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Small Active Urbanism

Little Havana's configuration and use of public space as a paradigm for a socially sustainable urbanity in multicultural cities

Abstract:

Since 1959 Miami has been the major entry point for Latin American immigrants in the United States, what has made of the city a hot spot of social conflict between races and cultures in the country. In Miami, a pervading logic of city space privatization and inherited modern urban planning tradition based on automobile use and secure suburban gated communities, have led to an increasing tension between individuals and groups with different cultural, social, ethnic and economical backgrounds.

In contrast, Little Havana neighbourhood, epicentre of Cuban exiles in Miami for years and stepping stone for new Latin American immigrants, has become not only the most multicultural neighbourhood, but also the less conflictive in the city. Little Havana's public space spatial configuration and its use by Miami's citizens has made the coexistence of these different forms of life possible. In this article, an analysis of different small-scale interventions, community events and remaining spatial configurations created by first Cuban entrepreneurs in Little Havana, will unveil the possibility of a different urban praxis in Miami, based on small scale interventions and the activation of the public space.

Keywords: *multiculturalism, urbanism, Little Havana*

Introduction

For the last twenty years, everyday life of multicultural Little Havana neighbourhood has been emerging from the pockets to face its central spine: the so called in Spanish “Calle Ocho” or 8th SW street. This street, with its porous surroundings composed of squares and courtyards with a direct communication to this street, has allowed a continuous active and vibrant urban environment, oblivious to changes in its immigrant population origins. The urban culture brought by Cuban immigrants based on squares and courtyards, public events and small businesses have not only facilitated diverse ethnic groups integration but also a greater flexibility and continuity of the urban and social fabric through time. This urban configuration clearly diverges from United States urban planning tradition, based on shopping malls, gated communities and metropolitan programs that have increased social tension in the city. Differently to this tradition the following article proposes a small scale active urbanism, created by citizens’ initiative and easily appropriated by the rest of the population, as a new tool for the production of a socially sustainable urbanity in contemporary global multicultural cities.

Miami: a destiny for Cuban migrants

In 1959, after Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba, a huge number of immigrants arrived to different destinations in the United States fleeing from the triumph of the revolutionary movement that took over the island. The proximity of this country and an immediate urgency of this group of privileged Cubans supporters of Fulgencio Batista to reestablish their homes outside Cuba determined the US as their first destination. Despite their similar aim to leave their country, in this first wave of exiles there were two different factions differentiated by their economic level, which also defined the location to settle in the US. A first group was composed by privileged bourgeoisie Cubans, with easy access to capital either brought from the island or previously deposited in US banks, who chose Miami as their prime location. The lack of development of Miami in the 60’s offered to the so-called “golden exile” the possibility of easy access, settlement and opening of new businesses. In fact, Miami’s underdevelopment allowed them to progressively make up the bulk of Hispanic professionals, entrepreneurs and politicians that has dominated the city for years. The other group of immigrants was composed by less privileged individuals, managers and executives, who looked for assistance from the Cuban Refugee

Program (CRP) of the US government¹. From 1961 to 1978 this program allowed their reception, settlement and easy inclusion into US labor market by being relocated in different Estates, such as New York, New Jersey, California or Illinois.² Therefore Cuban migration could not find in the beginning a central place for their community, being scattered by the US government in different locations.

From 1962 to 1965, migrants' arrivals were considerably reduced because of the missile crisis between Cuba and United States, but the pressure of already migrated relatives' resumed the migration flows. In December 1965 Castro was forced by Cuban exiles to announce an opening of the border control for Cubans willing to emigrate. As a result, new connections, called "freedom flights", started to bring new immigrants twice a day, ending in 1973 with a total of 260,500 Cubans entering into the US. This new group of immigrants was mostly middle class unionized skilled and independent blue collar workers who mostly decided to settle in Miami. In the city they found special support from previously upper-middle class Cuban migrants, who had successfully established different companies and business hiring and servicing their own community.³

Discontent caused by Castro regime and Cuba economic situation after 1975, further increased in the late 70s the amount of Cubans willing to migrate to US. This state of affairs forced Castro again to free the migration restrictions and to open the Mariel Harbor in Cuba to multiple boatlifts. Consequently, from the 15th of April to the 31st of

¹ Cuban Refugee Program (CRP) was authorized by President Eisenhower in February 1961 to assist the growing number of Cuban immigrants fleeing away of Castro regime. The Miami Cuban Refugee Emergency Center, at the Freedom Tower in the centre of Miami city, became the headquarters to manage the CRP. From this institution managed refugee registration, assistance, relief and resettlement, as well as coordination of government and independent agencies' programs. Federal funding was provided for the centre's operations, such as record keeping, publications, coordination of agencies, research on different aspects of the refugee situation as well as different programs for financial assistance, educational loans, health care, adult education and re-training, resettlement and care of unaccompanied children. The Cuban Refugee Centre closed in 1990 after more than three decades of providing assistance to refugees.

² The resettlement program of the CRP gave assistance to Cuban families providing transportation to new location, a house and employment and financial assistance till secure employment. Following this program 300.232 Cubans were resettled away from Miami from February of 1961 to August of 1978 in New York, New Jersey, California and Illinois. (Grenier et al; 1992; 83-109).

³ Many former exiles went into business for themselves, opening new trade avenues to Latin America and providing services for the large multinational firms coming to Miami. Many of them were able to bring considerable funds with which to start new enterprises and the circumstance of no return prompted them to invest these resources productively in the United States. (Mchugh et al; 1997; 506) and (Sassen et al; 1993; 472).

October of 1980 124,779 Cubans entered US border.⁴ In addition to Castro's decision, there was an activation of an immigration agreement between US and Cuba, allowing 20.000 people to arrive to Florida coast each year from 1987 to 1990. Differently to previous migrant waves, this group of immigrants, the so-called "Marielitos", was less positively received by already established Cubans because of their lower social status and longer relation with the Castro regime. They did not receive help from the government either, since the CRP ended in 1978. Despite both problems most of them decided to establish their new residence in Miami, being their adaptation process more complicated.

Following this large settlement, Miami became a magnet for Cuban migrants already established across the United States by the CRP. The familiar cultural environment, with strong ethnic and familial networks already established in the city, and an extensive use of their native language attracted 35, 776 Cuban migrants between 1985 and 1990 to reestablish their homes in Florida (Mchugh et al; 1997; 511). As a consequence of both exterior and interior migration, Miami became in the 80s "the almost inevitable destination for all major refugee flows triggered by political instability in the Cuban region", concentrating two-thirds of the Cuban-origin population of the United States. (Sassen et al; 1993; 472).

In contrast, during the last decade of the twentieth century, migration flows pattern changed after the "Wet foot, Dry foot" United States policy migration of 1995.⁵ As a consequence of this policy, the status of new Cubans changed from political asylum to illegal migrant, being any new immigrant persecuted by the government. Despite the change in the legislation, some Cubans still decided to move to the US because of the difficult situation in Cuba due to the US embargo and the Soviet Union collapse. Hundreds of poor migrants, the so-called in Spanish "balseros" (rafters), have fled by small boats to the United States since then looking for a new opportunity. Therefore previous migrants started to become more sensitive to their desperate situation helping again their compatriots, and taking this opportunity to attack the weakened

⁴ In 1980 the Cuban government announced that anyone who wanted to leave could do so, and an exodus by boat started shortly afterward for a period of 6 months. The exodus had negative political and social implications when it was discovered that a number of the exiles had been released from Cuban jails and mental health facilities. Therefore these new Cuban migrants, or "Marielitos", had many difficulties to be accepted by the United States society for being associated with criminals. (Skop; 2001; 449-471).

⁵ The "Wet foot, Dry foot" establishes that any Cuban reaching United States land can apply for political asylum in the country, while those found in the sea would be returned to Cuba.

Castro Regime.⁶

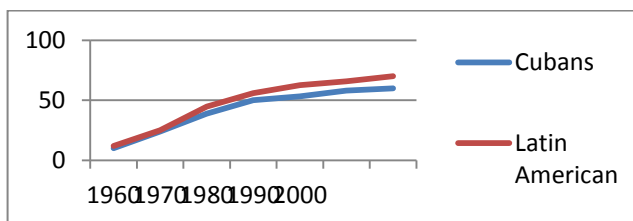


FIG. 1 - This graphic describes changes in Cuban and Latin American population in Miami from 1960 to 2010.⁷

Cubans in Miami: from a concentrated community to suburban dispersion

Despite differences between different waves of Cuban immigrants, all had in common a difficult settlement process in the Miami Dade County competing with the black community and non-Hispanic locals since 1959. From the beginning, both communities did not assimilate well the new population, especially because of their rapid increase in numbers and cultural differences. Despite first upper-middle class migrants fostered the prosperity of the city, non-Hispanic population could not easily accept them (Winsberg; 1983; 305-314). The conflict started as soon as Cuban migrants decided to locate themselves into existing medium and low-income individual houses, in a less dense and declining Anglo neighborhood on the West side of the central business district.⁸

The first location chosen by these new Cuban migrants was an area delimited by a three mile semi-circle on the western side of Miami's downtown, where first Cubans living in Miami had already established their homes in the 1920s, escaping from the conflicts with the black community settled in the Northwestern part of the city. Composed by single family housing, this area was cut by a central strip, the SW 8th street or "Calle Ocho", where many Cubans started to open different small businesses

⁶ An example of this situation can be found in the Elian Gonzalez case in 1999. The custody of a Cuban kid called Elian Gonzalez confronted Cuban and US governments, used by Miami exile community to bring criticism to Castro's regime to public discussion again.

⁷ Information taken from the Center for Immigration Studies: <http://www.cis.org/FloridaImmigrants19702020>; and (Mchugh et al; 1997; 504-519).

⁸ Before the Cubans arrived in Miami the city was divided by three social groups: the Jew community installed from the 1920s in the Miami Beach area, the Black communities in different Northern enclaves outside the city centre and the Non-Hispanic residents all around the city. (Winsberg; 1979; 405).

and enterprises. Both the gradual settlement of Cubans and the culturally rich everyday life experienced in the neighborhood promptly made the area recognized as Miami's Latin enclave, acquiring the name of Little Havana by non-Hispanic or "La Saguasera" by the Cubans.

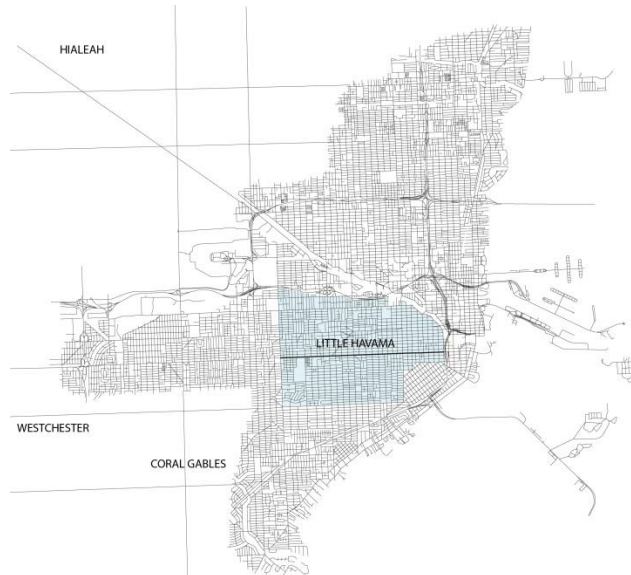


FIG. 2 - Map of Little Havana neighbourhood, Latin-American enclave of Miami, whose limits are: Douglas Road/West 37th Avenue to the West, I-95 between SW 11th and 4th Streets to the East, South River Drive in the Northwest, Miami River to Dolphin Expressway to the North, and SW11th Street from I-95 to the east SW 12th Avenue, then SW 8th Street to SW 15th Avenue, and SW 9th Street to West 37th street to the South. Other suburban neighbourhoods with high concentrations of Cubans such as Hialeah, Coral Gables and Westchester are also indicated.

From 1965 to 1973 the density and social conflict in Little Havana increased with the growth in numbers of Cuban migrants from the freedom flights that settled down in the area.⁹ The number of residents within the average household rose sharply in Little Havana, and there was a considerable conversion of single family units into multiple units as well as demolition of houses to make room for new apartment buildings (Winsberg; 1979; 410). The Cuban cultural environment increased in the area by the presence of these new residents, what forced some of the existing Non-Hispanic residents to move to other newly built locations in the suburbs of the city. Those

⁹ Little Havana became between 1960 and 1974 in the area with the major percentage of Latin population in the city, almost a hundred percent. Other Latin migrant joined Cubans in an area dominated by businesses and services managed by Cubans.

refusing the presence of the new community looked for locations all around the city starting a scattered spatial scheme as opposed to the highly concentrated one of the Latinos.

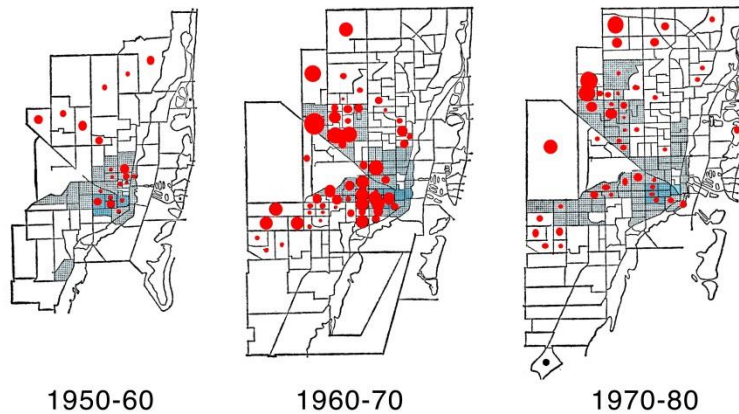


FIG. 3 - These maps show demographic changes of Latin-American population in Miami, highlighting the different locations chosen to settle in Miami Dade County from 1959 to 1980. The central area of Little Havana maintained during these years a high concentration of Latin emigrants, especially Cubans (Winsberg; 1979; 409).

From 1978 Little Havana area began its decline with a substantial decrease -from 84% in 1979 to 58% occupancy in 1989. This was due to two major questions related to the development of Miami suburbs. On the one hand, upper-middle income firstly established Cubans found difficult their upward social mobility in Little Havana deciding to change location. Elderly migrants wanted to keep certain distance from new Cuban immigrants, who belonged to lower social classes, and new suburban developments promoted by Miami planning department allowed them to move out of the enclave. In addition, the riots witnessed by Miami citizens in 1980, when Black violence exploded after the so-called McDuffie case¹⁰, increased their fear to central

¹⁰ The McDuffie events started after a court verdict, in which four white police officers were acquitted of charges of beating an African American motorist to death in downtown Miami. This legal action awake demonstrations in Downtown Miami and riots in the North-western black neighbourhoods of Overtown and

areas of the city, finding in these suburban locations their needed security. Thus, between 1985 and 1990 upper-middle class Cubans decided to move to South and West suburban areas of Miami-Dade County, living into more exclusive gated communities such as Coral Gables or Kendall in the south west of Greater Miami (Mchugh, 1997; 511).

On the other hand, some middle and working class Cubans decided to move to suburban industrial cities such as Hialeah in the Northwest of Greater Miami. This village concentrated the manufacturing plants established in the 60s and 70s and were surrounded by lower middle class housing. Recently migrated or already settled Cuban families easily found work in these cities factories as blue collar labor, creating since then the largest Cuban immigrant enclave in Miami and the United States.¹¹ Therefore, Hialeah residents have been characterized as having assimilated their cultural heritage and traditions into a hard-working and diverse community proud of its ethnicity and family oriented neighborhoods.

Miami Modern Metropolis versus Little Havana Multicultural enclave

Following these two issues it can be affirmed that the decadence of Little Havana neighborhood in the 80s was partly due to inherited planning directions given by the Miami planning department and the impossibility of Little Havana to bring high levels of security and employment. The period of social and physical expansion of the city between the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the US government promotion of suburban neighborhoods based on car mobility and large-scale land development economics (Shulman; 2009; 16). The increase of population in those years, that included the newly arrived Cubans, was directed to the creation of new family housing suburban neighborhoods towards the Western part of Miami.¹² The city was modified to absorb an automobile-centered culture, building new expressways whose routes and interchanges obliterated poor and minority neighborhoods, but to become just the nexus between North and South (Shulman; 2009; 17). Development of car-culture

Liberty City, leaving eighteen people dead, hundreds wounded, and damages estimated at two hundred million dollars

¹¹ In 2010, Hialeah had the highest percentage of Cuban and Cuban American residents in the United States, with 73.37% of the populace.

¹² After War Wold II many soldiers look for a new kid of life in Miami. In addition, the two-week paid vacation became nearly universal during this period what asked for new temporal residences in the city. Therefore Miami grew considerably in extension between 1945 and 1965, mainly by the construction of single-family housing, becoming a Modern Metropolis.

between 1945 and 1965 started the struggle of the city for urban unity which still continues today.

As derived from this modern development of Miami, a new suburban public space emerged composed of college campuses – the University of Miami (1948) and Dade County Junior College Campus (1967)-, metropolitan parks –Bayfront Park-, recreational spaces –Miami Marine Stadium (1964) and Miami Sequearium (1965)-, regional shopping malls –Biscayne Plaza Shopping Centre (1954), 163rd Street Mall (1956), Dadeland Mall (1960), Northside Shopping Center (1960), Lincoln Road Mall (1960)-, and the touristic area of Miami Beach. All of these places have in common an exclusive accessibility by car and a gated perimeter with controlled access, responding to the needs of security and the new car-culture standards.

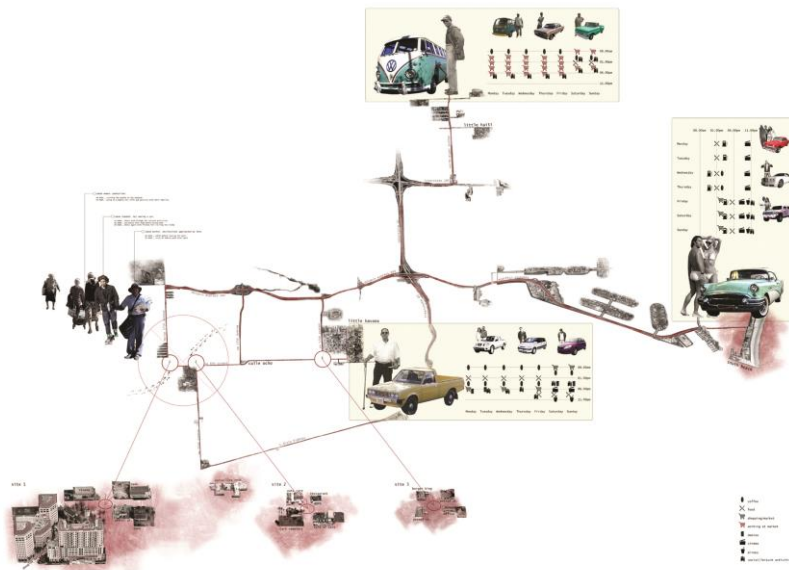


FIG. 4 - Analysis of Miami's car-culture inherited from 60s urban planning and its social consequences, such segregation and fragmentation of the city done by Lara Yegenoglu for Politics of Fabrication II at the Architectural Association.

In contrast to the modern planning, Hispanic migrants continued using roads, streets, parks, small business and cafeterias as places of socialization. Over all these places stands the “Calle Ocho” in Little Havana, whose spatial configuration of different small businesses facing the street transformed a “standard four-lane street with narrow sidewalks into a hybrid urban form between the typical American strip

shopping centre and a Cuban shopping street.” (Shulman; 2009; 73). This transformation was led by Cuban migrant entrepreneurs, who bought run-down buildings and started small businesses in the area in the early 1960s. This first generation of Cuban migrants populated the street by small cafeterias, businesses, and especially restaurants that soon became “venerable institutions for the community”, such as *Hong Kong*, the first Cuban Chinese restaurant, *El Centro Vasco*, *La Carreta* or *Versailles* (Portes; 1987; 365). Perhaps the latter example, the Versailles Restaurant, is the most paradigmatic of all of them. Set back from the road, Versailles Restaurant creates small paved patios and an exterior frontal square towards the “Calle Ocho”, which is served by a new form of coffee bar: the “coffee walk-in”. This coffee place, where clients stop for 15 minutes in their daily routine to stand up and have a conversation with the rest of Cuban migrants, settled a precedent for other similar coffee-shops along the street activating its urbanity.



FIG 5 - In this image taken in December 2011 of Restaurant Versailles' coffee bar towards “Calle Ocho”, where daily many Cuban immigrants stop by to have a coffee and meet their compatriots, it can be perceived the continuous use of walk-in coffee places created by Cuban immigrant entrepreneurs.

As a consequence of both “Calle Ocho” urban configuration and the gradual settling of Cuban families in the neighborhood, the strip became a publicly identifiable center for Little Havana radically different from the rest of the highly planned city of Miami. The urban spatial configuration brought by Cuban migrants from the city of Havana, (Shulman; 2009; 26-27) full of patios and communal courtyards inherited from

Southern Spanish traditional architecture, activated everyday life in the neighborhood and attracted other citizens to enjoy a more “European and Latin American tradition of sociable streets”. (Shulman; 2009; 73). Moreover, these activities responded better to migrant's everyday life dynamics that differed from new modern standards imposed by the assumed Miami urban modernization. The dialog created by this more porous spatial configuration with the street raised the intensity of pedestrians' everyday life between 1959 and 1980.

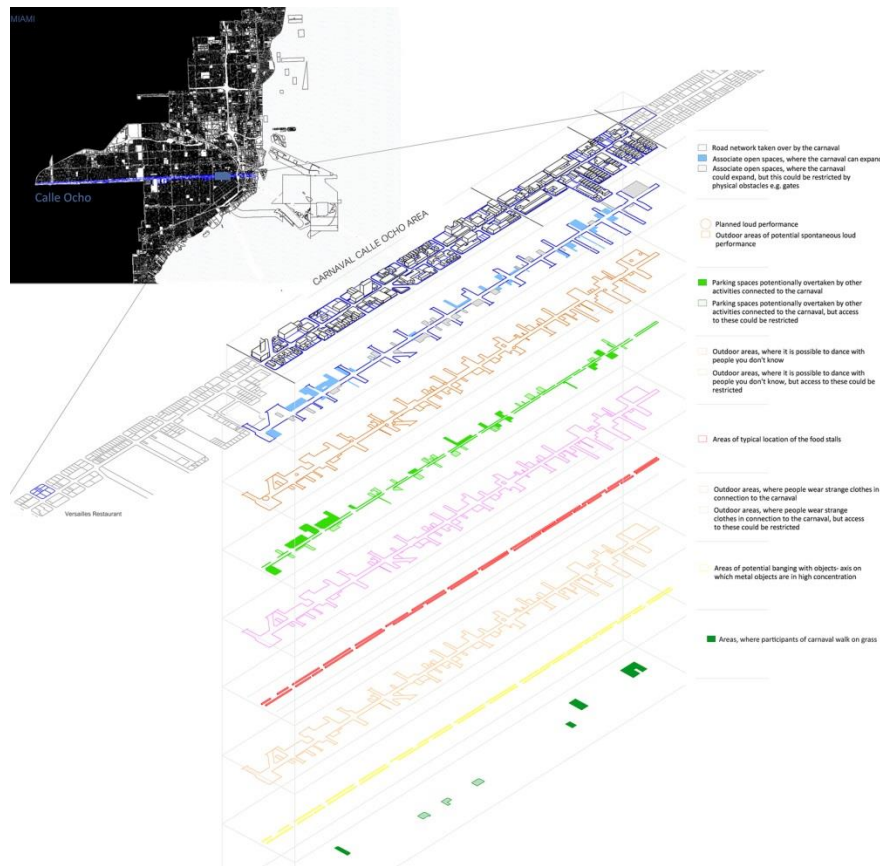


FIG 6 - Analysis of Southwest 8th Street or “Calle Ocho” spatial configuration by Eliska Pilna for Politics of Fabrication II in the Architectural Association. “Calle Ocho” or Tamiami Trail runs from Downtown Miami to the west connecting the center of the city to Tampa and is the centre of Little Havana. (Canales; 2011; 78-83)

Following this alternative scheme, in 1975 the “Calle Ocho” association of businesses decided to create a park for Cuban neighbors, who before used to play domino in the middle of the street over dodgy tables and cheap foldable chairs in the center of this commercial street. As a community initiative, the association built a tented covered and paved patio overlooking the main street. Since then, the named Maximo Gomez Park in Little Havana has become the communal center for older retired Cuban migrants. In addition, landmarks related to Cuban community were opened along the street, such as the *Plaza de la Cubanidad* with a memorial to Cuban heroes. The permeability of the spatial configuration of both sides of the street and the construction of the new park and different memorials, made “Calle Ocho” a more sociable streets, punctuated by the typical car stopping places of an American strip (Shulman; 2009; 73).



FIG. 7 - Images of Domino Club taken in December 2011 at Maximo Gomez Park situated in “Calle Ocho”, Miami. It can be appreciated the active use of this club by older Cuban immigrants.

However, with the expansion of residential suburban areas such as Coral Gables, Westchester and Kendall, where middle and upper class Cubans moved in the 1980s,

street life in “Calle Ocho” entered a period of decay. The new suburban shopping centers repeated in different and elaborated ways the same themes appearing in “Calle Ocho”, but within a precinct of security and exclusiveness (Portes et al; 1993; 349). Planning authorities not previously involved in the street development ignored this process, and local business entrepreneurs, who were involved in the past, seemed to be no more interested in the street.

Different use of the public space by the Cubans in Little Havana: “Calle Ocho” and surroundings

Nevertheless, a decade later, following the transformation of Miami into a global financial center that connected North and South America businesses Little Havana changed its situation (Sassen; 1993; 471-477). The new labor opportunities in the service sector associated with this transformation attracted a massive migration of workers from Nicaragua, Honduras and rest of Central American countries from early 1990s.¹³ They were very welcomed by most recently settled Cuban migrants in the area and the neighbourhood became a reception center or stepping stone for new arrivals from Latin America. This new Hispanic population filled vacant residences left in the neighbourhood coexisting with elderly Cubans who have lived there for decades (Winsberg; 1983; 308).

Therefore, the area concentrated again the highest Hispanic community of migrants in Miami (98%) with 49.206 residents in 2011, mainly blue-collar and service workers, recent immigrants and the elderly (Longbrake et al; 1976; 42).

The new community started to work and use the existing businesses fuelling the area with new activities following the “Cubannes” pattern of small economic activities and cultural events that maintained the cultural “ambience” (Rieff; 1988; 71). In addition, remaining local businesses and landmarks used by Cuban migrants before the years of “Calle Ocho” decay started to be daily visited again by the Cuban community, going there by car for a short breakfast, coffee or lunch. In addition, the new Hispanic migrants copied the Little Havana Cuban tradition of storefront cafeterias or coffee counters purveying thick sweet espresso coffee. This type of business first proliferated as extensions of large restaurants and cafeterias such as Versailles, by opening their space to the street. However, the pattern of small entrepreneurship started by Cuban migrants expanded to adjacent streets in private residences as an

¹³ For more information: <http://www.miamigov.com/nets/pages/LittleHavana/Your%20community.asp>

extension of their single family detached houses, and growing gradually during the last two decades to incorporate new programs such as convenient stores.

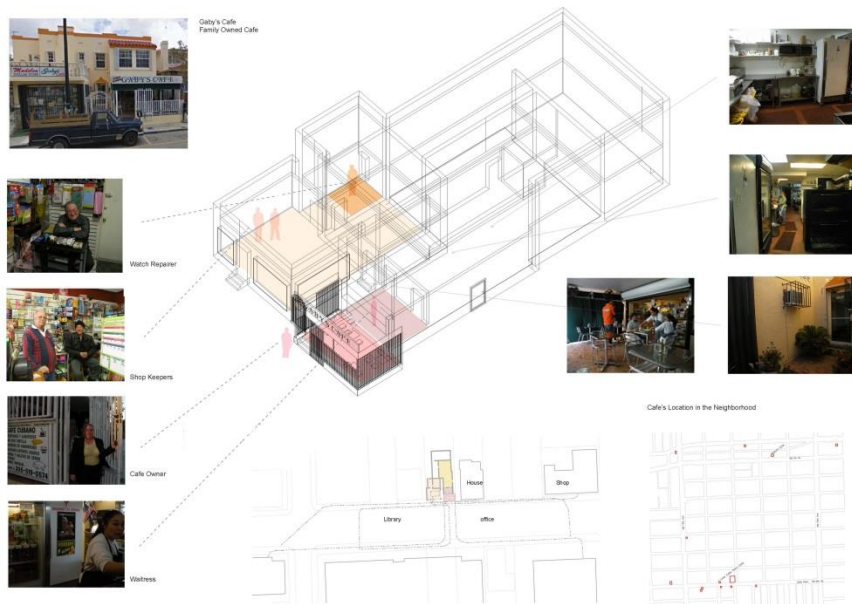


FIG 8 - The outstanding configuration of Gaby's Coffee Place in Little Havana, drawing done by Yiming Huang in *Politics of Fabrication II* at the Architectural Association. Starting as a small coffee bar serving to walkers from Gaby's own house, the cafeteria has evolved including other programs through time, such as a watch repair counter and a convenient store. The Cuban owner explains: "My husband and I came from Cuba to live in this house. We opened this small café named after my daughter Gaby. I rent some space to my friends to open a shop downstairs while we live upstairs."

On the other hand, these new migrants joined traditional festivities of Cuban community in the public space, such as the yearly traditionally catholic parades of The Three Kings celebrating the Epiphany in January or the *Calle Ocho Festival* rejoicing Carnival in March,¹⁴ becoming them the key for the social cohesion of the neighbourhood. Both festivities, initiated by the Cubans in the 70s, attracted very soon all different Latin migrants becoming celebrations of the diversity and multiculturalism of the area. Regarding this question The *Calle Ocho Festival* has had a special role. Initiated to smooth the social tensions between different ethnic groups

¹⁴ <http://www.carnavalmiami.com/>

in Miami in 1977, the success of this free parade has been followed by parallel festivities every last Friday of each month, that is called *Viernes Culturales*. In these Friday festivals “Calle Ocho” accommodates free setting of stalls selling food from different countries and playing Latin music like “reggaeton”, “salsa”, “bachata” and “meringue” that initiates dancing in the streets between different participants. This monthly ritual of eating, dancing and listening music from different Latin ethnicities and cultural backgrounds have generated a new common identity for the neighbourhood. In addition, adjacent neighbourhoods have gradually joined the festivity opening their art galleries, restaurants, cafeterias, film projections and educational programs from the Tower Theatre, becoming these events activators of other existing programs.

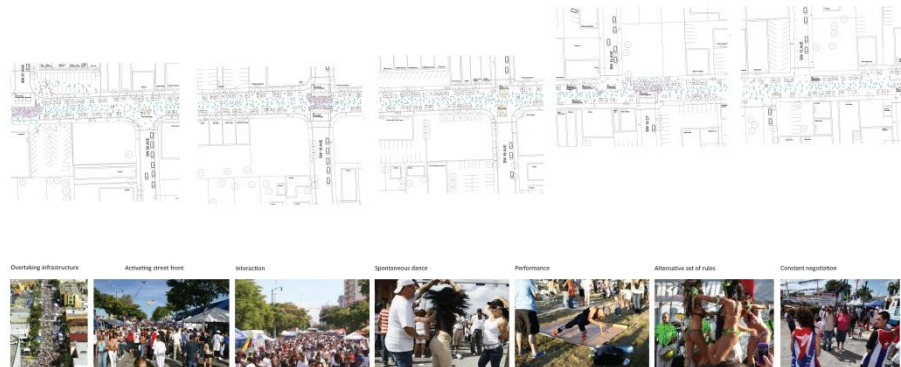


FIG. 9 - Diagrams showing the activities related to the celebration of the carnival in the *Calle Ocho Festival* from 27th to 4th Avenue done by Eliska Pilna in Politics of Fabrication II at the Architectural Association.

Learning from Little Havana

After analyzing the contemporary spatial configuration and use of “Calle Ocho” by new Latin American immigrants, and how it also engage with tourists and the rest of Miami’s population, we can conclude that public space design and use is fundamental to have stable multicultural urban realms. During the last twenty years, globalization processes have introduced new populations of multiple ethnicities and diverse cultures living side by side in capital cities. The lack of a common identity between all these citizens has generated multiple conflicts, riots and social unrest since then. Miami is a clear example of this problem, being one of the most dangerous cities in

the US. However, some neighborhoods in these cities, such as Little Havana, have succeeded by opening the public space to citizen's participation and initiative. They have understood the importance of public space as a necessary space of encounter, interaction and negotiation between different forms-of-life present in the city after globalization took place. In "Calle Ocho" we can find direct, voluntary and unbinding associations among people who assert their presence and difference in the public arena. This situation has allowed citizens to create an identity inside a multicultural environment not determined by a pre-fixed cultural pattern but as a collection of individualities using public space.

Therefore, following the example of "Calle Ocho", the role of the architects and urban designers lies in designing new spatial and physical layouts that enable the presence, frictional interaction and negotiation of all these forms-of-life that share the city. As the Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl explains in his book *Life between buildings*,

Although the physical framework does not have a direct influence on the quality, content and intensity of social contacts, architects and planners can affect the possibilities for meeting, seeing and hearing people (Gehl; 2001; 13).

This reflection and the analysis of Little Havana case study set the basis for a reconsideration of assumed standards in urban planning and design in new global metropolises such as Miami. This study supports that a major task for urban planners and designers should be the articulation of public space to allow citizens' initiative, action and easy appropriation in multicultural neighbourhoods of contemporary transnational cities. Examples as Versailles restaurant or the Máximo Gomez Park specifically indicate that the threshold between public and private, such as the courtyards, terraces and set backs from the roads and streets, are now fundamental spaces to be addressed by designers. The closer individuals are to buildings, the more intense the contacts are between them (Gehl; 2001; 8-30). Therefore, small-scale urbanism proposing interventions with direct relation to individuals' everyday life should be put ahead the large traditional urban planning in the US.

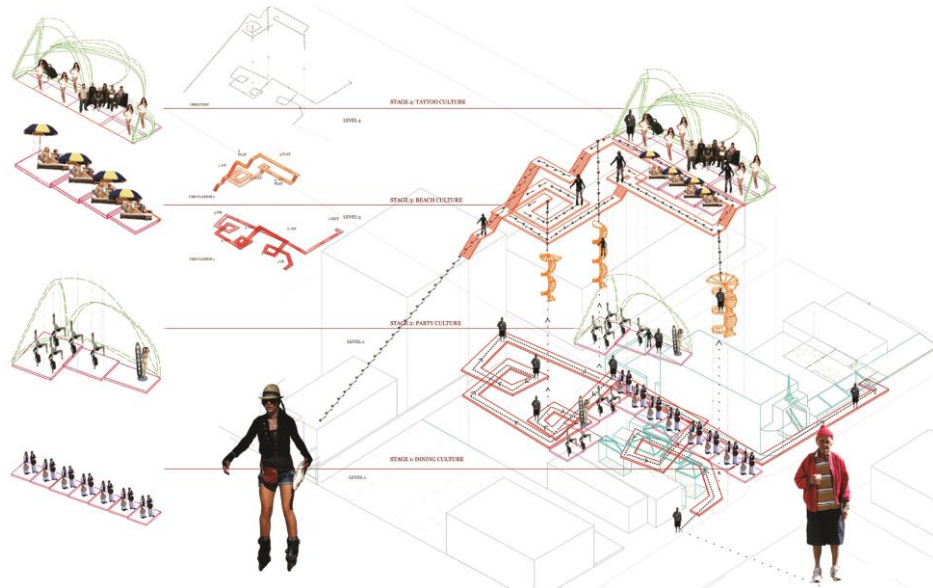


FIG. 10 - Proposal for colliding different communities, the urban tourist from Miami Beach with old Cuban exiles, by activating the public space with moments of estrangement and confrontation in Domino Club at Máximo Gomez Park, done by Vidhya Pushpanathan in Politics of Fabrication II at the Architectural Association

On the other hand different festivities in “Calle Ocho” are indicating the importance of activities and events in the public space as attractors of diversity and no local people presence. For this reason the activation of public space becomes a fundamental question to generate multicultural sustainable urban environments (Gehl; 2001; 31-32). Architects should trigger with their buildings skins and urban furniture designs incipient unplanned everyday activities, since these architectural elements are the most immediate to individuals using public space.

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