise, access to these gated neighborhoods is heavily con-trolled. Entry points are monitored by security personnel who scrutinize all incoming and outgoing traffic. This careful vetting of visitors aims to create an atmosphere of safety for residents but also reinforces the notion of exclusion. These entry points and their derivatives control the access of outsiders to residential developments and establish mechanisms for surveillance and intermittent or permanent selective obstruction of such access. In this way, neighborhood sociability is privileged over other forms of social interaction (García Sánchez; Villá 2002, p. 209).

Consequently, these city areas not only tend to attract a specific demographic but it is designed for these specific groups of people, often the more affluent sections of the population. Thus, this demographic homogeneity resulted in a lack of diversity and social and urban stratification within the city (Rebotier 2011).

As residents are insulated from the city's realities, they often have limited interaction with the rest of Caracas. This inevitably leads to a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by the broader population and the city itself.

In the same way, the proliferation of gated neighborhoods in Caracas has several disruptive effects on the urban environment, from its fragmentation to its collective misconception of the city as a whole.

The growth of gated neighborhoods has a very important role in the fragmentation of the city. This geographical separation reinforces socio-economic divisions and reduces opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. As explained by Rebotier (2017, p. 1), "stigma and dominant discourses are grounded in the context of Caracas", stemming from unequal cultural and social relations, commonly resulting in a lack of spatial justice, conceiving justice on the practical basis of redistribution as well as on more symbolic bases of social and cultural recognition.

At the same time, these gated neighborhoods commonly count with their own common spaces, impossible to name public due to the inaccessibility for the rest of the citizens that do not live within the gates. The focus on private amenities within gated neighborhoods usually results in the neglect of public spaces in the city. Public parks, streets, and community areas are often left in disrepair, diminishing the overall quality of life for the broader population. Not only the abandonment of public and common amenities and infrastructure but the privatization of recreational areas affect tremendously the city morphology, dynamics, and social cohesion.

While gated neighborhoods offer a heightened sense of security, this often comes at the cost of personal freedom and privacy. Residents may feel compelled to live under the watchful eye of security personnel and surveillance systems.

While these enclaves offer a sense of security and comfort to their residents, they simultaneously disrupt the urban environment and contribute to the city's social divisions. Finding a balance between security and an inclusive urban environment remains a significant challenge for Caracas as it navigates the complex issues of inaccessibility, freedom of mobility, seclusion, inequality, and fragmentation.

"THE URBAN SPACE OUTSIDE THE HOME IS "LIVABLE AND DESIRABLE" ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO FIND THE RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS OF THE TRADITIONAL DOMESTIC SPACE IN WHICH DISPUTES AND CONFLICTS ARE PREFERABLY RESOLVED BY RECOURSE TO FORCE AND AUTHORITY" (GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ; VILLÁ 2002, P. 230)

Fig. 49
Gated neighborhood in Prados del
Este, Caracas.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

3.3.2 Seclusion nemesis

Moreover, in spite of the fact that this urban typology replies specifically to a medium to high economic stratum (Almandoz 2012), similarities with the other fast-growing urban typology characteristic of Caracas, the *barrios*, can easily be made. While on the surface, these two urban entities seem to exist at opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, a closer examination reveals some striking similarities in their intrinsic functioning. Highlighting how both function as isolated urban nuclei that live for themselves, closing themselves off from the broader city, we can understand Caracas under a broader framework.

Gated neighborhoods in Caracas often boast their own amenities, so residents of these neighborhoods have everything more accessible and to a certain level be self-sufficient. The self-sufficiency within these enclaves is further reinforced by the presence of private security, maintenance services, and utilities.

Likewise, In the *barrios*, a different form of self-sufficiency emerges. Due to limited government services, residents often rely on informal and self-organized systems for basic needs, such as water supply, sanitation, and communal kitchens (García Sánchez; Villá 2002). Community bonds become essential for survival in such an environment, and residents depend on each other for support. At the same time, control over the *barrios* by organized crime gangs in some cases can also restrict the free transit of the *barrios*, as well as its access.

The exclusion from the rest of the city is also a pattern that we can find in both urban enclaves. On one hand, gated neighborhoods can be seen as exclusive islands within the city, closed off from the problems and challenges faced by the majority of Caracas' population. Residents often prioritize the safety and comforts of their enclave, leading to a detachment from the broader urban context, resulting in a lack of engagement in citywide issues.

On the other hand, in *barrios*, residents may not have the luxury of isolation, but they still experience exclusion from the broader city due to their marginalization. Government neglect often means they are overlooked in urban development plans, leading to a cycle of poverty and inadequate infrastructure. The mandate of Chavez has been well-known for its investment in social housing and dwellings, though the acknowledgment of *barrios* as an officially recognized part of the city and the tackling of its needs has been left aside, having a significant and disturbing omnipresence of *barrios* in the city (García Sanchez; Villá 2002, p. 210). The urban segregation faced in the *barrios* is driven by economic, political, and urban factors, making it difficult for residents to break free from their circumstances.

Accordingly, the *barrios* in Caracas grapple with a severe lack of connection to the formal city's transportation infrastructure, exacerbating the divide between the formal and informal urban areas. The absence of reliable roads, public transportation, and adequate infrastructure in these marginalized communities isolates them from the rest of the city. This lack of connectivity hampers residents'

access to essential services, education, and employment opportunities in the formal city, making it exceedingly challenging to foster a cohesive relationship between the formal and informal urban sectors. As a result, it deepens the socio-economic disparities and reinforces the sense of exclusion experienced by inhabitants of the *barrios*, underscoring the pressing need for urban development initiatives aimed at bridging this divide.

The urban dynamics of gated neighborhoods and *barrios* in Caracas, while vastly different in their socioeconomic contexts, exhibit similarities in the functioning of the urban agglomerations (García Sanchez; Villá 2002). Both often isolate themselves from the broader city, creating these satellite urbanities or, as I call them in this research, City Patches. Gated neighborhoods offer a sense of security and comfort by closing themselves off and secluding[2], while *barrios* are pushed to self-organize due to the lack of government

services and its consequences on segregation[3]. In both cases, these urban enclaves reflect the stark disparities that characterize Caracas, and they serve as a stark reminder of the city's ongoing struggle with inequality and division. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that transcends the boundaries of these isolated urban entities and seeks to bridge the gaps that divide the city.

Concluding the discussion on the urban typologies within Caracas, the nemesis between gated neighborhoods and the *barrios* shed light on the intricate social fabric of the city. Despite their contrast in economic status, both these enclaves function as insular entities, closing themselves off from the wider urban landscape. Gated neighborhoods offer exclusivity and self-sufficiency, relying on private amenities and security measures that unveil the intricate interplay between this urban typology and the social structures that thawing within it.

2 - a: obsolete : to exclude from a privilege, rank, or dignity : DEBAR
b: to remove or separate from intercourse or outside influence : ISOLATE
"Seclude."   Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

3 - a: the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means
b: the separation for special treatment or observation of individuals or items from a larger group
"Segregation."   Merriam-Webster. com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster

- LA VOY A SOLTAR.
  LO ÚNICO QUE NECESITO QUE HAGAN, ES SILENCIO.
  … Y QUE ELLA SE QUITE ESOS LEGGINS.

  YO SOY UNO DE USTEDES,
  YO TAMBIEN VIVO ACÁ, EN VILLA SILENCIO.
  YO ERA IGUAL A USTEDES:
  HABLABA DURÍSIMO, MÚSICA A TODO VOLUMEN,
  SANCOCHO LOS DOMINGOS.
  PERO NOSOTROS, LOS DE AFUERA, HACEMOS
  MUCHO RUIDO.
  Y ESO A LA GENTE DE ACÁ LE MOLESTA, NO LO
  SOPORTAN. NOS QUIEREN AFUERA.
  Y SI NO HACES SILENCIO TE PASA LO PEOR...

- TE MANDAN A CALLAR ?

- NO, PEOR... TE DESAPARECEN.

- PERO COMO TE VAN A DESAPARECER DISQUE POR
  HABLAR DURO Y USAR LEGGINS. TU ERES LOCO?

- SSSSH, POR FAVOR.
  NO SON LOS LEGGINS, NO ES LA MUSICA ALTA.
  SOMOS NOSOTROS... LOS DE AFUERA.
  LA UNICA MANERA DE QUE ELLOS SE CALMEN ES
  QUE NOSOTROS ESTEMOS CALLADOS...
  PARA SIEMPRE.

  ASÍ SON ELLOS, ASÍ SON SUS REGLAS.
  ASÍ ES VILLA SILENCIO

3.3.3 Gated Society

The omnipresence of surveillance significantly impacted daily life inside gated neighborhoods. Citizens had to navigate through a city where they were under constant scrutiny, which affected their behavior, choices, and even their sense of freedom.

The proliferation of gated neighborhoods in Caracas during the 2000s era has had far-reaching and complex social consequences. While these developments often promise a sense of security, exclusivity, and an improved quality of life, they also contribute to the deepening of seclusion and inequality within the city. This phenomenon underscores the stark disparities that exist between different socioeconomic groups.

On the surface, these neighborhoods promise security, privacy, and improved living conditions, which can be particularly enticing in a city marked by high crime rates and political instability, offering a seemingly idyllic lifestyle within the chaotic urban sprawl.

However, beneath the surface, the rise of gated neighborhoods in Caracas reveals a disturbing trend toward social fragmentation. The financial barriers to entry create a tangible and symbolic divide between the haves and have-nots, contributing to a social landscape where the rich and poor exist in separate worlds.

One of the most significant issues arising from the proliferation of gated neighborhoods is the exacerbation of inequality. As the wealthy withdraw from the city's public spaces and services, they invest in private alternatives, often leading to a vicious cycle of urban decay in surrounding neighborhoods. In many cases, these developments consume vast amounts of resources, such as water and energy, which are sometimes diverted from public infrastructure, deepening the disparities in access to essential services.

Furthermore, these neighborhoods often create a false sense of security. Although the crime crisis in Venezuela has been an alarming issue in the country for the past decades, the fear of crime is more related to social and racial divisions than it is to the objective distribution of insecurity (Rebotier 2009, p. 7).

The concept that fear in Caracas perpetuates a vicious cycle where the perception of danger amplifies insecurity itself is well-illustrated by García Sanchez and Villá (2002), and Rebotier (2010). The fear-provoked reorganization of urban spaces comes from a traumatic perception of danger leading to the installation of physical barriers, guards, and fences aimed at controlling and even restricting access to public areas in residential neighborhoods. While these measures are implemented with the intent of enhancing security, they inadvertently contribute to the deeper socio-spatial fragmentation of an already segregated society. The physical segregation of spaces and the heightened perception of danger further distance different social groups, exacerbating the sense of division and fear.

This cycle of fear is particularly insidious as it not only separates people but also reinforces the very sense of insecurity it seeks to mitigate. By keeping away those who are perceived as potential sources of insecurity, these neighborhoods inadvertently contribute to the cultivation of more fear. The presence of barriers and guards creates an atmosphere of constant vigilance and suspicion, which ultimately perpetuates a climate of fear and apprehension. In this way, the fear-driven reorganization of urban spaces becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the measures intended to enhance security end up fostering more insecurity and a heightened sense of isolation and division within society.

Gated neighborhoods also have a detrimental effect on the social fabric of a city. They reinforce social homogeneity by isolating residents from diverse experiences and backgrounds. This isolation can breed ignorance, prejudice, and a lack of empathy toward those who live outside the gates. The psychological separation between residents of gated neighborhoods and the rest of the city polarizes society, eroding the sense of common identity that is essential for a healthy actual community, and exacerbating the sense of "the other" and its neglect and contempt.

The study by García Sánchez and Villá (2002) highlights a phenomenon of segregation and homogenization derived from gated communities in Caracas. This segregation manifests itself as a residential homogenization based on what the authors call a vigilant sociability, in which "the other", generally represented by the stranger, tends to be seen as a dangerous power or threat.

Residential homogenization also benefits from the explicit or implicit complicity of political and urban management institutions. These entities, by offloading a portion of their responsibilities in terms of security, public order, and provision of services to the citizenry, perpetuate this social and urban division. This practice, in fact, allows them to disengage from their duties in the management of urban life in public spaces (García Sanchez; Villá 2002, p. 210). This transfer of responsibilities contributes to the deterioration of public spaces and, ultimately, to greater division in the city. By failing to fulfill their duty to guarantee safe and equitable coexistence, institutions perpetuate segregation and contribute to the fragmentation of Caracas society.

The existence of a marked social and urban segregation in Caracas is nurtured by attitudes and lifestyles adopted by both residents of urbanizations and those who live outside them. This residential homogenization is based on a vigilant sociability that generates distrust and fear of "the other" (García-Guadilla 2012).

Much of the interactions in these communities revolve around mitigating the disturbances and conflicts caused by insecurity, whether in the form of past experiences, latent fears, or the mere likelihood of their occurrence. These residents share a collective trauma, coinciding in the common interest of mitigating it on the basis of closure towards the city and public life. This trauma-based linkage "is necessarily constructed by sharing and recreating a semantics of fear against which we try to fight not only without leaving its logic but ironically, by feeding it" (García

Sanchez; Villá 2002, p. 231).

The feeling of fear in a social group generates a rejection of those who do not belong to that group, while at the same time making the streets of the city more unsafe.

This sense of community developed in gated communities easily turns into destructive attitudes, as it tends to reject outsiders. This rejection leads to a demand for autonomy and, paradoxically, the more isolated they are, the less sociable they become (Sennett 1976, p. 317). This dynamic of exclusion of those who do not belong to the group can increase the perception of insecurity in the streets, as it creates a division in society that hinders coexistence and cooperation.

Similarly, Jane Jacobs explains in her famous book "The Life And Death Of Great American Cities" (1961, p. 56) that when streets are empty or perceived as dangerous, people tend to avoid them, which, in turn, makes them even more unsafe. In this sense, fear of insecurity becomes a factor that intensifies social fragmentation and exclusion in cities.

Mechanisms of surveillance and control characterize this not-so-new urban typology and represent a large part of Caracas society, its fears, and its lack of interest in social and urban integration.

On the other hand, the presence of surveillance mechanisms, human and non-human, creates not only an atmosphere of suspicion towards the outside world of these neighborhoods but also has intrinsic consequences.

Through various strategies, such as the creation of communication networks between neighbors through telephones, radios, and email, as well as the implementation of defense protocols, sometimes even involving armed neighbors, the meeting spaces within these gated communities end up being anything but natural. This obsessive desire for privacy and the need for self-protection become central elements of local sociability based on fear, which can be described as a kind of "urbanity of fear" (Rebotier 2011, p. 9). In this context, neighborhoods become urban units that reinforce local social homogeneity and foster a rejection of difference on a broader scale.

Fear drives residents to take refuge in their private spaces and to establish defense mechanisms to protect themselves from possible threats. However, this seclusion and exclusion of those perceived as different often results in further social segregation and the formation of isolated urbanities. At the same time, the perception of "different" enters into the urbanizations and if someone does not identify with the people who live in these neighborhoods, they run the risk of being labeled and discriminated against for not belonging to this homogenization, which, despite belonging to the same social stratum, factors such as race, sexual orientation or even ways of dressing are quickly identified and classified as "different".

Despite the fact the majority of researchers focus on fear relies on the limitation of free use of the city and bestowal of civic proactivity (3), as a citizen of Caracas I can say that experiencing the city on its daily basis involves a constant over conscious on oneself behavior and other's concerning you. Any event out of the ordinary gener-ates an immediate change in the atmosphere. For example, when someone takes photographs or shows excessive interest in talking to a stranger, the atmosphere becomes rarefied. Uncertainty takes over. The need to maintain control and preserve privacy becomes a latent concern. This fear of being exposed, of feeling a loss of control over one's environment, manifested itself in reactions of alertness and distrust. The sense of security was shaken, revealing the fragility of the sense of protection provided by these spaces. "I felt for the first time an indescribable feeling of fear of the unknown, uncertainty and ambiguity that was manifested in the urban sphere as if I were crossing an invisible boundary" (García Alcaraz 2022, p. ix).

Therefore, what I say is that Cara-cas society is accustomed to living under a veil of surveillance and control, making interactions, and the creation and development of self-identity in the spaces of common domains happen under a state of over-consciousness, making it inorganic, ending in what I call adaptive agency, indirectly controlled by anything else but the individual and trigger by an unconscious feeling of unauthorized agency.

The spread of gated neighborhoods in Caracas has had profound implications for the city's social fabric and urban development. The long-term implications of this trend raise important questions not only about urban and viability ethics but also about identity creation, both on a common and individual scale.

THE
LOST
SYNTHESIS

The Street

A car–based paradise

"THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT OF THE CITY OF CARACAS IS SUFFOCATING CAR ORIENTATED AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY VIOLENT"

(GOMEZ HERRERA; SPIRKOSKA 2009, P. 43)

Caracas has grown over the years to become one of Latin America's most populous urban centers (Almandoz 2012). However, its urban planning and infrastructure have been heavily centered around automobiles, which has both defined its landscape and posed significant challenges.

The city's car-centric design is readily evident in its extensive network of roads and highways. Caracas boasts an intricate system of highways and urban arterials that weave through the valley, connecting the city's diverse neighborhoods, districts, and outlying suburbs. This extensive road network is a testament to the city's dependence on automobiles for transportation.

The urban sprawl of Caracas is also a reflection of its car-centric planning. This sprawl has led to a dependency on cars for daily commutes, as public transportation systems have struggled to keep pace with the city's rapid expansion.

The car-centric layout of Caracas has also contributed to stark socio-economic divisions (Marcano 1995). Wealthier residents tend to live in the affluent suburbs on the outskirts of the city, while lower-income communities are often situated on the hillsides, experiencing longer and more challenging commutes (Garía-Guadilla 2012).

Caracas' car-based design is deeply ingrained in the city's fabric, which not only generates a strong dependence on automobiles but its neglect of pedestrian life challenges the appropriation on public domains.

Fig. 51
Simon Bolivar Avenue.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023.

Many parts of Caracas lack adequate sidewalks, and where they exist, they are often narrow and in poor condition. This forces pedestrians to walk close to traffic, making it both uncomfortable and unsafe to navigate the city on foot. This lack of infrastructure for pedestrians makes it difficult to safely cross busy streets.

Likewise, Caracas' urban sprawl has led to a spread-out and fragmented city structure. Residential areas and commercial districts are often separated by considerable distances, making walking an impractical means of transportation for many residents.

The hostility towards pedestrian life in Caracas is a reflection of a broader challenge in urban planning and design. As the city grapples with issues of traffic congestion, crime, and inequality, it is essential to consider the need for more pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and public spaces. The creation of safe, accessible, and well-maintained sidewalks, improved public transportation, and efforts to reduce traffic congestion can help transform Caracas into a city that is more accommodating and welcoming to pedestrians, enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents.

In this sense, the atmosphere of urban life in Caracas has been constrained to minimum interaction between its citizens. Even though the city itself can not be considered easy to manage concerning its territorial extension and especially its population density, the importance given to the creation, development, and growth of common life has been lacking since its modernization period back in the mid-XX Century.

The social and urban problems that Caracas faces today have their inherent burden. From a long history of social neglect, its reflection in the public realm has been constant and increasing, a matter that at the bigging of Caracas's golden age was not that evident, and that throughout the years it became clearer arriving at the contemporary problems.

The following chapter explores the evolution of urban planning in Caracas, focusing on the city's car-centric design and its broader implications. It traces the city's growth into a major Latin American urban center defined by extensive road networks and highways. Covering developments from the mid-20th century to the late 20th century, the chapter evidenciate the enduring impact of these planning choices on the city's layout and social fabric, concluding with an analysis of modern initiatives with photography and maps as main graphic materials.

Fig. 52
Plaza Venezuela, Caracas. 1940
Guia Caracas.
https://guiaccs.com/obras/plaza-venezuela-y-urbanizacion-los-caobos/

4.1.1 Mid-XX Century

Going back to the 1940s, great changes began to become evident both in the approach to urban development and in the patterns of urban society. A clear and firm preference for the singularity and autonomy of the urban structure begins to become evident (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017). It is an energetic celebration of the antagonistic development of the city, an intimate citizen-city relationship that by definition repels the collective.

At the same time, it underscores the idea that road planning will play a preponderant role in determining future urban forms. This implies a significant change in the direction of urban planning, where the original history and structure of the city yield ground in favor of a closer relationship with the current geography, marking a shift in the orientation of urban planning towards a greater consideration of geographical aspects to the detriment of historical aspects (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017). It is then that the engine that moves the projects of public works and territorialization of the city detaches from the formal models and becomes mainly economic.

"Isolation, proposed by these urbanizations as a growth strategy, produces an ordering of the periphery based on disintegration. ... The model of the isolated villa linked to the city by automobile becomes the goal of the citizen with greater resources. If before the checkerboard house implied a longing for the urban, the single-family villa, seed of our new urbanism, proudly contains the germ of the rejection of the city, of its bewilderment and uncertainty". (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017).

A process of national development never seen before in Venezuela begins, and Caracas reflects its maximum expression. International oil companies entered the economic panorama of Venezuela, allowing the development of the individual automobile to be the standard typology for the conception of the new city. "The Caracas of the late 1950s will be the last project of a modern city. You have never been closer to an organic urban system, designed and built ... a modern city of the twentieth century. Everything seemed to indicate that it was possible to smooth, blur, social inequalities in an urban space that is less crystallized, more heterogeneous, less segregated in opportunities and benefits" (Martin Frechilla 1995, p. 101).

The "Plan Regulador de Caracas" (Caracas Regulatory Plan) of 1951 was a significant and decisive urban planning initiative for the city of Caracas. Designed by Francis Violich, Maurice Rotival, and Josep Lluis Sert, this plan aimed to address the rapid urban growth and modernization that the city was experiencing in the mid-20th century. The Plan Regulador was a comprehensive effort to guide and regulate the city's expansion and development, with a focus on improving infrastructure, housing, and transportation, through the zoning of the city.

The plan proposed the expansion of Caracas to accommodate its growing population and address housing developments. It introduced a zoning system that aimed to guide the city's growth in a more organized manner. This zoning system designated areas for residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational purposes.
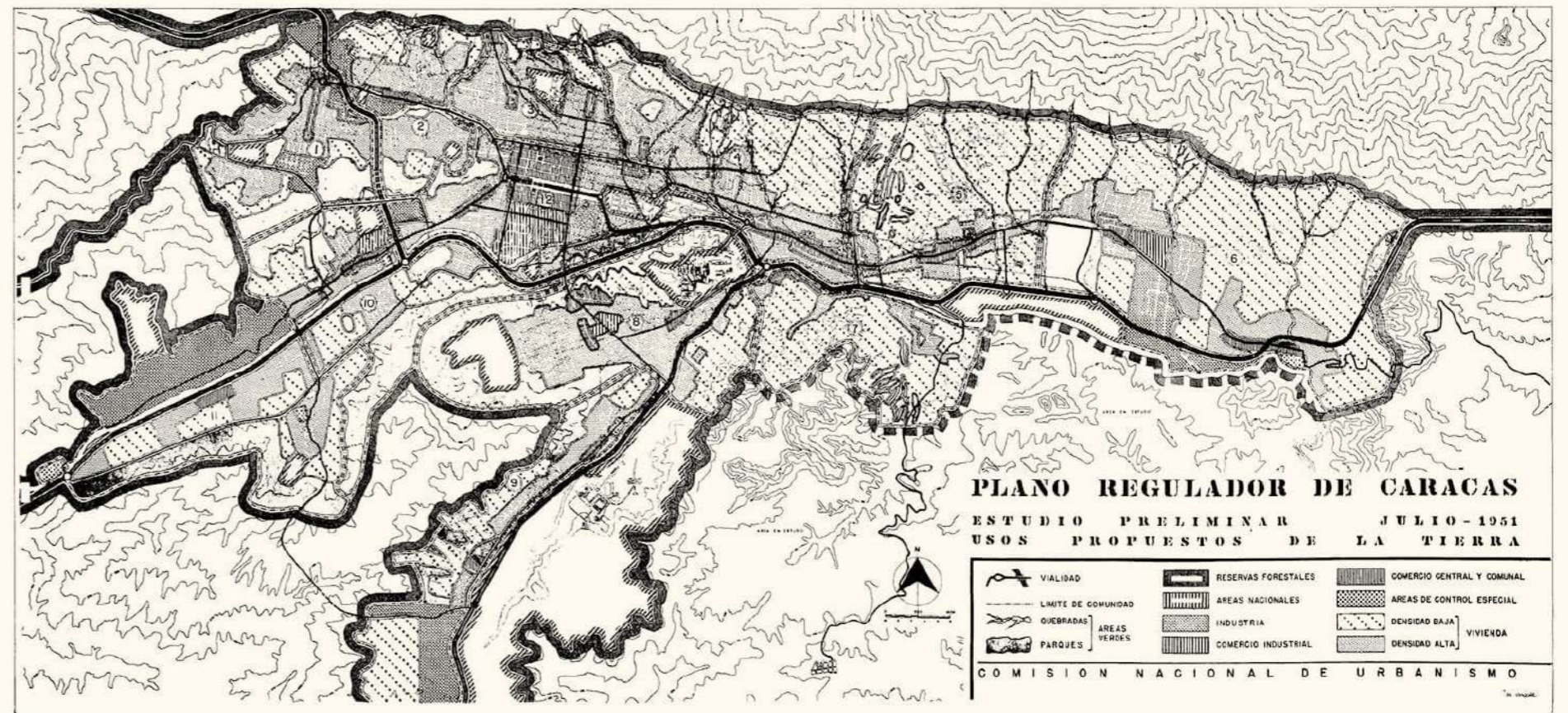
The plan recognized the importance of a modern transportation network. It called for developing a comprehensive road system to alleviate congestion improve mobility in the city and connect the new suburban hubs. This aspect of the plan contributed to constructing major highways and avenues as well as public works, including Boyaca Avenue, mostly known as "Cota Mil", Baralt Avenue, and Prados del Este Highway, and probably the major architectural and public work ever made in Caracas: the University City of Caracas (CUC).

The Plano Regulador of 1951 was designed to guide the city's development over the long term, providing a vision for Caracas' growth and transformation. The Plano Regulador was part of a broader effort to modernize and transform Caracas into a more organized, functional, and livable city.

However, its implementation was guided by the Saxon urban model of modernity, leaving aside both the traditional Latin American city models and the previously chosen European models. "The proposals and laws that emerged from this study constitute a definitive episode in its evolution. The city of the plot, the block, the courtyard, and integrated activities will be replaced, through an urban legislation based on zoned buildings and isolated by lateral withdrawals" (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017). To achieve efficient zoning at the time, it was decided to opt for the Neighborhood Unit as the basic urban form (Martin Frechilla 1995, p. 96), that is to say, for the Plano Regulador of 1951 the main objective was to safeguard housing and its expansion, with interest in the development of the roads of communication of these nuclei with the work centers of the city.
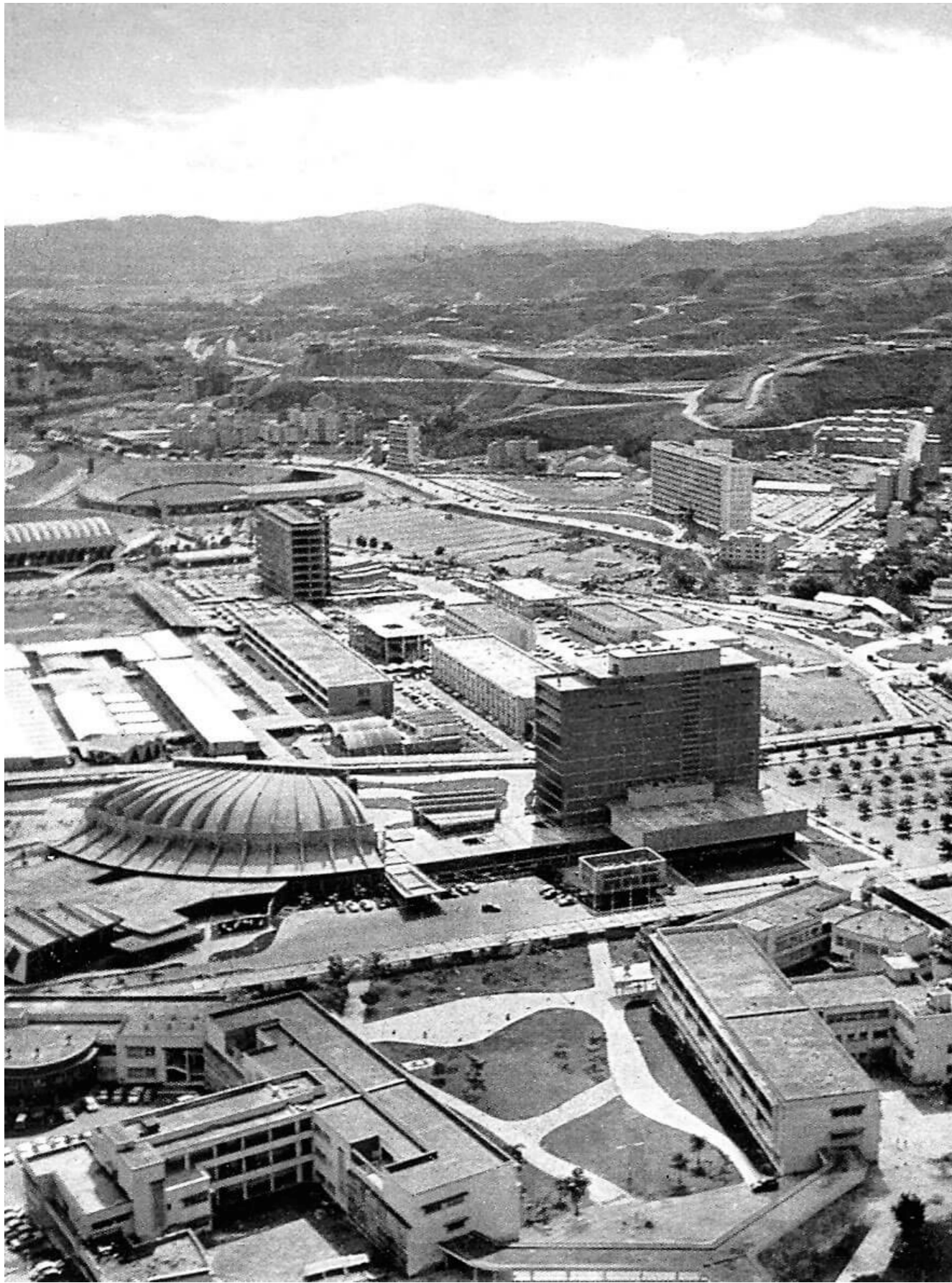
Fig. 54
Shell Photographic Archive.
Communication Research Center.
Andrés Bello Catholic University.
Caracas, 1996
https://guiaccs.com/planos/la-ciudad-moderna/

Fig. 55
Avenida Bolívar in 1953.
Guia Caracas.
https://guiaccs.com/zona-1/

"It is important to note that during this period the road system was built at the same time as the construction of the city, so that if the fabric of the city grew at the same time as its sophisticated road system" (Marcano Requena 1995, p. 195). During the following decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s the city began to experience the most rapid urban transformation ever seen in the country, always focused on the automobile as an instrument for the connection of Caracas, where the greatest number of intra and extra-urban roads were built. Caracas in its administration also began to be subdivided into municipalities, parishes, and urbanizations, "This means that the structure of the city no longer obeys a single criterion, but that there are several structures that overlap without coinciding. One thing is the parish, another the municipality, and another the urbanization. This separation will weaken the citizen's notion of the parts and the whole, and confuse his notion of participation and belonging" (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017).

Developed by the greatest figures of urbanism for the time, the Regulatory Plans of Caracas arose in search of a utopia that almost a century later its consequences are lived. "On the one hand, Rotival: macrocosmic, visual strokes with thick pencils and colors, and an incredible power of synthesis, together with the speed of the short approach. On the other hand, Violinch: meticulous research, cadastre, land use, property, and land prices to culminate in regulation, zoning, and planning, in the successful neighborhood units of the moment. Two illusions: synthesis and control" (Martin Frechilla 1995, p. 96).

At the same time, the processes of road expansion in Caracas were characterized by gentrification practices. The major developments of the main avenues and highways meant changes in the use and value of the land, which affected the local communities, reflected in some cases by displacements, as was the case of the aforementioned Avenida Boyaca and Avenida Baralt (Semeco Mora 1995, p. 49), while at the same time in the following years, urbanizations were developed in the southeast of the city, a sector where the majority of the middle and upper classes have been settling since then.

Fig. 56
Boyaca avenue.
Caracas, c. 1960
http://laguiadecaracas.net/22421/
avenida-boyaca-al-pie-de-la-montana/

4.1.2 Late XX Century

Until the beginning of the 1980s, Caracas had made general urban advances, mostly in roads and sectorized housing units, which represented a modern, buoyant and modern city, the consequences of which began to be seen during this decade, when great social conflicts began to explode, such as the previously explained Caracazo.

By the 1990s, the city underwent a significant transformation from being simply a metropolitan area divided by the evolutionary growth of two municipalities, Libertador and Sucre. The metropolitan area is then divided into five municipalities, each with its mayor and Local Urban Planning Office (OLPU). In this sense, the private sector has delegated the elaboration of proposals for special or sectoral plans for the city, leaving the formulation in the hands of designers without the support of expert advisors from the city (Marcano 1995, p. 253).

This approach, which divides the metropolitan city, explains Marcano (1995, p. 153), into fragments according to political criteria, translates into the application of practices similar to those of a town or a small city with incipient growth, without considering the complexity and specific needs of the capital city.

Likewise, in the decision-making process of the spatial administration of Caracas, the wealthiest social stratum enjoys an evident preference at the territorial-organizational level. The five municipalities into which Caracas was divided in 1990 - Baruta, Chacao, El Hatillo, Libertador, and Sucre - were divided into the previous Sucre municipality, to the east of the city area where the Caracas elite has commonly settled, while the Libertador municipality, to the west of the capital and where the less favored classes are agglomerated, remains intact.

"IN THE FUTURE, WE WILL HAVE A GROUP OF MUNICIPALITIES, SOME POOR, OTHERS RICH, OTHERS LESS POOR, THE SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF CARACAS WILL BE SPATIALLY DELIMITED AND INSTITUTIONALIZED AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL. THIS IS THE CITY WE ARE PRODUCING, TO WHICH WE MUST ADD THE NEW IDEOLOGY OF BEING A "CITIZEN IN CARACAS": IF YOU LIVE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHACAO, YOUR BEHAVIOR IS DIFFERENT, YOUR POLICY IS DIFFERENT, YOUR CITY IS DIFFERENT, YOUR HOUSING AND INCOME ARE DIFFERENT. "HERE YOUR PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED". THIS COULD HAVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF REJECTION OF THOSE CITIZENS WHO LIVE IN A DIFFERENT MUNICIPALITY BY TAKING IT AS A MODEL OF URBAN MANAGEMENT" (MARCANO 1995, P. 255)

4.1.3 Losing Interstices

The city that has developed since then has been restricted to the golden models of the twentieth century. After this great economic boom of the country, followed by the great social and economic conflicts of the 1980s and the catastrophic governments of Chavez and Maduro, all of Venezuela has been in a stagnation that encompasses all its areas, and of course the urban development of its cities.

In the last decades and since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the development of the city of Caracas has been highly stagnant. Except for a few small public works and social housing, interest in the improvement of the city as a whole and its common and shared spaces has been practically abandoned.

"The city had already lost the idea of an urban language of its own, traditional, popular, common and, consequently, everything that develops outside the new laws will occur in a disorderly manner, without any tradition to structure it … This marginal city will be configuring a true multiform and unifunctional network." (González Viso; Peña; Vegas 2017).

The Global Design Cities Initiative, in its Global Street Design Guide released in 2016, defines the street as "the basic unit of urban space through which people experience a city. It is often misconceived as the two-dimensional surface that vehicles drive on when moving from one place to another. Streets are, in fact, multidimensional spaces consisting of many surfaces and structures. They stretch from one property line to another, including the building edges, land uses, and setbacks that define each side. They offer space for movement and access and facilitate a variety of uses and activities. Streets are dynamic spaces that adapt over time to support environmental sustainability, public health, economic activity, and cultural significance". In Caracas, until today, the main focus of the desired urban works is still focusing on the automobile as the main protagonist. "In the middle of the last century, a road plan was designed for Caracas, called Plan Vial Caracas 2000, which contemplated a set of additional roads to keep traffic flowing in a capital city that would naturally grow. This plan was abandoned 30 years ago, so a group of Venezuelan engineers decided to take it up again and re-baptize it as Plan Vial Caracas 2025" (Pezzella Abilahoud 2011).
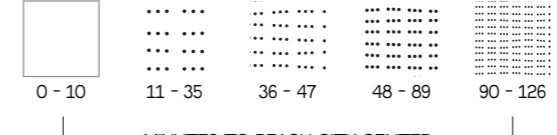
The Plan Vial Caracas 2025 (Caracas Road Plan 2025) is structured around three main systems: the regional expressway, the perimeter expressway, and the urban expressway, totaling approximately 322.3 kilometers of additional roads. This same article explains in detail how the desired new Caracas roads would work, but it does not mention at any time any thought about the other areas of the street destined for other means of transportation such as bicycles and pedestrians. The Caracas 2025 Road Plan includes 122.5 kilometers of internal roads, 56.6 kilometers of perimeter roads, and 143.2 kilometers of connecting roads "that would give hours of happiness to the people of Caracas and to all those who circulate in the capital" (Pezzella Abilahoud 2011). These numbers only indicate how to this day the perception of prosperity and development of urban centers in Venezuela continues to be dictated by the vehicle.

0 - 1K   1K - 2K   2K - 3K   3K - 4K   4K - 5K   5K - 8K
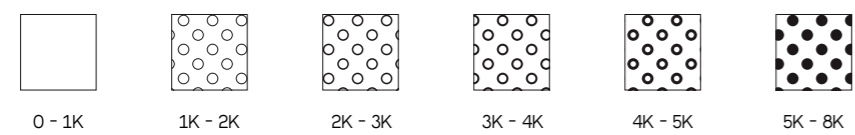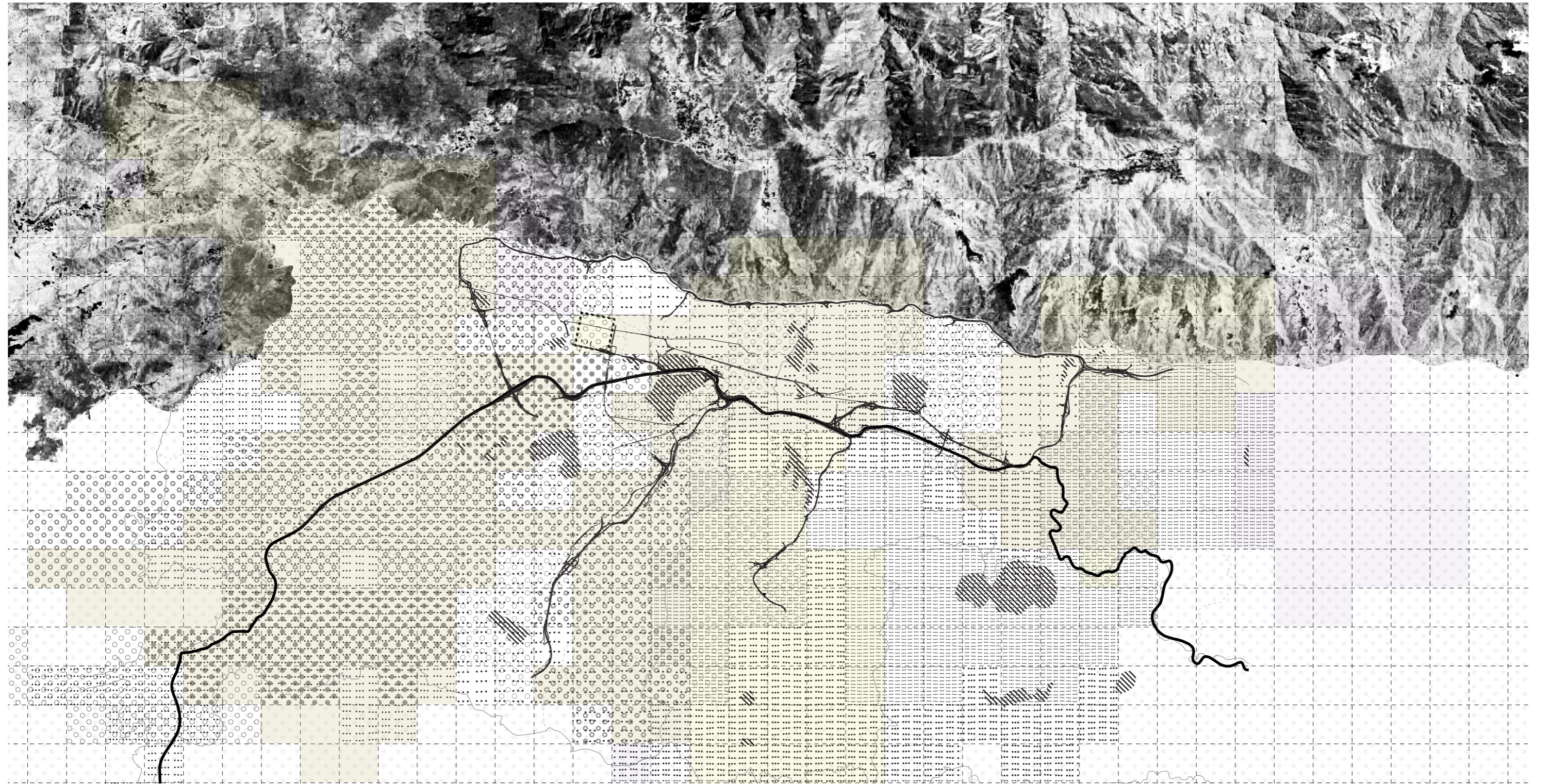
NUMBER OF TRIPS TO THE CITY CENTER AT RUSH HOUR
(SOURCE: REBOTIER. 2017)

0 - 10   11 - 35   36 - 47   48 - 89   90 - 126

MINUTES TO REACH CITY CENTER
(SOURCE: IRRAZABAL. FOLEY. 2009)

MAIN ORIGINS   MAIN DESTINATIONS

WALKING RATES
(MUNDÓ TEJADA. 2007)

1KM   MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES   COLONIAL CITY CENTER   GUIAIRE RIVER   HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS   RURAL AREAS   PARKS AND GREEN AREAS

The Loss
Urban Hauting

As demostrated in the chapters before, in Caracas the importance of roads and dependance on private mobility transports has been a constant feature for decades. The city's reliance on personal vehicles stems from the unreliability of its public transportation system. Due to Caracas' topographical challenges and urban development policies, depending on public transport for mobility within the city poses considerable challenges.

Historically, Caracas has boasted one of the highest rates of motorization in Latin America (Lizarraga 2012). Such dependence on automobiles for daily commutes underscores pressing issues in urban mobility and sustainability.

Caracas also exhibits a diverse and informal character in its collective transport services, which include both public and private operators. Despite the decentralization of ur-

ban public transportation service regulation to the Municipalities, intended to enhance efficiency and local adaptability, it has instead led to coordination challenges and an often chaotic metropolitan transport system.

The streets of Caracas are embedded with various fears, as walking is often perceived as a risky endeavor. The simple act of walking exposes individuals to potential dangers, from criminal activities to discrimination. This fear of public spaces and of being observed has led to a decline in pedestrian activity, reinforcing a sense of alienation and disconnection from the urban environment.

Consequently, citizens of Caracas show a distinct preference for private transportation methods, furthering the individualistic nature of urban life in the city.

The mobility and transportation problems in Caracas, characterized by an overreliance on private vehicles and an inefficient public transportation system, are not merely symptoms of urban planning challenges but also reflect a deeper issue of historic social segregation. This situation has given rise to what can be termed as "urban haunting," referring to Gordon's (1997) concept of social haunting and extrapolating it to urban matters, where the ghost of the city's divided past continues to shape its present. This idea of urban haunting is a continual scenario of the unresolved issues of social inequality and segregation that haunt Caracas, influencing the daily experiences and interactions of its residents, perpetuating a cycle of division and disparity in the city dynamics.

Caracas faces a dilemma in balancing individual security concerns

with the need for diverse public life. While private transportation offers a sense of security, it comes with its own set of problems, such as traffic congestion and environmental issues. Furthermore, the shift towards individualized living and transportation modes leads to a decline in public interaction, weakening the social life within the city. This trend challenges the notion of a cohesive urban community and underscores the need for a more inclusive approach to city planning and development.

Fig. 59
Anarchic trafict and walkability in
Mexico Avenue.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

4.2.1 Walkability

The city of Caracas is understood as a large urban ecosystem where for decades it has been built, developed, and experienced through its roads as a unifying element. To function properly in the city, it is necessary to have a vehicle, preferably one's own, due to the unreliability of public transportation.

For various reasons, the public transportation system in Caracas is synonymous with delays, inefficiency, and chaos. Because of its topographical characteristics, as well as its urban development and management policies, the decision to move around the city depending on its means of public transport is an extremely challenging mission.

By 1982, Caracas already boasted one of the highest motorization rates in Latin America, with 167 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants (Lizarraga 2012, p. 110). This figure has increased significantly over the years, keeping Caracas among the cities with the highest motorization rates in the region today, with an impressive total of 261 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants, which is significantly higher than the national average of 146 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants (Lizarraga 2012, p. 110). This increase has generated a marked dependence on the automobile in the daily lives of Caraqueños, posing significant challenges in terms of urban mobility and sustainability.

At the same time, the variety and informal character of collective transport services in Caracas is evident, with an amalgam of both public and private operators (Lizarraga 2012, p. 107). Likewise, in 2008 the Transit and Land Transportation Law decentralized the competen-

cies related to the authorization, regulation, supervision, and control of the urban public transportation service to the Municipalities (Asamblea Nacional 2008). In theory, the Municipalities grant the right to operate specific routes to the drivers or owners of the transportation units. However, in practice, this independence results in a lack of coordination which significantly hinders the management of metropolitan transport and the provision of accurate information on routes and schedules.

The decentralization of public transport regulatory powers to the Municipalities, although theoretically aimed at greater efficiency and local adaptability, has resulted in a lack of effective supervision. This situation has contributed to the generalized non-compliance with established regulations, generating chaos in the daily operations of public transportation. The absence of defined schedules for "por puesto" vehicles (private collective transport) and their focus on peak hours not only hinder user planning but also exacerbate insecurity, as the sector operates in a disorganized and uncoordinated manner (Lizarraga 2012, p. 109).

Fig. 60
"Un Sobreviviente"
Caracas, 2013
Julio Mesa (juliotavolo)

In this sense, citizens of Caracas exhibit a distinctive preference for private and personal transportation methods when mobilizing through the city. This is a key aspect for the preservation and exacerbation of the individuality setting which Caracas is constantly forced to work on. This inclination towards control is notably evident in the residential areas that often feature gated neighborhoods as explained before, and apartment complexes equipped with comprehensive security measures, reflecting a desire for a secure and regulated environment.

At the same time, the car dependency in Caracas has also led to a plethora of mobility issues, including traffic jams and limited accessibility, further exacerbating the city's transportation woes. The lack of efficient and reliable public transportation options has left many citizens with no choice but to endure long and frustrating commutes. The car-centric culture has hindered the development of sustainable and eco-friendly modes of transportation, perpetuating a cycle of environmental degradation and diminishing the overall livability of the city.

Furthermore, the preference for a controlled environment, both in terms of living spaces and transportation, contributes to a sense of individualism and detachment among the citizens. "The Modernist-planned city, with its separated zones and functions, creates a huge need for transportation to access the assets needed to live a full life. (⊠) Therefore, the zoned city not only makes for an inconvenient everyday life, it also makes for a social challenge as different groups of people (ethnic, economic, trade/professional, age) don't meet natu-

rally. Urban mobility is also about social mobility. The business of getting about connects you not just to where you are going, but also to the places you pass and the people you meet on the way" (Sim 2019, 170). The focus on personal comfort and convenience often comes at the expense of community engagement and a shared sense of responsibility toward the city's collective well-being. This individualistic mindset can hinder efforts to address broader urban challenges and build a more resilient and inclusive city for all residents.

Caracas grapples with a significant lack of pedestrian life, a predicament that profoundly shapes the urban experience in the city. The urban landscape is predominantly characterized by wide avenues, busy intersections, and inefficient sidewalks, which are often narrow and poorly maintained, posing challenges for pedestrians attempting to navigate the city on foot. This deficiency in pedestrian infrastructure discourages walking as a viable mode of transportation, contributes to a cityscape that is more accommodating to cars than to those on foot, and self-feeds urban insecurity issues.

Jane Jacobs in Life and Death of Great American Cities (1961, p. 57) highlights the fundamental idea that public peace in cities, specifically on streets and sidewalks, should not depend exclusively on police intervention, crucial though it is. Instead, it argues that the assurance of lasting peace in urban spaces must emanate primarily from a dense and almost unconscious network of voluntary controls and reflexes, supported by active community participation. This approach recognizes that the responsibility for maintaining

tranquility in the urban environment does not rest solely with law enforcement, but involves a broader collaboration involving citizens and their daily actions.

The notion of a "network of voluntary controls and reflexes" implies the existence of a series of ingrained behaviors and attitudes in the community that contribute to safety and peace on the streets, the author explains. This could include anything from simple gestures of courtesy and respect in daily coexistence to a collective vigilance on the part of citizens to maintain integrity and order in their environment. By highlighting the importance of these voluntary behaviors, the argument suggests that building public peace in cities is a shared effort that goes beyond police measures, fostering an active citizen culture that is aware of its role in preserving a safe and just environment.

"The key attribute of a successful urban district is that anyone can feel personally safe on the street in the midst of all those strangers. He or she should not automatically feel threatened by them. An urban district that fails on this point will go wrong in all other respects and will be an endless source of difficulties for itself and for the city as a whole" (Jacobs 1961, p. 59). Under the same train of thought, David Sim states in his book Soft Cities, Building Density for Everyday Life (2019, p. 209) that "in a wider debate about what the street does, it can be argued that pedestrians improve the perception of security, help build community, and spend more money in local businesses. Passing cars cannot do these things in the same way."

The lack of pedestrian-friendly

spaces in Caracas is further exacerbated by safety concerns. Crime rates in Caracas have been a longstanding issue, and the perceived threat to personal safety discourages people from engaging in outdoor activities, including walking. Poorly lit streets and a sense of insecurity create an environment that is not conducive to the vibrant pedestrian life found in many other global cities. The fear of crime hampers the potential for common spaces to serve as areas for social interaction and community engagement.

On the other hand, Sim (2019, p. 402) emphasizes the unique nature of walking as a form of transport, highlighting the unparalleled level of control individuals have when navigating on foot. Unlike other modes of transportation, walking allows people the freedom to make spontaneous decisions, stop at will, and adapt to their surroundings in real-time. This responsiveness to the environment fosters a sense of connection with the surroundings, providing individuals with the opportunity to engage with their community, observe their surroundings, and experience the urban landscape more intimately. The statement underscores the inherent adaptability of walking, which makes it an inherently human-centric mode of transport, allowing for a personalized and interactive experience with the environment.

The author also delves into the diversity of walking patterns and circumstances among individuals. He explains that people from different backgrounds, with varying needs and objectives, approach walking in distinct ways. Designing for walkability, therefore, must take into consideration this diver-

sity in both walking styles and the circumstances under which people traverse on foot. The recognition of the variety of people walking and their specific situations underscores the need for urban planners and designers to create environments that accommodate different paces, preferences, and purposes, ensuring that walkability is inclusive and accessible to everyone regardless of their unique circumstances.

In essence, both statements advocate for a holistic understanding of walking as a mode of transport. The first statement emphasizes the freedom and adaptability inherent in walking, promoting a connection with the environment. The second statement reinforces the idea that the design of walkable spaces must be considerate of the diverse ways in which individuals walk and the varied circumstances under which they engage in pedestrian activities. Together, these perspectives call for an inclusive and flexible approach to urban design that prioritizes the unique and dynamic nature of walking as a fundamental element of sustainable and people-centered cities.

"Walking will always be a vital component of urban life. It is the most essential and basic form of mobility. Every journey, regardless of the mode of transport, begins and ends with walking." (Sim 2019, p. 190).

In contrast to cities where walking is embraced as a central component of urban life, Caracas grapples with a scarcity of pedestrian-friendly spaces, hindered by safety concerns, challenging topography, and a historical bias towards vehicular transportation.

4.2.2 Apropiative Practices

Consequently, challenges in pedestrian practices in Caracas unravel other citizen issues. In his seminal 1971 book "Life Between Buildings", Jan Gehl categorizes outdoor activities within public spaces into three fundamental types: necessary, optional, and social activities, each imposing distinct requisites upon the physical environment.

Necessary activities encompass those that individuals are compelled to undertake, such as attending educational institutions or workplaces, purchasing goods, awaiting transportation, or completing various errands. These activities exhibit a degree of inevitability, their occurrence being marginally influenced by the physical context. They persist throughout diverse climatic conditions and temporal frameworks, underscoring their relative independence from external environmental factors.

Contrastingly, optional activities are predicated upon individual volition and environmental conduciveness. These encompass leisure pursuits like ambulatory excursions for fresh air, idle relaxation, or solar basking. Significantly contingent on favorable external conditions, these activities are pivotal in physical planning discourse, as they predominantly constitute enjoyable outdoor recreational pursuits.

Social activities, as defined by Gehl, necessitate the presence of others within public domains. This category spans a broad spectrum, from children's play to conversational exchanges and passive engagement, such as observing fellow citizens. These activities

are often the result of the amalgamation of necessary and optional activities, occurring spontaneously as individuals converge and interact within shared spaces.

The significance of Gehl's categorization extends to urban planning and architectural spheres. While physical design elements may not directly modulate the quality of social interactions, they significantly influence the feasibility and nature of these interactions. Thus, astute design in public spaces is instrumental not only in accommodating necessary and optional activities but also in nurturing social interconnectedness and vibrancy, thereby enhancing the overarching quality of public spaces.

The conceptual framework established by Jan Gehl regarding the classification of outdoor activities into necessary, optional, and social categories can be closely related to the challenges impacting walkability in Caracas, specifically influenced by inadequate public transportation and prevailing crime concerns.

In Caracas, the inefficiency of public transportation aligns closely with Gehl's category of necessary activities. The basic needs to commute for work, education, or errands are significantly hindered, forcing residents to resort to private transportation methods. This shift not only reduces the frequency and diversity of necessary activities in public spaces but also lessens the opportunities for spontaneous social interactions that are essential in a vibrant urban environment.

Moreover, the prevalent fear of crime in Caracas directly impacts both optional and social activities. Optional activities, such as leisure-

ly walks or outdoor relaxation, are drastically curtailed when citizens feel unsafe. This reduction in the presence of individuals in public spaces diminishes the very essence of social activities, which rely on the presence and observation of others. The apprehension surrounding crime effectively disrupts the organic development of social connections and communal activities that typically arise in public settings.

The preference for private transportation as a response to these challenges further compounds the issue. The isolation inherent in private vehicle use detracts significantly from the vibrancy of street life. It minimizes the opportunities for casual, incidental interactions that form the backbone of Gehl's social activities category. Public spaces, instead of being lively arenas of social engagement, become mere transitional zones, lacking the dynamic interaction that is pivotal to the health of an urban community.

At the same time, the "Place-Identity" theory presented in Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff's work (1983) can be intricately related to the challenges of creating place identity in Caracas, as discussed in the context of Jan Gehl's categorization of public space activities. In Caracas, the convergence of inefficient public transportation, prevalent fear of crime, and resultant reliance on private transportation modes distinctly impact place identity, leading to a decline in appropriative practices and a diminished sense of community and belonging.

The theory of place identity posits that one's self-identity is partly constituted by their cognitions of

physical settings, which include memories, feelings, attitudes, values, and meanings associated with these spaces. In Caracas, the impediments to a healthy life on public domains fundamentally alter residents' experiences and perceptions of public spaces. These spaces, rather than being seen as areas of communal gathering or engagement, become areas of transit and, in many cases, fear and avoidance. This significantly limits the opportunity for individuals to form emotional attachments and positive memories in these spaces, which are essential components of place identity.

Gehl's concept of social activities, which are crucial for vibrant urban life, is severely impacted in Caracas. With the reduced pedestrian activity and limited engagement in public spaces due to safety concerns and transportation issues, the opportunity for social interactions in public settings is greatly diminished. This leads to a weakened sense of community and a lack of what Proshansky et al. describe as place-belongingness. When individuals do not engage meaningfully with their physical surroundings, the development of a robust place identity is hindered, leading to spaces that feel less like communal environments and more like non-descript, transient areas.

Moreover, the environmental past of an individual in Caracas is shaped by these challenges, leading to cognitions of public spaces that are less about community and social interaction and more about utility, safety concerns, and transit. As Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff outline, the physical environment is inextricably linked to social and cultural existence. In the context of Caracas, the social

meanings attached to public spaces are likely to be dominated by perceptions of inefficiency and insecurity, rather than being places of social and cultural exchange.

The challenges faced in Caracas significantly impact the development of place identity. This results in a diminished sense of community and a reduction in the appropriative practices of public spaces, as theorized by Gehl and expanded upon by Proshansky et al. The reformation of place identity in Caracas, therefore, requires addressing these fundamental issues to restore equal and communal engagement in its public spaces.

Similarly, Henri Lefebvre's studies on "The Right to the City" (1996) provide a pertinent framework for analyzing the urban challenges and issues regarding appropriative practices in Caracas. Lefebvre's theory, focusing on the active participation of individuals in shaping their urban environments, is especially relevant in the context of Caracas, where urban problems have led to a decline in community engagement and a sense of disconnection from the city's public spaces.

In Caracas, the combination of inefficient public transportation, prevailing crime concerns, and a reliance on private transportation methods has significantly impacted the way residents interact with their city. These challenges align with Lefebvre's critique of modern urban spaces, which often fail to facilitate meaningful social interactions and communal bonds, leading to alienation and a sense of disempowerment among city dwellers.

Lefebvre's emphasis on the "Right

to the City" as not just a right to access urban space but to actively participate in its creation and transformation is particularly relevant. In Caracas, the need for more inclusive and participatory urban planning is evident. The city's residents often find themselves excluded from decision-making processes regarding urban development, resulting in public spaces that do not meet their needs or reflect their identities.

The decline in appropriative practices in Caracas, where residents feel less inclined or able to utilize public spaces for social, cultural, or recreational activities, mirrors Lefebvre's concerns about the loss of communal urban life. His call for cities to be more than just centers of economic activity, but also vibrant hubs of social and cultural exchange, is a call to action for Caracas. It underlines the need for urban planning that considers the diverse needs and aspirations of all residents, fostering environments that encourage community engagement and a sense of belonging.

Under this same thoughts chain, Accordingly, David Gouverneur in 2016 emphasizes in his article "The Environmental/Social Crisis and the Challenges of Informal Urbanization" a crucial perspective on urban dynamics relevant to Caracas, advocating for a cohesive urban society through a unique approach to urban development and informality. He argues that for individuals to experience a better quality of life, it must also extend to our neighbors, recognizing the increasing divide between the affluent and the less fortunate. This concept has global relevance, transcending continents, nations, cities, and neighborhoods.

Gouverneur notes that while informality in urbanization is not new, the scale and speed of its growth in modern times are unprecedented. He acknowledges some advantages of informality, such as its rapid, malleable, and transformative nature, which often results in strong community ties and identity. However, he also points out the challenges, including poor location, environmental issues, lack of infrastructure, and physical segregation, which can lead to control by undesirable elements like drug gangs.

In his vision for transforming urban landscapes like Caracas, Gouverneur criticizes traditional urban planning and public housing approaches for being inadequate in addressing the demands of a growing population. Instead, he advocates for a landscape urbanism approach, focusing on improving existing informal settlements and fostering new ones through proactive planning.

Likewise, Elisa Silva (2021), in her discussion about the public domain in Caracas, particularly within the *barrios*, offers a compelling perspective on the value of public spaces and community engagement with *barrios* as an example. She emphasizes that the 1.75 hectares of public space in these *barrios*, encompassing walkways, stairs, squares, and gardens, are not just physical entities but vital aspects of community life that deserve recognition and appreciation.

Silva suggests that these public spaces and their attributes, like the knowledge of vegetation found in gardens, are key elements in addressing the fragmentation of Caracas. By acknowledging and valuing these spaces, one can con-

tribute to the broader goal of urban integration, thereby fostering a sense of a complete and unified city.

Her perspective is rooted in the idea that public spaces in the *barrios* are more than mere infrastructural elements; they are central to public life and community engagement. These spaces serve as critical venues for social interaction, cultural expression, and community bonding, which are essential for the social fabric of the city.

Furthermore, as we delve deeper into the intricate urban frame of Caracas, it becomes evident that the challenges in pedestrian practices and the broader context of public space utilization intertwine with the broader narrative of the city's *barrios*. The historical development of these *barrios*, often sidelined in the Venezuelan capital's urban discourse, offers pivotal lessons in public life and community engagement.

The *barrios* of Caracas, traditionally perceived as informal settlements, represent a significant portion of the city's urban landscape. Yet, for years, there has been a prevailing denial of these neighborhoods as integral parts of Caracas. This oversight not only disregards the rich cultural and social fabric inherent in these communities but also overlooks the potential lessons they offer in fostering vibrant urban life amidst challenging conditions.

Despite facing infrastructural limitations and often being situated in less favorable urban areas, these neighborhoods have cultivated a strong sense of place and belonging among their residents. This is in stark contrast to the broader

trends of urban fragmentation and isolation observed in other parts of Caracas. In the *barrios*, the close-knit community life, the creative use of limited public spaces, and the grassroots efforts in urban improvement provide valuable insights into fostering a cohesive urban society.

As we transition from discussing the current state of Caracas to exploring the development history of its *barrios*, the emphasis shifts to understanding how these neighborhoods have navigated their marginalization. The journey of the *barrios*, from being unrecognized entities to becoming integral components of Caracas's urban identity, challenges the traditional narratives of urban development. It underscores the importance of inclusivity, community engagement, and recognizing the diverse experiences and contributions of all city sectors in shaping the urban landscape.

Fig. 61
Anarchic trafict and walkability in
Mexico Avenue.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

The Informal Dimension
Intrasatelites

When arriving in Caracas, from every entrance of the city, the first thing that shapes the image of the city is the *barrios* watching the city from its hills.

Together with the gated neighborhoods, the *barrios* represent the fastest-growing form of housing (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010). Although the gated neighborhoods represent a significant typology of housing in Caracas, their visual identification is not brutal, yet for the *barrios* it is.

City peripheral self-built houses' agglomeration: The *barrio*. These urban typologies, loaded with historical, political, and social components, frame the city from pole to pole, giving it shape, personality, and complexity. However, the recognition of these settlements within the urban imaginary of the citizens of Caracas is always blurred, as if ignoring their presence was something easy and natural.

We see them, and nothing more. Where did they come from? What does their presence, hugging the city, mean? Also, a lot of people ask themselves when are they going to leave.

To understand Caracas and all its complexity, the issue of the barrios needs its own focus of attention, analysis, and placement in the historical, political, and social context, as well as its understanding of the broader issue of the slums. In this chapter, we will explore the evolution of the barrios in Caracas, delving into their historical context, the social dynamics that have shaped their growth, and the lessons they offer in creating a more inclusive and integrated urban environment. This exploration will not only shed light on a critical aspect of Caracas's urban history but will also reinforce the importance of acknowledging and valuing all facets of urban life to achieve a truly comprehensive and cohesive city.

Fig. 62
Petare, Caracas.
Adriana Loureiro Fernández, 2018
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/ miss-venezuela

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3.4.1 The issue of informal settlements

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), slums are defined, in general terms, as "heavily populated urban areas characterized by substandard housing and squalor' (...) with high densities and low standards of housing" (UN-Habitat 2003, p. 8) both in structure and services. This definition underscores the multifaceted nature of slums, emphasizing the physical conditions and the social, behavioral, and legal dimensions that contribute to their existence.

The same report, through the research and analysis on slums, states that income inequality, lack of economic growth, and immigration are the primary drivers that exacerbate poverty. UN-Habitat (2003) has highlighted that poverty alone significantly increases the vulnerability of populations, particularly in urban areas. When coupled with the lack of affordable housing, these factors collectively lead to the formation of slums.

In the report published in 2003 entitled "The Challenge of Slums - Global Report on Human Settlements 2003" it is explained that the absolute definition of "slums" is difficult due to the different variants found in each global context. In the same report is mentioned that "The only characteristic that is generally accepted is that slums are neighborhoods that are in some respect substandard" and that for an area to be considered a "slum" it must meet at least one of the following characteristics: poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding, inadequate access to safe drinking water, inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure, and unsafe residential conditions (UN-Habitat 2003).

At the same time, the previously mentioned report classifies slums into two broad categories: "slums of hope" and "slums of despair". The first classification refers to "settlements in progress, which are characterized by new, usually self-built structures (...) that are in, or have recently undergone, a process of development, consolidation and

Fig. 63
Usual factors for slum formation
Own elaboration with source from
UN-HABITAT 2003

INCOME INEQUALITY   LACK OF ECONOMIC   INMIGRATION
                                GROWTH

        POVERTY   LACK OF AFFORDABLE
                                      HOUSING

              SLUM FORMATION

upgrading", while the second classification speaks of "neighborhoods in decline, in which environmental conditions and domestic services are undergoing a process of degeneration".

Under this system of categorization elaborated by the United Nations, it is evident that the Venezuelan slums, the *barrios*, comply with the five characteristics necessary to consider an area a slum, and that its typology is mostly aligned with the "slums of hope".

The Venezuelan *barrio*, which develops its maximum expression in Caracas, is are settlement commonly called "informal", which was born from the agglomeration of peasant migrants to the city, which mostly occupied other people's land (Silva, Cardonna, Galavis 2015). They are groups of self-built houses – in Venezuela called *rancho* –, with waste construction materials, which are usually always under improvement or expansion processes (Bolivar 2021), depending on the needs of each family group. Due to their nature of self-development and forced occupation, Venezuelan *barrios* are characterized by null or deficient access to basic services (Silva, Cardonna, Galavis 2015), as well as for being houses with low structural quality, both for their spontaneous condition and for the land where they are commonly developed, being these hills and hills that surround the city, and of difficult access due to their topographical condition.

Similarly, one of the key dynamics shaping the emergence and perpetuation of slums is the intricate relationship with globalization. Globalization, is defined as the process in which "trade and tech-

nology have made the world into a more connected and interdependent place" (National Geographic Society 2023), and its economic and social implication, has both direct and indirect impacts on the formation and persistence of slums in urban areas.

As Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010) explain, the phenomenon of slums is "a key aspect of, not an exception to, the globalized economy", and the *barrios* of Caracas are no exception. The authors explain in their essay "Rules of Engagement: Caracas and the Informal City" the relationship between the phenomena of globalization, and the development and growth of informal settlements taking Caracas as an object of study.

One of the primary drivers is rural-to-urban migration, as individuals move from rural areas to urban centers searching for employment and improved living standards. In this sense, Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010) analyzed Caracas' informal settlements case from the decade of the 1950s since it was "almost entirely developed on the back of the oil boom" during this decade, what made it "the idealization of the postwar urban explosion" (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010). Caracas was the primary city in Venezuela where not only urban but also economic growth was happening buoyantly in the mid-XX Century, which made it extremely attractive for the working class to go to find new opportunities (Bolivar 2021). This occupational pattern continued through time following the urban development force that was occurring in Caracas, and together with globalization's arrival, it started to increase.

1KM · MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES · COLONIAL CITY CENTER · GUIAIRE RIVER · HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS · RURAL AREAS · PARKS AND GREEN AREAS

1966 · 1984 · 2000 · 2014
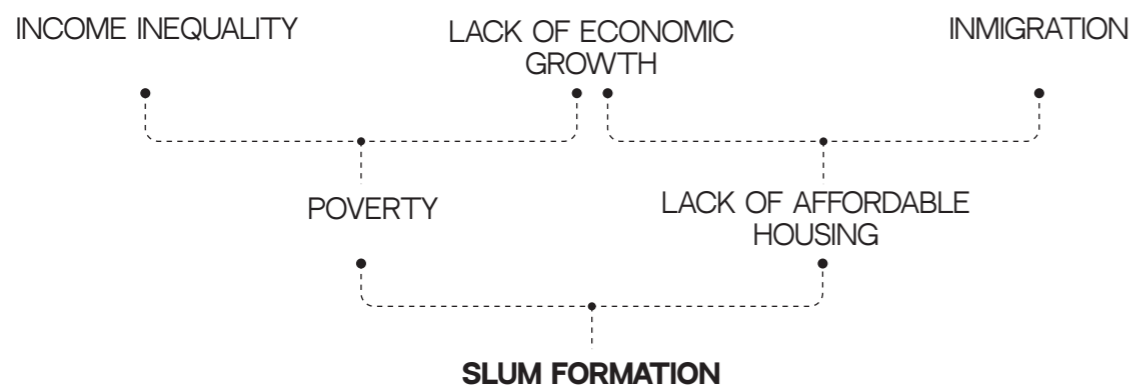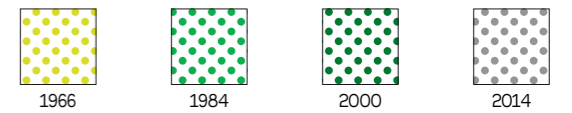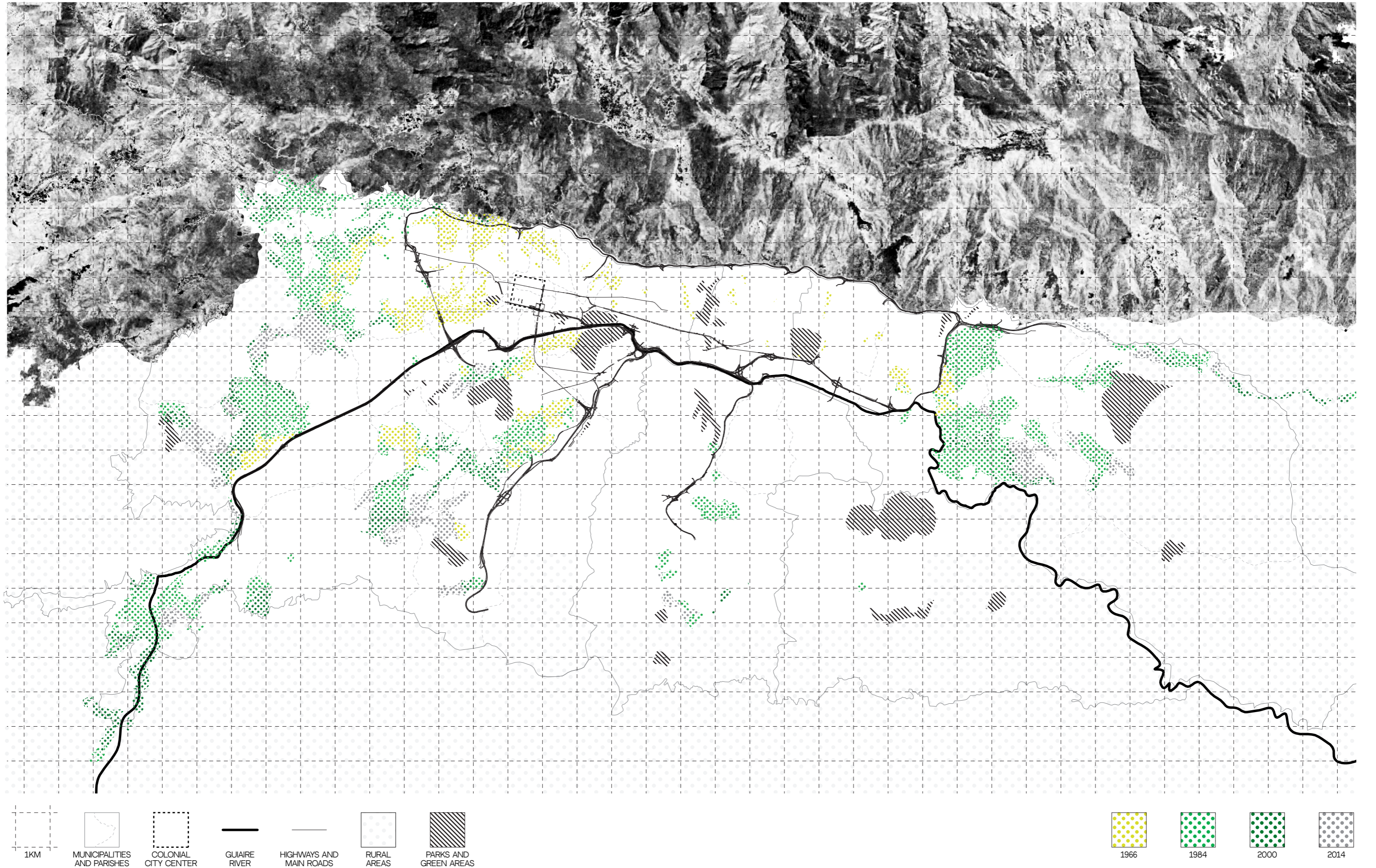
GROWTH OF CARACAS' BARRIOS FROM 1966 TO 2014
(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA; GALAVIS. 2015)

Under this logic, the growth of these settlements has since then been organic and spontaneous, following unoccupied and peripheral lands, most of which belong to the State or private owners, lacking services, both water and electricity, as well as transportation and connectivity [1]. Rapidly and progressively, informal settlements in the Metropolitan Area of Caracas acquired the characteristic of "overcrowding", as classified by UN-Habitat (2003), meaning one of the main occupancy issues for nowadays Caracas, being today the densest *barrios* relative to the size of any city in Latin America, with half of its population living on one-third of the city's geographical footprint [2].

On the other hand, even though *barrios* enter the United Nations category of "slums of hope", the "hope" of it developing into an acknowledged urban settlement is still blurry. "In the absence of appropriate interventions, slums of hope may all too easily yield to despair" exposed the UN-Habitat (2003 p. 9), what is commonly happening in Caracas' *barrios*. Although in a few cases, there are initiatives to promote the appropriation of space in the *barrios*, the appropriation difficulties faced by the *barrios* have been and continue to be referred primarily to the social aspect.

There is a collective imaginary in Caracas where the *barrio* is understood as something temporary or external to the city. To understand the phenomenon of the *barrios* from a social point of view means to confront the subject from the primordial: the word. The complexity of slums begins with their vocabulary. The problem of recognition of slums begins primarily in

the lack of an appropriate mapping, leading to problems corresponding to their measurement, which stems from the lack of a consensual definition [3]. The inclusion of slum enumeration is still conspicuous by its absence in widely recognized monitoring instruments, such as national population censuses, demographic and health surveys, and global surveys [4], basically due to the blurred definition of "what is a slum". Thus, mainstream data collection efforts often lack a dedicated focus on slums and instead rely on proxies such as "share of unauthorized housing" or "share of squatters" to indirectly capture aspects of informal settlements [5].

The omission of explicit slum enumeration from conventional monitoring tools underscores the persistent gap in capturing the intricate facets of informal settlements within formal data sources. While some surveys attempt to address this limitation through proxies and related variables, the absence of a standardized approach to systematically document slums impedes efforts to develop targeted policies and interventions. The lack of a formal assignment of names or numbers to dwellings in these areas has consequences of considerable magnitude in the daily lives of the inhabitants. Routine and essential processes, such as applying for a job, opening bank accounts, and conducting financial transactions, are complicated by the need for a registered address [6]. In sum, this deficiency in the formalization of addresses in certain areas of Caracas not only represents a logistical challenge but also evidences a significant gap in terms of urban inclusion and access to basic services, fundamental aspects for the effective integration of these communities into the social and eco-

1 - Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio

2 - Brillembourg, Alfredo; Klumpner, Humbert. 2010 "Rules of Engagement: Caracas and the Informal City" Rethinking the Informal City Edited by Felipe Hernández, Peter Kellett and Lea K. Allen. Berghahn Books: New York / Oxford

3 - UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlements Programme. 2003. "The Challenge of Slums - Global Report on Human Settlements 2003" Earthscan Publications Ltd: London and Sterling, VA

4, 5 , 6- Nagel, Juan. 2013 "Otro cerro es posible" Prodavinci. https://historico.prodavinci.com/2013/01/26/ciudad/otro-cerro-es-posible-por-juan-nagel/

nomic dynamics of the city.

Another problem derived from the vocabulary of informal settlements is the word "informal" itself. Different important authors attack the term interested in redefining it or detaching it from its negative understanding. Jose Carvajal, in his article "The Complete City" (2019) argues that the dichotomy between "formal" and "informal" in the urban context is not as clear as it might seem.

This phenomenon of informality understood as the lack of a structured plan or non-compliance with established regulations, manifests itself in different sectors of the city, not limited to *barrio* areas [7].

The argument suggests that the first step towards a significant urban transformation lies in the realm of discourse. The author proposes a rupture in the way the city is conceptualized and talked about, in order to recognize and validate the coexistence of different sectors within the same urban environment, no longer seeing it as "formal" or "informal" - which automatically divides it - but as a whole.

At the same time, Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010), attempt to clarify that the nature of the word "informal" is not inherently criminal. The term "informal" should not be conflated with illegality; instead, it denotes activities and structures that exist outside the purview of formal regulatory frameworks, thus being what the authors call "extra-legal."

Moreover, the argument calls for a reevaluation of the traditional perceptions of informalism. Historically, informalism has been

viewed as a temporary, small-scale phenomenon, primarily associated with survival strategies in urban settings [8]. This perspective, however, is no longer adequate to describe contemporary realities. In contrast to these historical connotations, the modern interpretation of informalism encompasses a much broader and more permanent scope.

Regardless, the arrival of these understandings – or misunderstandings – of the informal within the Venezuelan intellectual framework is considered something new. The perception of the informal within the urban imaginary of Caracas has been a sort of conceptual, and social, struggle that has been going on since the middle of the 20th century, when the typology of the *rancho* began to change notably, going from small houses of bahareque [9] and palm roofs to houses built with prefabricated construction materials such as corrugated zinc and clay and concrete blocks.

7- Carvajal, Jose. 2019 "La Ciudad Completa" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/la-ciudad-completa/

8 - Brillembourg, Alfredo; Klumpner, Humbert. 2010 "Rules of Engagement: Caracas and the Informal City" Rethinking the Informal City Edited by Felipe Hernández, Peter Kellett and Lea K. Allen. Berghahn Books: New York / Oxford

9 - "The bahareque is a construction system that has been used for ages for the construction of housing in indigenous peoples of America. This system consists of a series of reeds or sticks interwoven with a mud finish." Structuralia Blog.
"El Bahareque, El Remoto Sistema Constructivo Que Respeta El Medio Ambiente." Blog y noticias sobre ingeniería. https://blog.structuralia.com/el-bahareque-el-remoto-sistema-constructivo-que-respeta-el-medio-ambiente.

3.4.2 Stigmatization of Informality

Before the modernization development that Caracas faced, starting from the late 1920s and finding its peak moment from the 1950s until the mid-1980s, the traditional *ranchos* were notably different than the ones that we know today, the modern *ranchos*. Several authors[10] highlight the importance of this difference, the variation in its appearance, and the impact of this shift in the social fabric of Caracas.

Throughout the twentieth century, modern *ranchos* began to be characteristic elements of the urban landscape in Venezuela, marking a significant contrast with the traditional *ranchos*, which represented a largely rural profile. During the XIX Century, the Venezuelan "*ranchos*" – or as Bolivar (2021) calls it "*Casas de orilla*"[11] – were a form of exurb housing, built with pre-modern techniques and materials[12]. The traditional *rancho* reflected the economic and technological conditions of the time which eventually evolved to the modern *rancho* being a more present and permanent construction in the cities that would characterize the urbanization of the country in the following century.

10 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio

Vegas, Federico. 2021 "El Rancho vs La Quinta. La Urbanización vs El Barrio." La Gran Aldea. https://lagranaldea.com/2021/03/01/el-rancho-vs-la-quinta-la-urbanizacion-vs-el-barrio/.

11 - The term "Casas de orilla" (border houses) "has been used to qualify the nascent housing complexes on the border or periphery of Venezuelan cities, especially at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century."
Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

12 - Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio

Fig. 65
Barrio Tradicional. Prodavinci.
https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

Fig. 66
Barrio Moderno. Urban-Think Tank - Caracas Case. André Cypriano.
https://www.theemptysquare.org/stories/caracas-like-no-city-in-the-western-world

"We believe that the *ranchos* contain the popular wisdom inherited from our ancestors and the recoding of professional technical knowledge learned in the struggle for life" (Bolivar 2021). The *ranchos* – both the traditional from the XIX Century and the modern from the mid-XX century and XXI Century – are formal instruments that exposed the history of Venezuela, Caracas, and its people. Taking the *ranchos* as a clear urban expression of the process of transformation from rural to urban that occurred in Caracas [13], we can see how in them, and the *barrios*, the representation and consequences of the brutal modernization process of the city, becoming a sort of reinterpretation or modern transformation of indigenous housing as it adapts to urban life.

At the same time, through the research of Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010), Bolivar (2021), and Silva, Cardonna, and Galavis (2015) the figure of *ranchos* appears as the representation of the impact of globalization in Venezuela, manifesting itself more intensively in Caracas from the 1950s till today. The *ranchos* arose from the need for people to connect with the trade network, that is historically found in major cities [14].

In the XIX century, these migrations to Caracas were notably less recurrent than the ones that happened due to the Oil Boom era, as punctual "*Casas de orilla*" in the periphery of the city now and then on the panorama [15]. Conversely, with the population growth in the country by the 1920s and the new work market merging in the 1940s from the oil industry, rural migrations started to appear as a more significant and massive pattern in Venezuela's cities [16]. These mass

migrations began to develop what they called at the time the "*barrios de ranchos*" (*ranchos*' neighborhoods), an agglomeration of several *ranchos* together that creates a settlement mass, and from where the nowadays use of the word "*barrio*" comes from [17].

By the 1950s, "the *ranchos* numbered 500,000 in Venezuela and 65,000 in Caracas" (Bolivar 2021). Meanwhile, the modern city was in development searching for an international elegant metropolis image, and the formation of *barrios* was sprawling unstoppably. By that time, Caracas was already facing a dwelling crisis, and the approach from the state was what intellectuals call "war to the *rancho*", which consisted of a plan that had as its ultimate goal to exterminate the *barrios* and solve the dwelling crisis with social housing [18].

In an attempt to address the housing problem in Caracas, the Venezuelan government led at the time by dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez, launched an ambitious strategy with the "Plan Cerro Piloto" (Silva 2014). This plan focused on the creation of social super-blocks, seeking a solution to the growing need for adequate housing for the expanding population. The projects followed the urbanistic principles of Le Corbusier's L'Unite [19] and the modernizing principles of CIAM [20]. Large housing developments were executed under *barrios*' eradication policies, such as the housing block in El Valle and the 23 de Enero complex, projects that involved the demolition of informal settlements to make way for large social super-block complexes (Silva 2014). The objective was to provide a massive residential solution that could absorb a large amount of the population displaced by the

13 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

14 - Chueca Goita, Fernando. 2011 "BreveHistoria del Urbanismo" Alianza Editorial

15 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

16 - Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio

17 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

18 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio

19 - Silva, Elisa. 2014 "Mapeo de los barrios de Caracas" Prodavinci. https://historico.prodavinci.com/2016/06/17/ciudad/mapeo-de-los-barrios-de-caracas-por-elisa-silva/

20 - Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci https://prodavinci.com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.

Fig. 67 + 68
Comunidad 23 de Enero, 1955-1957
Architects Carlos Raúl Villanueva,
José Hoffmann y José Manuel
Mijares.
https://guiaccs.com/obras/comunidad-23-de-enero/

Fig. 69
Cerro Grande Housing Unit.
Architect Guido Bermúdez.
El Valle, Caracas. 1953-55
https://rosswolfe.tumblr.com/
post/135592444833

21 - *Bolivar, Teolinda. 2021 "De las barriadas a los barrios consolidados" Prodavinci. https://prodavinci. com/de-las-barriadas-a-los-barrios-consolidados/.*

22 - *Silva, Elisa; Cardonna, Valentina; Galavis, Odette. 2015 "CABA Cartografía de los barrios de Caracas 1966-2014" Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Espacio*

elimination of *barrios*.

However, despite these efforts from the part of the state, the housing problem in Caracas was far from being resolved. Urban migration continued at a pace that exceeded the capacity of both the private and public sectors to produce affordable housing (Silva, Cardonna, and Galavis 2015). As a result, new *ranchos* began to spring up around the very super-blocks that were built to prevent them (Silva 2014). This phenomenon highlights an urban irony where the housing solutions implemented could not keep pace with the constant flow of new city dwellers, leading to persistence and, in some cases, an increase in the formation of *barrios* (Bolivar 2021).

By the beginning of the 1960s, and with the fall of the regime of Marcos Perez Jimenez, it was revealed through studies that there was a clear lack of resident acceptance of the super-blocks (Bolivar 2021). Resistance lay in a strong preference for self-built housing, which residents could gradually expand and modify according to their specific wants and needs (Bolivar 2021). These custom-built dwellings contrasted with the super-blocks, which were perceived as rigid impositions that did not reflect individual preferences or adapt to the pace and economic capacity of each family.

This signifies a conflict for the city that was developing, between the "formal" city and the "informal" city, explained by Silva, Cardonna, and Galavis (2015, p. 10) as "the *rancho*, more than the *barrios* or the fabric of the informal settlements, materialized the Venezuelan duality, since it represented the regression, the opposite of the

sought modernity, while its informal and anonymous arrangement symbolized the "other" of the planned and designed capital of a rich and modern society".

Except for isolated cases that held a positive view regarding the self-development condition of the *rancho*[21] and a negative view on the neglection of the *barrio* as an urban component of the city[22], by the 1960s, the acknowledgment of the *barrio* as an official urban typology within the city was understood by the minority. The intellectuals of the time, as Silva, Cardonna, and Galavis (2015) refer to them, held a discourse that sought the extermination and eradication of the *rancho* and the *barrio*, a factor that inevitably brought with it a collective rejection and a negative imaginary towards the *barrio*.

These discourses, on the part of politicians and urban planners, related the concept of poverty to laziness, illegality, crime, and vice, and encouraged by the massive propaganda of television drama series and films, this perception of the *barrio* as a quarry of social ills developed and intensified in the collective imagination of other city residents (Silva, Cardonna, Galavis 2015).

Under this train of thought, the idea that peasant immigrants had no right to the city intensified. The traditional *rancho* was constantly compared to the modern *rancho*, seeing the former as settlements where they served as refuges for those with scarce resources who were forced to live in the city due to their jobs, being kept clean and tidy, while modern *ranchos* are perceived as scenarios of hopelessness, where overcrowding give rise to serious social problems and an-

tisocial behavior (Silva, Cardonna, Galavis 2015).

Relating this conflict to Judith Halberstam's research in her book "The Queer Art of Failure" (2011) and Lauren Berlant's "Cruel Optimism" (2011), it seems that problems related to *ranchos*, *barrios*, and their inhabitants were seen as something to blame on or consequence of themselves, as if poverty or need were a life choice or result of laziness, and not part of a systemic problem.

This vision of the *barrio* and its inhabitants generated an omnipresent duality in the social fabric in the second half of the past century. The notion of otherness materializes both socially and urban, and it started to generate an atmosphere in Caracas' society where two worlds live in the same city, and both voluntarily and subconsciously, one decides to overlook the other. "Next to the concrete and steel skyscrapers, in whose crystals and nickel-plated windows the tropical sun sharpens its darts, this amphitheater of *ranchos* forms the crudest contrast because it reveals how two forms of life coexist in the modern structure of the city, two antithetical expressions of the history of a people that has changed its course and that still does not find itself" (Diaz Sanchez 1962, p. 313).

From the decade of the 1970s, the government, through the Banco Obrero[23] and its Barrios Urbanization and Equipment Department, started to have a more receptive approach to the *barrios* issue. The construction of *ranchos* was allowed and infrastructure works were carried out in existing *barrios* as part of an emergency plan (Bolivar 2021). However, the po-

litical parties applied these initiatives sporadically and used these actions in a demagogic manner to gain political support from *barrio* residents. Meanwhile, the sense of otherness also developed for the following decades, finding its explosion in the social conflicts of 1989, El Caracazo[24] (Silva, Cardonna, Galavis 2015).

By the end of the 20th century, an interdisciplinary and participatory approach was adopted, where neighborhood residents worked together with professionals to improve their communities, applying methods of education and community organization. This approach, however, clashed with political party mechanisms and did not last long (Bolivar 2021).

Fig. 70
Petare, Caracas.
Adriana Loureiro Fernández, 2018
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/miss-venezuela

23 - Banco Obrero (BO) "was an institution created in Venezuela on June 30, 1928, attached to the then Ministry of Development, whose function was to facilitate the acquisition of urban houses for poor workers. What in its beginnings was only a financing entity was transformed over the years into an organization in charge of the planning, design, and construction of housing for the middle and working classes of the country."
Control de autoridades. 2012 "Banco Obrero." Proyecto Wikiwand. https://www.wikiwand.com/es/Banco⊠Obrero.

24 - The Caracazo was a series of violent protests and riots that occurred when critical poverty was already close to 40% of the population (Almandoz 2012, p. 16)

Towards the end of the 1990s and the dawn of the 2000s, the policies of Chávez's administration were distinctly shaped by socialist principles, primarily focusing on reducing inequality and poverty. During this era, several social welfare initiatives were launched in the *barrios*, encompassing sectors such as health, education, and housing. Notable among these were projects like "*Barrio Adentro*"[25] and "*Gran Mision Vivienda*" [26], which were designed to provide essential services in the *barrios* and address the country's housing shortage.

However, over the past 25 years, these state-led efforts have been critiqued for their lack of a comprehensive long-term strategy. This strategy should ideally encompass an integrated living environment for *barrio* residents, including access to production and educational facilities, as well as spaces for recreation and well-being, as noted by Carvajal and Silva (2017). Furthermore, government initiatives are often marked by inconsistency, a point highlighted by Bolivar (2021).

In the same vein, the execution of the Gran Misión Vivienda program in Caracas has drawn considerable criticism from experts and scholars focusing on the *barrios* of Venezuela. This criticism is rooted in the belief that the program fails to effectively address the city's density issues and the necessity of coupling housing construction with public amenities and essential services, such as public transportation. Jose Carvajal and Elisa Silva, in their work "El Imaginario de la Ciudad Completa" (2017), have

specifically criticized the housing typology developed under the Gran Mision Vivienda program. They argue that it is ill-suited for the local climate and often situated in locations remote from employment opportunities, imposing additional burdens and costs on the residents and exacerbating social inequity. However, they also acknowledge a recent decrease in the growth pressure of the *barrios*, attributing this trend to a significant population exodus.

Caracas, together with the globe, is facing a decreasing population growth rate, according to Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010), where the authors explained that "Ours is the first generation to begin peeling away from the hyperbolic curve of growth. Consequently, our challenge is not to accommodate an ever-increasing population. Instead, our current challenge lies on issues regarding sustainability and redistribution. For this reason, the coming century will be crucial for creating a sustainable environment for human reproduction on this planet" (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010, p. 126).

This issue of population growth, sustainability, and redistribution brings into question the model of compact cities. It is known that for a healthier and more sustainable urban environment, the model of compact cities has tremendous benefits.

According to Gehl (1971), a compact city led to a city structure where diverse social groups of varying economic statuses, coexisted closely. This close-knit arrange-

ment facilitated a form of urban living where daily activities and social interactions were deeply integrated, showcasing the benefits of an integration-oriented city structure, as Gehl (1971, p. 101) points out. The author states that these compact cities, with their dense mix of functions and social interactions, highlight the advantages of such an urban form, in contrast to the later functionalistic city structures, where the goal was to separate, unlike functions, leading to a more segregated and monofunctional urban landscape.

Although, the difference between a compact city and a dense city has to be very clear. A dense city primarily refers to the concentration of people and activities within a given area [27]. This concentration often results in high population densities, characterized by a large number of people living and working in close proximity.

In contrast, a compact city is a concept that combines density with planning and design principles aimed at creating efficient, sustainable urban spaces [28]. Compact cities are characterized by a deliberate approach to urban planning, which includes high density but also emphasizes the proximity of amenities and services, mixed land uses, and accessible public transport.

Following this logic, if density is used as a yardstick for urban sprawl and sustainability - with the assumption that compact cities are more sustainable - then Caracas emerges as the most compact and sustainable city in Latin America (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010).

On the contrary, density does not make a city automatically compact.

To have a sustainable compact city, work on service redistribution has to be carried out. Is not a matter of quantity of people but a matter of accessed diversity. In this way, the traditional city planning that has been and is still implemented in Caracas has to be questioned. "... The planning machinery in the city has failed to recognize the need for an updated understanding of the urban environment. Current initiatives (...) represent a rehashing of outdated housing concepts, smoothing the *barrios* into consolidated design districts and opening roads that bear no relationship to the inhabitants' concept of a village. The failure to recognize the immediate problems facing the inhabitants of the informal zones of the city has led to a degradation of the environment, a compromise of infrastructure and increased violence and insecurity. The standard slum paradigm is clearly insufficient. We need to change the way we think of cities in the global South" (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010, p. 127).

Similarly, Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010) highlight that Caracas offers an ideal setting for studying architecture and urbanism in the context of informal urban development, due to four key reasons, where two of which are considered very relevant to this research: the first is that Caracas "is profoundly modern, being almost entirely developed on the back of the oil boom that began in the 1950s" (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010, p. 121), relationship – modern urban growth and informal

25 - Barrio Adentro is "a social program that has expanded throughout Venezuela providing health care to city slums and rural communities" Castro, Arachu. 2008 "Barrio Adentro: A Look at the Origins of a Social Mission." ReVista. https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/barrio-adentro-a-look-at-the-origins-of-a-social-mission/.

26 - The Gran Mision Vivienda Venezuela (GMVV) "was created in 2011 by former President Hugo Chávez. Its main objective is to build and benefit Venezuelan families living in extreme poverty with decent housing."
Cabrera, Luisana 2023 "Gran Misión Vivienda: Registro, Planilla, Consulta Y Listado." Tu Web Guía en Gestión, Trámites y Consultas Venezuela. https://consultasvenezuela.com/gran-mision-vivienda-0800mihogar/.

27 - Hess, P. (2014). Density, Urban. In: Michalos, A.C. (eds) Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_698

28 - Sim, David. 2019 "Soft Cities. Building Density for Everyday Life" Gehl Architects Finance & Administration ApS. Island Press

settlements – that we have been analyzing throughout this chapter. The second refers to the fact that "Caracas is currently in political flux", resulting in "a period of uncertainty but also of great opportunity." (Brillembourg, Klumpner 2010, p. 122).

Taking the issue of the informal settlements in Caracas as one of its urban failures, and the stigmatization of these settlements and their inhabitants as one of the many social losses of its citizens, I ask myself how these typologies can work as projectual detonators for imagining new and different scenarios and approaches to the urban and social fragmentation that Caracas faced today.

Under this question, David Gouverneur in "Planning and Design for Future Informal Settlements: Shaping the Self-Constructed City" (2014), advocates for a significant paradigm shift in how informal settlements are perceived and managed. This approach termed what the author calls the Informal Armatures Approach (IAA), posits that with appropriate assistance, emerging informal areas have the potential to develop into well-balanced and appealing urban spaces. Gouverneur (2016) suggests that it is feasible to synergize the dynamism, adaptability, organic structure, sense of community, and place identity inherent in informal settlements with the advantages of advanced urban planning and design.

For the IAA to be successful, specific prerequisites need to be met. First, there must be a recognition of the severe social and environmental consequences of inaction, which includes an acknowledgment of informality as a legitimate urban development model. This recognition calls for innovative strategies to positively influence informal settlements. Gouverneur (2016) emphasizes the necessity of proactive land-banking policies, which can mitigate the exclusionary impacts of market-driven real estate models, gradually leading to more equitable urban configurations. The planning, design, and management interventions should concentrate on areas that communities cannot handle independently. This involves developing a framework, both physical and conceptual, capable of supporting rapid urban transformations. This framework should address public spaces, service delivery, and their temporal evolution; designate zones conducive to self-construction; and progressively integrate urban features typically associated with formal cities.

This perspective is grounded in the understanding that such informal settlements hold untapped potential for creating vibrant, resilient, and sustainable urban spaces. As argued by Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010), the challenge in urban development is no longer about accommodating a rapidly growing population but rather focusing on sustainability and equitable redistribution of services.

Therefore, the question that arises, how can the historical failures of modern city planning in Caracas, characterized by the oversight of cultural and environmental nuances and the unintended consequence of social segregation through zoning, be reinterpreted as opportunities for reimagining urban and social cohesion?

Fig. 71
Petare, Caracas.
Adriana Loureiro Fernández, 2018
https://www.adrianaloureiro.com/
miss-venezuela

Fig. 72
Urban-Think Tank - Caracas Case.
André Cypriano.
https://www.theemptysquare.org/
stories/caracas-like-no-city-in-the-
western-world

Losses and Failures as Design Principles

Towards the project

As we conclude this investigation into Caracas' urban and socio-political transformation, we have traversed through the dense layers of a city marked by profound historical ruptures, persistent socio-economic disparities, and deep-seated political turmoil. The study reveales the intricate ways in which Caracas' urban fabric has been shaped, dismantled, and reconfigured by forces that transcend mere architectural or urban planning considerations.

The specter of the past—laden with colonial legacies, oil booms, and political upheavals—haunts the present, dictating the rhythm and spatial configuration of Caracas. The enduring consequences of these past eras are not static relics but dynamic forces, continually influencing the lived experiences of its citizens and the city's socio-political landscape. As Avery Gordon suggests in "Ghostly Matters" (1997), these hauntings are not mere echoes but active presences, shaping realities and futures.

The concept of the Lost Generation and Lost Interstices are developed in order to depict the profound disconnect between Caracas' urbanity and its citizens. This disconnection, entrenched by years of political polarization and economic mismanagement, un-

Fig. 73
Parque Central.
Caracas, 2023
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez

derscores the challenges of reconciling a city's physical space with its social fabric. The legacy of these unresolved tensions manifests in the everyday life of Caracas, where urban spaces are marked by barriers—both tangible and intangible—that segment its society.

Moreover, understanding and embracing the failure of urban systems and infrastructures as highlighted through Judith Halberstam's lens in "The Queer Art of Failure" (2011) allows us to see these failures not as final states but as opportunities for critical inquiry and innovative thinking. It prompts us to reconsider urban development not just as a technical exercise but as a deeply social and political act that can redefine the relationships between space, identity, and community.

This research aims to challenge the envision of Caracas not as a city defined by its deficits but as a landscape of possibilities, where the ghosts of the past can be confronted and transformed into agents of positive change. Through this lens, Caracas presents itself not only as a field of study but also as a living laboratory for experimenting with new forms of urbanity that embrace complexity, acknowledge historical depths, and foster genuine community engagement.

5.1.1 Articulation of Losses

In Caracas's urban landscape, the enduring legacies of its history are constantly constructing itself, and through Avery Gordon's conceptual lens of social haunting and collective trauma developed in her book "Ghostly Matters" (1997) I was able to structure them into a theoretical framework that explains nowadays Caracas urban relations and dynamics. This research has unveiled the omnipresence of unresolved pasts periods that continue to shape the socio-political and urban contours of Caracas, defining both its physical spaces and the psyche of its inhabitants.

Avery Gordon's concept of social haunting captures how unresolved social violences and historical injustices continue to shape the present, manifesting as haunting presences that affect current realities.

Therefore, the concept of social hauting is critical in understanding how the urban environment of Caracas has evolved. The traumas inflicted by periods of intense violence and political instability have not been exorcised but continue to influence urban development and social interactions. These traumatce collective experiences have led to a city of fortresses—gated enclaves meant to protect against real and imagined threats—and of ghosts—abandoned or unrecognized urban entities.

Caracas's losses are not merely about what has been destroyed or decayed; they are also about city rights misopportunities and human agency faculty. This loss is palpable in the blurry – or pixelated – city's public realm and deteriorating infrastructure.

In this way, the research served to evidentiate the profound socio-urban transformations occured in Caracas, underpinned by the concept of urban pixelation that encapsulate the city's fragmented realities. This exploration has provided a critical framework to understand how Caracas, the city and its society, navigates its complex past and present. This framework allowed me to revealed how Caracas' citizens encounter and engage with the city, and how they relate with its unresolved historic narratives. The examination of Caracas through the lens of loss, haunting, and the sociological imagination not only expands the understanding of its urban dynamics but has also offers a blueprint for rethinking how the city confront and materialize their past.

This socio-urban exploration based its structure on three key historical periods: the era of colonialism, the mid-20th century urban development, and the violent environment of the 21st-century crisis.

The colonial period in Venezuela laid the foundational structures of social inequality and exclusion. The social hierarchies established during colonialism, with Europeans at the top and mixed races and indigenous populations at the bottom, created deep-seated divisions. These divisions were perpetuated by systems that favored landowners and the elite, leaving a legacy of disenfranchisement for the majority after Venezuela's independency.

This historical sense of hierarchy has persisted in the collective memory of Venezuelans, shaping our perception of power, governance, and social structure. The haunting of being a colonized land manifests

in ongoing social structures and a pervasive sense of injustice among the descendants of those marginalized during the colonial era. This history set the stage for future conflicts by instilling a pattern of class and race inequality and exclusion that continued to resonate within our society.

Accordingly, Venezuela's colonial period set foundational disparities that have perpetuated through generations. These disparities are not only historical footnotes since it continue to haunt Caracas's socio-political and economic structures. The hauntings of this period manifest in the systemic inequalities and exclusionary practices that persist, reflecting Gordon's idea of societal forces influencing the present by recalling unresolved past injustices.

Following this period, the discovery of oil reserves in the early 20th century transformed Caracas from a relatively modest capital into a booming urban center. The oil boom led to rapid urban development, characterized by significant modernization and the influx of rural populations seeking better life opportunities. However, this rapid transformation also led to uneven development, creating stark contrasts between the wealthy social groups – some old as landowners and some new workes related to the oil industry –, and the lower accommodated: new rural migrants.

Thus, the rapid urban development of Caracas during the second half of the 20th century led to profound transformations in the city's structure and social fabric. This period brought wealth and modernization but also led to significant disparities and disruptions since it main beneficial group was focus

on the upper class and their lands development. In another words, the urban planning of this era did not uniformly benefit all residents, and therefore this uneven development has haunted Caracas by creating enduring spatial and social divisions

As a finale key period of the research we have the 2000s. the 21st century in Venezuela has been marked by intense socio-political and economic crises, characterized by extreme violence, political instability, economic collapse, and human rights abuses. As a cosnequence, daily life in Caracas and other parts of Venezuela has been profoundly affected by fear. This has led to a state of constant alertness and a pervasive sense of insecurity among citizens. The trauma of living through this crisis affects all aspects of life, from restricting mobility and reducing shared spaces usability to impacting mental health and community cohesion.

The crises of the past 25 years in Caracas represent a direct confrontation with the inhereth social conflicts, where the widespread insecurity and suffering reflect not just contemporary policy failures but also the haunting of past eras' unresolved issues[1]. The violent environment of the 21st century in Caracas is understood in this research as the peak manifestation of the contemporary social haunting, where the historical and ongoing injustices are the result of an overlapped of historical social conflicts, from colonialism to XX Century urban development policies.

The thread that runs through these periods is the continued impact of unresolved historical and societal issues. The collective trauma ex-

perienced in each era has not only shaped the urban and social landscape of Caracas today but also conditioned the relationship with its citizens.

As a result, the Lost Generation in Caracas has been profoundly affected by a pervasive sense of insecurity and a distorted perception of urban life, which collectively embody a significant part of our identity and societal role, accompanied us from the past 25 years. Accordingly, under the framework of Avery Gordon's concept of social haunting, the losses experienced by the Lost Generation are understood in this research as presence of the past and current societal conflicts that continue to influence our urban life adn relationship with the city and other citizens.

The fragmentation of social structures due to pervasive fear and mistrust among communities creates, therefore, a collective trauma. The Lost Generation experiences this through a profound sense of isolation and alienation—not just from each other but also from the potential of what their community and city could offer. This fragmentation is a haunting that manifests in their daily navigation of the city, where interactions are often governed by fear rather than genuine social engagement.

Additionally, the haunting for the Lost Generation is also about the loss of potential—the what-could-have-been for Caracas and for ourselves. Raised amid crises, our expectations and aspirations are continually modulated by the reality of their environment, which is a direct outcome of past and unresolved social, economic, and political issues.

On the other hand, the Lost Interstices in Caracas reflect a deep and pervasive loss of public space and connectivity, emphasizing the wide-reaching consequences of car-centric urban planning and its impact on the social and spatial fabric of the city.

The research exposed that the design of the city discourages spontaneous social interactions, which are vital for a healthy urban life. The neglect of pedestrian infrastructure and shared spaces in favor of roads for automobiles reflects a broader loss of cultural and social values that prioritize community engagement. This shift has led to a city where the identity and needs of its citizens are often overlooked, favoring instead a model of development that does not support the well-being of its entire population.

Accordingly, these lost interstices are not merely expressions of physical absences but are also indicative of deeper social and cultural gaps within the urban framework of Caracas. Under Avery Gordon's concept of social haunting, these lost interstices can be seen as 'ghosts' of past urban planning decisions that continue to haunt the present, in terms of urban development and administrative policies.

Returning to Avery Gordon's, her concept of haunting provides a framework for understanding the entwined generational and spatial losses of Caracas. Gordon posits that haunting is a sociological phenomenon indicating that something unresolved from the past is asserting itself in the present in an unsettling way.

In the context of Caracas, the ghosts of past urban policies—cen-

tered around car-bases urban approaches and neglected pedestrian life —are not merely remnants but active presences that influence the city's current social and spatial configurations. These ghosts manifest as the Lost Interstices in the urban fabric, where pedestrian and city appropiative practices have been sacrificed for car-centric development. This loss directly impacts The Lost Generation, whose social and psychological landscapes are haunted by the city's physical and infrastructural deficiencies.

Therefore, the application of Avery Gordon's theories to this research has provided a framework to reveal the complexities of Caracas' urban crisis. By acknowledging the ghosts of its past and the collective traumas that pervade its present, Caracas present itself as a field to envision an urban future that is both speculative and grounded in non-physical reality. The path forward lies in transforming the city's collective spaces and practices into sites of therotetical experimentation, where the haunted past becomes visible questionnaire for nowadays Caracas' urban life concerns.

5.1.2 Embracing the Urban Failures

Regarding to Caracas' losses, the approach in this investigation is to take them as urban failures, and to work with this failure for new city developments narrative from a different perspective, especially regarding the non-physical aspect of Caracas' conflicts. In order to do this, the theoretical work of Halberstam (2011) on failure is taken as a conceptual base.

Judith Halberstam's conceptualization of failure in "The Queer Art

of Failure" (2011) provides a compelling framework to analyze the socio-urban landscape of Caracas, especially when considered alongside Avery Gordon's concept of social haunting. Both theorists offer perspectives that challenge traditional narratives of progress and success, instead focusing on the transformative potential hidden in failure and unresolved pasts.

Halberstam suggests that failure can disrupt the conventional understandings of success and allow for the exploration of alternatives that lie outside normative societal structures. In her view, failure is not merely an end but a beginning that opens up spaces for new forms of knowledge and being, and it questions the status quo and introduces different ways of thinking about achievement and the processes that lead to it. This theoretical approach encourages a shift from a success-oriented culture to one that finds value in the processes and potentialities that arise from failure.

In the context of Caracas, applying Halberstam's concept of failure involves recognizing and critically engaging with the city's historical and contemporary breakdowns—not as mere shortcomings but as opportunities for critical insight and transformative action. In this sense, in this research I take Caracas as a city haunted by its unresolved pasts, where legacies of colonialism, sudden urban development during the oil boom, and the ongoing socio-political crises have collectively shaped the urban and societal dynamics.

Accordingly, the history of Caracas is intricately related with the concept of failure—a concept both critical and transformative. The ur-

ban landscape of Caracas presents a unique opportunity to reconceptualize failure not as a setback but as a potent catalyst for urban innovation and reimagination.

Caracas has undergone significant transformations, from its colonial past to the abrupt and sudden urban development it suffer in the XX Century, which reshaped the city's identity and infrastructure. These eras were not only marked by growth but were also punctuated with failures— Social and political disenfranchisement, urban fragmentation and inequality, chronic violence and insecurity, loss of a common public realm, and psychological and social alienation of the Lost Generation.

As consequence, Caracas' history is riddled with what can conventionally be considered urban failures: economic downturns due to oil dependency and mismanagment, poorly planned urban expansion, and the the negletion and abandonment of public life – both from the state and its role as development and from citizens and their right reclamation on the city.

Accordingly, Caracas' losses manifest as social haunting, where the unresolved and the lost continue to impact the present, influencing both the physical spaces and the psyche of the inhabitants. By viewing these losses through Halberstam's lens of failure, they can be reinterpreted not just as deficits but as potent sites for reimagining and reshaping the urban landscape and changing the focus on nowadays Caracas' development concerns.

The idea is that, by embracing Caracas' failures, the city can engage in speculative urbanism—an approach that uses Caracas' failures as detonators for critical imaginarium on the city's future. This is based on Halberstam's idea of failure providing a critique of the normative and opening up possibilities for alternative ways of city relationships. It proposes using the city's complex history of failure as a foundation upon which different urban narratives can be exposed.

This speculative approach to urbanism in Caracas aims to materialize how the city addresses its socio-territorial losses. It also suggests rethinking urban interventions not only as corrective measures but as creative reconfigurations of the urban environment that can accommodate and reflect the diverse realities.

Applying Halberstam's concept of failure to the articulation of Caracas' losses let emerges a compelling narrative that goes beyond traditional urban recovery strategies which allow us to apply unconventional architectural approaches to think, imagine and design the city of tomorrow. It suggests a paradigm where failure is not the opposite of success, but a necessary part of a process that can evidenciate Caracas' problems on inclusiveness and urban adaptation. This approach advocates for a city that learns from its past, recognizes the potential in its present failures, and boldly reimagines its future. Embracing failure through the lens of Halberstam's theoretical approach provides a unique yet insightful way to tackle the urban development discussion about Caracas.

Throughout the research I described Caracas as an unbecoming metropolis haunted by the social and urban ghosts of a promised prosperity that never materialized.

This notion of failure encapsulates not only the tangible breakdowns in urban planning and governance but also the deeper, intangible losses related to identity, community, and historical continuity. Such failures are not just logistical but are imbued with emotional and socio-historical significance, impacting the collective psyche of Caracas' citizens.

In this analytical framework, failure is seen as a multidimensional construct that encompasses the city's broken promises and compromised urban dynamics. The idea is to portrayed Caracas' failures as a haunting specter that reveals the complex layers of its urban dysfunction.

This speculative approach to urbanism is informed by a forward-looking perspective that seeks to transform the city into a laboratory for questioning and experimentation. The idea is to shift from a reactive stance, which merely attempts to fix or mitigate urban problems, to a proactive stance that uses these problems as opportunities for critical urban narratives.

The practical application of these concepts involves rethinking how Caracas' socio-territorial losses and failures can be transformed into catalysts for different urban approaches. Therefore, the failures of Caracas are taken in this research as a starting point for speculative urbanism proposed to re-apporach urban discussions and to foster a shift in urban interventions by reframing urban discourse to include a broader range of social and spatial considerations, and by developing interventions that are not reparative but questionative.

5.1.3 Speculative Posibilites

Starting from the point thart Caracas' social stigmatization and its baggage on exclusion, seclusion, and segregation shape its contemporary urban scene, the speculation on possible future scenarios generate by a composition of its elements elaborated in this research.

The lack of relation between the components of the Pixels City makes emerged an urban panorama where the experience city-citizens occurred mostly detached. Reflected on dwelling morphologies, the city Patches live within itself, completely untied with its surroundings – the Citizen Debris, referring to its urban dynamics (the city and its uses: walkability and citizen appropriation of urban amenities and spaces).

Consequently, under the frame of the Pixels City, Caracas creates its urban image and social dynamics. The city works as a societal constellation of areas and sites that dictates its uses and the behaviors within them, unfolding therefore a territorialization of the city: places

where do's and don't are both blurry and strongly determined for its location in the city.

This framework allows us not only to understand nowadays Caracas' urban picture as a whole with a nite perception of the small details and unpredictable political and social layers of information that compose its image but also to visualize possible scenarios of the city.

Caracas' urban problematics go beyond architectural nor urban development; its conflict lies in the in-betweens, both formally and mentally. In its unappropriated urban in-betweens spaces, in the in-betweens of its society over the conscious sense of otherness, in its political in-betweens, in its unvisited territorialization in-betweens regarding wealth, urban development, state recognition, and economical development. All of these in-betweens work conceptually in this research as glitches of Caracas pixels, referring to all of its system of categories which never meet each other but are schizophrenically stacked.

Fig. 24
Conceptual diagram.
The Pixels City framework:
City Patches and Citizen Debris
articulation.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024
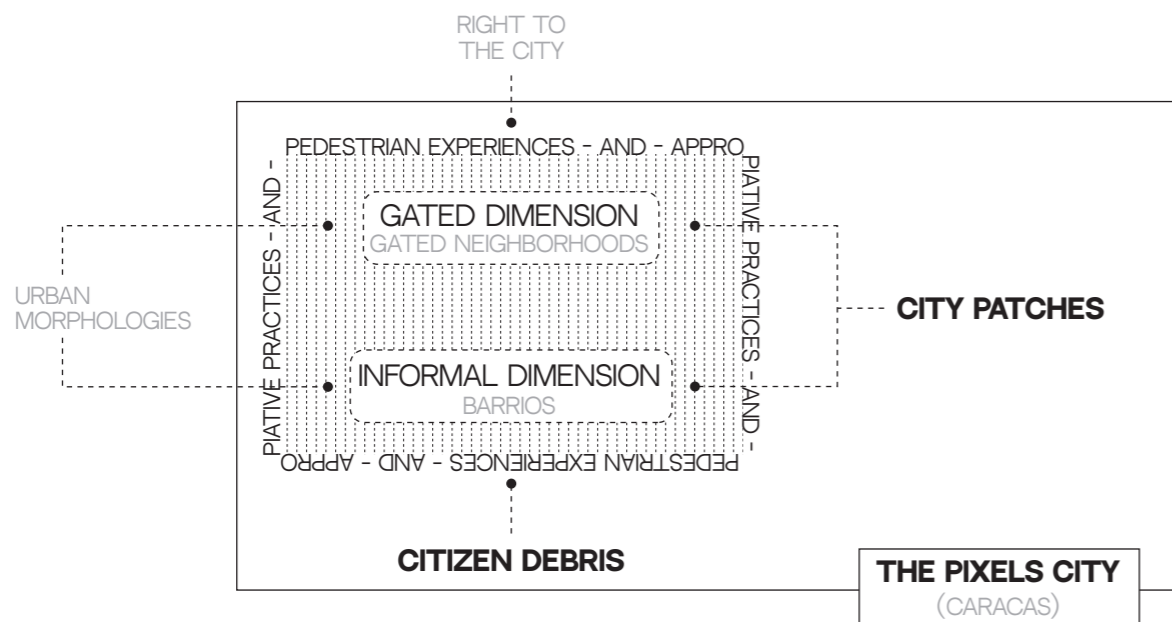
In this sense, the research presented a claim to expose the possibilities of scenarios that may occur in this framework. With the intention to use architecture as a tool to expose current problems in the social tissue of Caracas and its expression in its urban territory, the following ideas are developed as speculative scenarios where this glitch can become visible, therefore the idea of a pixelated city can emerge both as a failure and a support.

The idea is to create a portfolio of images that works as a starting point for addressing Caracas urban-citizen misunderstanding. The idea is to create a catalog of speculative possibilities that trigger architects, urban developers, designers, and citizens by exposing how this otherness problem can become tangible in order to ask ourselves and maybe others accurate questions regarding inequalities and rights for the city.

This speculative scenario is expressed mainly in two areas of Caracas within the Caracas' Central North Axis, which I call Eastern and Western Glitching Areas that emerged from the mapping analysis of Caracas and its pixelation condition, where at the same time it analysis allows to pinpoint several Stitching Sites, referring to specific intervention sites to implement urban artifacts which tackle different urban constrains and give shape to different urban momentums, creating, therefore, a new Caracas' Urban Imaginarium.

To depict properly this Imaginarium, a deep analysis of the different urban levels (Glitching Areas, Stitching Sites, and Urban Artifacts) unfolds in the following chapters.

Fig. 75
Conceptual diagram.
Theroical development of Caracas'
Urban Imaginarium
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez

Central North Axis
Urban Focus

Throughout the research, based on political orientation, land value, dwelling typologies, crime, and average incomes, the different maps and data analyses allow us to show un territorial matters constantly mentioned the distinction between the East and the West side of the city. This division lies in the collective subconscious of Caracas' citizens, marked by social, political, and administrative matters.

On the following pages, the idea is to show on territorial representation all the data that shaped the Pixels City on the following maps exposing the high contrast occurring in this sector regarding population density, high criminality sectors, mobility, land value, political orientation manifestation, dwelling typology distribution (barrios and gated neighborhoods), city development, and land use; data that summarized the range of socio-political factors analized throughout the research.

The sector that emerged as the ideal case study for design speculations from these maps is what I call Caracas' Central Noeth Axis, which shows itself as the ideal case study for Caracas' conflicts and scenario for developing design speculations, both in urban territorial matters and for its collective social acknowledgment. Its relevance also lays on three important characteristics, being one of the major city developments from the XX Century, its cultural and economic relevance for city life and production, and its territorial neutrality regarding "east" and "west" classification.

Sequencetly, a photographic survey is undertake along this axis aiming to immerse firsthand in the specific challenges related to pedestrian connectivity and the sense of spatial ownership within the selected case study.

Fig. 76
Central North Axis on Google Earth.
From El Calvario to La Carlota militar airport.
2024

1KM   MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES   COLONIAL CITY CENTER   GUIAIRE RIVER   HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS   RURAL AREAS   PARKS AND GREEN AREAS   OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES

COLONIAL CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS

RURAL AREAS

PARKS AND GREEN AREAS

1966

1984

2000

2014

GROWTH OF THE CITY OF CARACAS FROM 1966 TO 2014
(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA; GALAVIS. 2015)

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES

COLONIAL CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS

RURAL AREAS

1567
1940'S
1970'S
1970'S
1980'S
1990'S

ECONOMIC CENTER DISPLACEMENT (REBOTIER. 2009)

1KM — MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES — COLONIAL CITY CENTER — GUIAIRE RIVER — HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS — RURAL AREAS

BARRIOS   GATED NGHBH.

(SOURCE: SILVA; CARDONNA; GALAVIS; 2015)

1KM | MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES | COLONIAL CITY CENTER | GUIAIRE RIVER | HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS | RURAL AREAS | PARKS AND GREEN AREAS | OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

RELATIVE POPULATION DENSITY
(SOURCE: REBOTIER. 2017)

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES

COLONIAL CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS

RURAL AREAS

PARKS AND GREEN AREAS

OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

INDEX OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION (SOURCE: REBOTIER. 2009)

1KM MUNICIPALITIES COLONIAL GUIAIRE HIGHWAYS AND RURAL PARKS AND
     AND PARISHES   CITY CENTER RIVER   MAIN ROADS   AREAS GREEN AREAS

MAIN   MAIN   0 - 1K   1K - 2K   2K - 3K   3K - 4K   4K - 5K   5K - 8K
ORIGINS   DESTINATIONS

WALKING RATES   NUMBER OF TRIPS TO THE CITY CENTER AT RUSH HOUR
(MUNDÓ TEJADA, 2007)   (SOURCE: REBOTIER, 2017)

FIG. 83
SOCIETAL MOVEMENTS: CRIME

OWN ELABORATION
SCALE 1 : 100.000

VIOLENT DEATHS RELATIVE RATE
BY MUNICIPALITY (D'HOY. 2023)

VIOLENT DEATHS BY PARISH BETWEEN JANUARY - JULY 2021
(OVV. 2021)

2   3   4   5   6   18   22

1KM

MUNICIPALITIES
AND PARISHES

COLONIAL
CITY CENTER

GUIAIRE
RIVER

HIGHWAYS AND
MAIN ROADS

RURAL
AREAS

PARKS AND
GREEN AREAS

RED
ZONES

ORGANIZED
GANG HQ

2021 RED ZONES FOR ASSAULTS,
ROBBERIES AND THEFTS (CAMARGO. 2021)

26   13
5

PARAMILITAR ARMED GROUPS
(OVCS. 2015)

1KM | MUNICIPALITIES AND PARISHES | COLONIAL CITY CENTER | GUIAIRE RIVER | HIGHWAYS AND MAIN ROADS | RURAL AREAS | PARKS AND GREEN AREAS | OPEN PUBLIC SPACES

MAIN PRO GOVERNMENT POINTS | PRO GOVERNMENT POINTS | MAIN OPPOSITION POINTS | OPPOSITION POINTS | USUAL POINTS FOR POLICE CONTAINMENT | SECURITY ZONE

POLITICAL MANIFESTATION
(SOURCE: GARCÍA-GUADILLA. 2003; UNIDAD DEMOCRÁTICA. 2017)

FIG. 85
CARACAS: THE PIXELS CITY

OWN ELABORATION
SCALE 1 : 100.000

HISTORIC CITY CENTER

MUSEUMS + THEATER CIRCUIT

EL CALVARIO PARK

LOS CAOBOS PARK

COUNTRY CLUB GOLF CAMPS

EASTERN PARK

PARQUE CENTRAL

PLAZA VENEZUELA

CHACAO / AV. FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA

LAS DELICIAS

BOTANIC GARDEN

UNIVERSITY CITY

LA CARLOTA MILITERY AIRPORT

WESTERN CEMENTERY

VALLE ARRIBA GOLF CLUB

Ground Zero

The West-East axis of Caracas, which extends from the Historic Center to Chacaíto, represents a vital artery in the urban and social fabric of the city, reflecting both the historical evolution and contemporary dynamics of Caracas. This axis not only connects areas of historical, economic, and cultural relevance but also symbolizes the growth and urban expansion of the Venezuelan capital over the centuries.

At its starting point, the Historic Center of Caracas is concentrated on an architectural and cultural legacy of inestimable value. This sector is home to colonial buildings, churches, museums, and other monuments that bear witness to the city's colonial past. The preser-

vation of these structures underscores the importance of history in the urban development of Caracas, providing a counterpoint to the more modern areas of the city.

As the axis extends eastward, it passes through diverse neighborhoods that reflect a mix of architectural styles, social classes, and urban functions. This diversity reflects the multifaceted character of Caracas, where residential, commercial, leisure, and governmental areas coexist. This coexistence of functions and styles emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the city.

The west-east axis also serves as an important communication and transportation route for the city. The presence of main avenues,

PARKS AND GREENERY

STUDIED URBAN AXIS
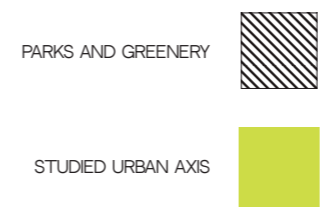
subway stations, and other means of transportation along this corridor facilitates the movement of people and goods, vital for the economy and daily life in Caracas.

In addition, this axis has been the scene of important social and political events throughout Venezuela's history. Demonstrations, celebrations, and other large-scale events have taken place in this corridor, underscoring its role as a fundamental public space for citizen expression and political participation.

Fig. 86
Central North Axis plan.
Scale 1:50.000
From El Calvario to La Carlota militar airport.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

dynamism and as a social meeting point, reflects the evolution of Caracas into an economic metropolis. The contrast between the Historic Center and Chacaíto illustrates the transformation of the city from its colonial roots to its current status as an urban and economic center.

The Chacaíto area, at the end of the axis, symbolizes the modernization and urban expansion of Caracas during the 20th century. This area, known for its commercial

Fig. 87 - As summarized from González Viso, Peña, and Vegas (2017), the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Valvarena, situated on a hill, was historically significant for Holy Week pilgrimages. The main feature of this 19th-century urban park in Caracas is its large staircase with 110 steps. Under Guzmán Blanco's direction in 1873, the hill became part of the city, leading to the creation of an artificial lake and a park with a mix of English natural and French geometric designs. Key attractions include the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, the Arc of the Federation, and the Cajigal Observatory. Despite reduced size and significance, the renovated park still offers stunning city views. www.guiaccs.com
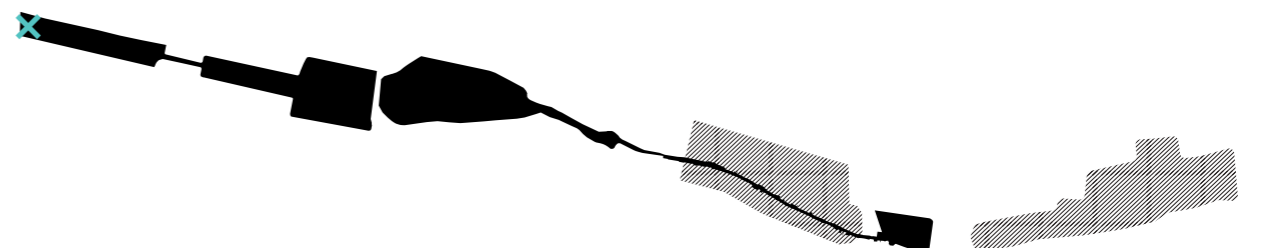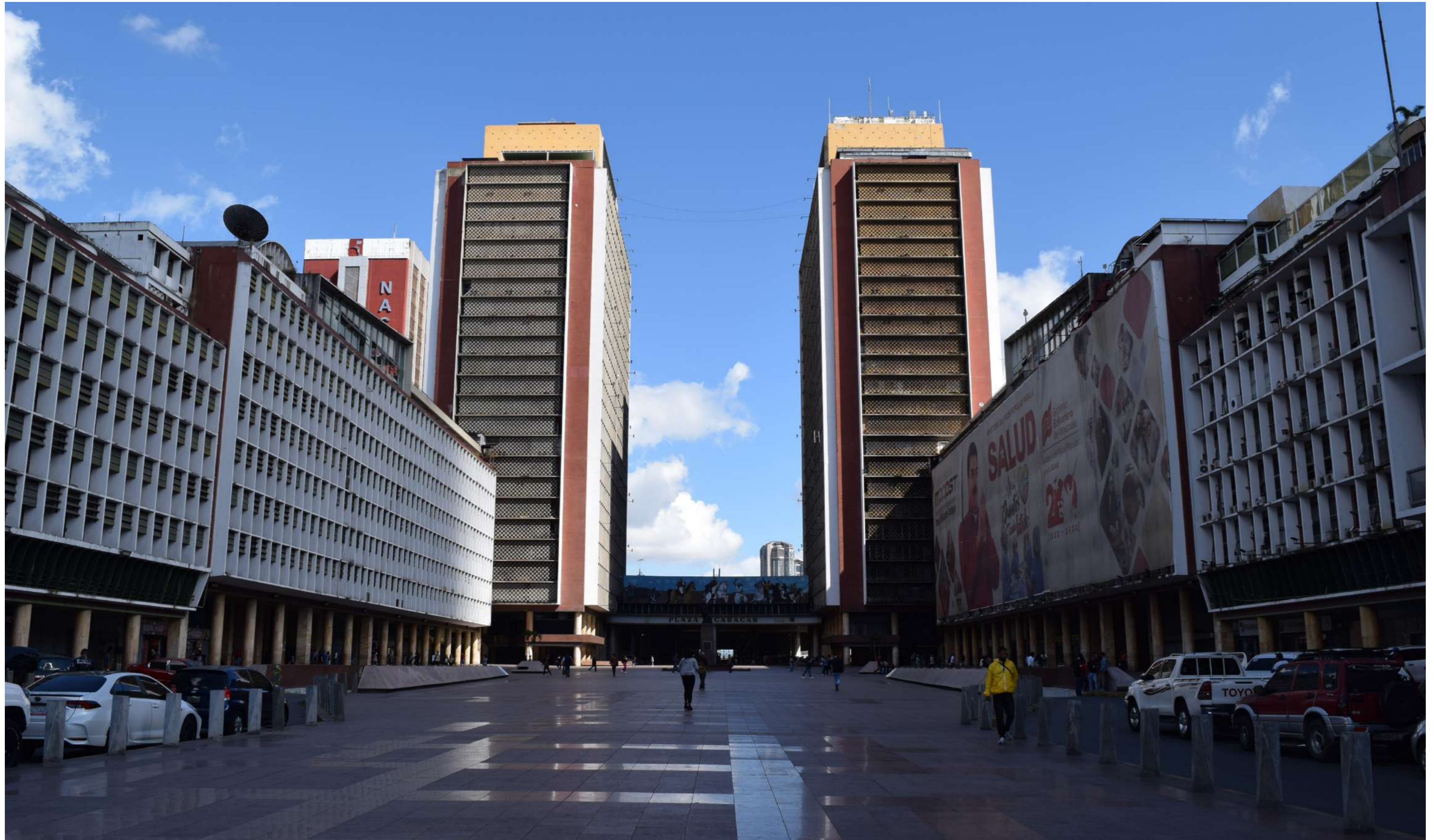
Fig. 88 - The Centro Simón Bolívar towers in Caracas, built in the 1950s, stand as a remarkable blend of functional and monumental urban architecture, according to González Viso, Peña, and Vegas (2017), t. These emblematic towers, shaped by the National Commission of Urbanism's volumetric principles and designed by acclaimed architect Cipriano Domínguez, epitomize the modern movement in Venezuelan architecture. The 28-story skyscrapers, part of a six-block complex, mark the end of Avenida Bolívar and introduce a modern twist to the city's layout with their neoclassical, axial disposition and modern volumetrics. Incorporating Le Corbusier's principles, the complex, with its pedestrian overpasses, plazas, and amenities like shops and restaurants, redefined Caracas' skyline and became its symbol of modernity for over four decades.
Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
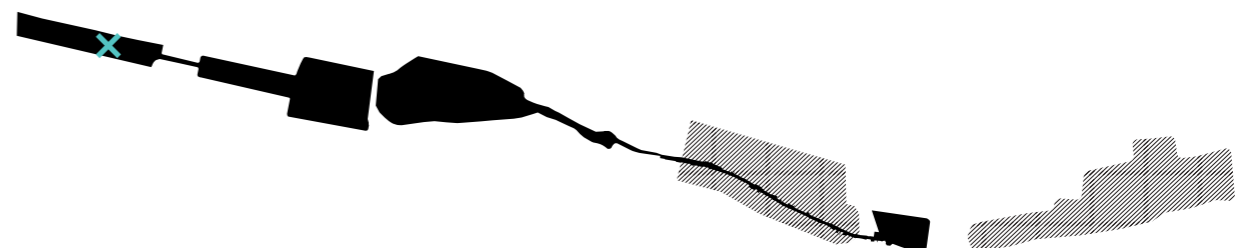
Fig. 89 - Caracas, founded as part of the over two thousand cities in Latin America based on the "Indies grid" layout, initially featured a 25-block grid in the San Francisco valley, ideally positioned for sunlight and wind. This included the Plaza Mayor (now Plaza Bolívar), flanked by the cathedral and government buildings. Until the late 19th century, Caracas maintained its colonial character with modest red clay rooftops, only slightly altered by Guzmán Blanco's constructions. The city's continuous borders led to mixed-use public spaces like Plaza Bolívar and Plaza Miranda, each corner named uniquely in Spanish-speaking countries, reflecting Catholic saints, local residents, or historical events. The grid expanded until halted by El Calvario hill (now Park), influencing road layouts. In the 1940s, the El Silencio urban renewal, led by architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva, introduced low-rise buildings with business corridors, reviving colonial styles. This development included contiguous public spaces like Plaza O'Leary and Avenida Bolívar. - Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
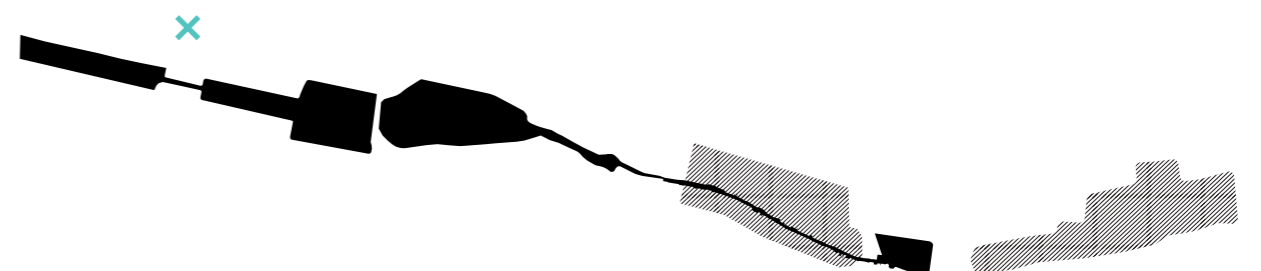
Fig. 90 - González Viso, Peña, and Vegas (2017) describe Parque Central as a significant architectural development in Caracas. Initiated in 1969 under Enrique Siso and Daniel Fernández Shaw, this 30-hectare complex south of Avenida Bolívar combines housing, offices, shops, and spaces for cultural and educational purposes. Notable for its avant-garde design, it features two 60-floor office towers that were once the tallest reinforced concrete buildings globally. The complex also includes 40-floor residential buildings with modern amenities like vacuum waste systems, copper water tubing, and integrated air conditioning. The design optimizes natural light with most façades facing north or south. Residential towers offer a variety of simple and duplex units, while the office buildings' unique construction includes external circulation cores and a steel interior structure, ideal for Caracas's seismic activity.
Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
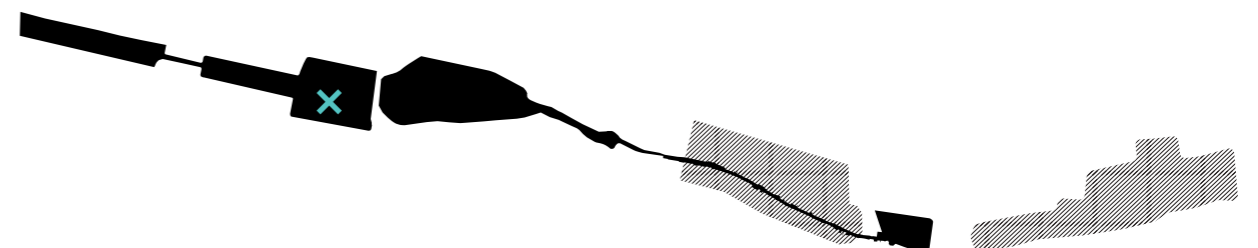
Fig. 91 - The Plaza de los Museos is a cultural hub in the city's heart. This plaza is a haven for art and history enthusiasts. The plaza is flanked by prominent museums, including the Museo de Bellas Artes and the Museo de Ciencias, each housing collections that showcase Venezuela's artistic and scientific heritage.
Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
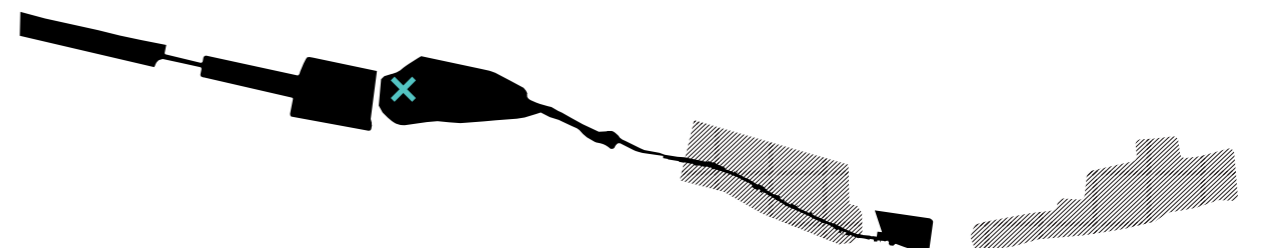
Fig. 92 - González Viso, Peña, and Vegas (2017) note that Los Caobos Park, spanning 40 hectares, stands as one of Caracas' oldest urban forests. Originally opened in 1920 as Parque Sucre on hacienda La Industrial land, it was renamed in 1937 when the city's population was around 300,000. The park underwent a significant refurbishment in 1959 under Tomás Sanabria, with Galia's design focusing on recreation for both body and spirit, featuring walkways, stairs, ramps, and ponds. This redesign retained the original street and hydraulic plans from 1910, creating a three-directional space structure from the museum's circular plaza to the green areas of Plaza Venezuela. In 1967, the park became home to the radial-shaped "Venezuela" fountain by Ernesto Maragall, representing the country's geographic regions. Later enhancements included artistic fences and gates designed by Miguel Acosta.
Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
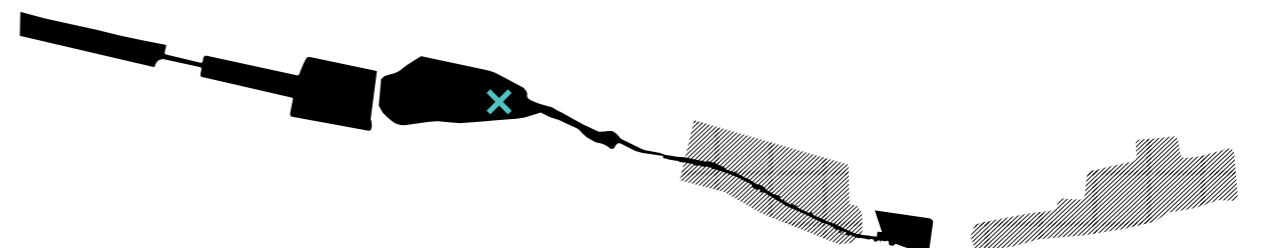
Fig. 93 - Distribuidor Plaza Venezuela. Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
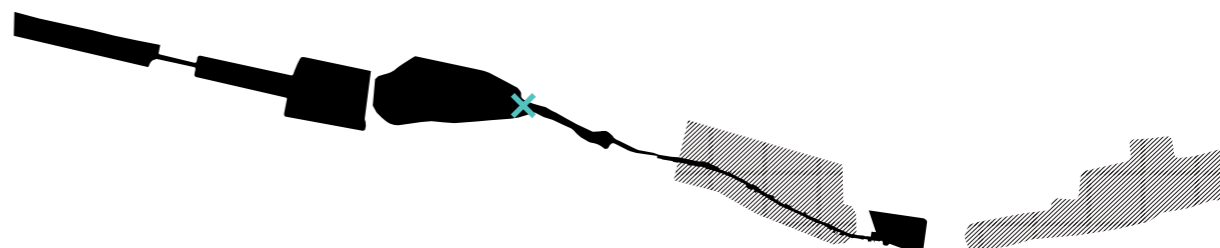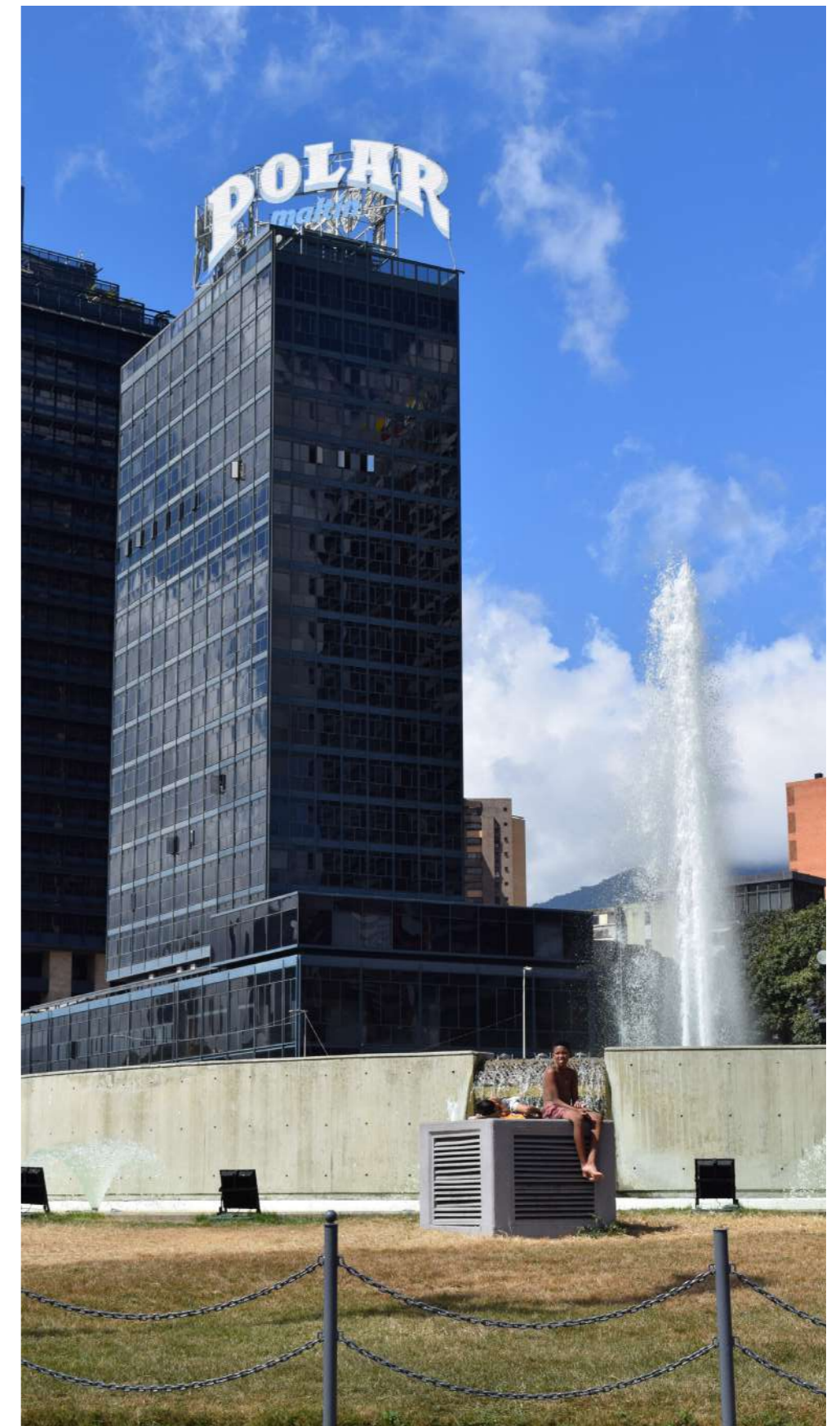
Fig. 94 - According to González Viso, Peña, and Vegas (2017) Plaza Venezuela has alternated roles between a traffic hub with a decorative fountain and a social gathering place. Situated in the heart of the Caracas valley, within the Los Caobos urban development initiated by Luis Roche and Enrique García Maldonado, the plaza's design and central sculpture have undergone several transformations. The original human figure sculptures by Ernesto Maragall were replaced by an engineer Santos Michelena-designed fountain, now reactivated and a symbol of the city. An interim redesign of the plaza featured grassy slopes and a vehicle underpass. Los Caobos, designed in the style of an English suburban garden, features curved streets starting from Plaza Venezuela, originally linking to the Carretera del Este. Notable changes in the area include the construction of Avenida Libertador and the removal of large-scale advertising, contributing to a metropolitan feel. The plaza has regained its vibrancy with a musically synchronized light and water show at night. - Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
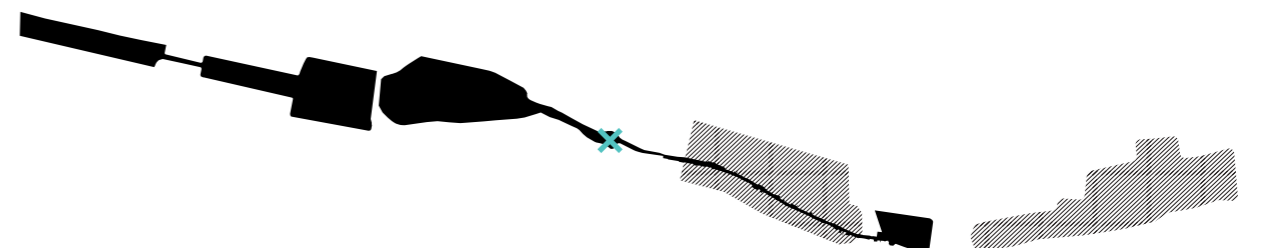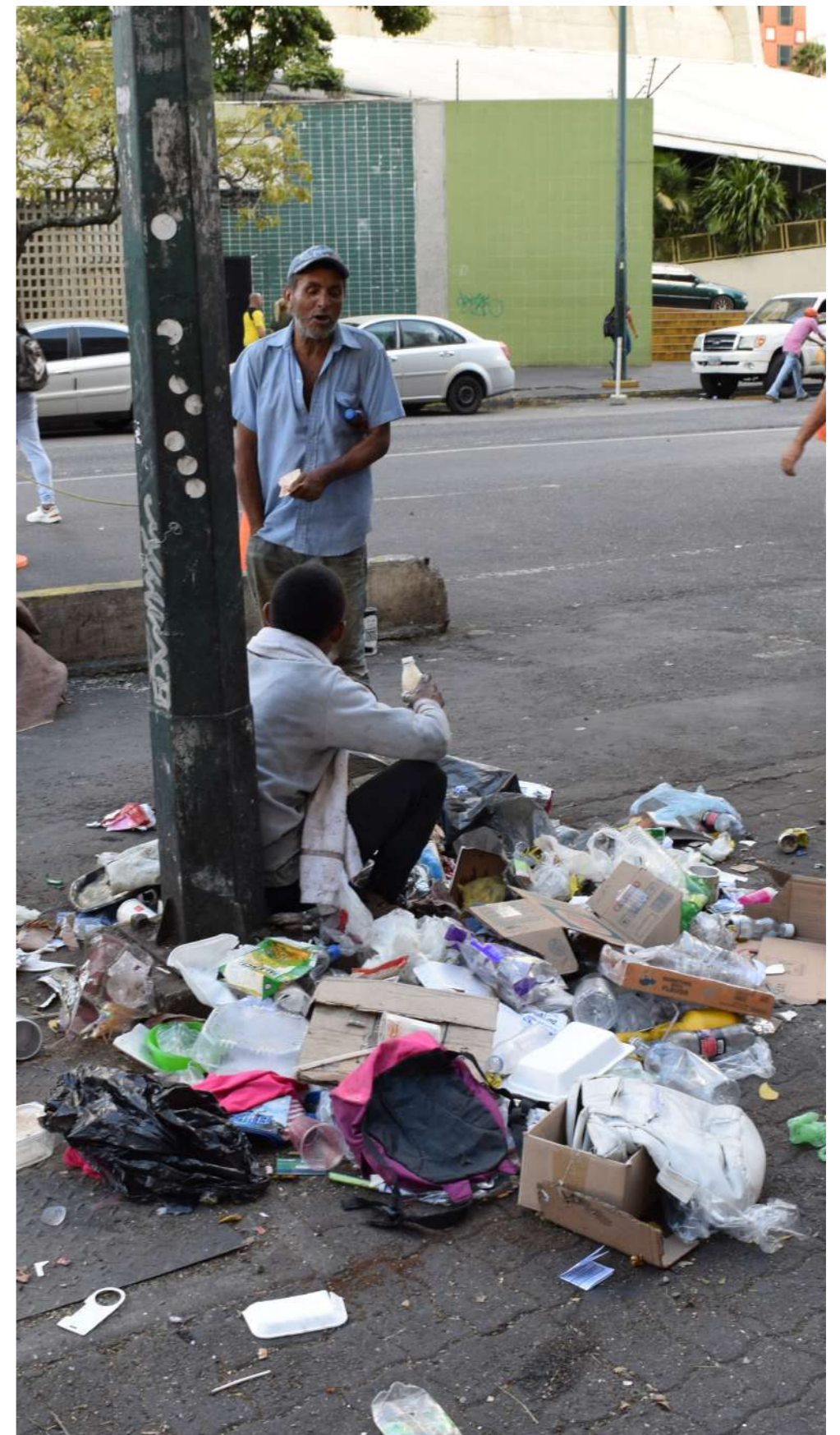
Fig. 95 - La gran avenida. Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
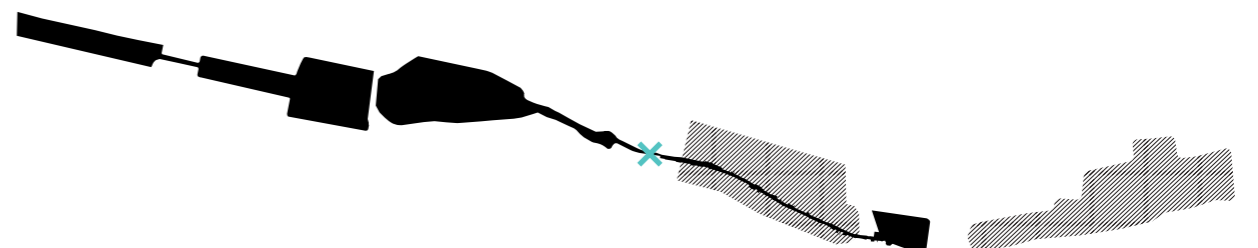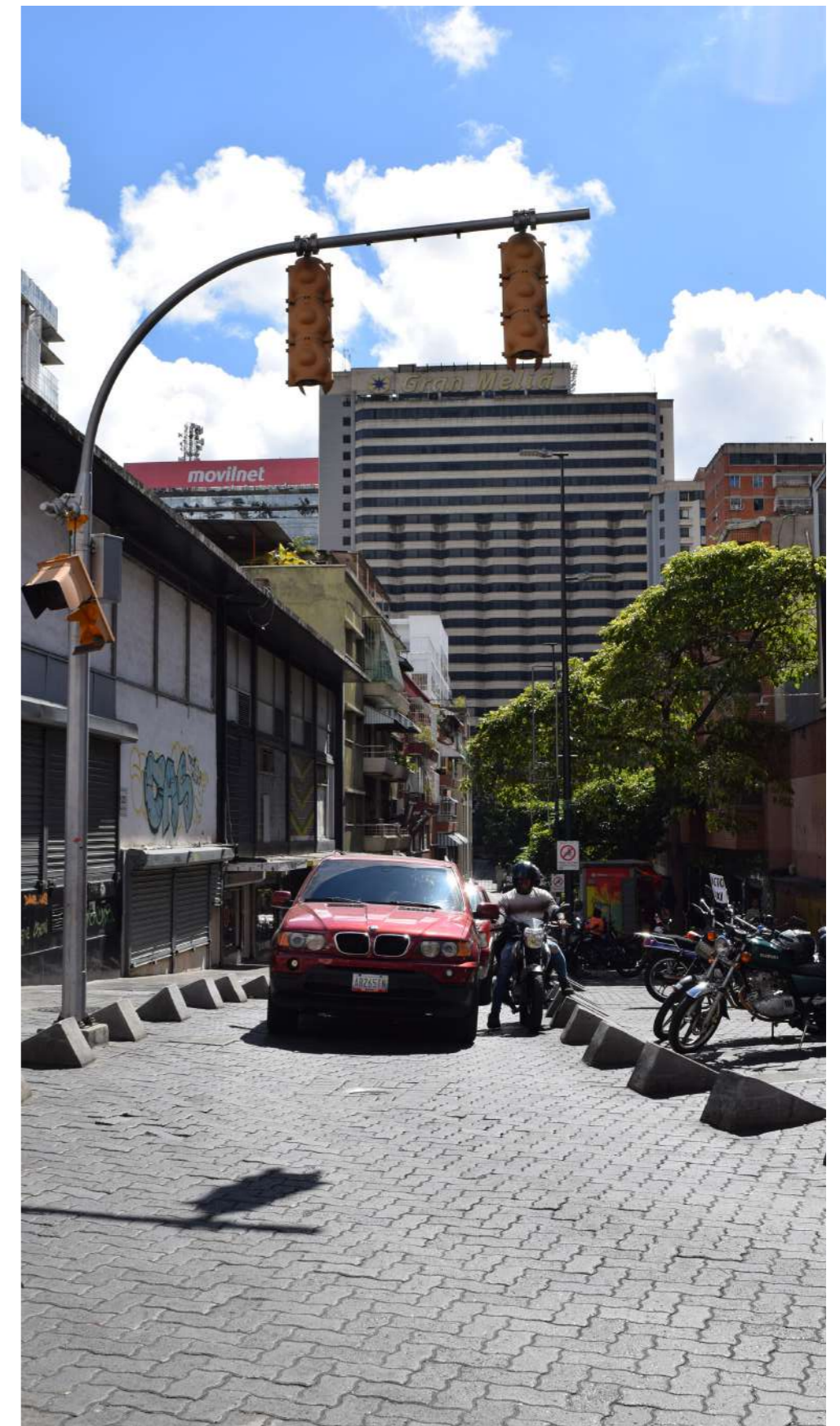
Fig. 96 - Established in 1783, the former Calle Real of Sabana Grande, a key route linking the city center to eastern haciendas, became a parish in 1852 and saw the introduction of the El Central tram line in 1881. By the 1960s, it evolved into a vibrant urban center, lined with luxury stores, restaurants, and cafes, notably attracting figures like Henri Charriere, or "Papillon," who allegedly wrote his memoirs at the Gran Café. The development of metro Line 1 led to the paving of Avenida Lincoln, transforming it into a pedestrian-friendly boulevard. Despite years of informal trading, a 2009 restoration sponsored by PDVSA La Estancia, featuring Elisa Silva's award-winning design, revitalized the area, though it resulted in the removal of iconic store signs for aesthetic reasons. Currently, the boulevard is enhanced with white textile awnings, artworks, and playful features, creating a shaded, engaging walkway for pedestrians. Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
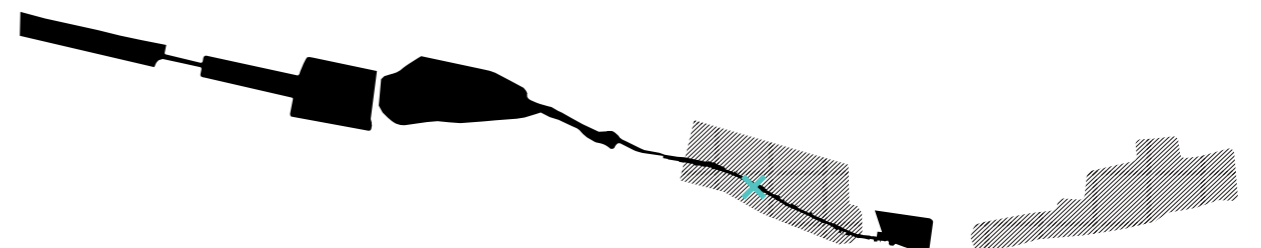
Fig. 97 - Plaza Brión serves as a key pedestrian link between Sabana Grande Boulevard and Avenida Francisco de Miranda, developed alongside the construction of Caracas Metro's Line 1. This space transforms into a wide boulevard, approximately 40 x 280 meters, resembling a square due to its size and the presence of surrounding shopping centers like Chacaíto, Expreso Chacaíto, and Único, as well as mixed-use buildings. A notable feature near Chacaíto Shopping Center is Jesús Soto's large sculpture, "Cubo Virtual," comprising mobile rods suspended from a metal cross above the metro's pedestrian exit. The plaza is enriched with trees, street furniture, life-sized chess games, and a sculpture of José Marti leading to Avenida Francisco de Miranda. It's a bustling area, frequented by pedestrians and serving as an important intermodal station.
Caracas, 2023. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez
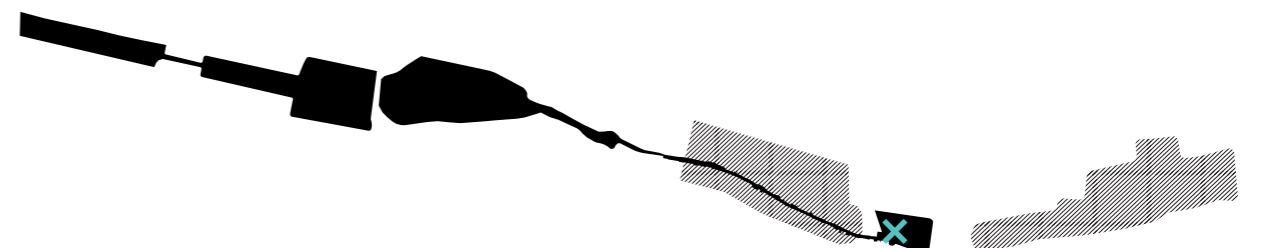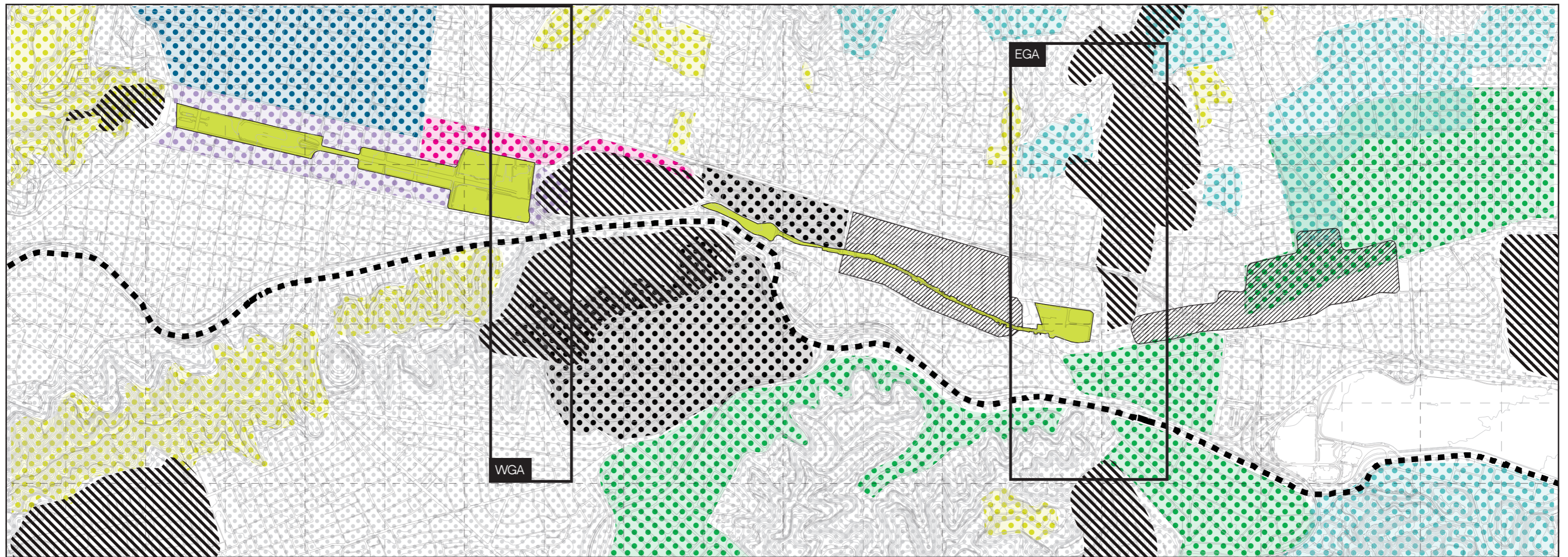
At the same time, this specific site represents a ground zero for the city, both for its location and its use, as for its collective social connotation. Throughout the promenade of this axis, vehicular infrastructure development unfolds, showcasing the golden years and the proper urban development considered by that time, the second half of the XX Century. Conversely, although the pedestrian infrastructure through this Central North Axis is well developed, it lacks acknowledgment and also continuity.

Finding its highest problematic node in Plaza Venezuela, a vehicular junction that is one of the main highway development in Caracas, a clear rupture between East and West occur here. The continuity of vehicular flow does not stop through this axis, yet the pedestrian experience is abruptly interrupted when we arrive at Plaza Venezuela. Accordingly, the western and eastern sides of Plaza Venezuela also suffer an abrupt change: when on the western side the main urban development spins around cultural matters, on the eastern side of the highway junction the environment turns immediately into a commerce one.

Another factor that affects the dynamics of the Central North Axis is the change of administration through it. On the western side the administration of the land is in the hands of the Libertador municipality, which represents the total half of Caracas, whereas at the end of the eastern side, the administration depends on Chacao municipality, being the largest and poorest and the smallest and wealthiest, respectively.

This studied axis is understood in this research as ground zero because the polar experiences any citizen gets through it are highly contrasting. Passing from the western side of Plaza Venezuela being a mismanaged, historic, overpopulated, and represented by big modern developments, the promised through the Central North Axis change abruptly – after overcoming the pedestrian challenge of the highway junction – to a business center, with turn-of-the-century curtainwall high towers developments, Caracas Country Club and the lowest population density in the city. This Central North Axis transits two different dimensions, programmatically, historically, and socially speaking.

From west to east, the main squares and boulevards create a consecutive walkway yet when it arrives at the height of Los Caobos Park suddenly it ends with the presence of the highway junction: Plaza Venezuela, giving it again more importance to the car than to the walkable life, making this node the Western Glitching Area of study. Additionally, these main squares and boulevards nowadays highly lack maintenance, leaving some of them completely unused and even becoming dangerous places. On the other hand, the Eastern Glitch Area studied focuses on the conflicting urban node at the end of Sabana Grande Boulevard, where municipality administration changes and the connection between these two socio-urban dimensions fractures.

BARRIOS

GATED NEIGHBORH.

COMMERCE AREAS

MAIN MODERN WORKS

HISTORIC CITY CENTER

CULTURAL AREAS

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

RESIDENCIES

PARKS AND GREENERY

STUDIED URBAN AXIS

Fig. 98
Central North Axis.
Lanf use map.
Scale 1:50.000
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024
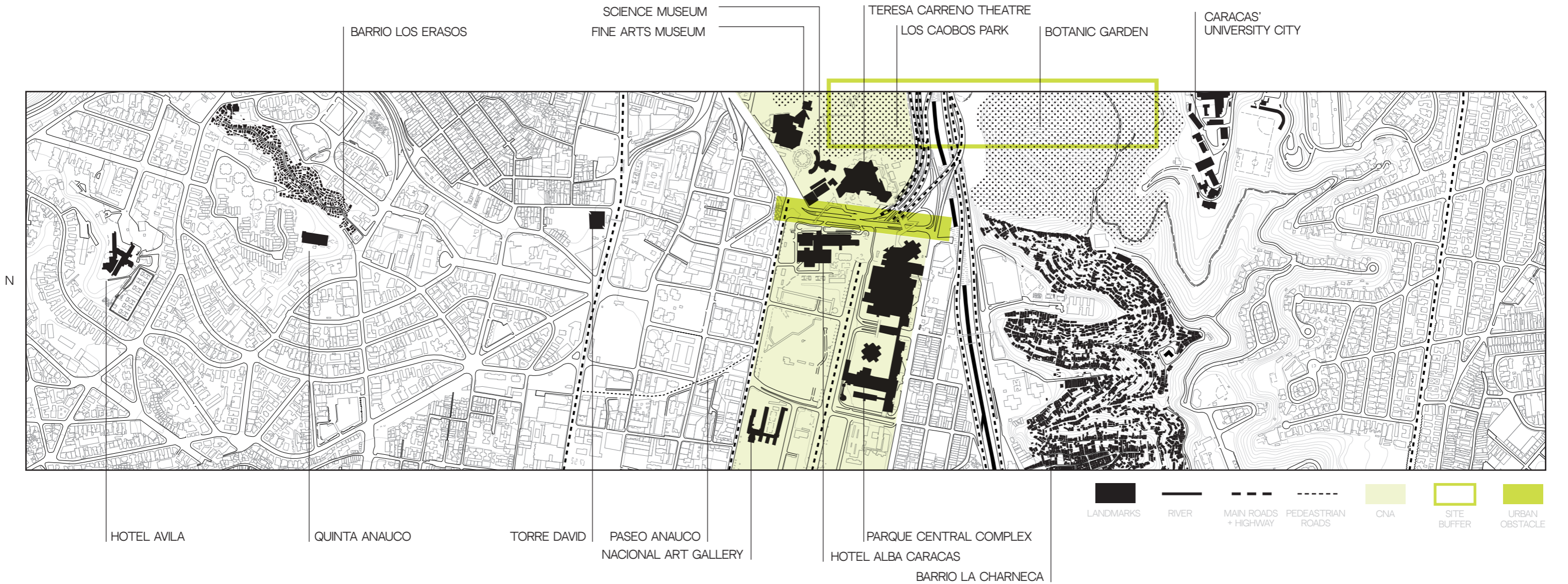
BARRIO LOS ERASOS

SCIENCE MUSEUM
FINE ARTS MUSEUM

TERESA CARRENO THEATRE
LOS CAOBOS PARK   BOTANIC GARDEN

CARACAS'
UNIVERSITY CITY

LANDMARKS   RIVER   MAIN ROADS + HIGHWAY   PEDEASTRIAN ROADS   CNA   SITE BUFFER   URBAN OBSTACLE

HOTEL AVILA   QUINTA ANAUCO   TORRE DAVID   PASEO ANAUCO
NACIONAL ART GALLERY

PARQUE CENTRAL COMPLEX
HOTEL ALBA CARACAS
BARRIO LA CHARNECA

Western Glitch

The Western Glitch Area, which extends from Hotel Avila to Victoria Avenue, represents a synthesis of complexity and diversity, weaving a common thread through its history, culture, and urban development. This axis not only connects points of architectural and cultural interest but also reflects the diverse socioeconomic facets of the city.

As a whole, this Western Glitching Area offers a comprehensive narrative of the city, weaving together the history, culture, and social complexity of Caracas. Through this tour, one can appreciate how urban spaces reflect and shape the experiences and identity of its inhabitants, showing a city, despite its challenges, with cultural baggage.

The transition from the more affluent areas in the north to the more popular and diverse areas in the south illustrates the social and economic stratification of Caracas. This urban reality is not only a reflection of existing inequalities but also offers an opportunity to understand how these issues can be addressed through inclusive and sustainable urban policies.

The Western Glitching Area also highlights the importance of urban planning and management in the preservation of cultural and architectural heritage. The coexistence of modern buildings with historic and cultural sites demonstrates how modernization and tradition can complement each other, contributing to the unique character of the city.

The Western Glitching Area, as a whole, is an example of how urban spaces can be used to tell the story of a city. Each point along this axis represents a different chapter in the history book of Caracas, offering unique perspectives on the past, present, and future of the city.

This journey through the Western Glitching Area of Caracas is not only a journey through a physical space but also a journey through time and culture. It reflects the city's contrasts and challenges, but also its strength, resilience, and cultural richness. This axis is a microcosm of Caracas, encapsulating the essence of the city in its diversity and complexity.

In this site two new critical points appear from the analysis: a site buffer and our first urban obstacle. The site buffer refers to the presence of the Botanic Garden and Los Caobos Park, understanding them as urban elements that "cushion" the relation of the Western Glitching Ares with its Eastern context, making their continuity and interaction difficult, and linking this area of study more to the dynamics and identity of western Caracas.

Fig. 99
Western Glitch Area map.
Scale 1:15.000
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 100 - For many years, the prestigious Hotel Ávila was the premier hotel in Caracas until the Hotel Tamanaco's emergence in 1953. Situated in San Bernardino, the first city sector to deviate from the traditional grid pattern, the hotel's construction was initiated by the Corporacion Venezolana de Fomento and supported by the Rockefeller Group. Its designer, Wallace K. Harrison, known for New York's Rockefeller Center, incorporated a "tropicalized" approach, learning from previous Caribbean projects. The 120-room hotel, nestled amidst greenery and aligned with views of Ávila and the Caracas valley, harmoniously blends interior and exterior spaces with a design that adapts to the climate using local materials. It features traditional architectural elements like outer corridor blinds, wooden balcony balustrades, and a tiled pre-lobby corridor. The hotel showcases a blend of local exterior charm and international interior style. Its expansion in 1944 was led by Clifford Wendehack, with construction carried out by Hegeman-Harris. (www.guiaccs.com)
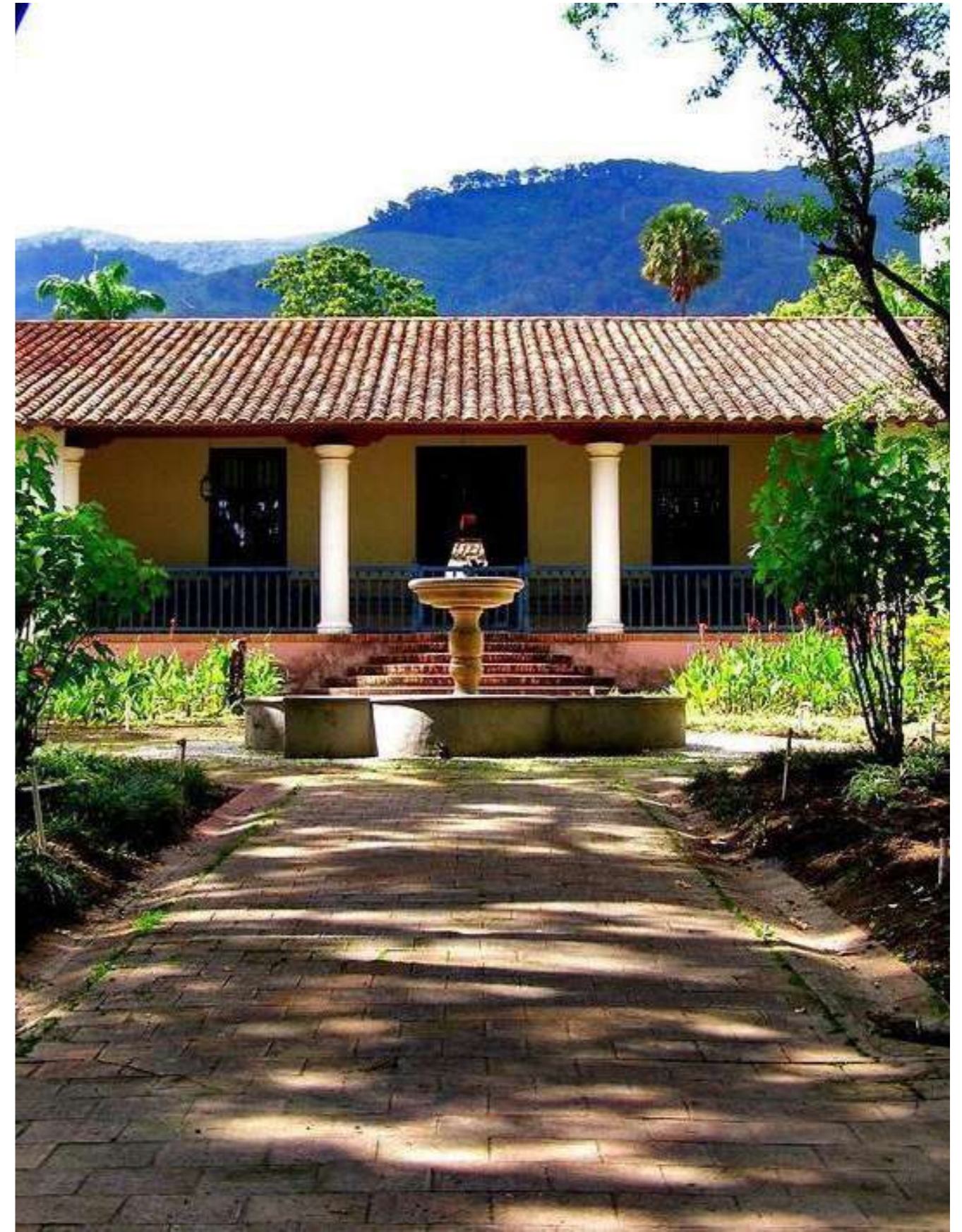

Fig. 101 - In the late 18th century, the area around the Anauco river on the outskirts of Caracas was primarily farmland. During this time, Juan Javier Mijares de Solórzano y Pacheco bought riverside land overlooking the Caracas valley to construct a luxurious country home, designed for leisure. This one-story building, centered around a courtyard and lined with corridors, separated the main living areas from the servant quarters. The courtyard, one of the era's first geometric gardens, aligned with the house's symmetry. The house featured a side entrance with a small roof, reminiscent of urban homes, and included a coach house and a garden-facing corridor. After the Solórzano family immigrated to Curacao in 1821 due to safety concerns, the property became government-owned. Acquired by the Marqués del Toro in 1826, the house, known as Quinta Anauco, hosted numerous gatherings for notable figures for almost forty years. Donated to the nation in 1958, it now showcases a significant collection of 17th and 18th-century colonial art. (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 102 - The Los Erasos Community developed over a sewage collector, with self-built houses along its margins, densifying vertically and leaving a narrow space above the collector. Trees are more abundant on the periphery of the neighborhood, while in the interior, due to lack of space, residents resort to potted plants on window grills or use recycled tires as planters. Some areas of Los Erasos face geological hazards, with slopes prone to landslides. Garbage collection is carried out internally on weekdays, but at the entrances to the neighborhood, the accumulation of waste and overflowing containers are evidence of the inadequacy of the waste management system. (www.ccscity450.com)
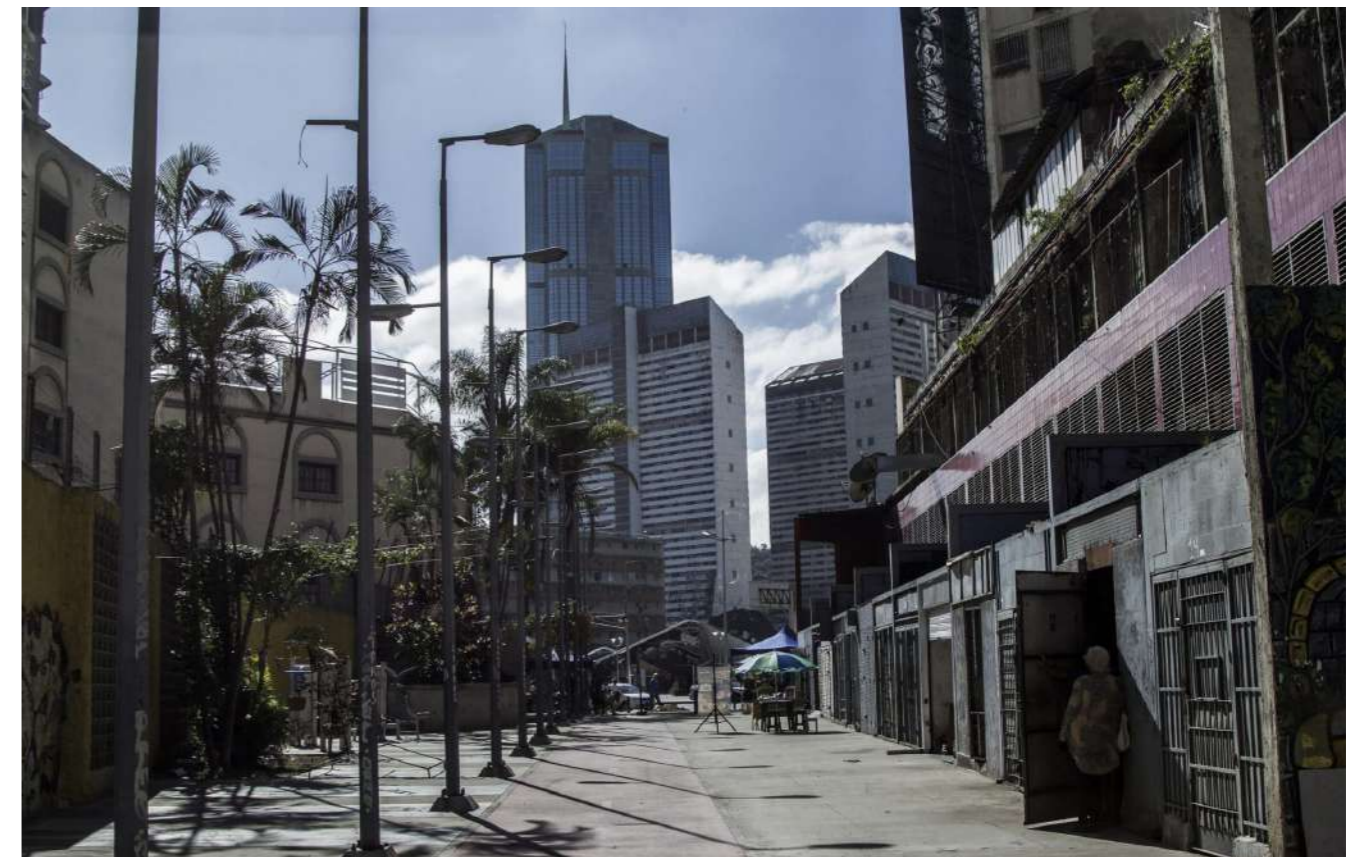
Fig. 103 - The Anauco pedestrian walk, located in front of the Galería de Arte Nacional in Bellas Artes, Caracas, is a historical and cultural space built in 1983. Originally, this 2.7 kilometer promenade was designed to beautify the city and offer a pedestrian and cultural route. However, it has suffered progressive abandonment by the State. Despite announced recovery plans, including Rodriguez's Candelaria Plan in 2013, the promenade has remained in a state of disrepair, with problems of garbage, sewage and lack of lighting, affecting the quality of life of neighbors and homeless people residing in the area. Promises of restoration and improvements have not materialized, leaving the promenade in a state of oblivion and neglect. (www.ccscity450.com)

Fig, 103 - Torre David, originally named Centro Financiero Confinanzas, is a prominent skyscraper in Caracas. Originally intended to be a financial center, the project was halted due to the death of its main investor, David Brillembourg, in 1993, and the subsequent Venezuelan banking crisis. The unfinished building, which consists of 45 floors, became known as "Torre David" after its investor. In the 2000s, Torre David gained international attention when it was occupied by squatters. These residents, many of whom were families, turned the unfinished skyscraper into a makeshift community. (www.uttdesign.com)
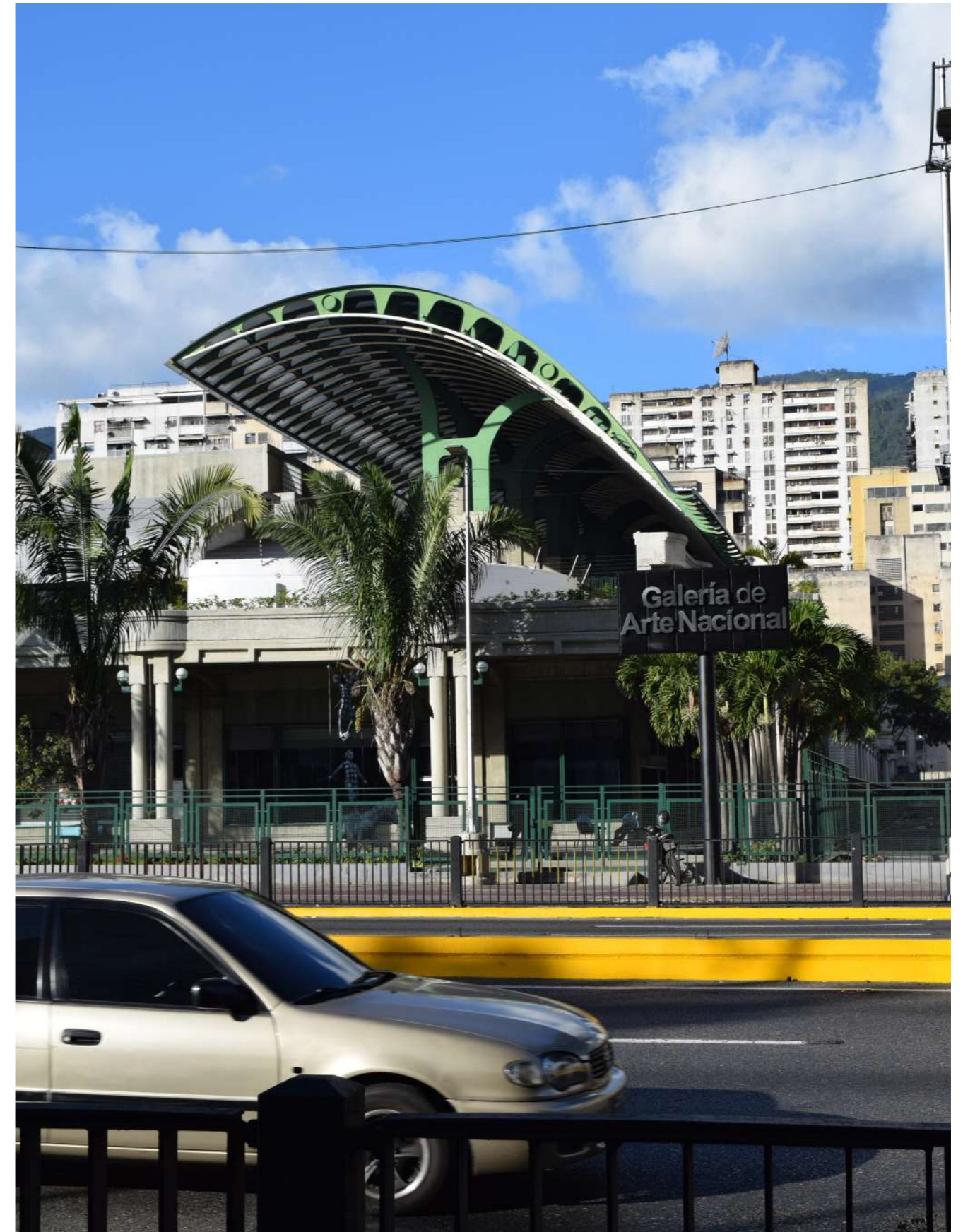
Fig. 104 - This large-scale project, one of the most extensive in Latin America and notable for its prolonged construction period, highlights the issues with the inconsistency of public cultural policies. Initiated by the National Council of Culture in 1974, the National Art Gallery started in the former Museum of Fine Arts by Villanueva in 1976. Its relocation to a new site, assigned during the Pérez government and designed by the creators of Parque Vargas, faced significant delays. Although the design was completed in 1986, the construction was stalled for nearly two decades, resuming only in 2006, and partially opening in 2009 with 11,000 of its planned 27,000 square meters. The structure consists of three sections: a porticoed base, a triple-height gallery, and a two-story central area for exhibitions. The design accommodates artworks of various types and sizes, with the western façade offering a clear display arrangement. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 105 - Urdaneta Avenue, a significant thoroughfare in Caracas, exemplifies the city's blend of modernity and historical richness. Named after the illustrious Venezuelan General Rafael Urdaneta, a hero in the war of independence, this avenue is not only a vital transport link but also a repository of cultural and historical landmarks. Running through the heart of Caracas, it passes by notable buildings. Furthermore, Urdaneta Avenue is lined with a mix of colonial and contemporary architectural styles, showcasing the city's evolving urban landscape. This juxtaposition provides a unique visual experience, reflecting Caracas's dynamic growth and its respect for historical heritage. The avenue is also a hub of commercial activity, with bustling markets, shops, and local vendors, making it a lively artery that embodies the city's vibrant social and economic life. (www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 106 - Avenida México in Caracas, stands as a vivid illustration of the city's urban landscape and cultural vibrancy. Traversing key sections of the city, this bustling artery is a reflection of Caracas's architectural diversity and its role as a melting pot of historical and contemporary influences. The avenue also features lush green spaces, including the Los Caobos Park. Avenida México is not just a transit route but a cultural corridor, playing host to numerous art galleries, theaters, and museums, such as the Museum of Fine Arts and the National Art Gallery. These institutions are instrumental in promoting Venezuelan art and culture.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 107 - Avenida Bolívar serves as a living testament to the city's historical legacy and its modern aspirations. This avenue is more than a transportation route; it symbolizes the nation's enduring reverence for its historical roots. The thoroughfare is renowned for its scale and grandeur, exemplifying the ambitious urban planning and architectural advancements that characterize mid-20th century Caracas. Along its stretch, Avenida Bolívar hosts a range of architecturally significant buildings, from the monumental Twin Towers of Centro Simon Bolivar to various governmental and cultural edifices, representing a blend of classical and modernist designs. This avenue is not just an urban landmark but a social and political hub, often becoming the focal point for national celebrations, parades, and political gatherings, thus reflecting the civic life of the nation. In sum, Avenida Bolívar stands as a symbol of national pride, historical significance, and the continuous evolution of the city's urban and cultural identity. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 108 - The Museo de los Niños (Children's Museum) established in 1982, is a pioneering institution in Latin America dedicated to interactive learning and educational enrichment for children. This museum, located in the Parque Central Complex, represents a visionary approach to children's education, blending entertainment with hands-on learning experiences across a wide array of disciplines. The museum's innovative design and exhibits are tailored to stimulate curiosity and engage young minds in the exploration of science, technology, arts, and humanities. The museum also serves as a social equalizer, offering access to educational resources and experiences that might otherwise be unavailable to many children in Venezuela. The Museo de los Niños thus stands as a testament to the role of educational institutions in shaping future generations, embodying a blend of pedagogical innovation, cultural inclusivity, and community engagement. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 109 + 110 - The Parque Central Complex is another important landmark on this axis. It constitutes a crucial cultural and administrative center, housing government offices, residences, and cultural spaces. Its architectural importance and its role in the daily life of the city are indisputable, representing an attempt at vertical and functional integration in the heart of Caracas.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 111 - The Teresa Carreño Theater, a key cultural and architectural landmark of the 20th century in Venezuela, is part of a comprehensive cultural complex in Caracas. Spanning over 22,000 square meters, it was born from a 1970 architectural competition. The theater serves as a connecting hub for various cultural institutions, including museums and art galleries. It features advanced design and engineering, including two main halls – the Ríos Reyna Hall for large-scale performances and the José Félix Ribas Hall for smaller, more intimate events. Both halls exhibit artistic elements with acoustic functions, contributing to the theater's unique aesthetic and functional design. Housing prominent Venezuelan orchestras and ballet companies, the Teresa Carreño Theater, inaugurated in 1983, stands as a testament to Venezuela's commitment to cultural and architectural excellence.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 112 - In this same area is located the Hotel Alba Caracas, formerly known as the Hilton, which has witnessed numerous historical events and is an icon of hospitality and modern Venezuelan history. This hotel has hosted political figures and celebrities, being a landmark in the urban and social fabric of Caracas.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 113 - Influenced by French beaux-arts, is evident in the rigorous axial design of the Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Science in Caracas. These buildings are distinguished by their unique layouts, incorporating courtyards and corridors for a standalone monumental feel, a novel concept in the city. The Museum of Fine Arts, designed with radial geometry, forms a balanced public space with its façade extending into the city. Its central courtyard is surrounded by well-proportioned rooms and monumental colonnades. Sybil Moholy Nagy commended the museum's seamless integration of interior and exterior spaces. The neoclassical façade features Francisco Narváez's reliefs, and the interior houses significant modern artworks. The museum was expanded in 1952.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023
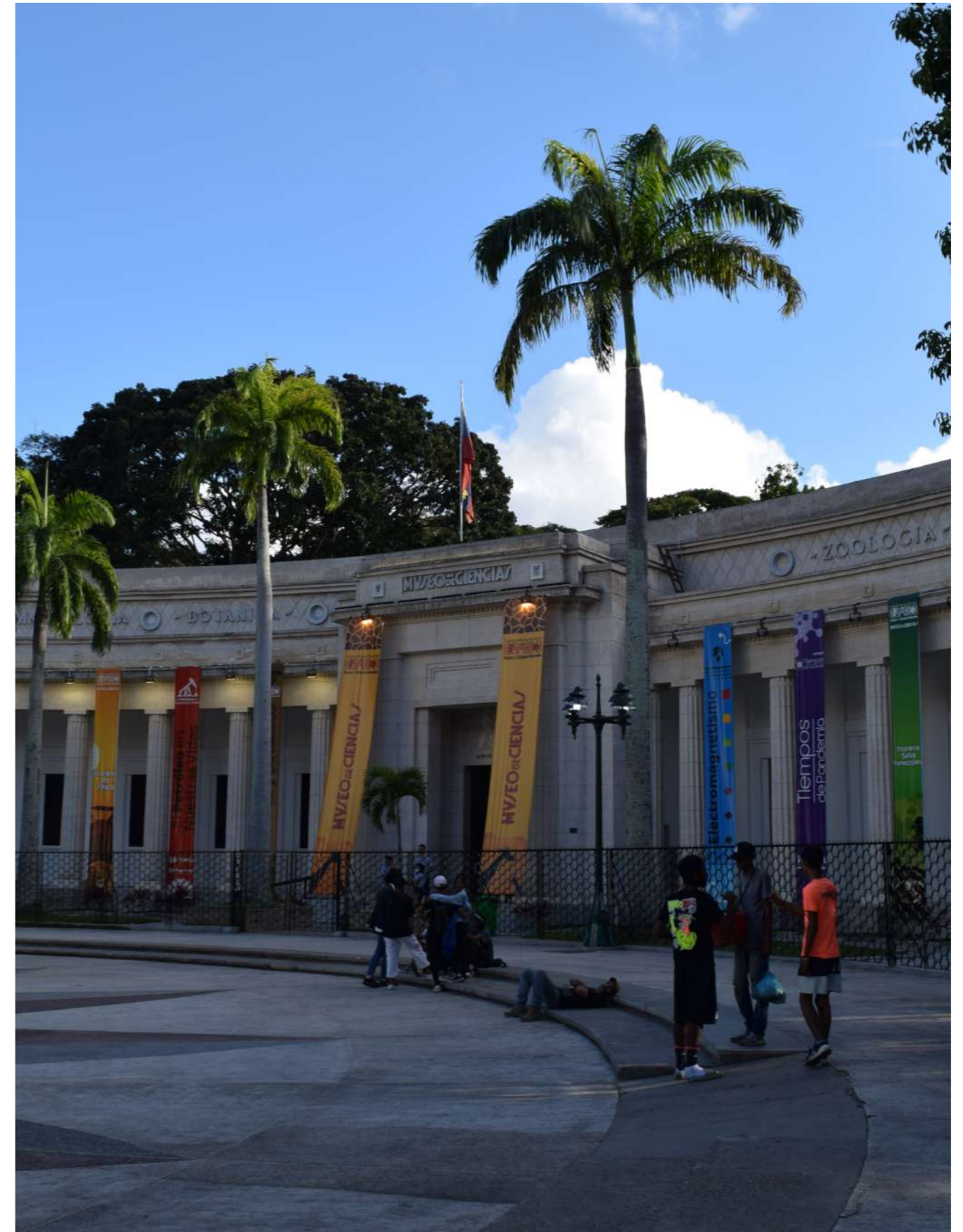
Fig. 114 - Opened in 1940 alongside the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Science represents Villanueva's classicist period and forms part of a harmonious urban architectural complex near Los Caobos Park. While maintaining a beaux-arts structure, the Museum of Science offers a contrasting spatial arrangement to the Museum of Fine Arts with its vertical layout across two floors. The focus here is not on an inner courtyard but on a stairway system and a sky-light, aligning more with academic architectural styles. The museum's façade, featuring a curved colonnade, mirrors the circular plaza layout. Internally, the architecture unfolds through a three-space sequence: a front area defined by lateral wings, a central double-height space with vertical circulation and skylight, and a rear area with a small square courtyard, functioning as a light well. Combining neoclassical elements with tropical considerations, the building's façade is adorned with ornamental motifs and reliefs by Francisco Narváez. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023
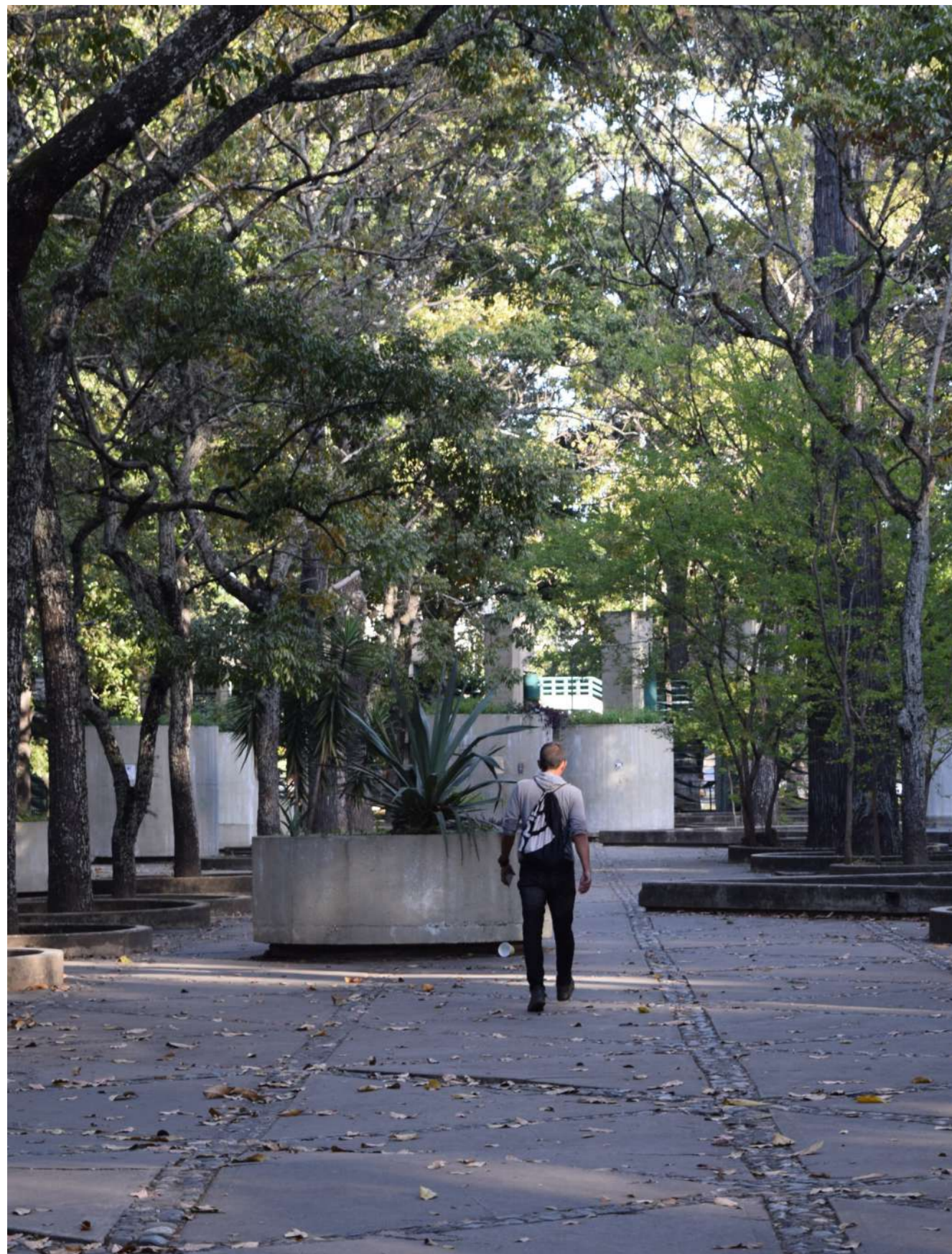
Fig. 115 - Los Caobos Park, one of the oldest and most significant public parks in Caracas, Venezuela, represents a vital green space within the urban landscape, offering both ecological and cultural value. Established in the early 20th century, the park spans approximately 17 hectares and is renowned for its lush and diverse vegetation, including the iconic Caobo trees after which it is named. Beyond its environmental importance, Los Caobos Park is a cultural and recreational hub, housing important cultural institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts and the National Art Gallery. Its wide paths, open spaces, and sculptures, including works by renowned Venezuelan artists, make it a popular spot for leisure activities, cultural events, and community gatherings. This space not only offers respite from the urban hustle but also serves as a communal ground for cultural exchange, recreational activities, and environmental education, underlining its integral role in the social and environmental fabric of Caracas. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 116 - The Botanical Garden, an integral part of Ciudad Universitaria, serves as a lush "green oasis" in the Caracas valley, spanning 68 hectares with two ponds at each end. Home to over 2500 botanical species, this living plant museum and research center also supports more than two thousand species of birds and insects. Developed by Tobias Lasser (1911-2006), the garden features various sections like an arboretum, palmetum, a xerophilous garden, bromeliarium, tropical rainforest, and a medicinal garden, spread across its flat and mountainous areas. The Botanical Institute building, designed by Villanueva, complements the landscape with its unique architecture of three interconnected parallelepipeds, featuring courtyards, ramps, corridors, and a trapezoidal auditorium. The design plays with light and shadow, incorporating elements like latticework, brise-soleils, and pergolas. The interior houses a herbarium with a mural by Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982) and a wood mural by Francisco Narváez (1905-1982) near the auditorium. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 117 - The Francisco Fajardo Highway is a major urban expressway that stretches across the Venezuelan capital, playing a pivotal role in the city's transportation infrastructure. As Caracas's principal east-west arterial route, this highway spans approximately 40 kilometers, linking key areas of the city and serving as a crucial conduit for its daily traffic flow. Designed and constructed in phases during the latter half of the 20th century, the Francisco Fajardo Highway exemplifies the city's rapid urbanization and modernization efforts during this period. Its construction involved significant engineering feats, including the negotiation of Caracas's complex topography and the integration of various overpasses and interchanges to manage the dense urban traffic. However, it also represents the challenges of urban planning in rapidly growing cities, occasionally contributing to traffic congestion and urban sprawl. (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 118 - In 1942, President Isaías Medina Angarita established the Autonomous Institute of the University City of Cara-cas (UCC), spearheaded by Carlos Raúl Villanueva, a Venezuelan architect trained at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris. The UCC, starting with the University Hospital, evolved into Villanueva's experimental ground for blending classical layouts and modernist principles. The area boasts various architectural innovations like segregated uses, independent walkways and roadways, continuous greenery, rooftop utilization, and integration of art with architecture. Recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site in 2002, the UCC includes 87 buildings and 87 art works, showcasing a synthesis of architecture, urbanism, and art. The Botanical Garden, part of this heritage, features Latin America's largest palm collec-tion. The campus design blends various elements - orthogonal classroom buildings, unique amphitheaters, libraries, and sports facilities, with innovations in covered public spaces, transition areas, and light-infused interior gardens.
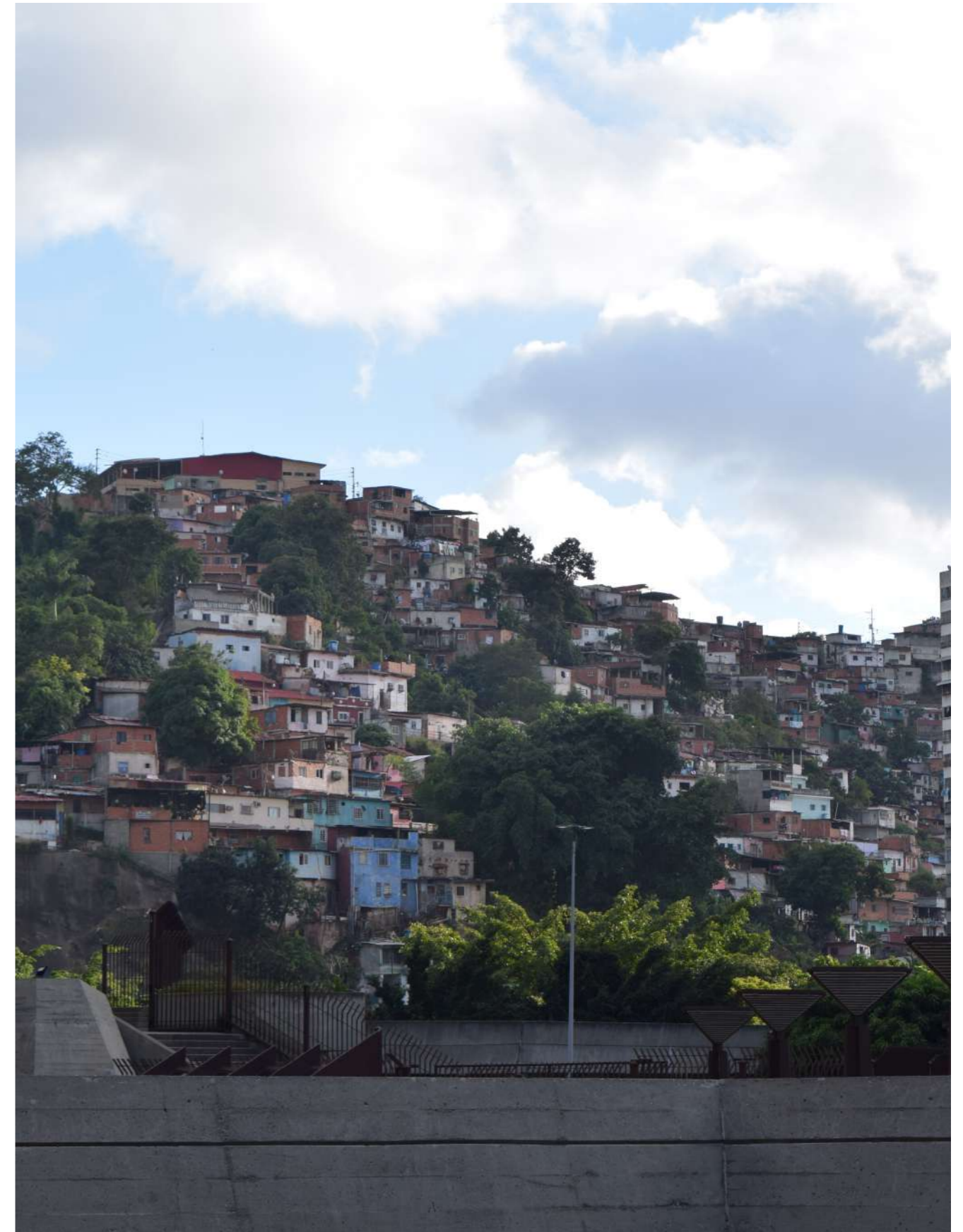
Fig.119 - As we move south, we enter the La Charneca neighborhood, known for its rich musical history linked to Creole drums. This neighborhood is a living testimony of Afro-Venezuelan cultural traditions and their influence on Venezuelan popular music. La Charneca symbolizes resistance and the preservation of cultural roots in a constantly changing urban environment. Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

The Western Glitch Area, from north to south, unfolds through Caracas' main features: its valley condition and the prioritization of the streets over its urban-territorial landscape. The landmarks of this site have the challenge not only of relating to its immediate context as adjacent buildings, streets, and public spaces, but they also have the challenge of relating to each other, interrupted by main broad streets that disregard pedestrian flow and a topographic land that difficult accessibility equality, allowing only a core interaction between the buildings and urban complex in the Central North Axis.

Fig. 120 - up
Western Glitch Area section.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 121 - down
Western Glitch Area northen urban profile.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024
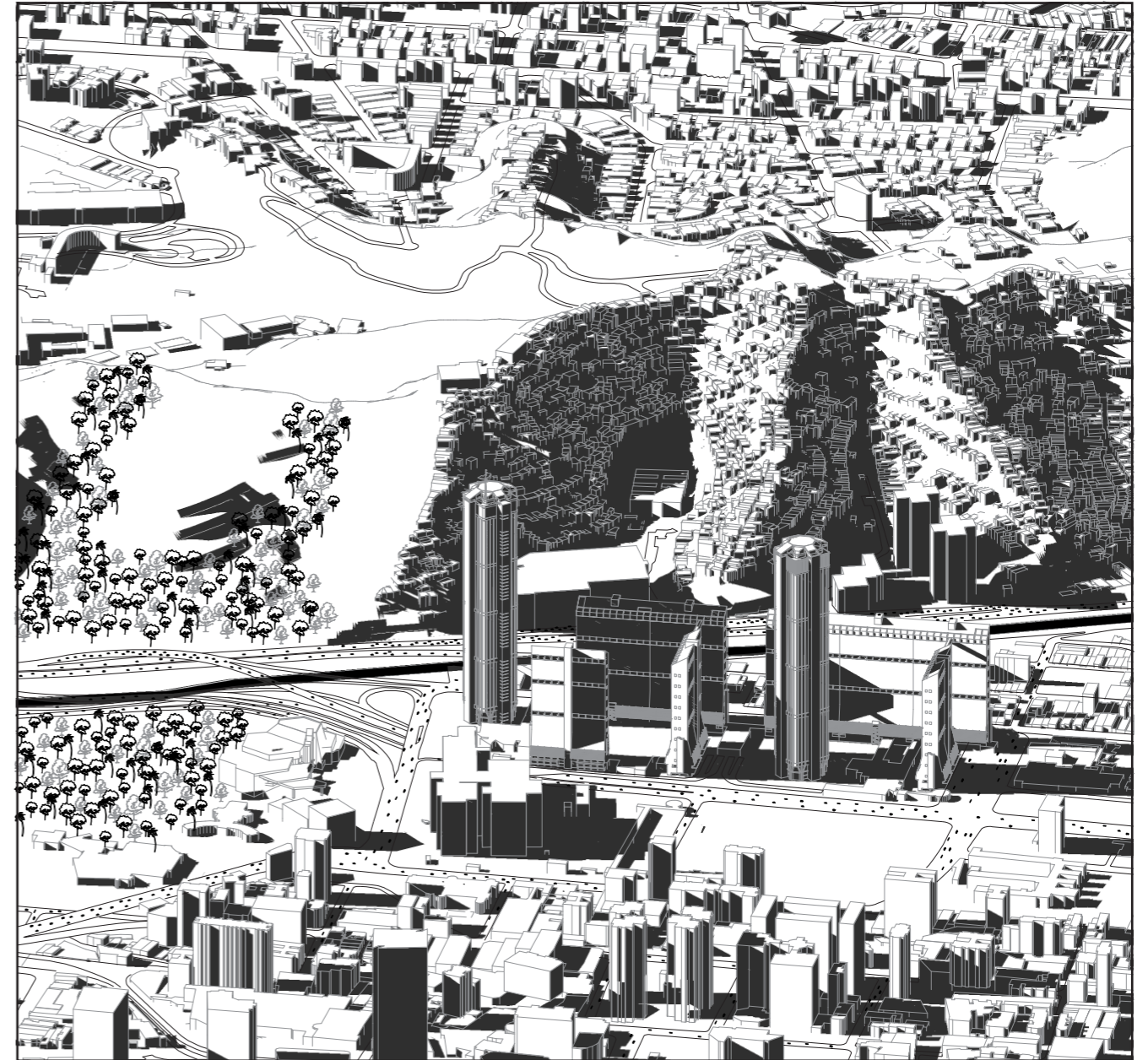
Fig. 122
Western Glitch Area southern urban profile.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Eastern Glitch

The urban axis that extends north-south along the border between the Chacao and Libertado municipalities constitutes one of the most dynamic and representative areas of Caracas. This route crosses areas that mostly reflect the contemporary development of Caracas, which is the Eastern Glitch Area of this research.

The starting point of this Glitch Area is the Country Club of Caracas, known for its prestigious golf course and first-class facilities, which represent a part of the economic and social elite of the city. This place is not only a leisure space for its members but has also become a symbol of status and socioeconomic segregation within the urban structure of Caracas.

Moving south is the Chacaíto sector, an area characterized by its commercial and urban vitality. Chacaíto is an important transportation node and a center of economic activity, housing numerous stores, offices, and shopping malls. This area reflects the cosmopolitan character of Caracas, formalized in the Plaza Brion, being a meeting point for a wide range of residents and visitors from different social strata.

Plaza Brion in Caracas, located at the confluence of key areas of Sabana Grande and Avenida Francisco de Miranda, is not only an important transportation node due to its proximity to the Chacaíto subway station, thus facilitating access and mobility in one of the busiest areas of Caracas, but also serves as a meeting space between different commercial buildings. The strategic location of Plaza Brion makes it a linking point between different

commercial and residential areas, which makes it vital for pedestrian flow and urban interaction. In addition, its proximity to the vibrant Sabana Grande Avenue, known for its pedestrian boulevard, stores, and cultural life, amplifies its relevance as an urban center that reflects the daily life and diversity of Caracas.

Moving towards El Rosal, the axis enters an area that combines business and residential life. El Rosal is known for being one of Caracas' financial centers, with a high concentration of banks, businesses, and corporate headquarters. This area reflects the importance of Caracas as an economic center in Venezuela.

Following the tour, we arrive at Las Mercedes, a neighborhood that has become an important center of entertainment, gastronomy, and fashion. Las Mercedes is emblematic for its restaurants, boutiques, art galleries, and nightlife, which makes it a reference point for leisure and tourism.

Along with Las Mercedes, two other areas stand out in the functioning of the Eastern Glitch Area, these being Sabana Grande Boulevard and Franciso de Miranda Avenue.

Sabana Grande Boulevard in Caracas, a pedestrian promenade of about 2 km, represents a vibrant epicenter of social, cultural, and commercial activity, essential to the city's urban life. This prominent artery, which crosses one of the most important commercial districts of Caracas, offers a dynamic space for the meeting of citizens and visitors, marked by a
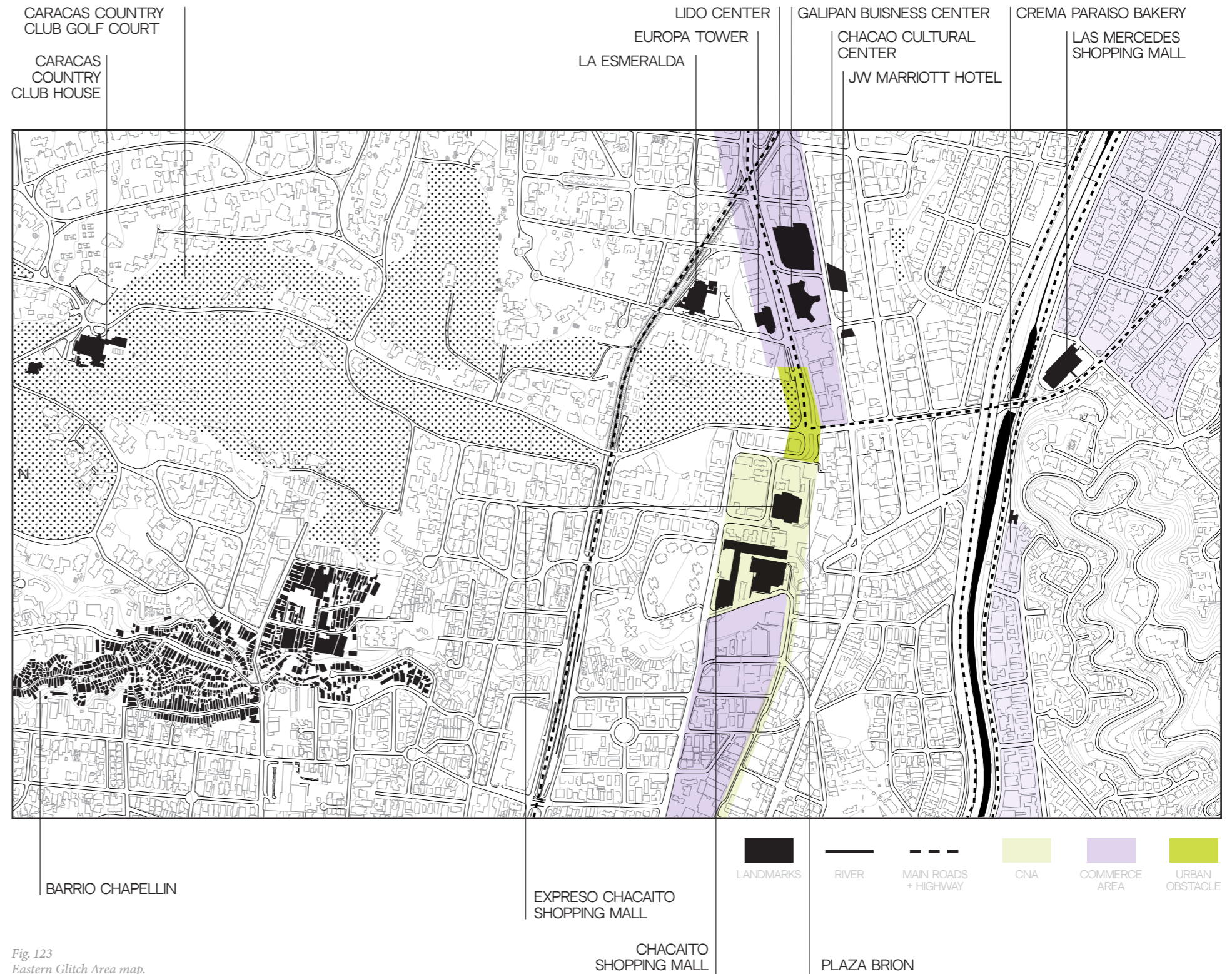
wide variety of stores, restaurants, cafes, and artistic spaces while being an area commonly known for its intercontinental communities, reflected in the gastronomic variety offered by the boulevard.

Avenida Francisco de Miranda, which runs from Chacaíto to the Petare sector (c. 7.5 km), is one of the main arteries of the city and exemplifies the modernization and urban expansion of Caracas. This avenue is fundamental for mobility in the city, connecting diverse residential and commercial areas.

CARACAS COUNTRY CLUB GOLF COURT
CARACAS COUNTRY CLUB HOUSE
LIDO CENTER
EUROPA TOWER
LA ESMERALDA
GALIPAN BUISNESS CENTER
CHACAO CULTURAL CENTER
JW MARRIOTT HOTEL
CREMA PARAISO BAKERY
LAS MERCEDES SHOPPING MALL
BARRIO CHAPELLIN
EXPRESO CHACAITO SHOPPING MALL
CHACAITO SHOPPING MALL
PLAZA BRION

LANDMARKS | RIVER | MAIN ROADS + HIGHWAY | CNA | COMMERCE AREA | URBAN OBSTACLE

Fig. 123
Eastern Glitch Area map.
Scale 1:15.000
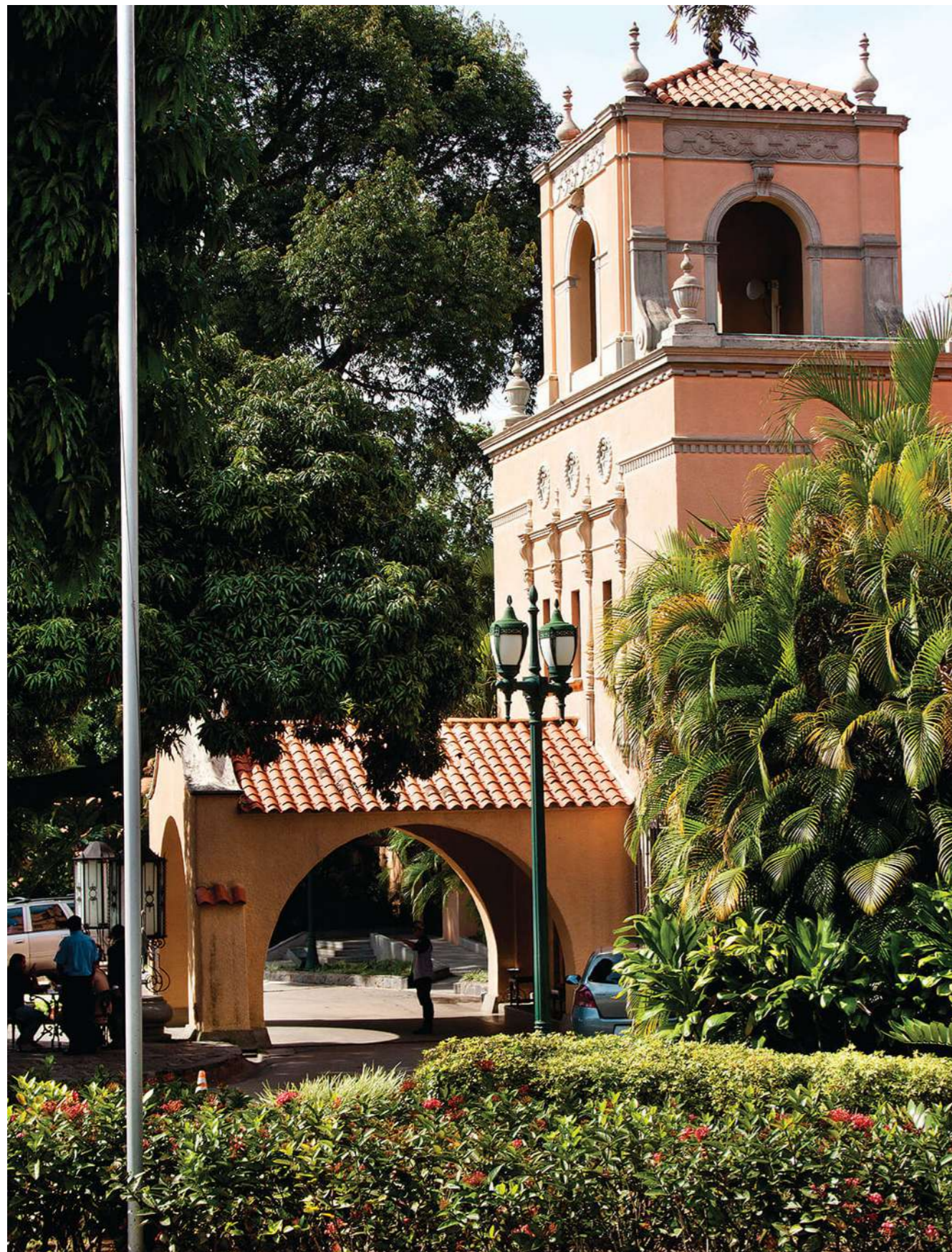*Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024*

Fig. 124 - Located on the former Hacienda Blandín coffee plantation, the club features a stately neo-Hispanic architecture designed by Wendehack, integrating elements from the old plantation house. Positioned on a natural terrace, it overlooks the Chacao valley and sits at the foot of the Ávila mountain. Its design includes a series of volumes forming courtyards, a main hall aligned east-west, and a symmetrical gallery with a view towards the south pond, all maintaining the symmetry and layout of the original hacienda's courtyard. Carlos Guinand Sandoz played a key role in its construction, contributing significantly to its architectural style. Inaugurated in 1930, the club is considered one of Venezuela's architectural treasures.
(www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 125 - The Caracas Country Club Golf Club is a landmark residential development in Caracas, blending urban design with the valley's natural landscape. The project, initiated with the 1929 demolition of the Blandín House, was developed on land that once belonged to the area's first coffee plantation. The Blandín Syndicate, composed of prominent families and advised by Nelson Rockefeller, employed the Olmsted Brothers Associates, famed for New York's Central Park, to design the landscape. They utilized the scenic qualities of the land, preserving large trees and views of the surrounding valley and Ávila peak. The golf course, designed by C. H. Banks and built in two stages, respected the area's topography, incorporating existing tree-lined pathways and preserving century-old trees. This unique development is recognized for its integration of urban and natural elements, with its plans archived at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. - (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 126 - The Chapellín neighborhood, situated at the base of Avila Mountain, is known for its steep topography and proximity to important commercial areas. It acts as a link between the Country Club and La Florida urbanization. The neighborhood is characterized by the Chapellín creek and numerous informal settlements prone to flooding. A redevelopment plan proposes to relocate these settlements, embank the creek, and convert the area into a recreational space. This plan includes green spaces, a multi-level library, sports facilities, and residential buildings with commercial ground floors. It also features main street access decks and a resident-made north-south pedestrian path, aiming to revitalize the neighborhood while addressing environmental and urban challenges.
www.ccscity450.com

Fig. 127 - Avenida Libertador, in the east of Caracas, is a key thoroughfare in the financial and cultural district of Sabana Grande, connecting Parroquia El Recreo with the Municipality of Chacao. Formerly known as Calle La Línea de Sabana Grande due to the railway, it crosses several important neighborhoods and features two levels, including a lower one without traffic lights and adorned with artistic murals. This avenue, essential for traffic flow in Caracas, houses at its western end the headquarters of CANTV and the Casa del Artista. Historically known for sex trade, especially in the nineties, this activity has decreased following the construction of new buildings and demographic changes in the area, shifting these activities to the north of the avenue.
www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 128 - Sabana Grande Boulevard is a prominent urban promenade that epitomizes the city's cosmopolitan and dynamic character. Stretching through the heart of the Sabana Grande district, this pedestrian-only boulevard serves as a bustling microcosm of urban life, blending commerce, culture, and social interaction. The transformation of the area into a pedestrian zone in the late 20th century marked a significant urban development, fostering a safer and more engaging environment for both residents and visitors. Flanked by an array of retail stores, restaurants, street cafes, and bookshops, the boulevard offers a diverse shopping and culinary experience, reflecting the rich cultural diversity of the city. It is also known for its vibrant street performers and artists, adding a unique artistic flair to the area. Architecturally, the boulevard features a blend of modern and traditional building styles, offering a visual narrative of Caracas's architectural evolution. - Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 129 + 130 - The Chacaíto shopping complex represents a rare and successful example of a city-integrated shopping center. Set on a 23,000 m2 trapezoidal lot, this open-air complex distinguishes itself with expansive pedestrian areas separated from vehicular traffic. At 45,000 m2, it quickly became a prominent shopping destination in Caracas, known for its unique urban design and notable stores like the Drugstore, Carnaby Street, and the Hipocampo. The complex consists of an "L"-shaped and a square structure, featuring three levels: a basement with parking and shops, a ground floor with retail spaces, and an upper level with more shops and offices. The "L" block connects to Avenida Francisco Solano López, while the square block centers around a double-height area for light. The arrangement of shops around perimeter walkways and strategic advertising enhanced its avant-garde image. Awarded the 1970 Municipal Architecture Award of Sucre District, it remains esteemed as one of Caracas's best modern shopping centers. (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 131 - The Expreso Chacaito shopping mall is known for its innovative layout that prioritizes pedestrian movement, offering an open and inviting atmosphere distinct from the congested city streets. Architecturally, the Expreso Chacaíto combines functionality with aesthetic appeal, featuring a contemporary design that accommodates a diverse range of shops and eateries. The interior is characterized by spacious walkways, ample natural lighting, and a layout that encourages easy navigation and accessibility. This commercial hub not only caters to shopping needs but also serves as a social and cultural meeting point for locals and tourists alike, hosting various events and exhibitions. Its strategic location near major transit routes enhances its accessibility, making it a popular destination for both casual shopping and leisure activities. The Expreso Chacaíto Shopping Mall, therefore, is not just a center for commerce but a symbol of Caracas's evolving urban landscape, blending modern retail trends with the city's vibrant social life. (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 132 - Plaza Brión, positioned between Sabana Grande Boulevard and Avenida Francisco de Miranda, was established alongside the construction of Caracas Metro's Line 1 and its adjacent pedestrian boulevard. This area, stretching about 40 x 280 meters, resembles a square and is surrounded by shopping centers like Chacaíto and mixed-use buildings. A notable feature is Jesús Soto's "Cubo Virtual" sculpture near the Chacaíto Shopping Center. The plaza, lined with trees and urban furniture, including life-sized chess games and a José Martí sculpture, serves as a lively pedestrian zone and intermodal transit hub, linking to both the Country Club's main avenue and Avenida Francisco de Miranda. www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 133 - Avenida Francisco de Miranda stands as a testament to the city's urban evolution and its bustling metropolitan character. This avenue is a vital link in the city's transportation network, connecting diverse neighborhoods and facilitating fluid movement across eastern Caracas. Spanning several municipalities, it intersects with other significant roads, making it a crucial artery for both local and through traffic. The avenue is also known for its commercial vibrancy, hosting a plethora of shops, offices, restaurants, and entertainment venues, making it a hub of economic and social activity. Moreover, Francisco de Miranda Avenue is dotted with several public squares and green spaces, offering urban respite and contributing to the city's environmental health. The presence of cultural landmarks and public art along the avenue adds to its aesthetic and cultural significance. Overall, Avenida Francisco de Miranda embodies the dynamic interplay of Caracas's urbanity, history, commerce, and culture. (www.guiaccs.com)

Fig. 134 - Torre Europa stands as a prominent architectural landmark symbolizing the city's modernity and urban development. This towering skyscraper, completed in 1981, rises prominently in the city's skyline, offering a striking visual presence. Designed by renowned Venezuelan architect Carlos Gómez de Llarena, the building boasts a sleek and contemporary design characterized by its cylindrical shape and mirrored glass façade, reflecting the surrounding cityscape. Standing at approximately 180 meters tall, Torre Europa is one of the tallest buildings in Caracas, providing expansive views of the city and its surroundings. Functioning primarily as an office building, it houses a variety of businesses, financial institutions, and commercial enterprises, contributing significantly to Caracas's economic activity. www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 135 - Quinta La Esmeralda, originally constructed in the late 19th century, served as the private retreat of prominent Venezuelan families. Its architecture reflects a blend of European influences, with ornate facades, intricate detailing, and sprawling gardens evoking a sense of elegance and grandeur. Over the years, Quinta La Esmeralda has served various purposes, including as a venue for social gatherings, cultural events, and diplomatic receptions, further enhancing its importance in Caracas's social fabric. Today, the estate stands as a cherished cultural landmark, offering visitors a glimpse into the city's rich history and architectural heritage. Its well-preserved interiors, adorned with period furnishings and artwork, provide a captivating insight into the lifestyle of Caracas's elite during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Quinta La Esmeralda remains an enduring symbol of Caracas's cultural identity and architectural legacy, inviting both locals and tourists to appreciate its historical significance and beauty.

Fig. 136 - The JW Marriott Hotel in Caracas stands as a prominent emblem of luxury hospitality in the heart of the city. This prestigious establishment, part of the globally renowned Marriott International chain, epitomizes elegance, sophistication, and world-class service. Situated in the affluent neighborhood of El Rosal, the hotel boasts a contemporary architectural design that seamlessly blends modern aesthetics with functional elegance. Its towering facade and sleek interiors exude opulence, offering guests a luxurious retreat amidst the bustling urban landscape. The JW Marriott Hotel features an array of amenities, including spacious guest rooms and suites outfitted with upscale furnishings and state-of-the-art technology, gourmet dining options showcasing both local and international cuisine, sophisticated event spaces for meetings and social gatherings, and a range of leisure facilities.
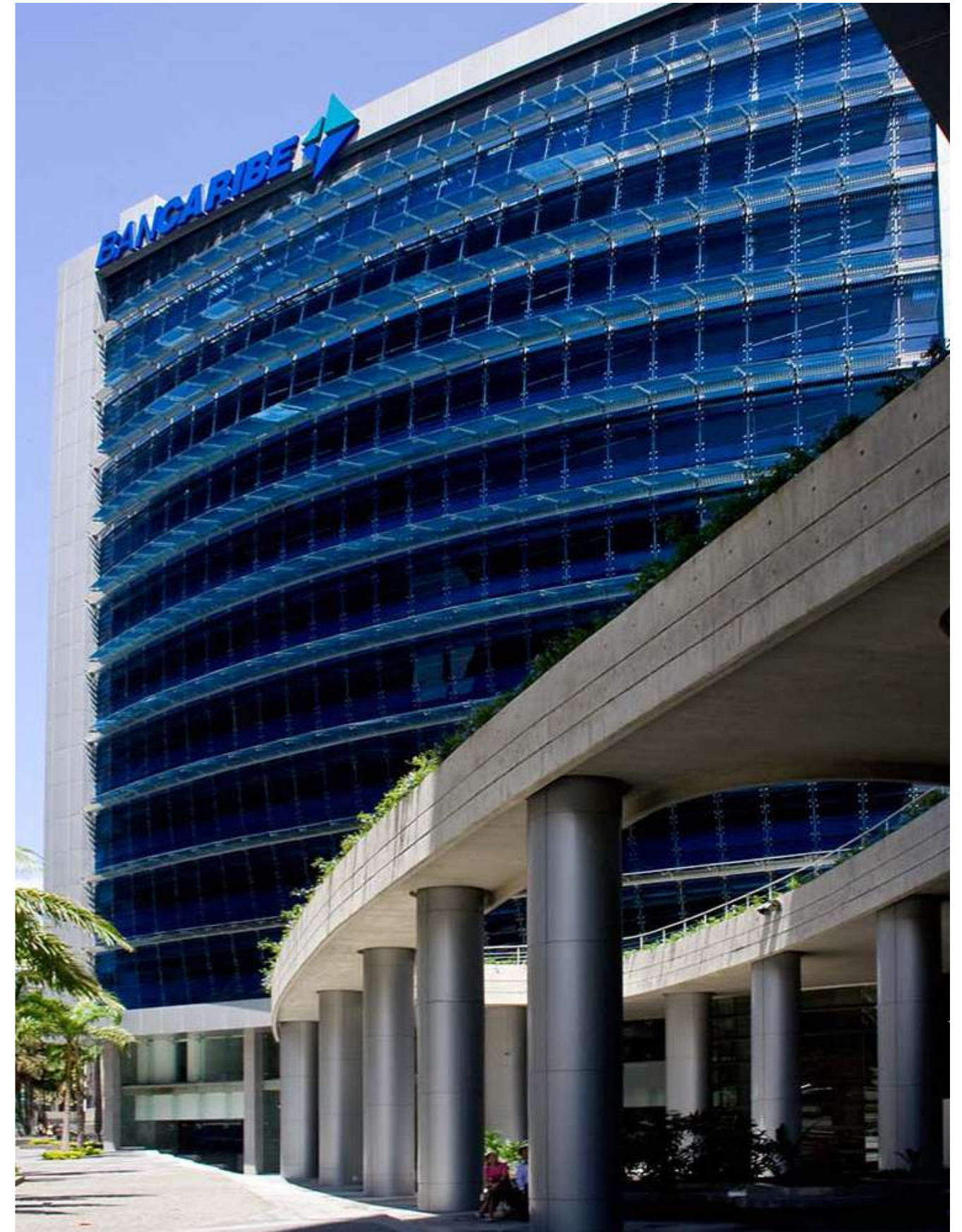
Fig. 137 - Torre Galipán, completed in 1979, stands as a testament to modernist design principles and urban development aspirations. Torre Galipán features a distinctive cylindrical shape, accented by sleek lines and a glass curtain wall façade. Rising approximately 110 meters above street level, the tower commands attention with its towering presence and commanding views of the surrounding cityscape. Originally conceived as a mixed-use development, Torre Galipán houses office spaces, commercial establishments, and luxury residences, catering to a diverse range of tenants and occupants. Its strategic location in the financial district of Caracas, Chacao, adds to its appeal, providing convenient access to business, commerce, and cultural amenities. Despite facing occasional challenges due to economic fluctuations and maintenance issues, Torre Galipán remains an enduring symbol of Caracas's architectural innovation and urban progress.

Fig. 138 + 139 - Constructed in the late 1970s, Centro Lido stands as a testament to modernist architectural principles and urban planning concepts. The complex comprises several interconnected towers and buildings, including office spaces, retail outlets, restaurants, and leisure facilities. Its design features angular lines, geometric shapes, and a glass curtain wall façade, reflecting the architectural trends of its time. Situated in the upscale area of El Rosal, Centro Lido serves as a multifunctional hub, attracting business professionals, shoppers, diners, and entertainment-seekers alike. Its central location within the city's commercial and financial district enhances its accessibility and convenience. Over the years, Centro Lido has evolved into a landmark destination, offering a vibrant mix of commerce, culture, and leisure activities to residents and visitors of Caracas.
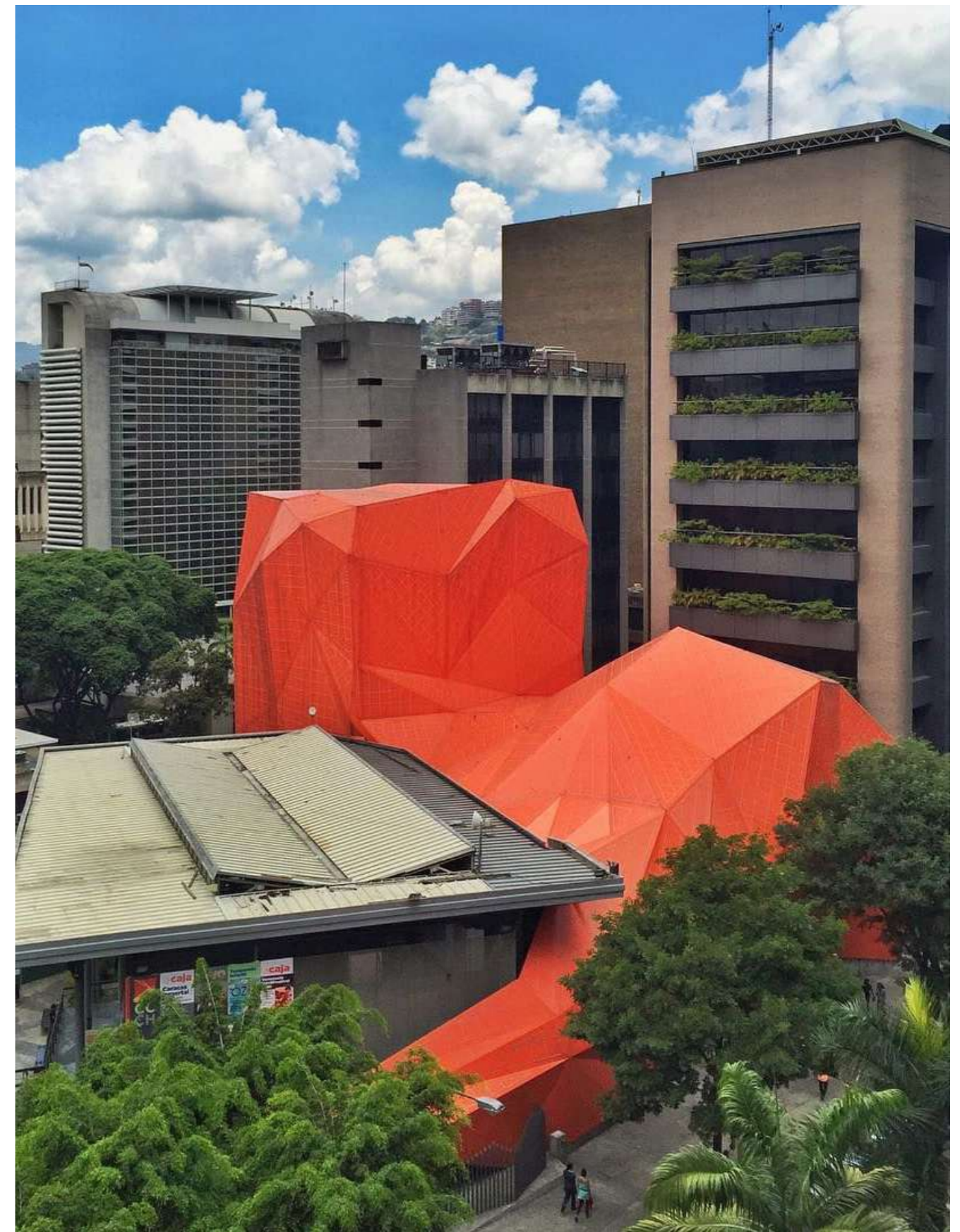
Fig. 140 - Located within the Chacao Cultural Center complex, the second stage of this project, initiated in 2004, maximizes the 1200 m2 plot by integrating with existing structures. Crafted by ODA, the eye-catching theater, inspired by the Ávila mountains, features an irregular aluminum-clad surface and fractal geometry. Its flexible design accommodates various shows and seamlessly blends into the complex, fostering the creation of new spaces. The theater comprises a stage, movable seating, and covered areas serving as a foyer with essential facilities below. Future plans include a contrasting concrete structure.
www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 141 - Rio de Janeiro Avenue serves as a vital thoroughfare within the city's urban fabric. Named after the Brazilian city, this avenue plays a pivotal role in connecting various neighborhoods and districts. Stretching across a significant portion of the city, Rio de Janeiro Avenue intersects with several major roads and arteries, facilitating the flow of traffic and commerce. Lined with a mix of commercial establishments, residential buildings, and public spaces, the avenue reflects the dynamic and diverse nature of Caracas. Its bustling atmosphere and vibrant street life make it a focal point for social interaction and economic activity. Additionally, Rio de Janeiro Avenue is known for its architectural diversity, featuring a blend of modern high-rise buildings and historic structures, providing a glimpse into the city's evolving urban landscape. As a key artery in Caracas's transportation network and a hub of urban life, Rio de Janeiro Avenue holds both practical and symbolic significance for the city and its residents.

Fig. 142 + 143 - Crema Paraíso Caffeteria, situated in the neighborhood of Bello Monte, is a notable establishment known for its unique ambiance and culinary offerings. Located within a bustling urban setting, this café stands out for its inviting atmosphere and charming décor. The café's interior exudes warmth and coziness, with comfortable seating arrangements, tasteful décor elements, and soft lighting creating a relaxed and welcoming environment for patrons. The café's strategic location in Bello Monte makes it a popular destination for locals and tourists alike, seeking a respite from the hustle and bustle of city life. Overall, Crema Paraíso Caffeteria serves as a charming oasis in Caracas, providing a haven where patrons can unwind, socialize, and indulge in the simple pleasures of good food and great company. www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 144 - Las Mercedes is a vibrant and upscale area renowned for its cosmopolitan atmosphere and diverse amenities. Situated in the Baruta Municipality, it features bustling streets adorned with chic boutiques, gourmet restaurants, and trendy cafes. The area's architectural landscape blends modern high-rises with colonial-style mansions. Known for its vibrant nightlife, Las Mercedes offers a plethora of clubs and live music venues. Despite its urban vibe, it also provides green spaces for recreation and cultural venues for artistic expression. Overall, Las Mercedes is a dynamic and sought-after neighborhood, offering luxury, entertainment, and cultural experiences to residents and visitors alike. www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 145 + 146 - In 1953, the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC), led by Nelson Rockefeller, commissioned American architect Donald Hatch to design the first modern shopping center with a supermarket in the emerging residential suburb of Las Mercedes in Caracas. Hatch, who previously worked at the Rockefeller Center in New York, completed the prototype first in Maracaibo in 1954, then with slight variations in La Vega from 1956 to 1958. The structure occupied a triangular lot of 8,200 square meters, featuring a peripheric parking for 130 cars. It comprised a two-story steel and glass building with a cantilevered roof, divided into two sections by a large double-height central hall. The ground floor housed commercial shops, a cafeteria, and a terrace with a reflecting pool, while the basement contained furniture and household equipment stores. Upstairs were the offices, and the modern self-service supermarket, spanning over 1,000 square meters, was accessible from the hall by ramps. Despite alterations and deterioration over time, the building once served as a symbol of modernity in Caracas, embodying the "American way of life." (www.ccscity450.com)
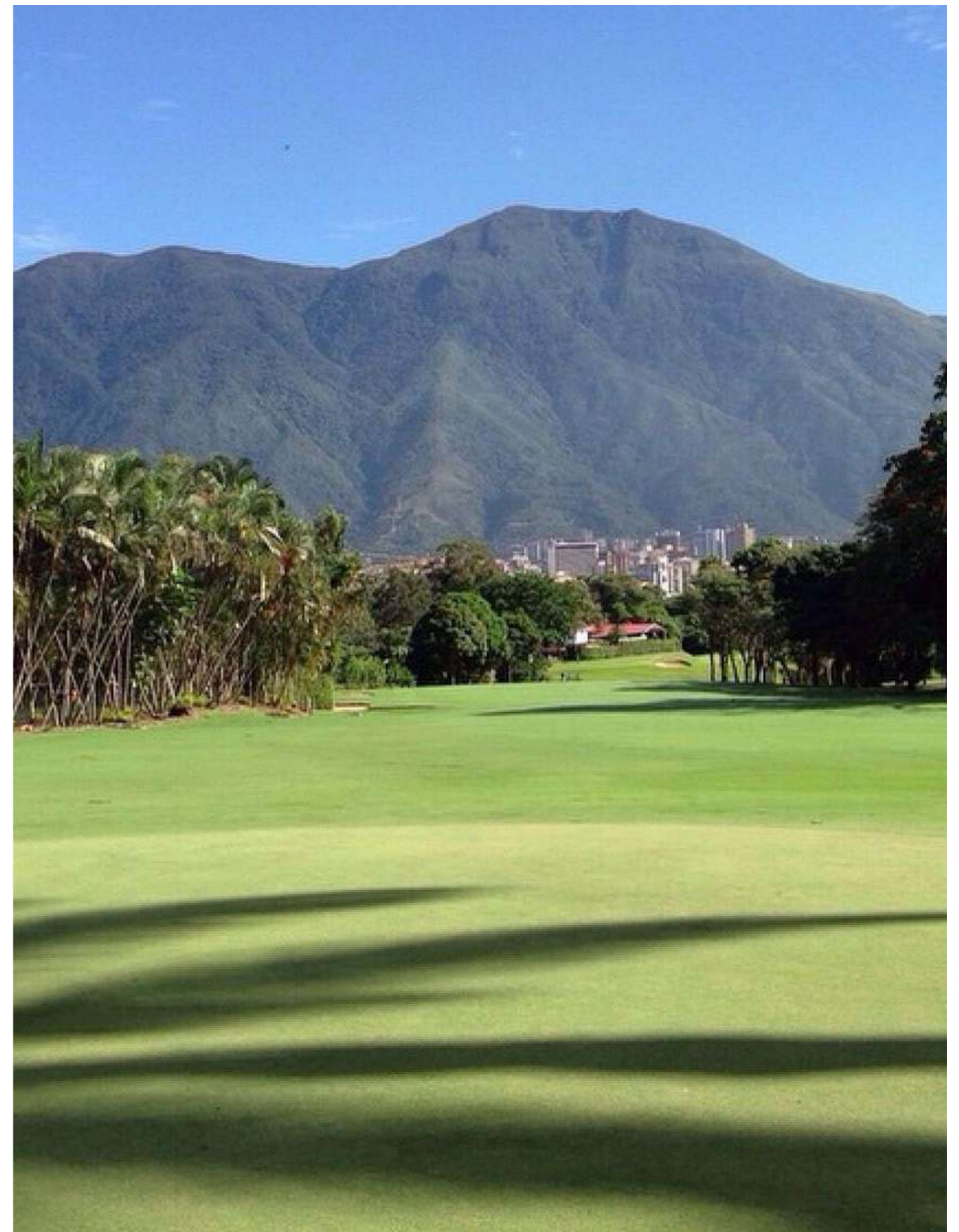
Fig. 147 - The Valle Arriba Golf Club is a renowned destination for golf enthusiasts and socialites alike. Founded in the mid-20th century, this exclusive club offers an escape from the city's hustle and bustle, nestled amidst picturesque greenery and rolling hills. Its meticulously maintained 18-hole golf course, designed by renowned architects, provides a challenging yet scenic landscape for players of all levels. In addition to golf, the club features amenities such as tennis courts, swimming pools, and fine dining options, catering to diverse recreational interests. Valle Arriba Golf Club serves as a hub for social gatherings and networking events, fostering camaraderie among its members. With its commitment to excellence, the club remains a prestigious institution synonymous with leisure and luxury in Caracas. www.guiaccs.com
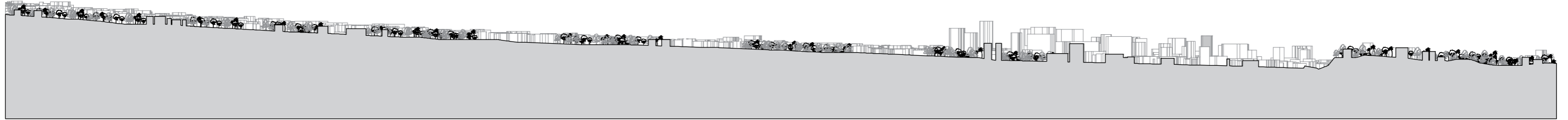
The Eastern Glitching Area, located in Chacao municipality, showcases a unique urban profile, in the stretch from the Caracas Country Club to Las Mercedes. This area exemplifies a striking contrast in urban planning and socio-economic levels in comparison with the Western Glitching Area. The Caracas Country Club and its neighborhoods located on the north side of this area analyzed; an emblem of opulence and exclusivity features sprawling green spaces and is surrounded by some of the most affluent residential areas in the city, characterized by luxurious homes and high-end amenities. In stark contrast, as one progresses towards Las Mercedes, the landscape shifts to a bustling commercial hub, renowned for its dynamic

Fig. 148 - up
Eastern Glitch Area section.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 149 - down
Eastern Glitch Area northen urban profile.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 150
Eastern Glitch Area southern urban profile.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

business environment, contemporary shopping centers, diverse culinary offerings, and vibrant nightlife. This area reflects a more cosmopolitan and modern aspect of Caracas, diverging significantly from the tranquility and seclusion of the Country Club area. The transition between these zones highlights the multifaceted nature of urban development in Caracas – following the natural topography condition of the city which at its highest point creates a quiet and exclusive urban area whereas at the bottom of the valley, the commerce hub unfolds – exposes where luxury and commerce coexist, shaping the city's unique urban fabric.

Heterotopias
Urban Imaginarium
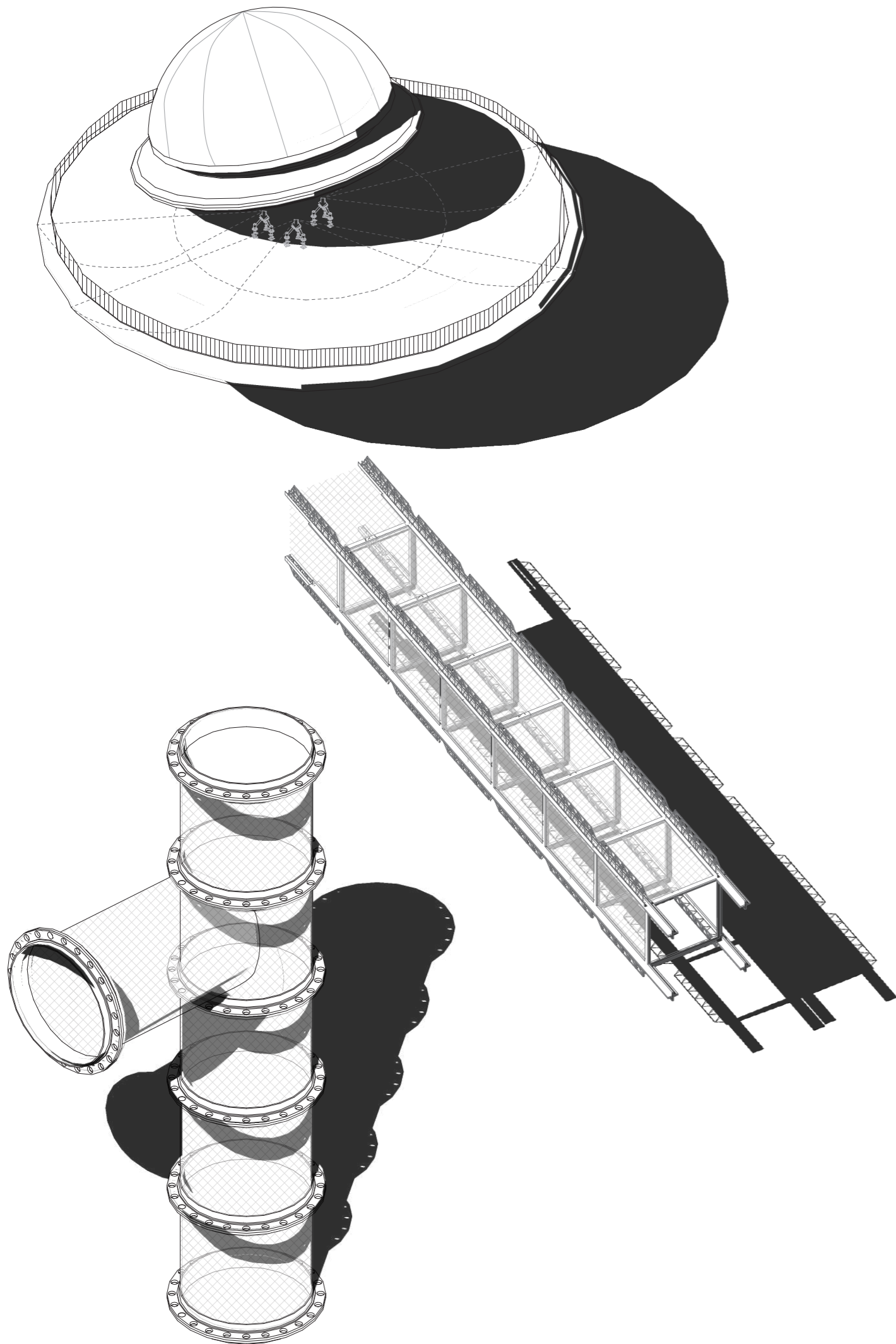
The concept of heterotopias, introduced by Michel Foucault, refers to places that are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. These are spaces of otherness, which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously physical and mental. Heterotopias confront the utopia with the effectively enacted utopia that exposes the real spaces of a given culture. Heterotopias are 'other' spaces, different from the every day, and they can either mirror, distort, or invert the spaces we inhabit regularly. They have a function within a society, acting as spaces of deviation, illusion, or compensation

In the context of the urban Imaginarium of Caracas, the concepts of "The Lost Generation" and "The Lost Interstice" could be understood through the lens of heterotopias as follows:

When these two concepts coexist, the Lost Generation finds itself in the Lost Interstice, navigating and shaping these heterotopias within the city. These spaces become platforms for the expression of otherness and can either facilitate a sense of belonging and community or exacerbate feelings of alienation and exclusion. They reflect the complex layers of urban living and social dynamics, where the past, present, and future collide, and where socio-cultural identities are continuously being constructed and deconstructed.

Segregation, both formal and informal, shapes the experience of the city for different groups, potentially contributing to the notion of a Lost Generation, whose members find themselves navigating a landscape of unexercised citizenship practices and a sense of detachment from the sanctioned uses of urban space. The pedestrian experiences in these interstices become key to understanding and possibly reclaiming or redefining these spaces.

By exploring these heterotopian scenarios, the Imaginarium would seek to understand how the Lost Generation interacts with the Lost Interstices, potentially identifying new pathways for social and urban integration.

Fig. 151
Artifacts.
Own elaboration.
2024

In order to depict this image of Caracas, the theoretical work of Lebbeus Woods and Rania Ghosn was taken as main references for building the strategy of the Urban Imaginarium.

Lebbeus Woods and Rania Ghosn, though working in different eras and contexts, share a profound commitment to speculative architectural scenarios, using their work to explore complex and often challenging futures. Woods, known for his conceptual designs, was a visionary architect who delved into the realms of politics, society, and ethics through his radical architectural propositions. His work often depicted a world in flux, characterized by conflict, disaster, and transformation. Woods' architectural drawings were not just structures but narrative devices that illustrated theoretical scenarios, pushing the boundaries of architectural thinking and its role in society.

Rania Ghosn, on the other hand, operates in a contemporary setting with a focus on environmental and geopolitical issues. Her work combines architectural design with geographic analysis and storytelling. Ghosn's speculative projects often address the complexities of environmental challenges, such as climate change, energy consumption, and waste management. Her approach is multidisciplinary, blending architecture, landscape, and urbanism to imagine future scenarios that provoke discussion and reflection about the present and future state of the planet.

Both Woods and Ghosn utilize speculation as a critical tool in their architectural practice. Woods' speculative architecture, often devoid of the constraints of practicality and client requirements, allowed him to explore the deeper implications of architectural form and space in a socio-political context. His drawings and theoretical projects acted as a form of critique, questioning the norms of architectural practice and envisioning alternatives to the built environment's status quo.

Ghosn, similarly, uses speculative scenarios to highlight and question current environmental and social practices. Her work serves as a form of environmental storytelling, where hypothetical futures are depicted to engage the public and policymakers in dialogue about urgent ecological and geopolitical issues. Through her speculative projects, Ghosn demonstrates how architectural thinking can extend beyond buildings to encompass larger ecological and spatial systems, highlighting the discipline's potential to address complex global challenges.

The theoretical work of Lebbeus Woods and Rania Ghosn provides a rich foundation for developing the Urban Imaginarium of Caracas, especially in the context of social segregation, exclusion, collective trauma, and otherness. Such a project would employ speculative and critical design methodologies to explore and represent the complex socio-urban fabric of Caracas.

Woods' exploration of war-torn and conflicted spaces can guide the conceptualization of an Imaginarium that reflects Caracas's urban challenges, such as social unrest and political turmoil. His approach to treating architecture as a narrative tool can be applied to illustrate and confront the collective traumas and social fractures within Caracas. Projects could visualize hypothetical futures where these traumas are represented in an urbanity that leans on detached space and dynamics independent from its urban context, offering a platform for critical reflection and dialogue.

At the same time, Rania Ghosn's work on geopolitical landscapes offers a lens to examine how urban planning and architectural interventions in Caracas could respond to resource scarcity and spatial inequities. ThisImaginarium could visualize the socio-political impacts of urban development, creating speculative scenarios that challenge current practices and invite them to rethink the city from a different critical point.

These scenarios would not only depict the physicality of the city but also embed the social narratives of otherness. This speculative urbanism can serve as a tool for imagining how the city might evolve under different socio-political conditions and interventions. The Imaginarium could also visualize the concept of "otherness" within the urban context of Caracas, reflecting on how architectural and urban spaces can either perpetuate or mitigate social and cultural marginalization. This aspect can draw upon Woods' exploration of alien and unfamiliar forms in architecture as a metaphor for social otherness.

In essence, the Imaginarium of Caracas's urbanity, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Woods and Ghosn, would serve as a multidimensional platform for exploring, understanding, and reimagining the city's complex social and urban landscape.

Working likewise, the strategy applied in the project consists of the urban intervention of specific sites, called in this research Stitching Site, through Urban Artifact: prefabricated, self-built structures of easy installation and three different functions, being these connectivity, observatory, and urban detonator.

The idea consists of identifying key sites within the Glitching Areas analyzed where the immediate context of these Stitching Sites demands one of the three functions, thus creating a possible Imaginarium of the city based on a catalog of independent structures and the interaction between them.
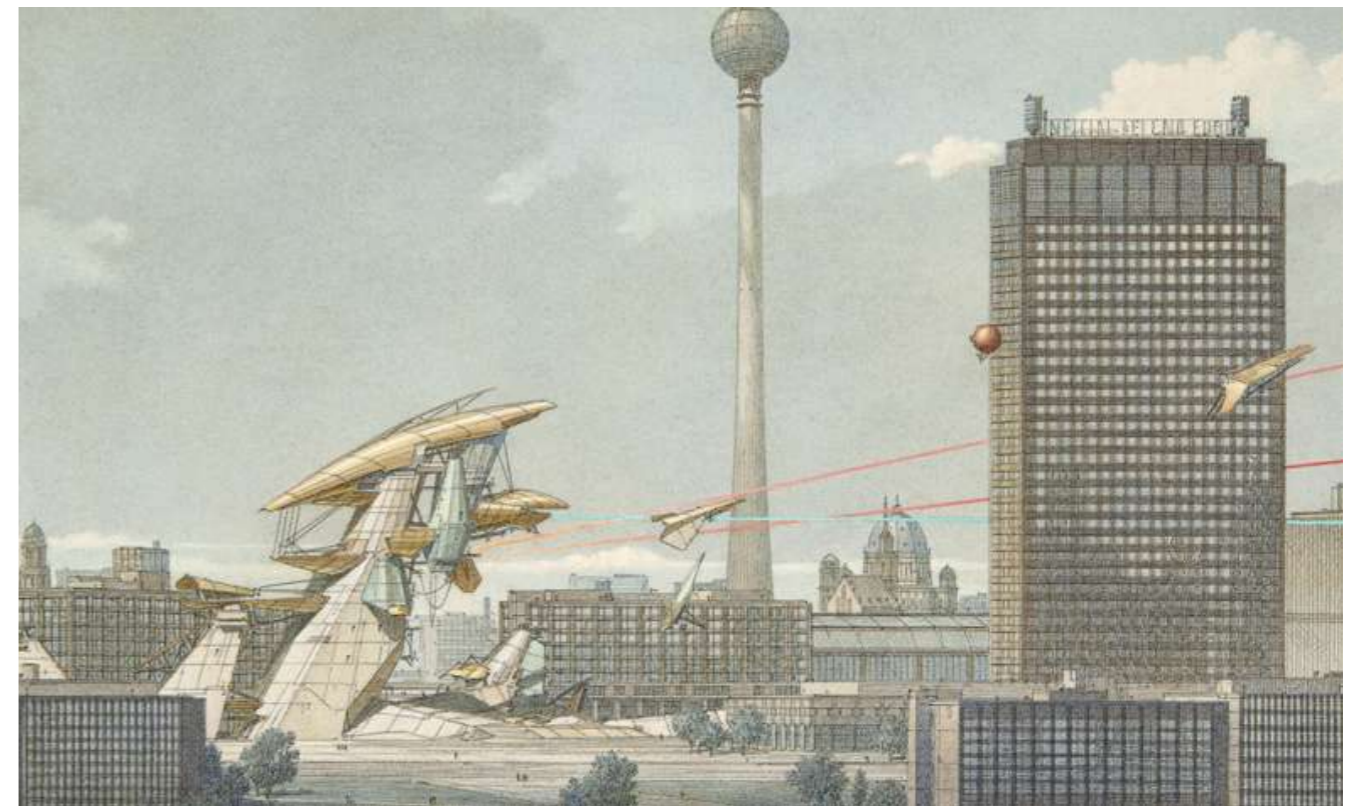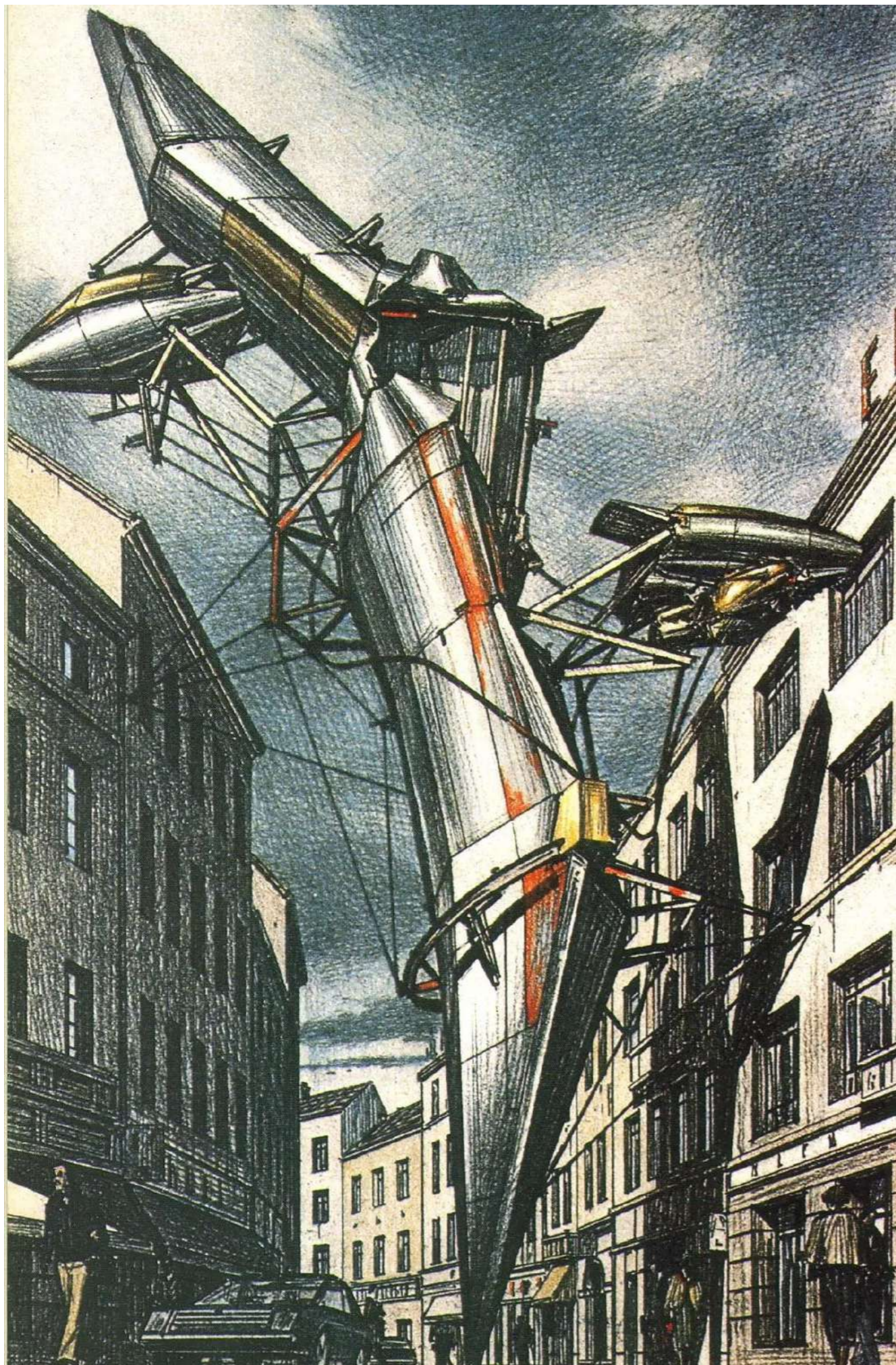
Fig. 152
Zagreb Free-Zone
Lebbeus Wood, 1991
https://www.architectural-re-
view.com/essays/reputations/leb-
beus-woods-1940-2012

Fig. 153
"After Oil proposes three speculative tales that explore the geography of the Gulf and its islands in the decades after oil. These stories are also a reflection on the present condition: they stage and extrapolate critical issues of today's oil landscape to make the public aware of the energy systems on which modern life is dependent and the long-term consequences of current fossil fuel regime."

After Oil (Das Island, Das Crude)
Rania Ghosn with El Hadi Jazairy, 2016
https://www.moma.org/artists/70051

Fig. 154
*Western Glitch Area map with
stitching sites.
Scale 1:15.000
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024*

N

IDENTIFICATION OF STITCHING SITE, BOTH IN WESTERN ADN EASTERN AREAS

Fig. 155
*Eastern Glitch Area map with
stitching sites.
Scale 1:15.000
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024*

STITCHING SITES | POSSIBLE STITCHING SITES | LANDMARKS | RIVER | MAIN ROADS + HIGHWAY | CNA | SITE BUFFER | SITE BUFFER | URBAN OBSTACLE

Western Stitching Site

The Stitching Sites chosen on the Western Glitching Area, represented in diagonal lines, are the landpiece in between the Quinta Anauco and the Barrio Los Erasos, the Torre David, and the end of the walkway along the Bolivar Avenue, at the height of the Teresa Carreño Theater.

Regarding the space in between the Quinta Anauco and the Barrio Los Erasos, the site presents particular characteristics for imagining the space as an active vivid urban node, working both for the museum and the *barrio*. Having a topographical difference of around 8 meters, this particular side is chosen to speculate an urban scenario where it is a formal gate to the *barrio* and an auxiliary leisure place for the museum, which exposed and preserves Venezuelan

17th and 18th-century colonial art. This site is taken as a primary speculation site for the opportunity it presents to relate the importance of the *barrio* with the cultural heritage of our country and city.

The second site chosen is Torre de David, which by its iconic condition as squatters' invasion hub the speculative Imaginarium that represents this building is extremely suitable for the research. Understanding the tower as the point where the stigmatization between the rich and the poor emerges, some see the private ownership of the building as an authoritarian presence in the community will and strength, some others see the squatters as thefts who took a private right and change the urbanity of the area.

SITITCHING SITES

POSSIBLE STITCHING SITES
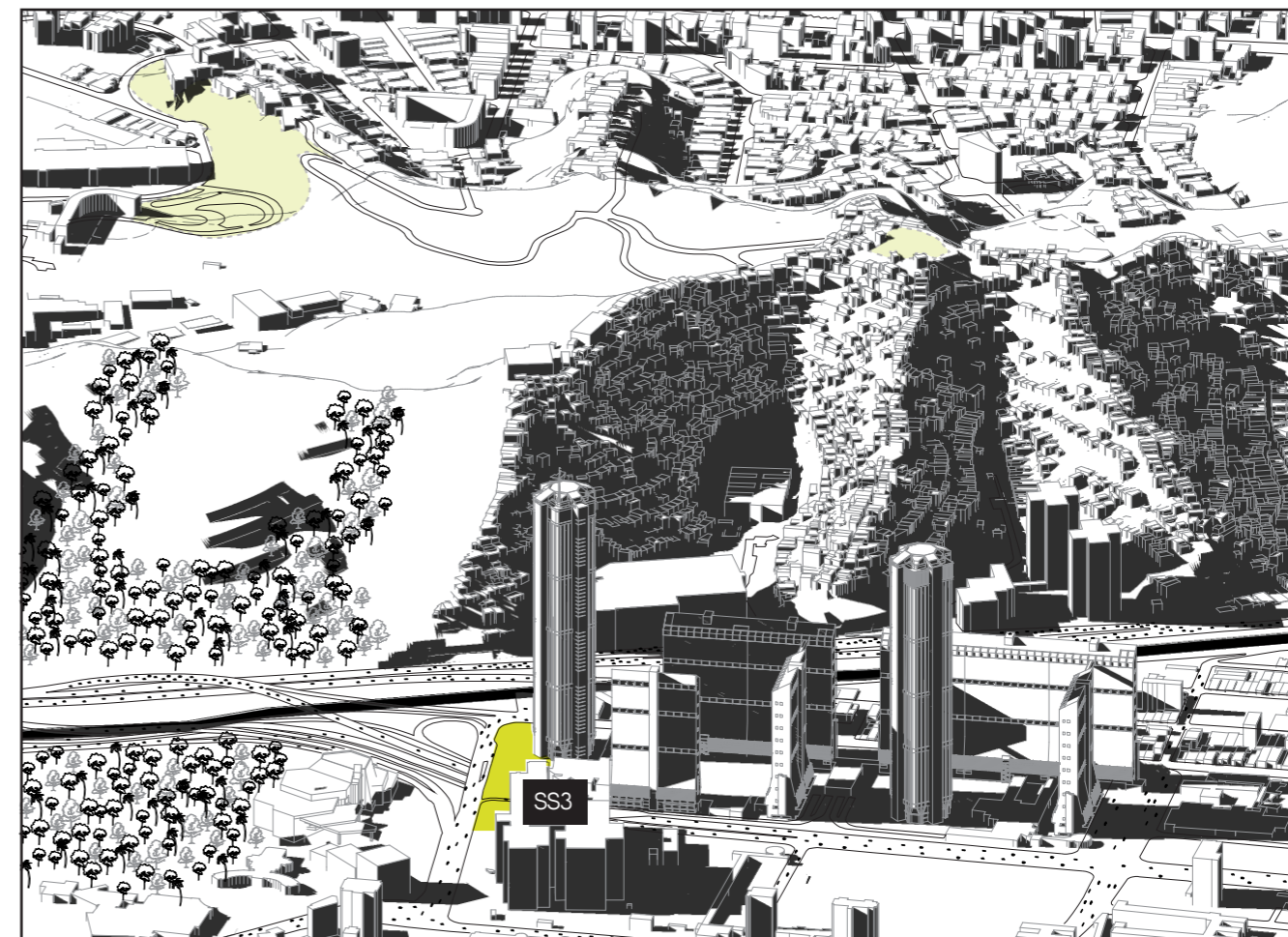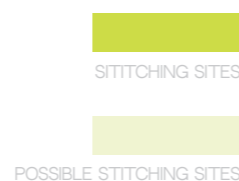
Regardless of the illegitimate and vandalism reality of what this phenomenon represents, the Torre David has been occupied by squatters since 2007 (Anderson 2013), and the intention to relocate them is far from seen. In this sense, the intention is to imagine how the acknowledgment of the tower into the urbanity of Caracas could look like, as well as the self-built strategy of its development for the better of its users, in terms of personal and community development.
The third site for study refers to the end of Bolivar Avenue between Parque Central Complex and Teresa Carreño Theater. Although this site is well integrated within the city and easily acknowledged and identified by Caracas' citizens, the pedestrian promenade coming from Bolivar Avenue suddenly stops when it arrives at the Teresa

Carreño Theater, making impossible the continuity of the pedestrian connection in the site, detaching cultural infrastructure from each other. At the same time, this site is also known for its presence of folkloric and traditional artists, where local markets take place every day, a factor that is taken as an opportunity to imagine the continuity driven by commerce focusing on traditional and artisanal goods.

Other Stitching Sites identified within the Western Glitching Area as potential areas for speculative urban artifact implementation, represented in grey, are located on the now abandoned Anauco walkway, the end of Mexico Avenue, the Metrocable of Barrio La Charneca, and the sports facilities of the University Campus.
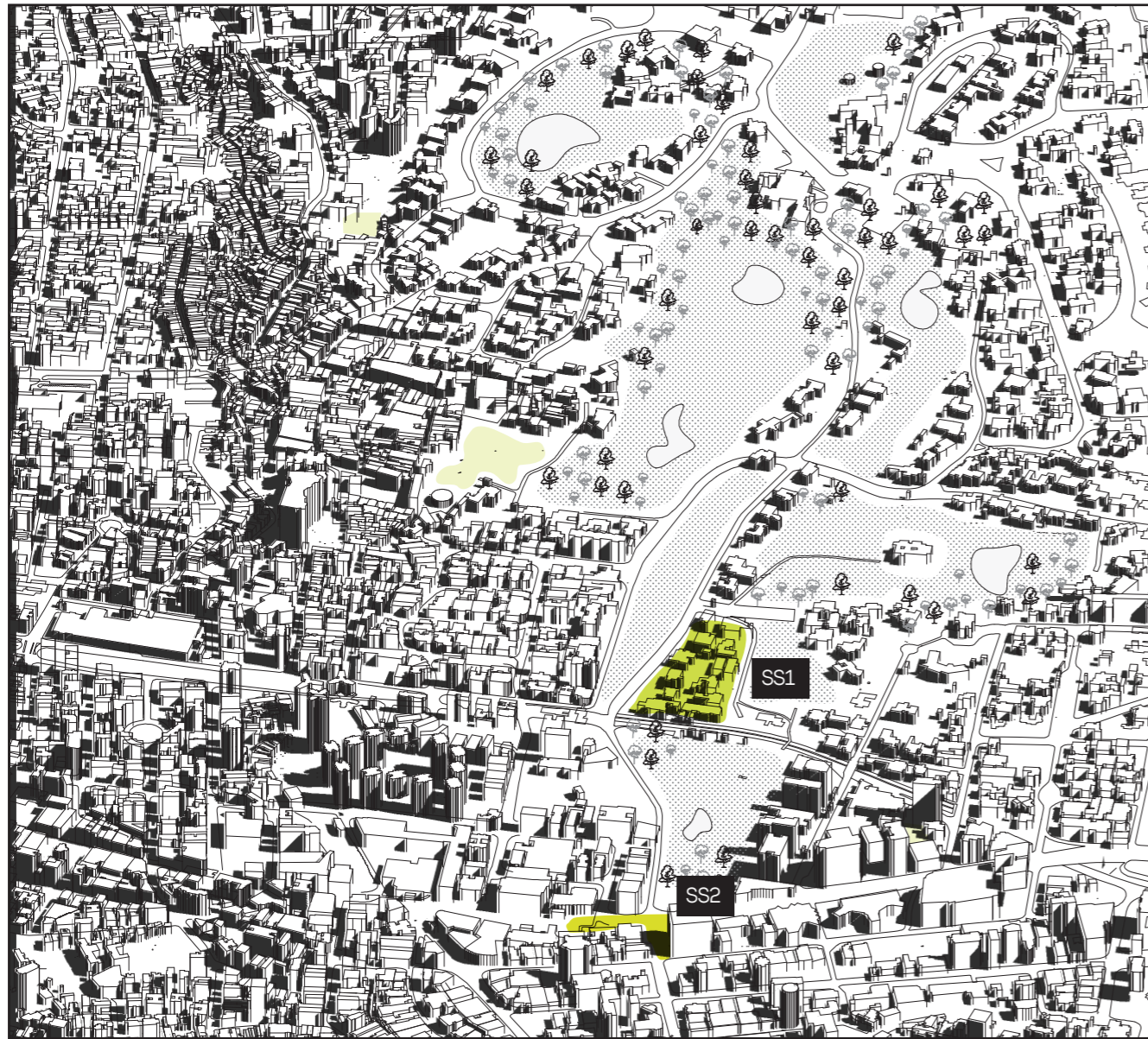
Eastern Stitching Site

Accordingly, the Stitching Sites chosen for the Eastern Glitching Area represent three sites with major focus, being the lot in between the Barrio Chapellin and the Caracas' Country Club; the Plaza Brion and its relation with the Francisco de Miranda Avenue; and the disconnected point in between Las Mercedes and El Rosal due to the Guaire River.

The first site, regarding the meeting point between the Barrio Chapellin and the Caracas' Country Club, shows as one of the sites where the research urban morphologies studied converge: Barrio Chapellin and Caracas' Country Club gated neighborhood, where the physical barrier between them is the gold field of the club. This site is a possible scenario to speculate on class relations in urban developments and how to relate different social groups based on an idealistic public and common core for Caracas citizens.

The second site of study, regarding the meeting point between the Plaza Brion and Francisco de Miranda Avenue, is taken as a site to speculate on socio-urban continuity. Being Plaza Brion from its west the end of Sabana Grande Boulevard
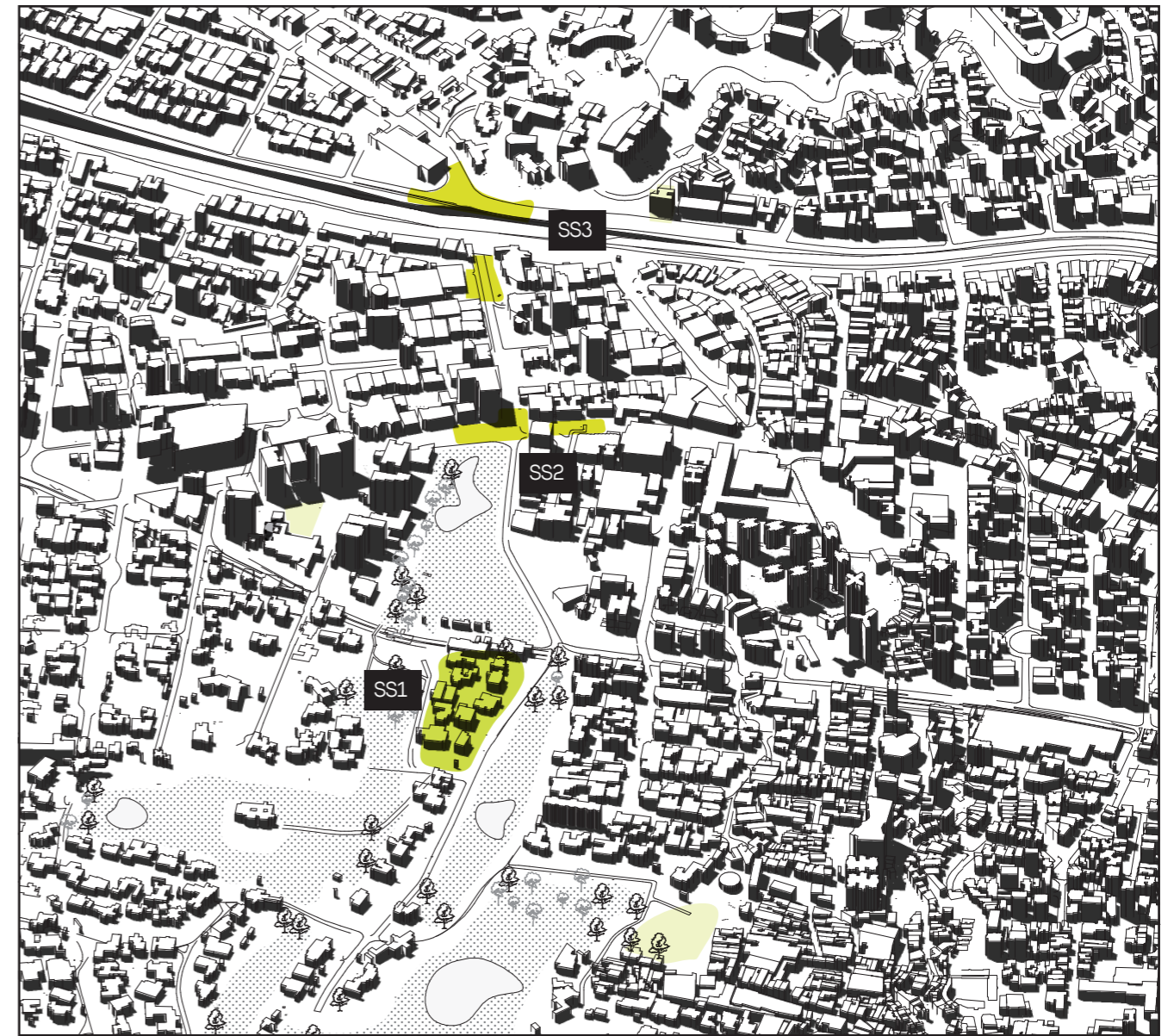
– commonly understood nowadays as a lower-income commerce area; and from its east the the end of Francisco de Miranda Avenue – commonly understood as better accommodated commerce area; this specific site exposed itself as an unsolved urban node, where the imagination of a continues commerce axis prolonge towards all the commerce areas, including El Rosal and Las Mercedes, both in the south.

Similarly, the third site refers to the territorial barrier that the Guaire River represents between El Rosal and Las Mercedes. Both areas represent commercial hubs on the north and south sides of the river respectively, yet they lack pedestrian connectivity which disconnects an optimized economic flow for the area. The idea to speculate in this area comes to imagine this barrier tool for urban development focuses on pedestrian safety, city use, right for the city, and economic flow.

Urban Artifacts

In order to intervene in the chosen Stitching Sites, the development of three different Urban Artifacts took place for its implementation in each site, replying specifically to each demand. The idea for these artifacts is to connect, explore, and detonate the Stiching Site to create an urban scenario that works for and is based on the preexisting city yet parallel and almost independent. These artifacts look to obey similar laws of morphogenesis meanwhile acting differently depending on each immediate circumstance (Lahoud 2011).

For the design of these Urban Artifacts, the research of Archigram's "Instant City" and Adrian Lahoud's "Post Traumatic Urbanism" where taken as direct references.

Archigram, a collective of avant-garde architects in the 1960s, conceptualized the "Instant City" as a transient, moveable structure that could dock onto existing cities, introducing new technologies and cultural experiences to stimulate stagnant urban environments. It was envisioned as a kind of traveling kit of parts—airships, inflatable modules, and media devices—that could temporarily graft onto a city to energize and transform it. The "Instant City" was an intervention from the outside, acting as a catalyst for change, introducing new spatial dynamics, and fostering new forms of social engagement and interaction.

Concerning local urban dynamics, "Instant City" could be seen as a means of injecting vitality and infrastructure into underdeveloped or underutilized areas. It could potentially bridge gaps in local services and amenities, pro-vide a stage for cultural exchange, and encourage the development of a more dynamic and participatory urban culture.

On the other hand, Adrian Lahoud, the actual Dean of the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art, researched "Post-Traumatic Urbanism", which takes a critical look at urban environments that have experienced shock—whether from conflict, disaster, or systemic failure—and how these environments respond to and recover from trauma. Lahoud investigates how cities can be designed or re-designed to cope with the aftermath of trauma, and how they might adapt to prevent or mitigate future disturbances. His approach often involves a deep understanding of the local context, the existing urban fabric, and the social dynamics at play.

When synthesizing Archigram's and Lahoud's concepts, we can envision a scenario where external infrastructure acts as both a temporary stimulant and an adaptive framework that supports post-traumatic recovery and resilience. This dual approach acknowledges immediate and ephemeral interventions that can activate and enliven urban spaces, while also recognizing the need for sustainable, context-sensitive infrastructure that replies to a community's traumatic event.

At the same time, these concepts and approaches to urban design strategies align with the primary principles of informal development. The idea of having urban artifacts that unfold in the urban territory as needed also searches to recognize the benefits of informality as an accurate response to rapidly changing urban centers.
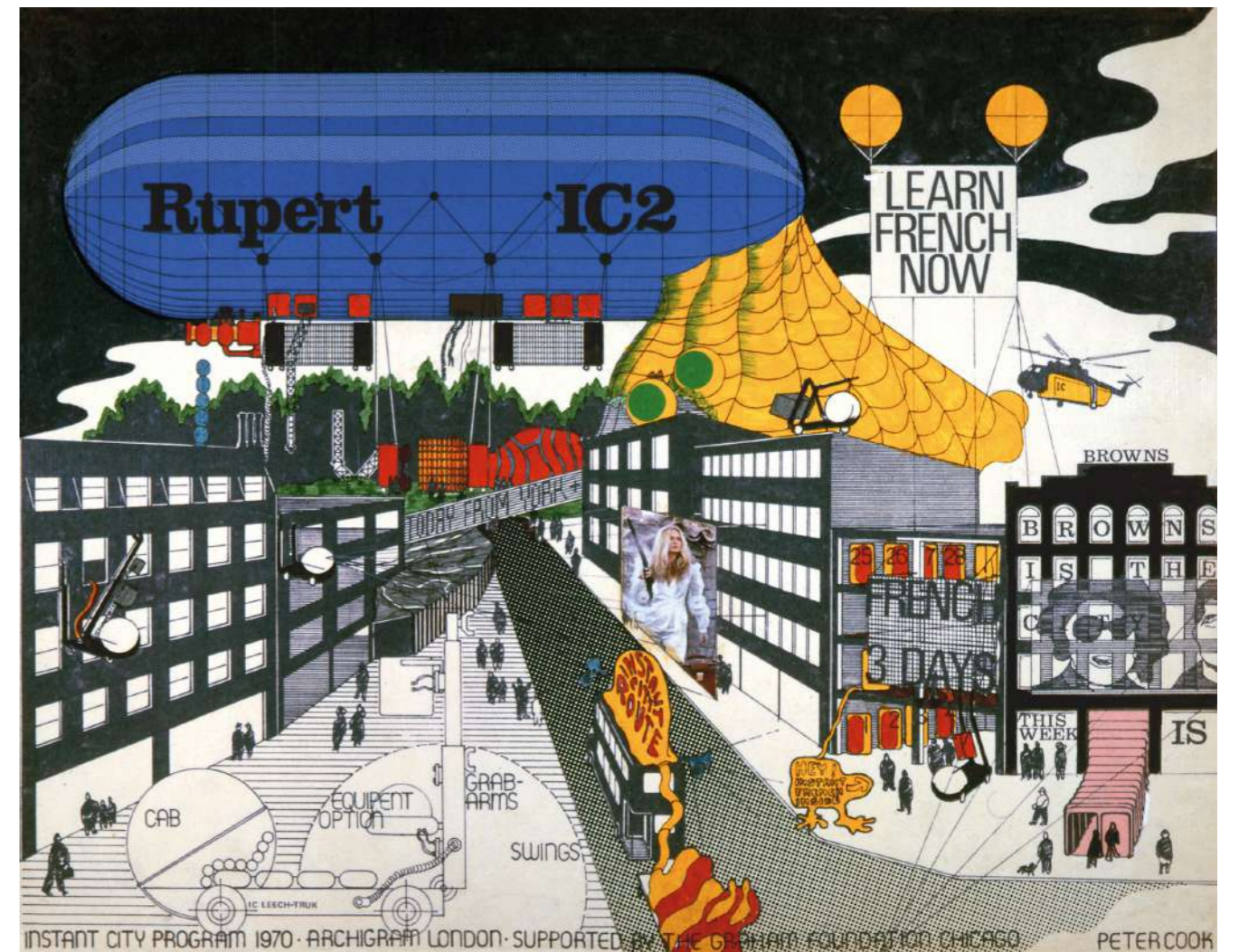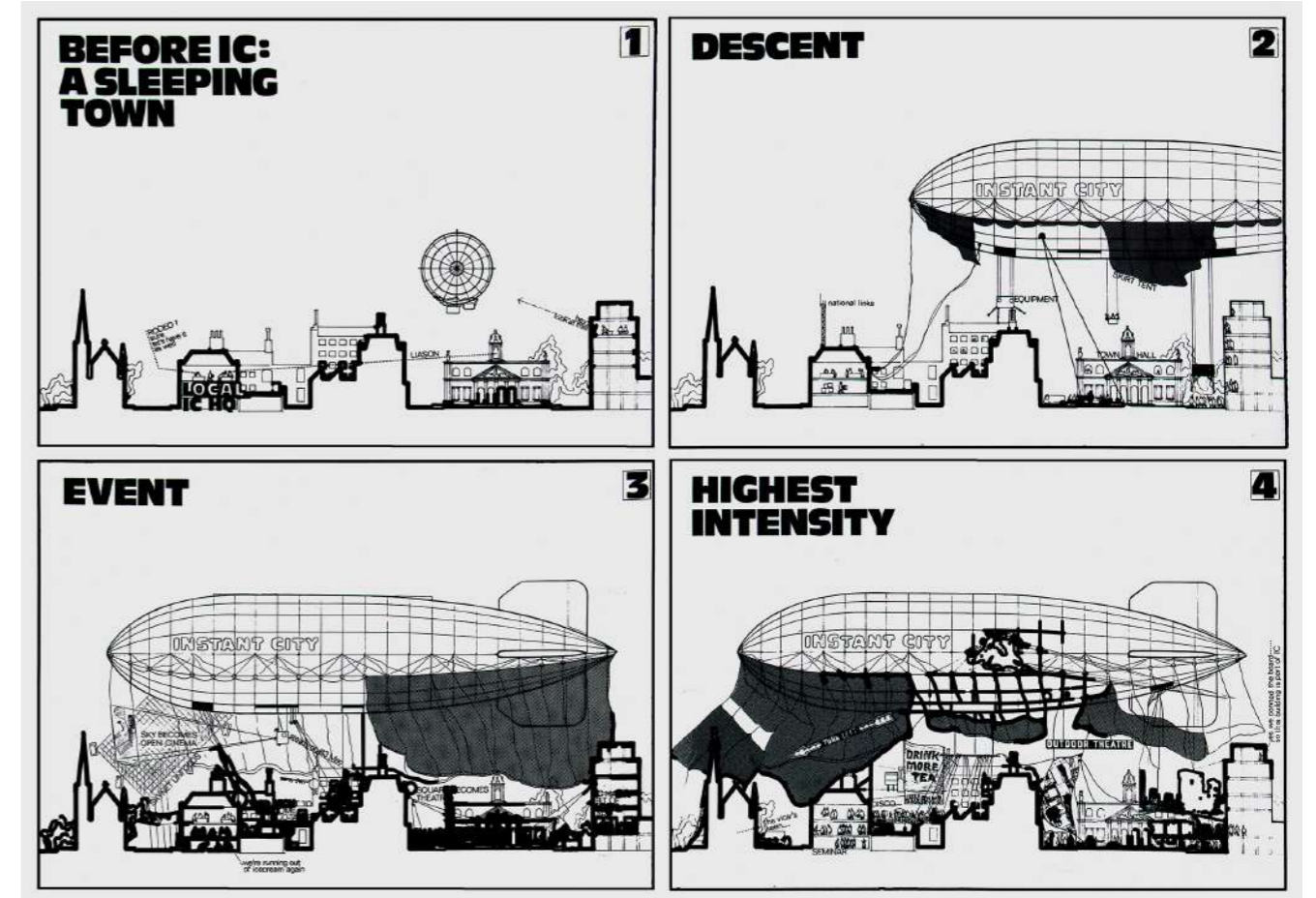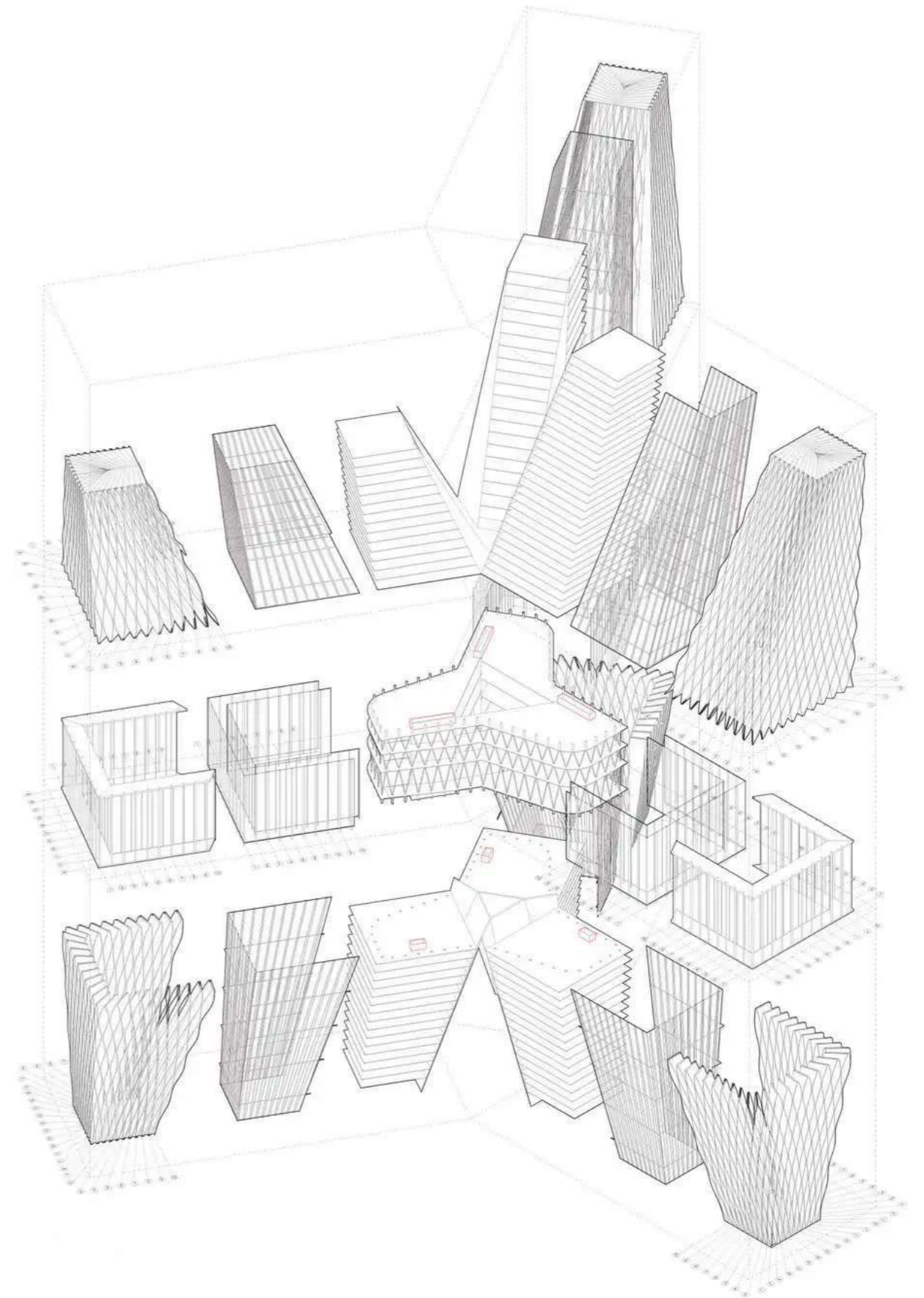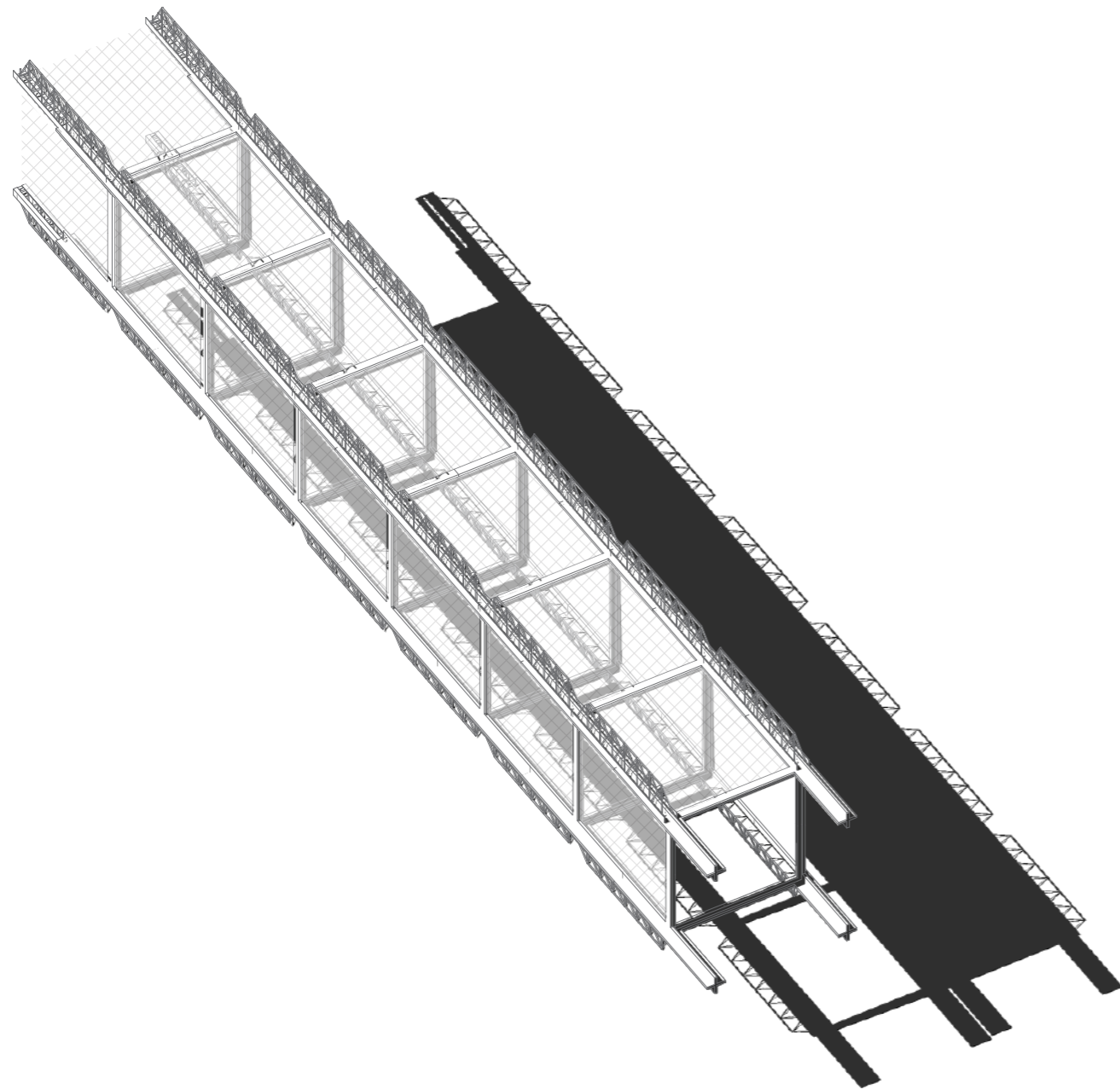

Fig. 160
Instant City
Archigram, c. 1970
https://www.dezeen.com/2020/05/13/archigram-instant-city-peter-cook-video-interview-vdf/

Fig. 161 + 162
Collective Tower in Tripoli, Lebanon.
Adrian Lahoud, 2011
https://www.archdaily.
com/122544/collective-tower-adri-
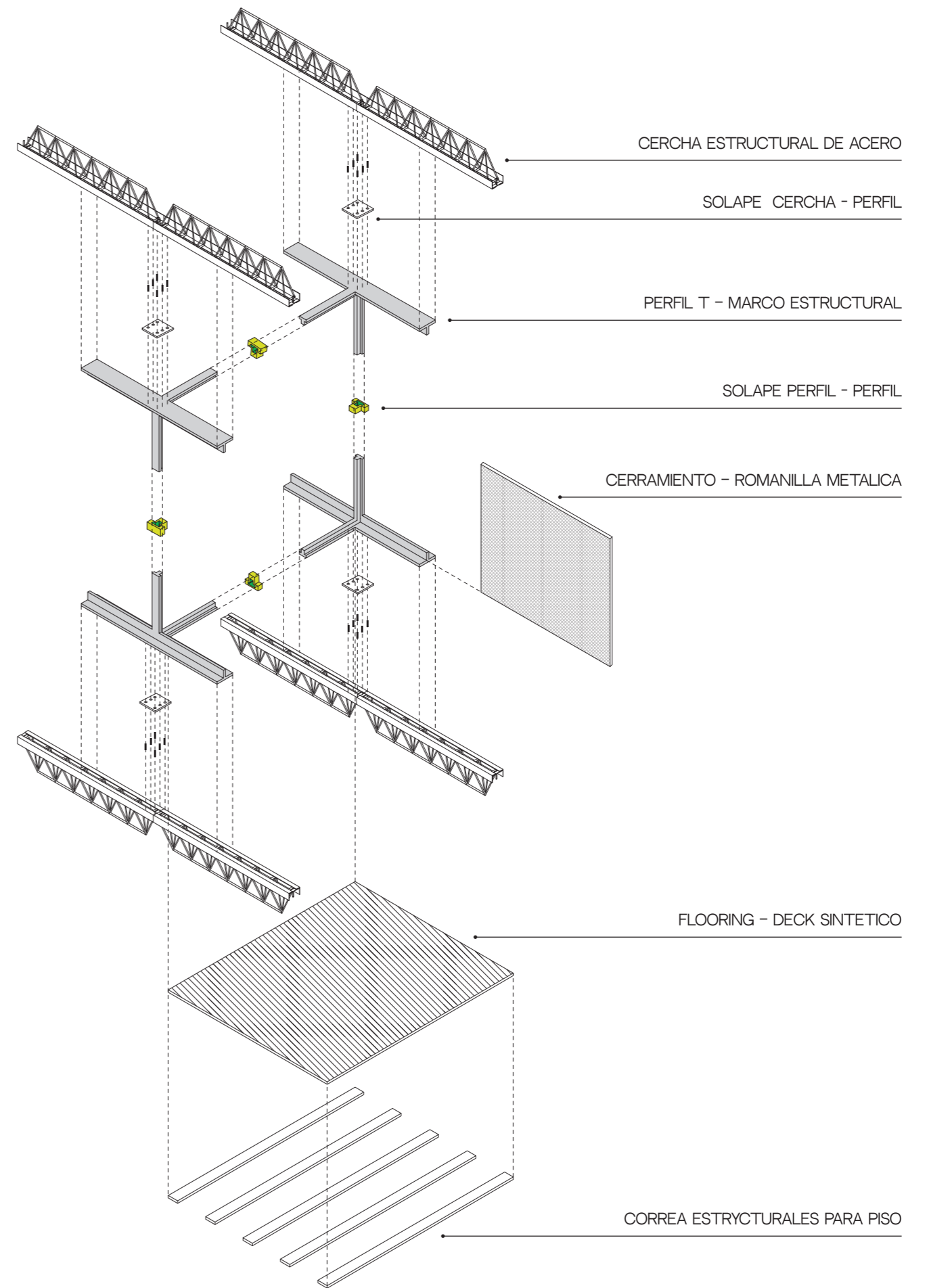an-lahoud

scale 1:1000 @ A3

connector

An infrastructure that, as its name says, its primary purpose is to work a connect different parts of the city that are either isolated or unrelated from the urban dynamics flow. It consists of a square steel structure of 3 meters by 3 meters by 3 meters, working as a module and that is supported by four trusses, each one placed on the longest edge of the cube created. The design idea is to assemble the structure needed for each particular case with the Connector module as a system for commerce as accompanying activities for walking and mobilization around the city.

Fig. 163
Axonometric Connector Artifact
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 164
Exploted Axonometric view of
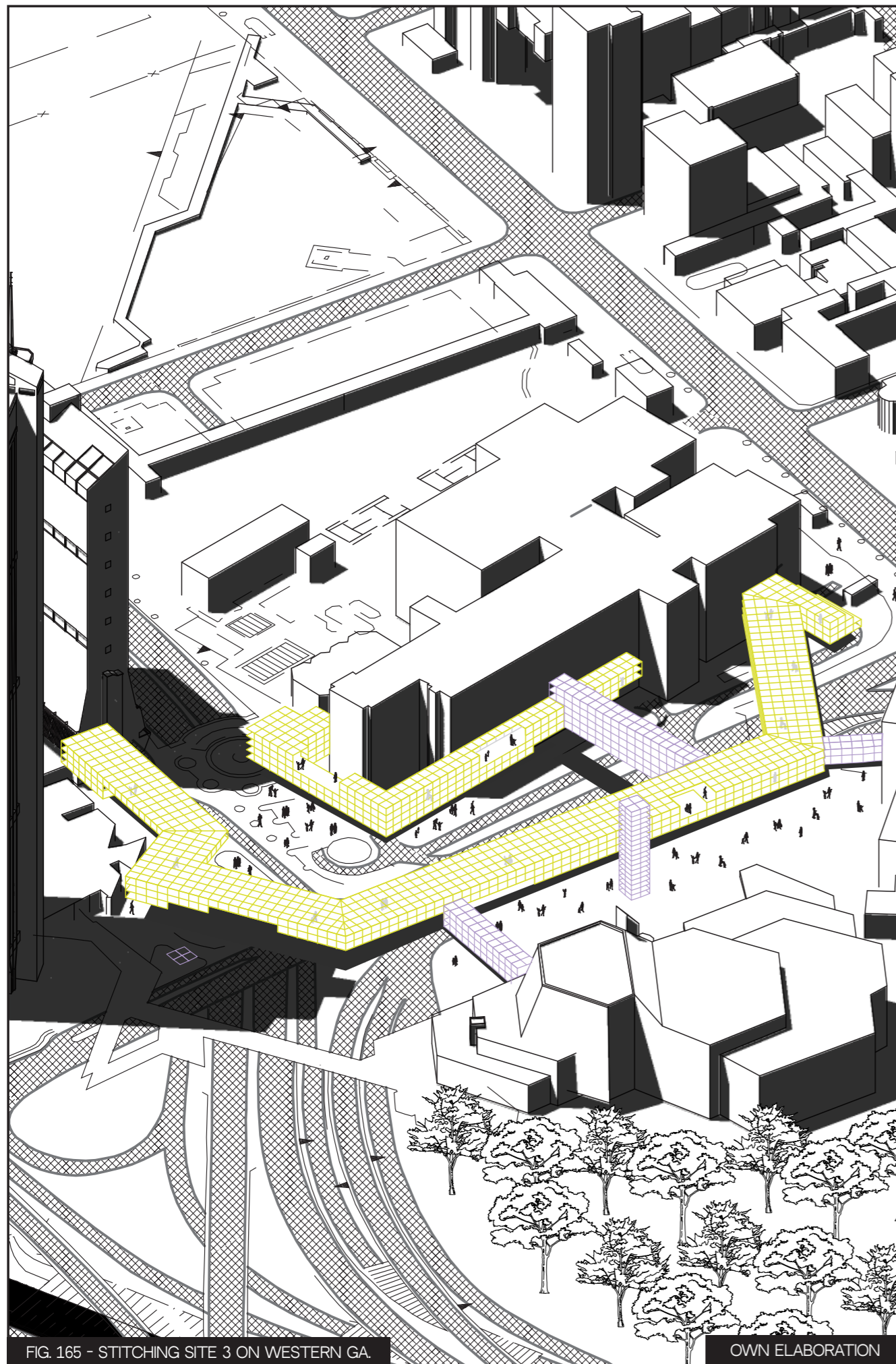*Connector Artifact*
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

CERCHA ESTRUCTURAL DE ACERO

SOLAPE CERCHA - PERFIL

PERFIL T – MARCO ESTRUCTURAL

SOLAPE PERFIL - PERFIL

CERRAMIENTO – ROMANILLA METALICA

FLOORING – DECK SINTETICO

CORREA ESTRYCTURALES PARA PISO

FIG. 165 - STITCHING SITE 3 ON WESTERN GA.

OWN ELABORATION
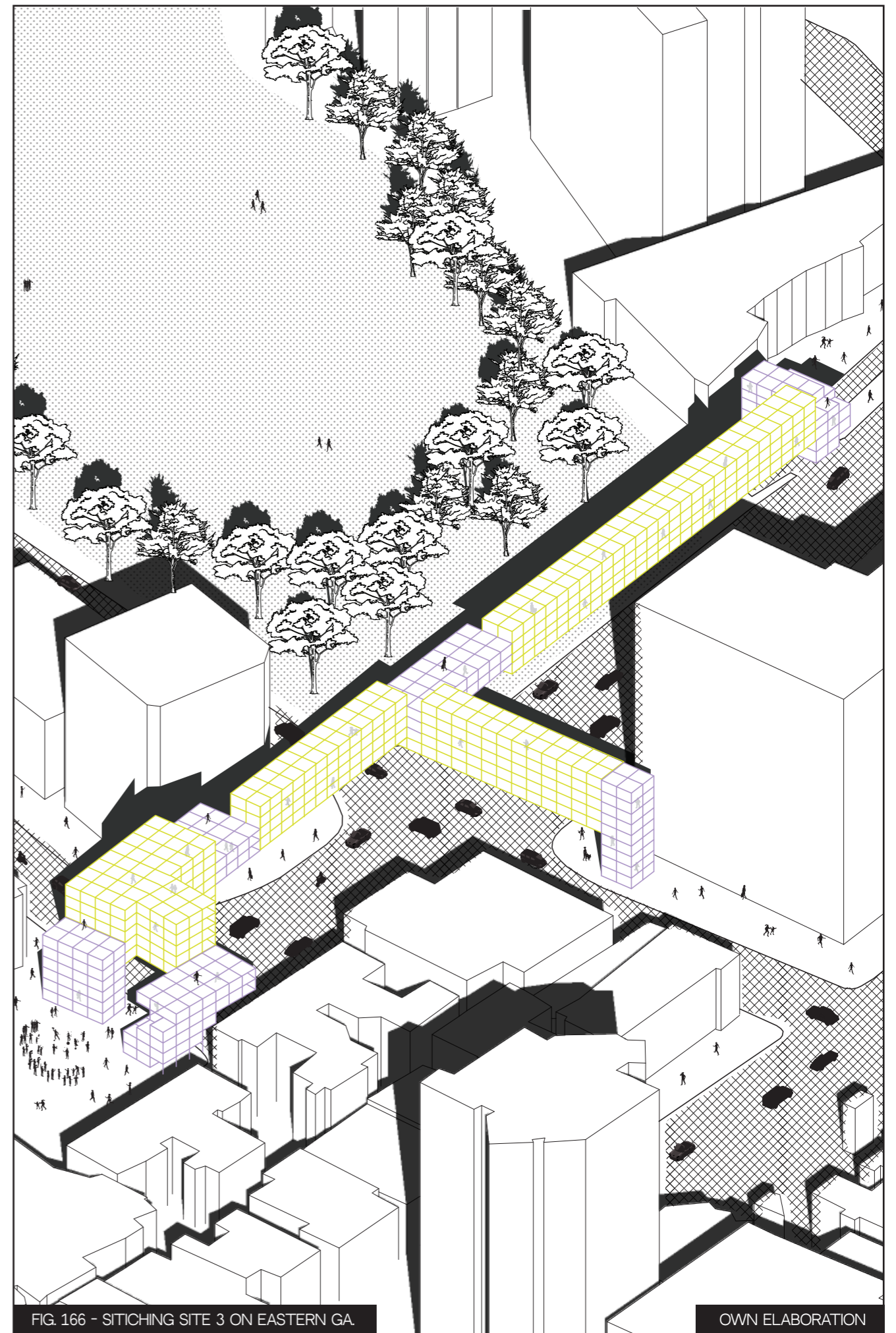
FIG. 166 - SITICHING SITE 3 ON EASTERN GA.

OWN ELABORATION

PERFIL DE ACERO DISENADO
(SEMICIRCULO 2.5M X 2.5M)

SOLAPE PERFIL - PERFIL

CORREA ESTRUCTURAL

CERRAMIENTO - ROMANILLA METALICA

CERRAMIENTO - POLICARBONATO
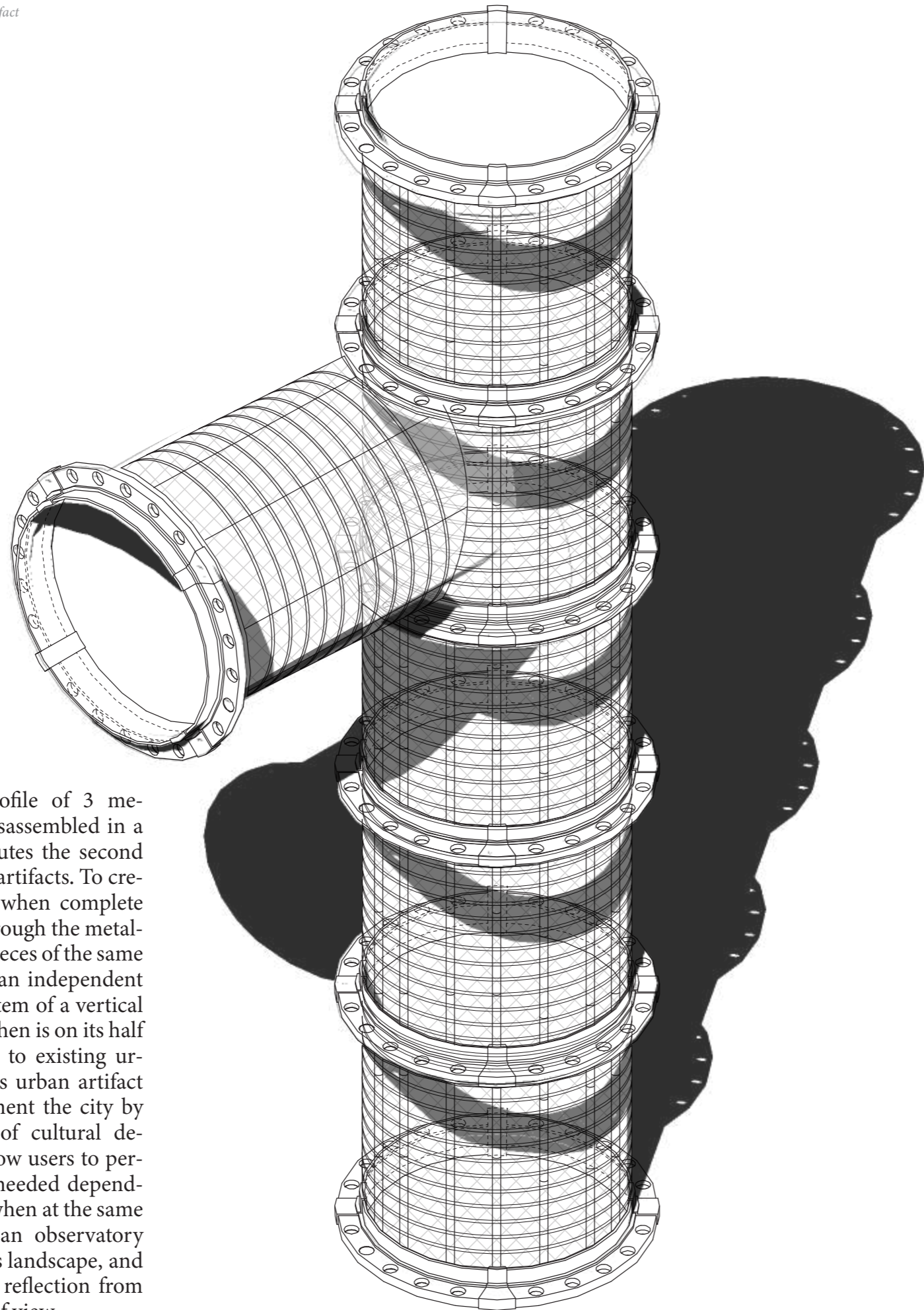
Observatory

A steel round profile of 3 meters that can be disassembled in a semi-circle constitutes the second typology of urban artifacts. To create a profile that, when complete can be attached through the metallic mesh to other pieces of the same profile and create an independent and individual system of a vertical promenade, and when is on its half it can be attached to existing urban structures, this urban artifact search to complement the city by providing spaces of cultural development that allow users to perform activities as needed depending of its location when at the same time it works as an observatory towards the city, its landscape, and discounter and its reflection from an elevated point of view.
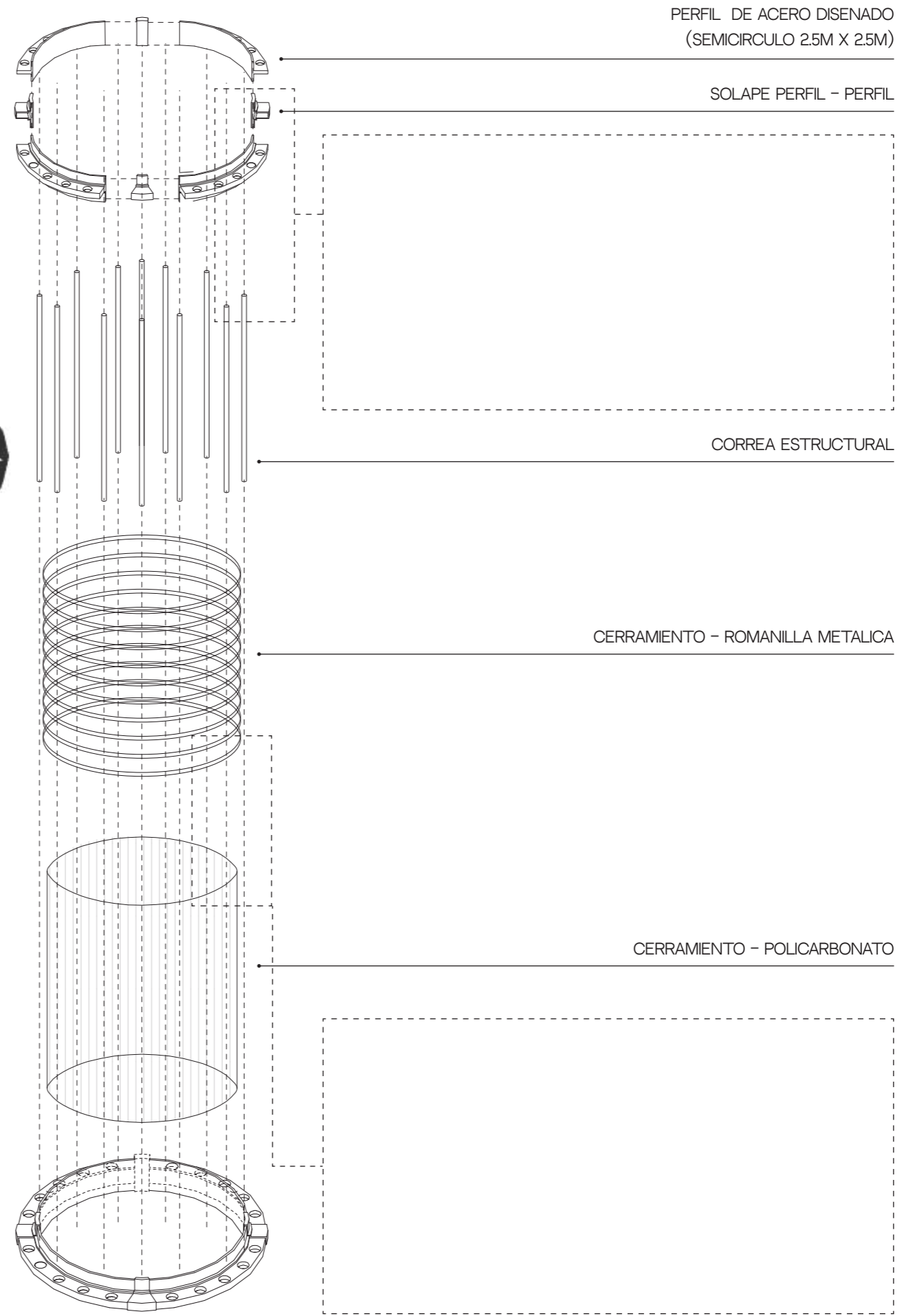
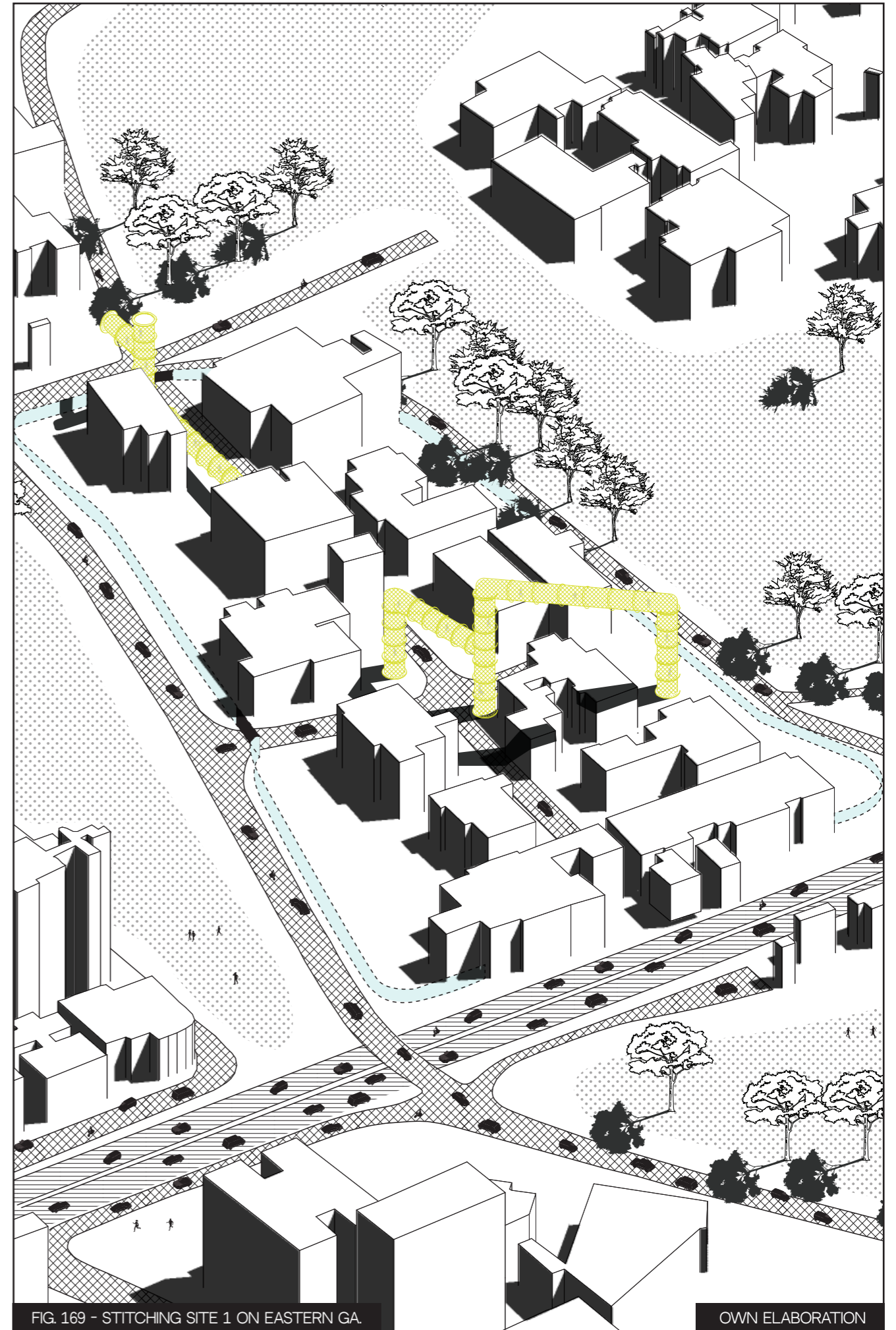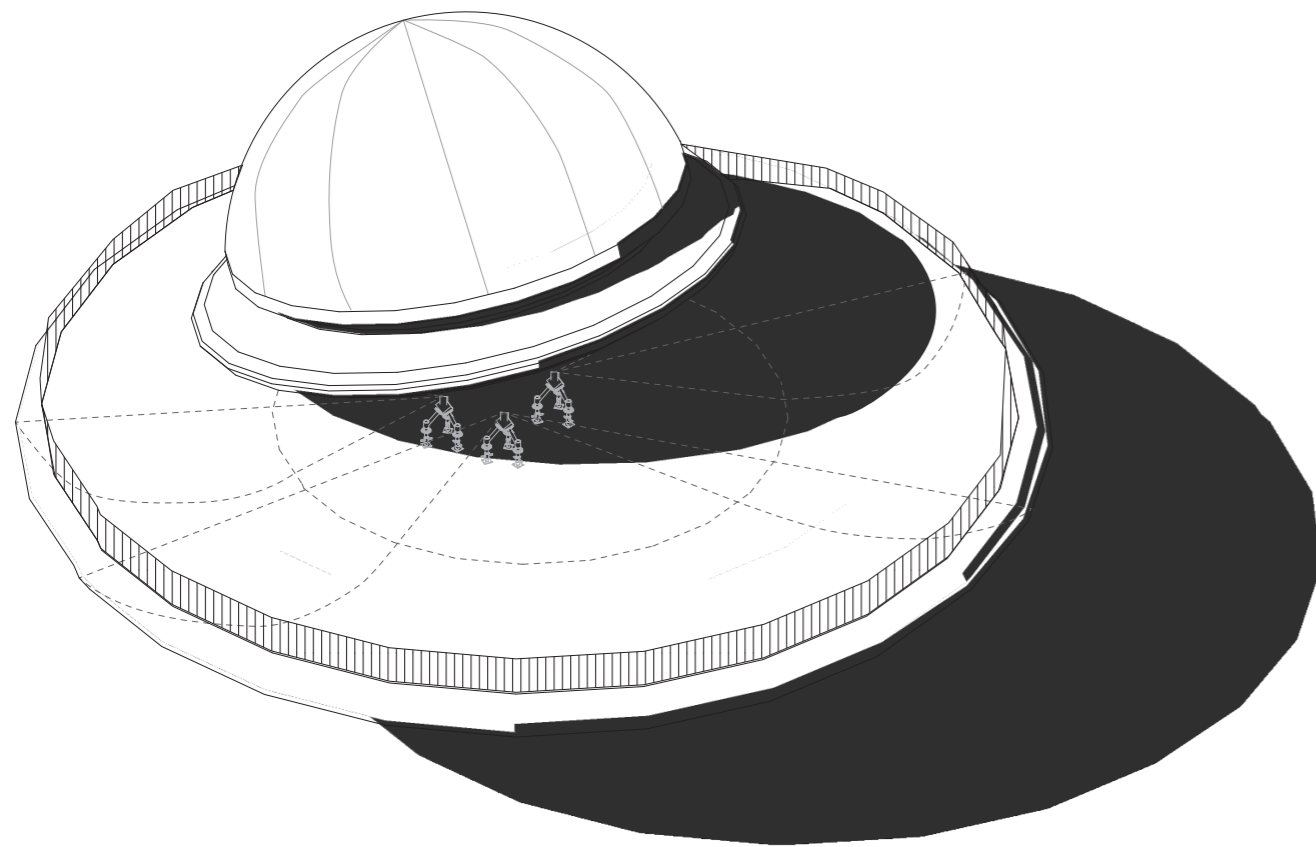FIG. 168 - SITITCHING SITE 2 ON WESTERN GA.   OWN ELABORATION

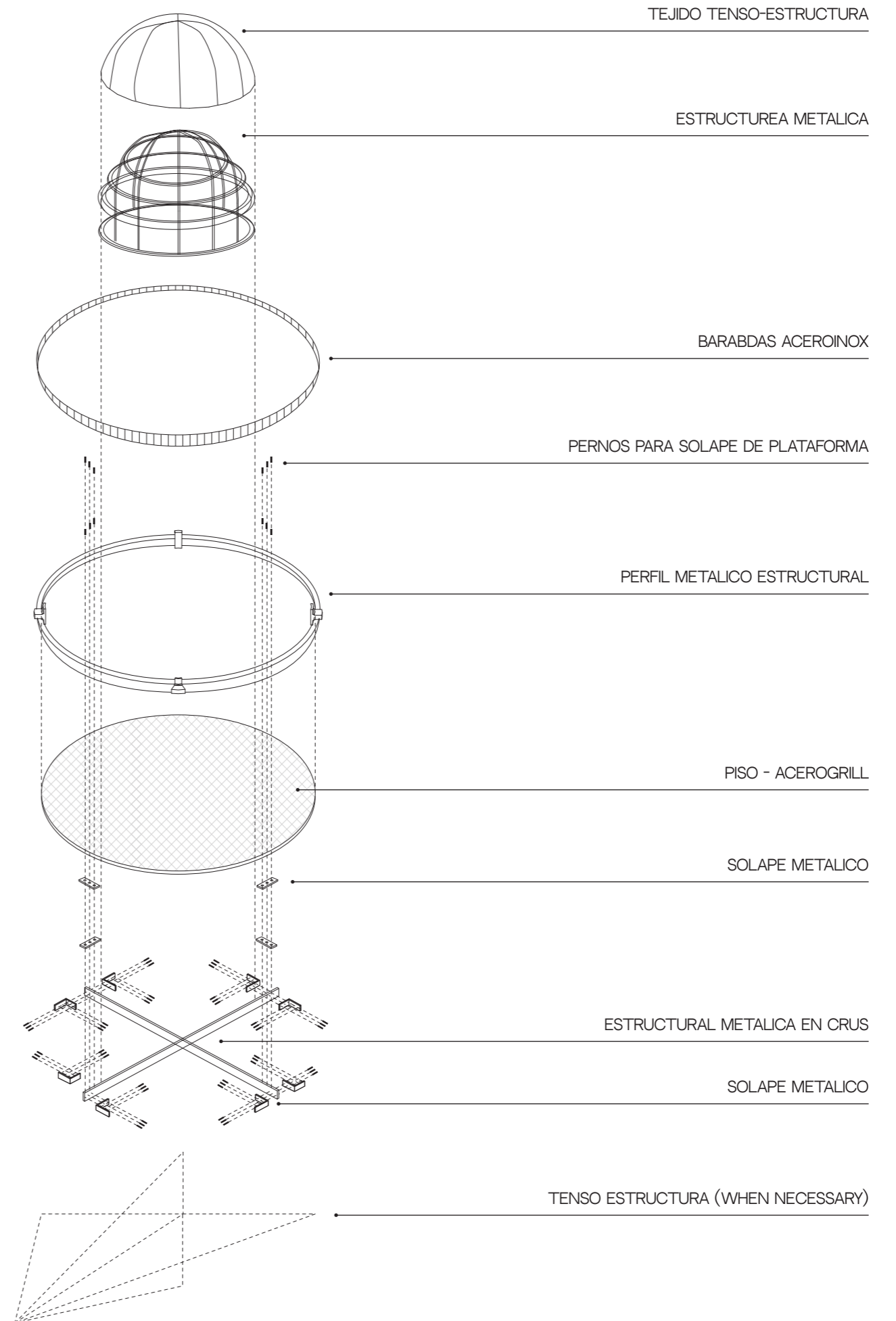FIG. 169 - STITCHING SITE 1 ON EASTERN GA.   OWN ELABORATION

Detonator

The intention of the detonator is to be applied in stitching sites that are identified as tension points for the closeness of two urban elements that adjoin each other yet don't interact. As opposite from Connectors and Observatories, this artifact represents more complex interventions, both in assemble and use, since its design consists of a system of platforms that by level differentiation create different spaces of permanence that work as a meeting point for the spaces around it, forming species for citizen interaction and performances.

Fig. 170
Axonometric Detonator Artifact
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

Fig. 171
Exploted Axonometric view of
Detonator Artifact
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

TEJIDO TENSO-ESTRUCTURA

ESTRUCTUREA METALICA

BARABDAS ACEROINOX

PERNOS PARA SOLAPE DE PLATAFORMA

PERFIL METALICO ESTRUCTURAL

PISO - ACEROGRILL

SOLAPE METALICO

ESTRUCTURAL METALICA EN CRUS

SOLAPE METALICO

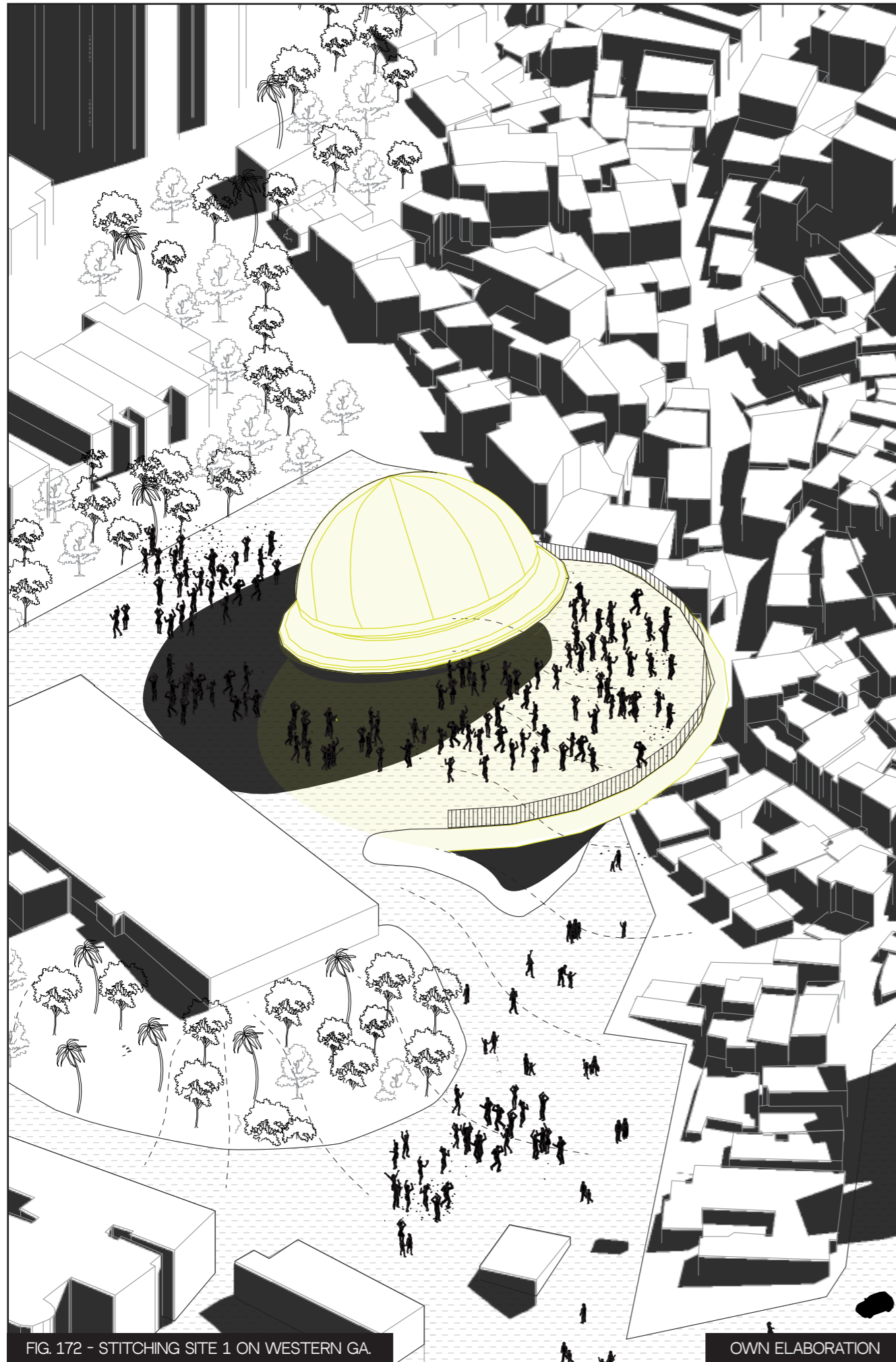TENSO ESTRUCTURA (WHEN NECESSARY)

FIG. 172 - STITCHING SITE 1 ON WESTERN GA.
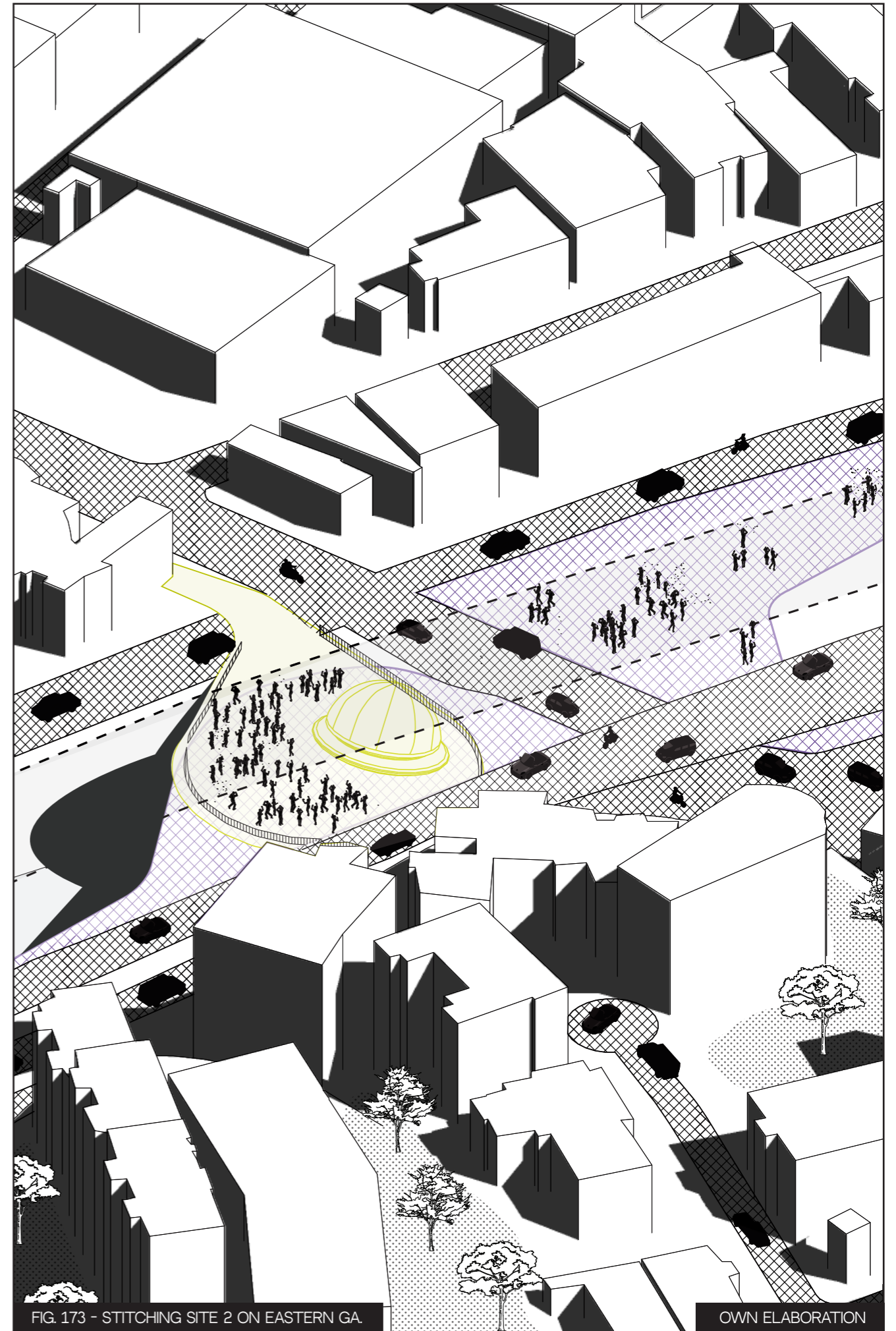
OWN ELABORATION

FIG. 173 - STITCHING SITE 2 ON EASTERN GA.

OWN ELABORATION

5.3.4 Caracas' Urban Imaginarium

The Urban Imaginarium of Caracas works as a metaphor for the complex interplay of ideas, perceptions, and realities that shape the city's urban landscape. At its core, the idea is to posits two interrelated dynamics that contribute to the urban discourse: Stitching Sites and Glitching Areas.

"Stitching sites" are identified as locales within the urban matrix where speculative ideas on urbanism are enacted to bridge gaps and weave together the disparate elements of the city. These areas represent the potential for urban innovation and integration, suggesting a proactive effort to mend the fragmented urban space, potentially through infrastructural, social, and economic interventions that seek to improve connectivity and functionality.

Conversely, Glitching Areas are urban zones where a multitude of factors disrupt the city's continuity and coherence. Such disruptions may be attributed to a traumatic urbanism, where the urban environment, due to its dysfunctional elements, operates in a state of disorder and adopts a new order of functions.

The emergence of these Glitching Areas is further traced to underlying causes such as historical social conflicts, mid-20th-century urban development strategies, and prevailing stigmas and crime, which collectively contribute to generational conflict. These elements can be seen as both the product and producers of the urban dysfunctions—each aspect feeds into the cycle of trauma and disarray that characterizes areas of the city in question.

Fig. 1714
Barrio Chapellin
www.ccscity450.com

Fig. 175
Torre David
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 177
Calle Las Artes
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2023

Fig. 178
Caracas Country Club
www.guiaccs.com

Fig. 179
Francisco de Miranda Avenue
www.ccscity450.com

Fig. 180
Las Mercedes
www.guiaccs.com

CARACAS' URBAN IMAGINARIUM

UNFOLDING THROUGH

SITES WHERE SPECULATIVE IDEAS
ON A POSSIBLE **STITCHING** URBANISM
STITCHING SITES

ARTICULATES

URBAN AREAS WHERE DIFFERETN FACTORS
MAKE ITS CONTINUITY **GLITCHES**
GLITCHING AREAS

DUE TO

A **TRAUMATIC URBANISM** WHICH ITS
DYSFUNCTIONALITY IS TAKING AS A
DIFFERENT ORDER OF FUNTIONS

EMERGED FROM

SOCIAL
CONFLICTS'
HISTORY

MID-XX CENTURY
URBAN
DEVELOPMENT

STIGMA

CRIME

GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

Fig. 181
Conceptual map.
Urban Imaginarium elements
articulation.
Veronica Diaz Gutierrez, 2024

The diagram encapsulates a dynamic urban narrative of Caracas, where the city's historical and contemporary challenges contribute to a unique urban condition. The understanding of the dichotomy between "stitching" and "glitching" is vital to formulating strategies for urban renewal and development that are sensitive to the complexities and needs of the urban fabric and its inhabitants, with a focus on the generational factor of Caracas' socio-urban development.

In this sense, the idea is to explore the potential trajectory of urban development in Caracas as the reins of urban planning and development are taken over by The Lost Generation. By a series of architectural images that investigate how this generation's pursuit of citizenship through The Lost Interstices — the neglected or overlooked spaces within the urban tapestry —, the imagination of the city in its future scenario led by the control and management of the Lost Generation is the ultimate tool to trigger a critical approach on the development of Caracas and how it is related with its social structure, and vise versa. Additionally, the images aimed to examine the interplay between the collective trauma experienced by this generation and the interstices, analyzing how this symbiosis could redefine Caracas's image and identity.

Urban landscapes are not merely the physical embodiment of bricks and mortar; they are a palimpsest of generations' aspirations, traumas, and lived experiences. Caracas stands on the cusp of a transformative era as the Lost Generation gears up to steer its development. Central to their urban intervention is the exploration and interaction of Lost Interstices, which can be a quest for spaces and opportunities neglected by previous developmental paradigms.

This study poses two critical questions at this juncture of Caracas's urban evolution:

HOW CARACAS' CITY WOULD LOOK LIKE WHEN THE LOST GENERATION STARTS TO MANAGE ITS DEVELOPMENT, SEARCHING FOR (OR CREATING ITS) LOST INTERSTICES ?
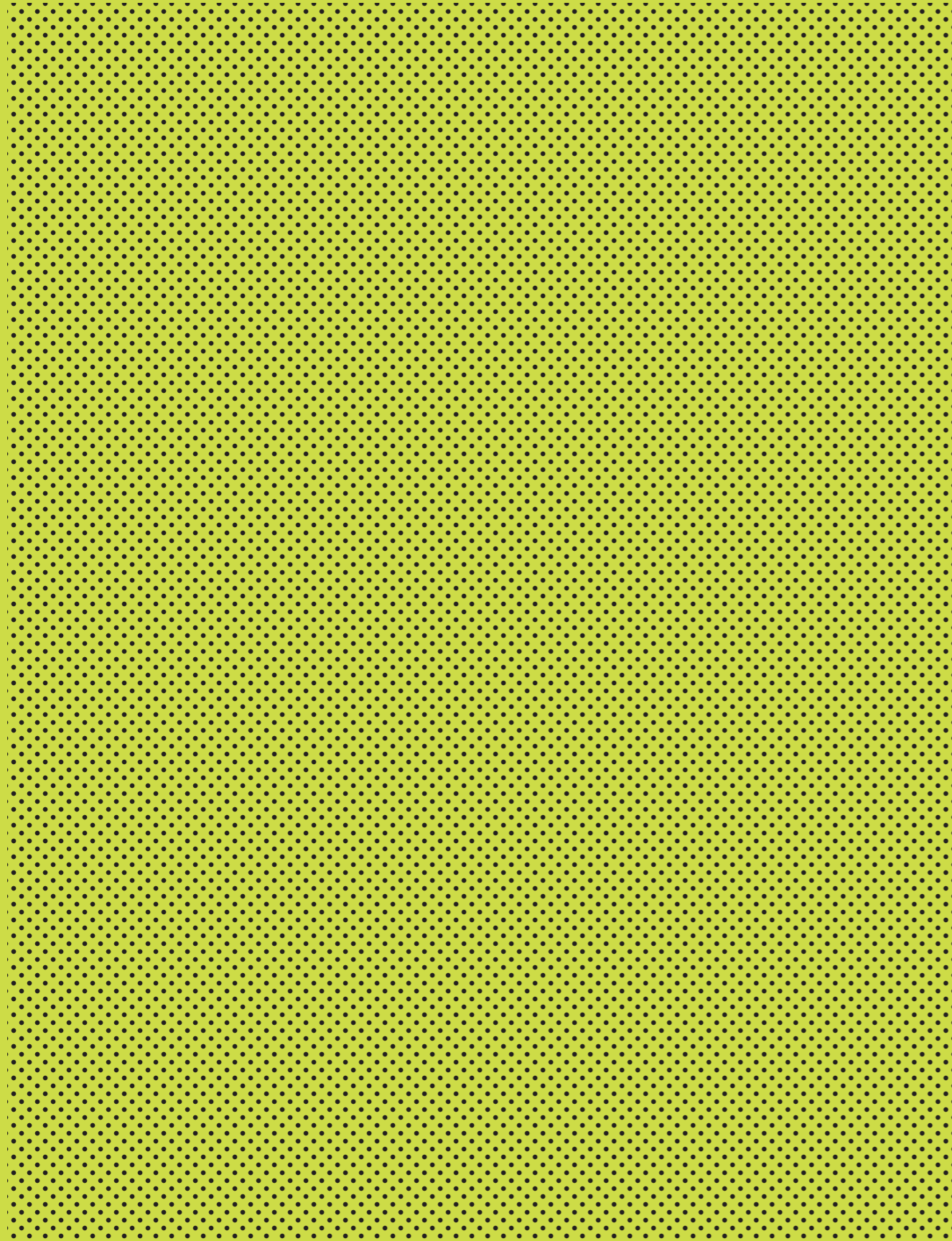
HOW DOES THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN THE COLLECTIVE TRAUMA OF THE LOST GENERATION AND THE URBAN HAUNTING OF THE LOST INTERSTICES SHAPE THE CITY IMAGE?

In addressing these inquiries, we will delve into theoretical frameworks such as "trauma-informed urbanism" and "psychogeography," drawing upon interdisciplinary approaches to decode the anticipated urban transformations.

In envisioning the future, Caracas could transform into a city that embraces its voids as much as its volumes, where the Lost Interstices evolve into vibrant hubs of cultural and community activities. We might see urban agriculture taking root in abandoned lots, and community art installations in derelict buildings, — each a testament to a reclaimed and redemptive urban vision through the urban artifacts.

This articulation is poised to create an urban image of two different systems working at the same time, in some cases together, yet within two different dynamics. The traumatic relationship towards the city by the Lost Generation is interpreted by a desire to interact with the city just when necessary", creating these spaces and situations where this new city dynamic works based on the old one.

As the lost generation steps forward to redefine Caracas, the city is positioned to undergo a metamorphosis driven by the intercession of past traumas. The recognition and revitalization of the "Lost Interstices" will be critical in this transformative process, as will the acknowledgment and incorporation of the city's collective memories. Through this lens, the image of Caracas is anticipated to emerge as a mosaic of acknowledged social problems within a diverse and complex urban territory.

5.3.5 IMAGINARIES AS A FORM OF SOCIO-URBAN OBSERVATORY

FIG. 183
CARACAS' URBAN IMAGINARIUM: OBSERVATORY ON DISPARITIES
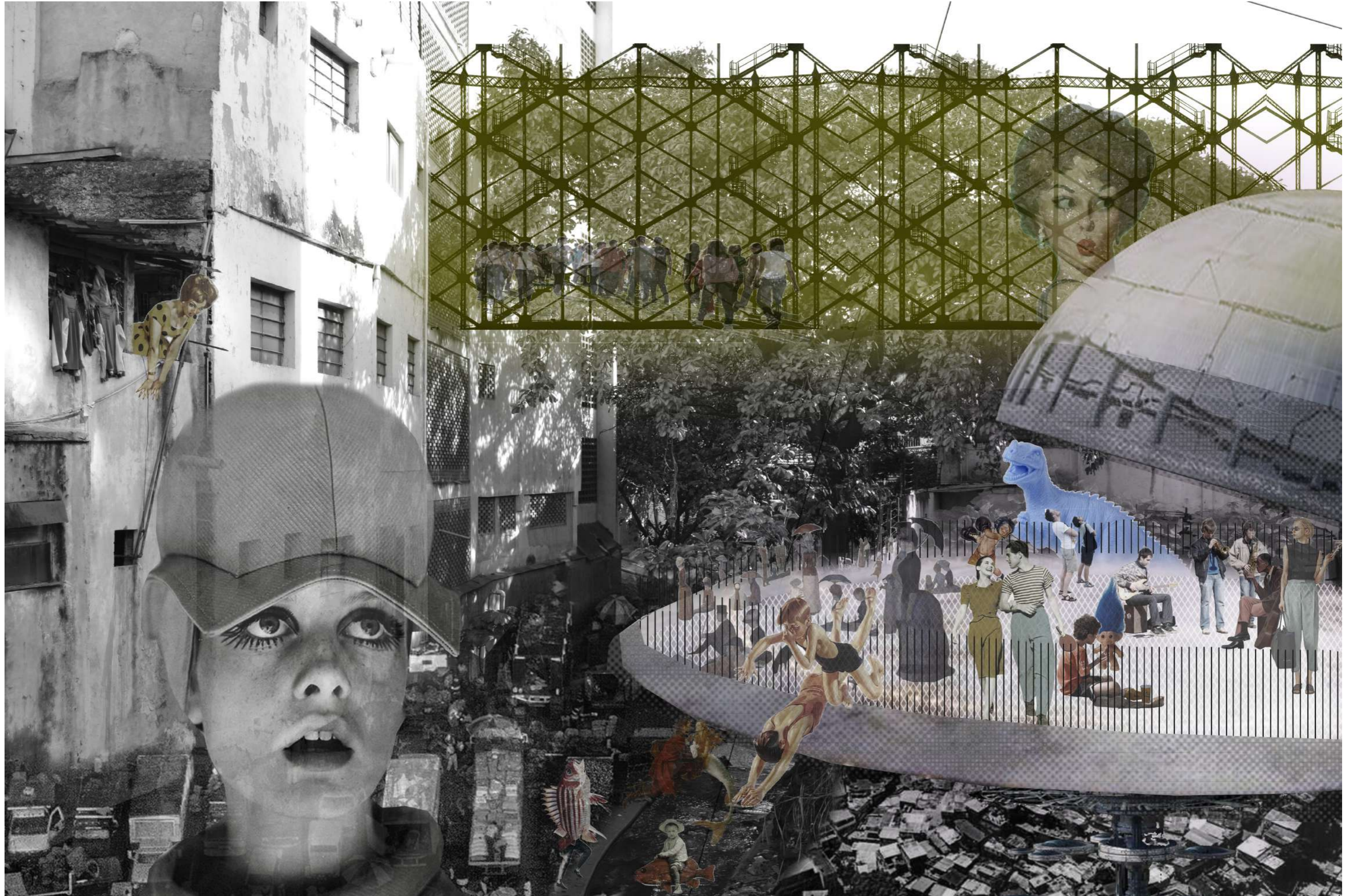
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