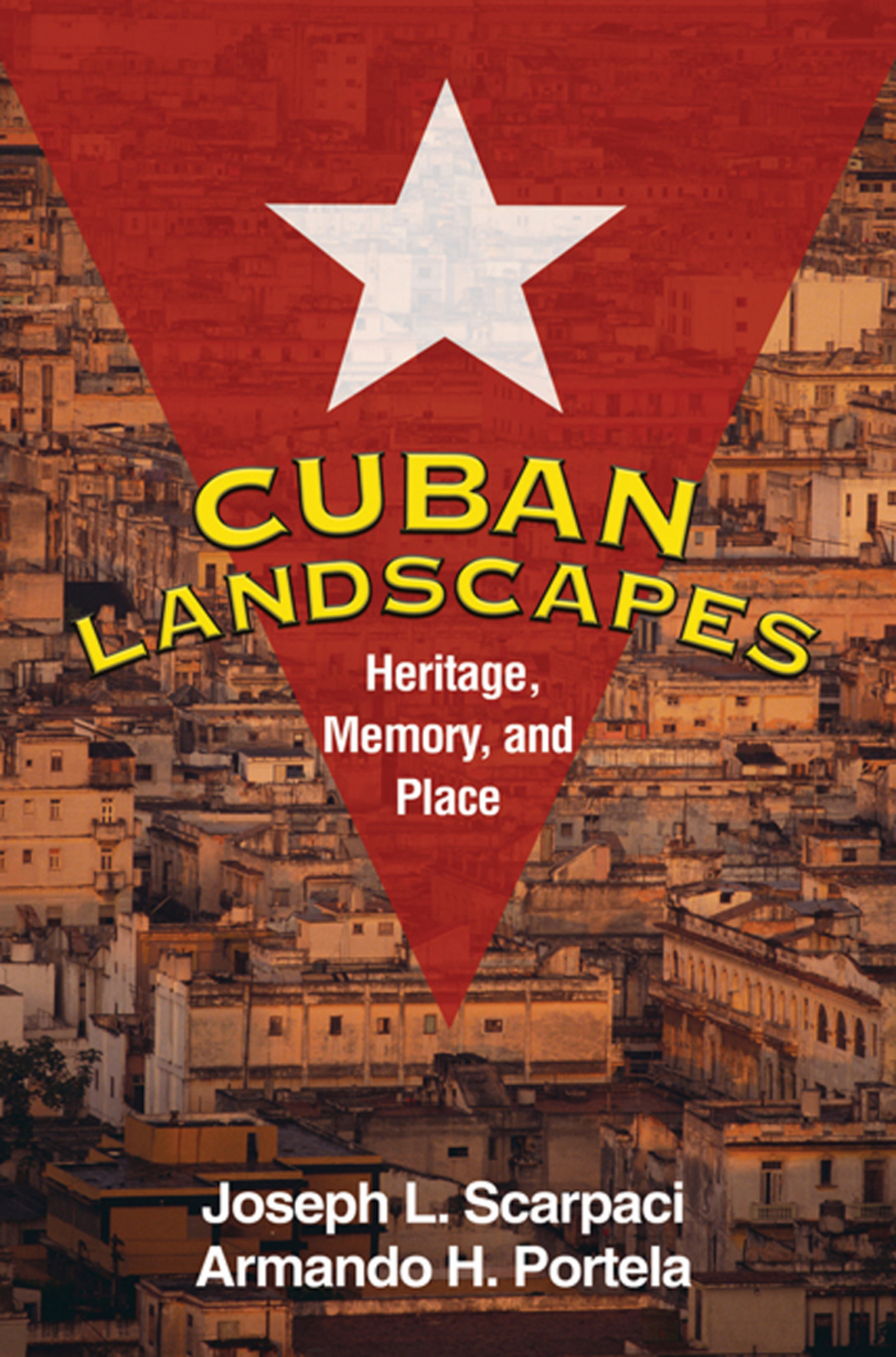
CUBAN LANDSCAPES
Heritage, Memory, and Place
Joseph L. Scarpaci
Armando H. Portela

CUBAN LANDSCAPES

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Cuban Landscapes: Heritage, Memory, and Place

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CUBAN LANDSCAPES

Heritage, Memory, and Place

Joseph L. Scarpaci
Armando H. Portela

THE GUILFORD PRESS
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Para Michael Joseph,
para que conozcas parte de tu herencia cultural
—J. L. S.

Para Leví Marrero
—A. H. P.

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Preface

Studying landscapes is messy going. Landscapes have multiple meanings that require individual interpretation: Each observer of landscape brings his or her life experiences and subjectivity to bear on extracting meaning. In this regard, landscapes can be thought of (conceptualized) as a sort of text that can be read and deciphered, encoded and decoded. Accordingly, our landscape-as-text approach means that we serve as writers who bring our own backgrounds, experiences inside and outside Cuba, to give meaning for the readers of our book. We approach Cuban landscapes by enlisting in the seven chapters of this book a human–environmental approach that reflects our backgrounds as a human geographer (J. L. S.) and a physical geographer (A. H. P.). We draw on selected literatures that, we hope, will help the reader. Perhaps the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortíz said it best when he described Cuban culture as a wonderful *ajiaco* (stew).

Our belief is that landscapes are useful mirrors to understand what has transpired and what contributed to the visible consequences that give a place or a region its discernible features, or, in the case at hand, what constitutes the essence of Cuba: *cubanidad*.

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CHAPTER 1

On Cuban Landscapes

> [Islands are] the loci of imagination, desire, hopes and fears, the goal of dreamers and mystics and misfits, multiplying, drifting, disappearing and reappearing: malleable moulds into which cosmographers and cartographers could pour both art and science, material spaces which the merchant venturer, pirate, colonist, and governor could penetrate and exploit.
>
> —Dennis Cosgrove (2005, 302)

Cuba is at once a poetic place steeped in history and culture, and a tenacious vestige of land when contrasted with nearby continents. Seen offshore of the Sierra de los Organos in the west, the Escambray Mountains in the south, or the Sierra Maestras in the east, Cuba's green-peaked ridges evoke a wind-whipped emerald sea. Henry Dana (1815–1882) observed in 1859 while approaching Cuba that the "fertile, undulating land comes to the sea, and rises into high hills as it recedes" (Dana 1996, ix). Cuba, not unlike the rest of the Greater Antilles (Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Cayman Islands), affords land observers a glimpse of its mountains and hills from almost any point on the many plains and flatlands interspersed between higher elevations (Richardson 2002, 15).

But how to approach a tangible and conceptual place we call the Cuban landscape? Indeed, the term "Cuban landscape" carries multiple meanings. Its usage spans the disciplines of architecture, art and art history, cultural geography, literature, poetry, and urban design over the past century or so. There are copious first-impression descriptions about this crescent-shaped island such as those often given by explorers and conquerors. Christopher Columbus—Cuba's first European discoverer—reportedly claimed it was

the "most beautiful land [his] eyes [had] ever seen," though many Bahamians, Haitians, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans claim that the Italian mariner made the same remark about their islands. Baron von Humboldt, known as Cuba's "second discoverer" for systematically studying the island's ecology and social organization, characterized it as "an island of sugar and slaves." And the 20th-century Cuban anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortíz, known as the "third discoverer of Cuba" for reconstructing indigenous and African contributions to the island's rich tapestry, claimed that Cuba was positively enriched by the contributions of Afro-Cuban culture. The island did not need to be rescued by outsiders. Understanding the Africanization of the island (Ortiz coined the term "Afro-Cuban") meant understanding the material culture (plant names, toponyms, farming practices) and nonmaterial contributions (syncretism, language, music, street humor or *choteo*, folklore, botany) to the island's heritage (Mañach 1969). He argued that the Africans' contribution to Cuba stemmed from their long history of survival and knowledge of the land.

Many of the themes promulgated by these three discoverers appear elsewhere. Gonzálo de Quesada (1868–1915), a Columbia University–trained Cuban lawyer who worked in New York for Cuban independence, waxed eloquently:

> Cuba! Beautiful "Queen of the Antilles," the land of the cocoa and the palm—of the golden banana and the luscious orange—well may the hearts of thy sons and the dark, lustrous eyes of thy maidens glow and glisten with pride at the praises of thy sunny Isle! How few Americans there are who have formed any correct conception of "Life in the Tropics"! To the generality of us, Cuba suggests the idea of heat and yellow fever, of venomous reptiles and insects, slaves and sugar, oranges and ever-blooming flowers—an idea in a great degree erroneous. (Hazard 1871, 18)

Like the three discoverers noted earlier, Hazard also captures a defining feature of Cuba and the Caribbean at large: a tragic chapter in human history (slavery) juxtaposed against Garden-of-Eden-like prose, all of which is (often) defined by outsiders (North Americans and Europeans) who have historically felt a need to rescue these islands. Indeed, as analysts of Caribbean landscapes have long argued, the Caribbean is a cultural mosaic made up of incredible diversity and understated intricacy that has been conditioned by its colonial past (Lowenthal 1985, 2007).

To continental dwellers in North America and Europe, islands in general—and Cuba in particular—may offer some respite from the perennial booming of traffic, perhaps to be replaced by the constant booming of

surf. Nicolson (2007, 153) argues that an island is like an idea that begins, glows, and expands in the mind like a beam of possibilities.

> The island looks like the place where that mixture of heaviness and insignificance might somehow evaporate, leaving life pure and rich. An island, in other words, concentrates the dreams of Arcadia with which civilization has always been haunted. It is a place defined by otherness, thriving on nothing more than its distance and difference from the mainland, to which it is opposed.

This holds true for Cuba. One is constantly reminded that Cuba is just 90 miles from the United States, though in fact the island is 90 miles from Key West, which is the end of an archipelago extending 120 miles from the soggy bottom of "mainland" south Florida.

Baldacchino (2007) conceptualizes islands as novelty sites. They are cast in the humanities and the natural and social sciences as quintessential places for experimentation (Gillis 2007; Gillis and Lowenthal 2007). A kind of mythical island geography, argue some, has helped Fidel Castro sustain a revolution for nearly 50 years, in essence making the nation an "island of communism" surrounded by a "sea of capitalism." This island experiment in communism builds on the intoxicating fascination that islands are *tabulae rasae*, where anything is possible. Perhaps the relatively small size of islands makes them more malleable to grand designs than continental projects. In 1992, the Soviet Union dissolved but Cuba's experiment continues. Cuban socialism may be small, remote, insular, and peripheral, but Cuba's being an island on the "edge" of mainstream international (and continental) events has exposed the weaknesses of mainstream orthodoxies (e.g., Soviet communism), and has allowed Cuba to foment alternatives to the status quo because, as Baldacchino (2007, 167) suggests, "islands tend toward clairvoyance. They act as advance indicators for what will occur in the future, or as extreme renditions of what exists elsewhere in less exceptional form."

Cubans make the best of a difficult situation imposed by a trade embargo that since 1962 has deprived the island of importing merchandise directly from the United States, or of securing goods from ships that might stop in nearby Miami or Fort Lauderdale. As citizens of a "quintessential site for experimentation," Cubans have learned to innovate and make due with less-than-ideal conditions. Reconfigured Soviet washing machine motors turn grinding wheels, help cobblers mold tire treads into soles, or function as fans. Old American cars made in Detroit now run with motors adapted from Soviet-made Ladas. An extensive tool and dye industry, most of it informally operated, gives credence to Baldacchino's notion that islands spark innovation.

CUBA AS LANDSCAPE

The study of landscapes is an eclectic discipline, requiring us to cast a necessarily broad net to capture the many nuances of Cuba and *cubanidad* ("Cubanness"). Some of the earliest noncartographic representations of the island of Cuba come to us in the form of landscape paintings. This genre departed from 18th-century European treatments of oil portraits, rooms, objects (flowers, vases, and quotidian features), gardens, and other smaller spaces. European landscape painters were particularly inspired by the island's beauty, which was originally communicated by travelers' diaries, journalistic accounts, and personal correspondences. The German naturalist Baron Alexander von Humboldt's detailed account of his short visit to the island triggered considerable interest in Europe once his 1801–1802 descriptions were published in French in 1835 and then in English in 1856 (Humboldt 2001). Thus, it was no small accolade that perhaps the greatest explorer and scientist of the 19th century remarked upon his arrival on December 18, 1800, in Havana's harbor that it was "one of the most picturesque and pleasing on the northern equinoctial shores of America" (Humboldt 2001, 4). Although his writings were not published for nearly 35 years, they served to fuel U.S. annexation of Cuba and in the 1890s to justify U.S. imperialism; it was used by the U.S. subsequently and erroneously to justify the Monroe Doctrine (1823). Cuba became "desirable," in no small measure attributable to the German's keen eye. His acuity and penmanship form a cornerstone of what is now the burgeoning field of Atlantic Studies, or what John Gillis (2004) calls the creation of "islands of the mind." For Spain and other envious nations, Cuban landscapes would be more than silver specks in the Caribbean.

Cuba surely epitomized the changes brought on by industrialization and rising international trade. However, the industrial revolution in the first half of the 19th century meant replacing animal- or slave-driven sugar cane grinding mills (*trapiches*) with steam-powered ones (*centrales*). Commercial agriculture accelerated quickly during the first half of the 19th century. This expansion was ignited by the Haitian revolution of 1791, which sent sugar growers to Cuba and New Orleans in search of new acreage (Marrero 1972). Cuban coffee production, much "gentler" on the land than sugar, jumped in production from 1.25 million pounds in 1804 to 44 million pounds two decades later. Cuban sugar mills doubled, from about 500 in the year of the Haitian slave revolt to 1,000, by 1827 (Martínez-Fernández 2001, 7). Accordingly, landscape paintings captured, if not in unduly romantic fashion, fragments of a changing look of the land and a dying way of life.

Cuba's meteoric rise as a world sugar producer between 1800 and 1850 was dealt a severe blow by the Independence Wars (1868–1898) (Marrero 1950, 341), especially the Ten Years' War (1868–1878). This war came between two improvements in sugar production: The first was a revolution driven by rail and steam, which took hold in the early 19th century. A second occurred after the decade-long war and responded to mounting sugar beet production in Europe and the United States. The arrival of what would become "agribusiness" separated the small plots for small-farmer use and an indentured farmer system from the *latifundia* (plantation) system. Corporate farming teased out the traditional *ingenio* (simple sugar mill) from the plantation, replacing the *latifundia* sugar system with a single industrialized central system (hence the Spanish term, *centrales*). The plantation system continued to work, in that tenant farmers (*colonos)* could contract with the modern sugar mills. Despite this economic and technological restructuring, economic hardship brought on by war seemed to engender a special appreciation for what the land could offer. José Martí captures this sentiment in his essay "Memories of the War: Conversations with a Soldier," penned in November 1893. His description of the ragged colonial army, especially the common soldiers (*mambises*), highlights how these soldiers (mostly former peasants) foraged and gathered whatever the land could offer them:

> In came the officers, nearly every one of them naked, one using his hat as a fig leaf, the other, two tanned *jutia* [rodent] skins, one north, one south. Barefooted, or in cowhide sandals. They had made themselves hats of yarey, or *yuruy-guana* [yuraguano], which is more pliable, or a cap of *cataure* [*catauro*]; their machete belts were twisted vine, or a strip of cowhide.... When we were drilling we were sometimes so hungry that I have had men faint on me, unable to stand up from hunger. Food? Sometimes it was very good and sometimes very bad.... The fact of the matter is that after a long march or a hard skirmish, or a retreat over the savannah, there's nothing like a piece of fresh cane or a nice ripe mango. The mango is a great fellow; when they were in season we ate them every way you can think of, raw, baked, boiled, fried ... [and] one day a fellow was in bad shape, with pains and stomach ache, from eating too many *piñas* [pineapples]. "I'll never touch *piña* again." "Yes you will," I said to him. "Yes you will. *Piña* is the only thing that's like a woman." It was a banquet when we sat down to roast *jutia*.... And for coffee, we had either "monkey tail," which was orange leaves steeped in water, or *cuba-libre*, which was honey water. Only the bees must be native, and not from a Spanish hive, because the Spanish bee stings. Ours is noisy like the Cubans themselves, but it's considerate, and does you no harm. The Spanish bees, when they sting, die, and their guts pull out with the stinger. (Martí 1968, 304–305)

Martí's description not only underscores both the travesty and resourcefulness that war imposes, but shows a deeper connection to the land in ways that tens of thousands of *mambises* might have never known.

Nineteenth-century Cuba was also a time when the colony—in addition to struggling for independence—forged a strong sense of nationalism that centered on human–environment relationships. Louis A. Pérez Jr. (2001b) cogently documents the rise of nationalism on the basis of how Cubans supported each other before, during, and after hurricanes. Specifically, his aim was "to insert the phenomenon of mid-19th-century hurricanes into the larger circumstances of the Cuban condition as one more variable in the formation of nation." His environmental history studied how the catastrophic storms of the 1840s molded socioeconomic developments in 19th-century Cuba. He shows how the powerless (peasants, slaves, common folks) and powerful (the Spanish colonial authorities) reached compromise in preparing for tropical storms, surviving them, and rebuilding in the wake of the storms. In this way, then, Cuban respect and admiration for the forces of nature take firm hold well before Independence (1898) and the socialist government (1959–), while also cutting across class lines.

Although it is true that the hurricane (also noted as *huracán, hunrakán, yuracns*, and *yorocán* by indigenous Caribbean people[1]) and cyclone (*ciclón*) leave undeniable marks on the geographical, economic, political, social, and moral fabric of all Caribbeaners, Cubans have always judged themselves and their governments on their comportment when facing these natural disasters. Pérez argues that

> so much in the character of economic conditions, social relationships, and cultural forms bear the distinctive imprint of the hurricane. The very notion of nationality, no less than the idea of nation, evolved from the experience and the encounter and contributed [in] decisive ways to the people Cubans have become. (2001b, 155)

Hurricanes also reshape the physical landscape: Shorelines, 1,600 keys and islands, river courses, and landslides often change dramatically after hurricanes (Iñiguez-Rojas 1989). In this way, Cuba's insularity and vulnerability to hurricanes have been a defining feature of Cuba's physical, political, and social fabric.

LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN 19TH-CENTURY CUBA

In the United States, the Hudson River School of landscape painting developed in the 19th century in response to modernity and industrializa-

tion, reflecting a romantic clinging to the nation's older established eastern seaboard. While America's frontier moved ever westward, the Hudson River painters found an enthusiastic American public that increasingly appreciated the older settlements. Many of their paintings were forcefully theatrical, often depicting moral or literary themes. In both the United States and Europe, this new school of painting was partly a response to the rise of industrialization and was surely recognition that mechanization was capable of transforming the look of the land in unprecedented ways. Industrial production, driven by smoky steam engines in factories, mills, and railroads, left sooty plumes across cityscapes and countryside alike (Burtner 2002). Cuba was also responsive to this new genre of painting, which altered the initial European influences on its culture.

A few landscape painters stand out in 19th-century Cuba. Esteban Chartrand's 1877 work *Marine Landscape* (*Paisaje Marino*) and Valentín Sanz Carta's *The Malangas* (*Las Malangas*) capture the pristine countryside of colonial Cuba. Chartrand (c. 1824–c. 1889), the son of French immigrants who resided in Matanzas, about 100 kilometers east of Havana, is widely acclaimed for bringing a subtlety and accuracy to his landscape portraits of a nation not yet widely marked by sugar cane planting and great urbanization. He crafted nostalgic, romanticized, and idealized landscapes that were often washed in twilight. Unlike the European painters, gazing at the island through continental lenses, he included the common peasant (*guajíro*) as opposed to the trappings of the economic elite (Figure 1.1). Elements in his paintings emphasized *lo cubano* (Cubanness) and highlighted such cultural elements as *bohíos* (small and simple farmhouses), *ingenios* (simple sugar mills) and *palmas* (the *palma real*, in Spanish—or royal palm, *Roystonea regia*—is the national tree). His massive ceiba trees appear majestic and his palm trees are always svelte. Sanz Carta, a Cuban who hailed from the Canary Islands (called an *isleño* in Cuba), depicted the Cuban countryside more realistically and often bathed his works with strong doses of tropical sunlight (Museo de Bellas Artes 2001).

Although our purpose here is not to digress into the subtleties of Cuban art history, these landscapes, as representations of place, are important because they present an image to the rest of the world depicting the allures the island held for curious travelers. Both Chartrand and Sanz Carta flourished at a time when there was a growing appreciation for local aesthetics and beauty as well as a turn away from elitist and Spanish-based views of local life. This trend in painting rose in tandem with the independence wars and helped to establish certain iconic elements of *cubanidad*—ranging from depictions of huts, wild-growing fruit, palm trees, castles and fortresses, and other natural and cultural elements—that might at one time have been considered too plebian to paint.

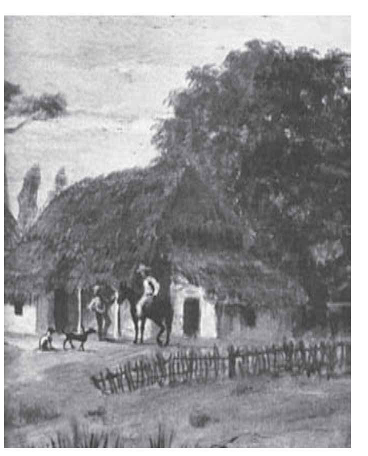


FIGURE 1.1. The painting *Landscape* (1880), by Esteban Chartrand (1840–1883), focuses attention on key elements of the natural landscape; at right, detail of Cuban *bohío* and *guajíro* on horse. Courtesy Museo Nacional de Cuba.

Travel literature and its icons are wellsprings for geographical knowledge and form a key part of the new cultural geography (Duncan and Gregory 1999). Although iconic attractions and writings about Cuba (bucolic tropical landscapes, sandy beaches and blue water, cigar-filled rum saloons, Spanish castles, "fiery" mulattas) would change over time, they rightly or wrongly became symbols in the island's tourist industry over the next century (Schwartz 1997). Curious (and affluent) Americans and Europeans would come to the island in search of these landscape elements. Pen-and-pencil sketchings could be electrotyped inexpensively and then printed in American and European newspapers and magazines. Samuel Hazard's drawings of daily life in Cuba were especially popular beyond the island, as he captured romanticized and pristine versions of Cuba's subtropical forests at about the time the Ten Years' War (1868–1878) began (Figure 1.2).

Consumer items sold in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the five-cent Cuban cigar, "were among the most sought after in the western hemisphere," with their "classical graphic idioms to reflect a real or mythical heritage ... [and whose themes included] a requisite number of pastoral vistas, female personas, and waving flags" (Levi and Heller 2002, 86). These eye-catching embossed chromolithographs became collectible artworks (Figure 1.3). Indirectly, they fired the imagination and aesthetics among a growing middle class in Europe and North America who were increasingly pursuing leisure and travel.

LANDSCAPES AT LARGE

Landscape is a concept tied to the study of places in disciplines as diverse as geography, biology, landscape architecture, urban planning, and the fine arts. "Landscape" refers to the arrangement of the land and how humans have modified it. The concept includes many elements that express themselves as visual representation. Landscape's essence, however, is not limited to the lofty confines of academe. In fact, its rise as a popular medium for describing places can be traced back to the Renaissance and merchant capitalism of 15th-century Flanders and Venice (Aubu-Lughod 1984; Morris 1981). Painters played a key role in bringing exciting, if not romanticized and somewhat distorted, images of faraway places to the elite of their era. These images, in turn, found their way to the masses in reproductions and popular media.

Cuba's sugar potential in the late 18th century evoked much interest in the European elite because of the possible profits (Scarpaci and Portela

FIGURE 1.2. The Falls of the Rosario (also known as Soroa Falls) captured in the late 1860s by Samuel Hazard. "Rosario" refers to the Sierra Rosario in Pinar del Río Province. From Hazard (1871, frontispiece).

FIGURE 1.3. Carmen Flor Fina cigar label, 1900. A pastiche of exotic, pastoral, and tropical themes beautified the individual cigar and boxes of 25. This ancillary form of artwork prospered soon after lithographic printing began in Havana in 1822. Few globally consumed items did as much to disseminate a representation of the island of Cuba as did the Cuban cigar ring, box, and packaging in the 19th and 20th centuries. From Levi and Heller (2002, 92).

2005) and a certain exoticism; Cuba was American *criollo* (creole), but it was also imbued with more than three centuries of Spanish rule. Unlike the ornate and abundant religious architecture of Mexico and Peru, the only highbrow architecture the colony could boast was of a military nature: fortresses, castles, bulwarks, and ramparts, all of which had become obsolete by the middle of the 19th century. Havana in the early 19th century was a busy port, the gateway to an industrious and prosperous island (Figure 1.4).

In a prephotographic age, landscape portraits and their subsequent dissemination through lithographs became important media in casting the essence of places and territories (Burtner 2002). Cuban landscape paintings embraced Western notions of land, art, and nature (Figure 1.5). Some art historians argue that 19th-century landscape paintings everywhere enlisted a simple dichotomy of culture versus nature, the mundane and contaminated versus the pristine. However, Narciso G. Menocal (1996) has carefully shown how depicting the landscape and common folks characterized a key part of the colonial independence project. Cuban art was not a mere extension of European trends and themes. Rather, it established "national imagery through a search for the characteristic and exploring national identity.... Nationalism made Cuban art *sui generis* in style and general appearance, but perhaps more interestingly, in the manner in which it should be read and interpreted" (Menocal 1996, 187).

"Landscape" would eventually find its way into the English language as a derivative of the Dutch term *landschap* and the German word *landschaft*. Over the past 500 years or so, the term has moved from one largely

FIGURE 1.4. Detail of *General View of Havana*, 1856, drawn by Eduardo Barañano and lithographed by Eduardo Laplante. This bird's-eye view of the port from the north shows Castillo de Los Tres Reyes del Morro and its lighthouse (left foreground), La Cabaña fort (left midrange), La Punta castle (right foreground), and the walled city of La Habana (right midrange).

confined to the fine arts to a concept that is imbued with meanings of power, politics, and ownership (Creswell 2004).

In cultural geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer introduced the term to North American scholars in his seminal 1925 essay, "The Morphology of Landscape." Sauer proposed the study of landscape as an alternative to the prevalent philosophy of environmental determinism, which emphasized the role of their surroundings (environment) in shaping the material development of a people or region. Sauer's notion was that the landscape could be studied scientifically and that one could elucidate the role humans played in modifying it—the antithesis of environmental determinism (Sauer 1963). In using cultural history and artifactual analysis, one challenge in studying the transformation of a natural landscape into its contemporary condition (cultural landscape) is that it remains daunting to reconstruct the original natural landscape and to designate seamlessly where the mark of one group of occupants on the landscape ended and where another

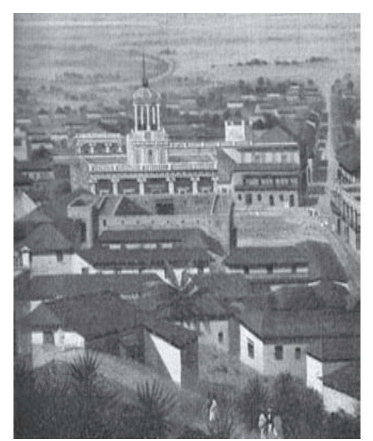


FIGURE 1.5. *View of Trinidad from Mount Vigia*, 1852, by Eduardo Laplante. Laplante captures the rise of the sugar industry in this south-central town set back 11 kilometers from the Caribbean Sea, and a gentrifying "sugarocracy," in the words of Moreno Fraginals. More than a score of small mills (*ingenios*) lined the Sugar Mill Valley (*El Valle de los Ingenios*) just to the west (left) of the image. The detail at right enlarges the main plaza and reveals a turrett used by a wealthy slave trader. Courtesy Museo Nacional de Cuba.

began. Subsequent cultural geographers such as D. W. Meinig (1979) and Wilbur Zelinksy (1973) worked with these Sauerian themes in studying the human imprint on the surface of the earth. Their works were highly informative because they synthesized a great deal of information about places and regions and their books reached both academic and general readership. However, such approaches to landscape were often criticized because good description alone—devoid of theory—could not make substantive contributions to basic research (see Soja 1996).

Novel tenets of cultural geography that were grounded in landscape analysis appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. This "new cultural geography" added social and cultural theory to interpret changes in landscape (Back, Kunze, and Pickles, 1989). By emphasizing political and sociocultural processes, this new cultural geography also considered how landscape shapes political and sociocultural processes in a particular region (Schein 1997). No theoretical lens consistently informs these new studies of landscape. Cosgrove (1998), for instance, enlists Marxian analysis to characterize his study of place and landscape, giving particular emphasis to ideology and how it shapes the way social classes view property and land. Others (Duncan and Duncan 1988; Price and Lewis 1993) have furthered this work by focusing on how landscape forms a key ingredient in cultural, political, and social systems. Graham, Ashworth, and Tumbridge (2000, 31) "regard landscape less as places shaped by lived experience than as largely symbolic entities."

We believe this new cultural geographic analysis lends itself nicely to the study of Cuba because of the island's striking historical periods that spawned distinctive political economies: the colonial period based on raw material extraction and slavery (1514–1898); the republican era witnessing the domination of United States investment in sugar, communications, and overall infrastructure, as well as political support and sugar price-fixing for exports (1898–1958); and the socialist era (1959 to the present). Throughout this book, we refer to several examples of *vernacular* or *ordinary landscapes.* These make up the everyday environment of the island, its elements ranging from schools, streetscapes, sugar cane fields, and rural settlements to the shaded suburbs of its large cities and the increasing blend of tourists with locals. Vernacular landscapes are "lived in" and shape the perceptions, values, and behaviors of the Cubans who occupy them. In Cuban towns and cities, for example, vernacular landscapes include the distinguishing automobiles, largely older Soviet-made Ladas and Moskvich models, as well as American cars of the 1950s and earlier (Figure 1.6).

Today these automobiles give the country a museum-like quality (Baker 2004; Schweid 2004). The neighborhood landscape is peppered with the state-run food stores (*bodegas*), primary care clinics (*policlínicas*),

FIGURE 1.6. One of the predominant features of Cuba's contemporary and vernacular landscape is the presence of American cars from the 1950s. Paint for maintaining the bodies of these relics is often stolen from shipyards or is surplus household latex paint, resulting in strong hues. Havana, 2006.

and schools, and many settlements are marked by high-rise public housing complexes (*vivienda social*) built after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959. In the countryside, traditional rural housing based on the pre-Columbian structures of the *bohío* are common visual markers whose virtues are praised in literature, song, and poetry (Figure 1.7). Vernacular or ordinary landscapes are also celebrated in such popular songs as José Fernández Díaz's adaptation of José Martí's lyrics to form the composition "Guatanamera." This famous song, brought to an English-speaking audience by Pete Seeger's adaptation, evoke images of a pristine, bucolic landscape and the virtuous men and women who live there.

Adhering to the tenets of the new cultural geography, we also point out *symbolic landscapes* in this book. Unlike vernacular landscapes, symbolic landscapes portray the values and power of those agents that finance and modify them. Up until independence in 1898–1902, Cuba was seen as a place where many capitalists could "rationalize" imperialism, whether for economic gains, political domination, or a "benevolent civilizing process." Leland K. Jenks, a U.S. business writer contributing to a series titled "American Imperialism: American Fund for Public Service Studies

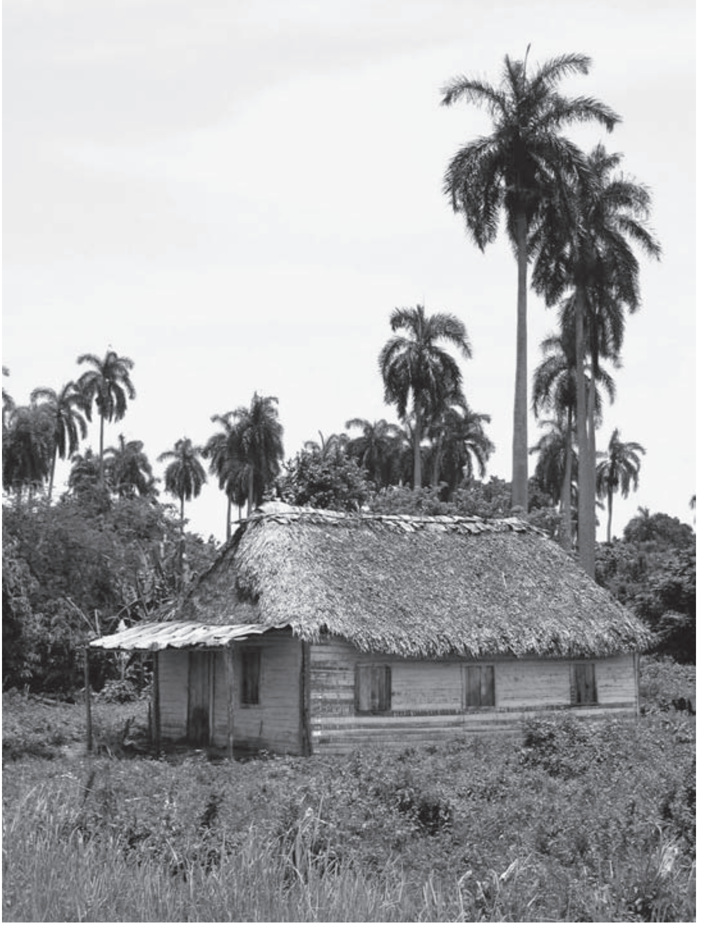


FIGURE 1.7. Typical rural dwelling made of palm thatching, palm wood (sides), and a zinc roof modification on front porch, Ciego de Avila Province, 2003.

in American Investments Abroad," described three aspects of this notion plainly:

1. Merchants and bankers recognize the opportunities for pecuniary gain in certainly relatively backward political and economic areas.
2. Their penetration is followed by appeals to the foreign offices of their respective states.
3. These requests lead immediately to military intervention and the political administration of such areas. (1928, x)

It was often popular in European circles to refer to colonial Cuba (before the massive introduction of slaves, railroads, and sugar cane) as "a lemon not worth squeezing" because it lacked the gold and silver of Alto Peru and Mexico. However, Jenks's summation about conditions in the early 20th century indicates a sharp change in opinion about the island. Its proximity to the United States created a strong movement toward annexation in the U.S. Congress and a belief, bolstered by the Monroe Doctrine, that perhaps Cuba really should form part of the Union. American politicians saw Cuba as presenting an opportunity to complete the expansion of the U.S. Atlantic seaboard into the "American Mediterranean" and expel Spain forever from the Western hemisphere (Herring 1960).

In the republican era, strong elements of a market economy and concentrations of a consumer society in Havana and selected provincial capitals manifested U.S. affinity through print and radio advertising, billboards, clothing stores, automobile dealerships, and other venues. Promotion of the island as a safe yet exotic tourist destination (Figures 1.8 and 1.9) in the early 20th century drove a growing steamship industry, with steady traffic between U.S. ports and Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago (Schwartz 1997).

Other representations by or for non-Cubans formed a powerful force in the electronic media of the 20th century. Although the contemporary tourist landscape is explored more fully in Chapter 5, this historical pause may provide useful background for the reader. The Hollywood motion picture industry, Broadway musicals, songs, and other forms of U.S. popular culture played a huge role in disseminating an image of Cuba, arguably very distorted, to a global audience (Table 1.1). These representations included a set of practices through which meanings about the island of Cuba were constituted and communicated. And although the socialist government would embark on a long process of contesting these images and reconstructing new social identities of Cuba and Cubans, the "Cuban sensation" worldwide was deep and enduring. Cuba was different: It had swing and pizzazz; it was sexy and tempting.

During Prohibition in the United States, for instance, Cuba was cast as a forbidden but accessible place, as Irving Berlin made popular in his song "I'll See You in C-U-B-A" (© Copyright 1920 by Irving Berlin; © Copyright Renewed. International Copyright Secured; All Rights Reserved; Reprinted by permission):

Not so far from here
There's a very lively atmosphere
Everybody's going there this year
And there's a reason; the season

FIGURE 1.8. This 1953 guidebook cover has all the trappings of promoting Cuba as a safe yet exotic destination. The man is wearing a (dark midlatitude) suit and hat; the Capitolio building (completed in 1930) stands as a (familiar) replica of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. Perhaps the only difference setting the two cities apart is the appearance of the palm trees and bouquet of flowers that proliferate in tropical climes. From Levi and Heller (2002, 39).

Opened last July
Ever since the U.S.A. went dry
Ev'rybody's going there,
And I'm going too;
I'm on my way to
[Refrain:]
Cuba—That's where I'm going
Cuba—That's where I'll stay

Cuban musician Ernesto Lecuona (1895–1963) was a versatile artist known as a composer, arranger, and bandleader. Exotica lovers sought his music for the rhythms, excitement, romance, and mystery they conveyed. He was a popular crossover artist between Latin and big band musicians of the pre-World War II era. Some called him a "Latin Gershwin," though his

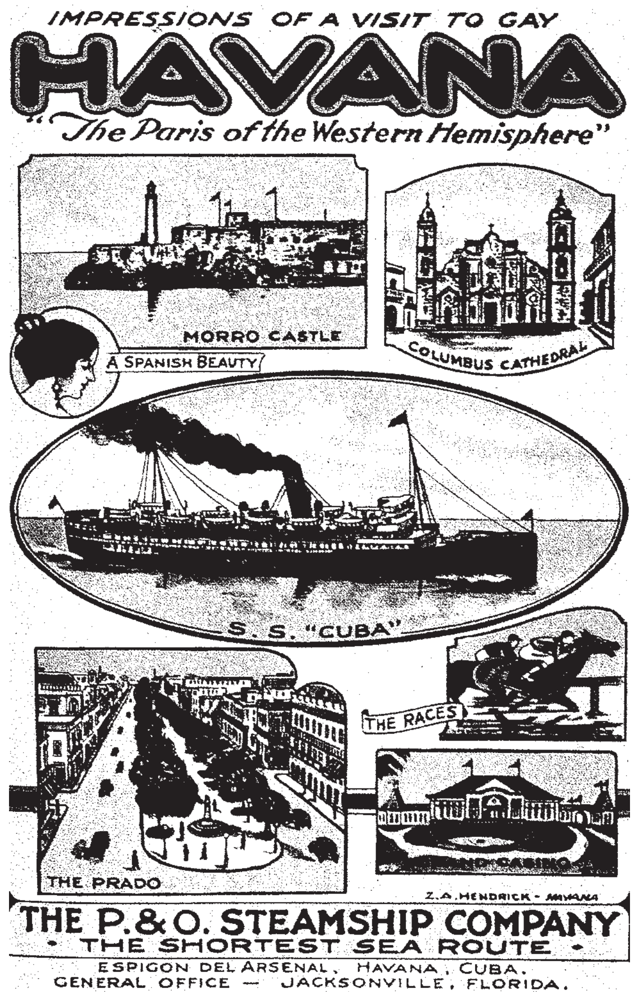


FIGURE 1.9. This 1940 postcard reinforces the safe-but-exotic theme. It promotes "gay" Havana as "The Paris of the Western Hemisphere" and juxtaposes familiar leisure activities such as casino entertainment and horseracing against castles, cathedrals, and European-like promenades (the Prado). From Levi and Heller (2002, 31).

TABLE 1.1. Sampling of Popular Music and Motion Pictures in the United States about Cuba, 20th Century, before the 1959 Revolution

Medium	Title	Year	Authors/actors
Music	"On the Shores of Havana, Far Away"	1898	Paul Dresser
Music	"The Cubanola Glide"	1909	Vincent Bryan and Harry von Tilzer
Music	"There's a Girl in Havana"	1911	E. Ray Goetz and A. Baldwin Sloane
Music	"I'll See You in Cuba"	1919	Irving Berlin
Music	"Cuban Moon"	1920	Joe McKiernan and Norman Spencer
Music	"Siboney"	1929	Ernesto Lecuona; English lyrics by Dolly Morse
Music	"The Cuban Love Song"	1931	Herbert Sothart, Jimmy McHugh, and Dorothy Fields
Music	"Maria My Own (Maria la O)"	1931	Ernesto Lecuona
Music	"El Frutero"	1932	Ernesto Lecuona
Music	"Cuba Cabaret"	1933	Eduard Herpman, Bert Kaplan, and Reggie Childs
Motion picture	*Havana Widows*	1933	Glendal Farrell, Guy Kibbee, Joan Blondell, Lyle Talbot, Allen Jenkins, and Frank McHugh
Music	"Street in Havana"	1935	Don Marzedo
Music	"Cubanita: The Daughter of Mam-inez, Rhumba"	1939	Lew Abrosio, Lew and Dolph Ambrosio, and Juliet Flores
Music	"Little Havana Girl"	1942	Lewis Brown
Motion picture	*Moonlight in Havana*	1942	Allan Jones, Jane Frazee, Marjorie Lord, Don Terry, William Frawley, and Grace and Nicco (dance team)
Motion picture	*Holiday in Havana*	1949	Desi Arnaz and Mary Hatcher
Music	"Cuban Pete"	1952	Desi Arnaz
Music (album)	*La Sonora Matancera*	1955	La Sonora Matancera with Celio González
Music (album)	*Cha Cha Cha*	1955	Monchito and the Mambo Royals
Motion picture	*Ole Cuba!*	1957	Julito Díaz, Tete Machado, and Alicia Ricú
Music (album)	*El Bárbaro del Ritmo*	1958	Beny Moré
Music (album)	*Lecuona Cuban Boys*	1958	Lecuona Cuban Boys

Note. Data from Levi and Heller (2002).

music was exceptional in its own right. Through some 850 compositions, he cultivated a remarkable number of musical forms such as *pasodoble*, waltz, *habanera, bolero*, and *son* (de León 1995). Reflecting his homeland, his hybrid musical form borrowed widely and integrated a variety of genres.

Perhaps no single Hollywood actor and executive did more to bring Cuban music into American households, including that of Ernesto Lecuona, than did Desi Arnaz, born Desiderio Alberto Arnaz y de Acha III in 1917 in Santiago, Cuba. Desi's father was a rich rancher and politician. He owned several farms and served as the mayor of Santiago. However, the 1933 uprising by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista led to the overthrow of the dictatorship of Machado, and young Desi's family assets were seized and his father was imprisoned. Desi and his mother, Dolores, sought exile in Miami, where he worked various jobs until graduating from high school, then working with Xavier Cugat's band. One of his most famous Broadway and cinematic scenes was his famous Conga line, which he performed in theater in 1939 and 1940 in the musical *Too Many Girls*. In his autobiography, *A Book*, Arnaz writes about his struggles in getting American musicians to conform to his Cuban rhythms:

> After that whachamacallit group and I struggled with a few rumbas, they didn't sound like anything. It was a pitiful sound. The boys weren't bad musicians but we had no arrangements, they had never played Latin music, and the instrumentation was all cockeyed for it. . . . And my mind did a flashback to the yearly carnivals in Santiago, when thousands of people in the streets form a conga line, and they go all over the town, singing and dancing for three days and nights to the beat of African conga drums. They also use frying pans, nailed to boards, bottom side up, which they beat with hard sticks, making a sharp ding-ding-ding it-ding it-ding-ding sound, keeping tempo with the conga drum going boom-boom-boom-BOOM. It's a simple beat. You can hear this sound approaching from ten blocks away and it keeps getting louder and louder and more exciting. (1976, 59)

What debuted on the U.S. scene as a conga line in the film *Holiday in Havana* in 1949 would years later become an annual tradition during carnival celebrations throughout the Americas. The three-shuffle step progression, derived from African slaves who were chained together, allegedly brought an ensemble of nearly 120,000 dancers to Little Havana, Miami, on March 13, 1998 (Longest List 2006). Arnaz's successful partnership with Lucille Ball allowed snippets of Cuban culture to be portrayed, such as the conga line in the hit syndicated show *I Love Lucy,* which was launched in October 1951 and reached an unprecedented 44 million U.S. households in 1953—an astounding figure in television's infancy. That series, moreover, lives on in reruns, especially through the syndicated

cable television network TV Land. Arnaz introduced millions of viewers to Latin pop music and the fictitious Tropicana nightclub on television and perhaps planted a seed for future tourists to visit the real Tropicana in the Marianao district of Havana (which has been operating continuously since 1939; see also Pérez 1999).

In addition to Arnaz's music and memories of Cuba, other images of gaiety in the island can be found in songs such as *The Cubanola Glide*: "Way down in Cuba where skies are clear/Where it is summertime all of the year." All of these sparked the tourist's imagination and representation of Cuba, forged both within and outside the Caribbean.

In contemporary socialist Cuba, only the state has the power within the realm of national culture to invoke symbolic values, and naturally its intentions are largely political and represent the ideology of the Cuban leadership and the Cuban Communist Party. The island's relative lack of commercial advertising and limited private enterprise (Peters and Scarpaci 1998) have provided ample opportunity for political slogans and pronouncements to line the walls of factories, schools, and government buildings, as well as the occasional billboard (Figure 1.10), which we explore further in Chapter 6.

Symbolic landscapes dominate contemporary Cuba because the state has replaced the market as the principal source of ideological dissemination. Instead of visual markers about private businesses, shopping centers, and private retail stores, government institutions mostly dominate the

FIGURE 1.10. Political billboard in the countryside that reads "They showed us the road to follow ahead" and consists of colonial (from left, Antonio Maceo, Máximo Gómez, Ignacio Agramonte, and José Martí), Republican-era (a.k.a. neocolonial), as indicated by José Antonio Echeverría, third from right (an anti-Batista student leader who was killed by security forces in 1957), and socialist political figures (Camilo Cienfuegos and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, second and first from right). In a globalized world of mass marketing, the Cuban landscape is conspicuously void of commodity and service advertising.

public realm. These include political billboards, painted murals with slogans, neighborhood vigilante groups (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution), clinics and schools, busts of José Martí (the 19th-century "apostle" of the Cuban Independence Wars), and uniformed police. Within this realm of symbolic landscapes, we identify two manifestations of power that are at once apparent. At one end, we see landscapes of power that include military and security (police) personnel and facilities. At the opposite extreme, there exist "landscapes of despair" that include the most destitute of Cuban society who reside in urban and rural penury and who stand in contrast to the achievements of social equality that the socialist government portends. Within those extremes there are, on a daily basis, scenes of uniformed Cubans such as white-shirted and red-kerchiefed grade schoolers (*pioneros*) (Figure 1.11), militiamen and women (*milicianos*), and others whose symbolic manifestations of the state are readily identifiable.

FIGURE 1.11. Elementary school children, many of whom become *pioneros* when they join the José Martí Union of Pioneers at the age of 7, enter their school in Habana Vieja, 2006. Busing children to school is rare in Cuba, and parents often escort children to and from school. The red jumpers and white blouses (short pants and shirts for boys), as well as their colored kerchiefs are transient but major components of socialist Cuba's vernacular landscape. They symbolize the state's commitment to free and universal education in a country where private education does not exist. However, this commitment comes with a dose of patriotism—some would say "indoctrination." This is evidenced by the school-age saying "*¡Pioneros por el comunismo!*" (Pioneers [young students] for communism!) and "*¡Seremos como el Che!*" (We'll be like Che!).

A PLACE CALLED CUBA

Geographers' concern with the study of place and territory has a long-standing tradition. Cartographers, kings, military architects, and formal decrees often impose boundaries over the surface of the earth, which are later contested, traversed, negotiated, and renegotiated. Borders between nations are examples of "formal regions," such as the divide between Mexico and the United States or between Ecuador and Peru. However, these are artificial lines on land—continental bodies at large—whose physicality is much more subject to negotiation, conflict, and change than that of islands. These formal regions contrast with "functional regions," which are the lived-in spaces identified by a distinct activity or attribute and ignore political divisions.

Cuba's insularity has been a key feature in the nation's political geography. Early maps emphasized ports and bays so that merchants and navigators could access the hundreds of transshipment points for the exportation of sugar and precious woods to the world beyond (Figure 1.12); this feature has led many writers to reflect tragically on "the cursed circumstance of water everywhere" (Mosquera 1999, 23). Although Spain preferred to interpret Cuba's lingering 19th-century status as a sign of the colony's loyalty to the Spanish Crown, Martínez-Fernández (2004) argues that the Spanish American liberators' lack of a navy impeded the ability of Cuba and Puerto Rico to resist Spanish domination. To be sure, the *criollo* elite knew that being a colony meant Spanish protection against possible black uprisings and the continuation of the slave trade. Moreover, a Spanish Cuba was perhaps preferable to an independent Cuba that might align itself with either England or the United States; Cuba and Spain likely formed a tacit agreement on this point. However, insularity was of singular importance when, in about 1820, the liberation of Spanish American colonies, through the efforts of Simón Bolívar and José San Martín, was fought for in land wars throughout Mexico, Central America, and South America. Although Spanish territories, ranging from the Great Salt Lake of Utah all the way to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, had thrown off the yoke of colonialism by Spain, Puerto Rico and Cuba would have to wait until 1898 and the Spanish-American-Cuban War to capture their independence. Even then, true independence and sovereignty were subject to debate; Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States and then a Free Associated State in 1952 (*Estado Libre Asociado*), and Cuba was occupied by the United States from 1898 to 1902. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 would interpret the 1902–1958 era as the "neocolonial" period versus the "republican" period, the traditional label used by others. Louis

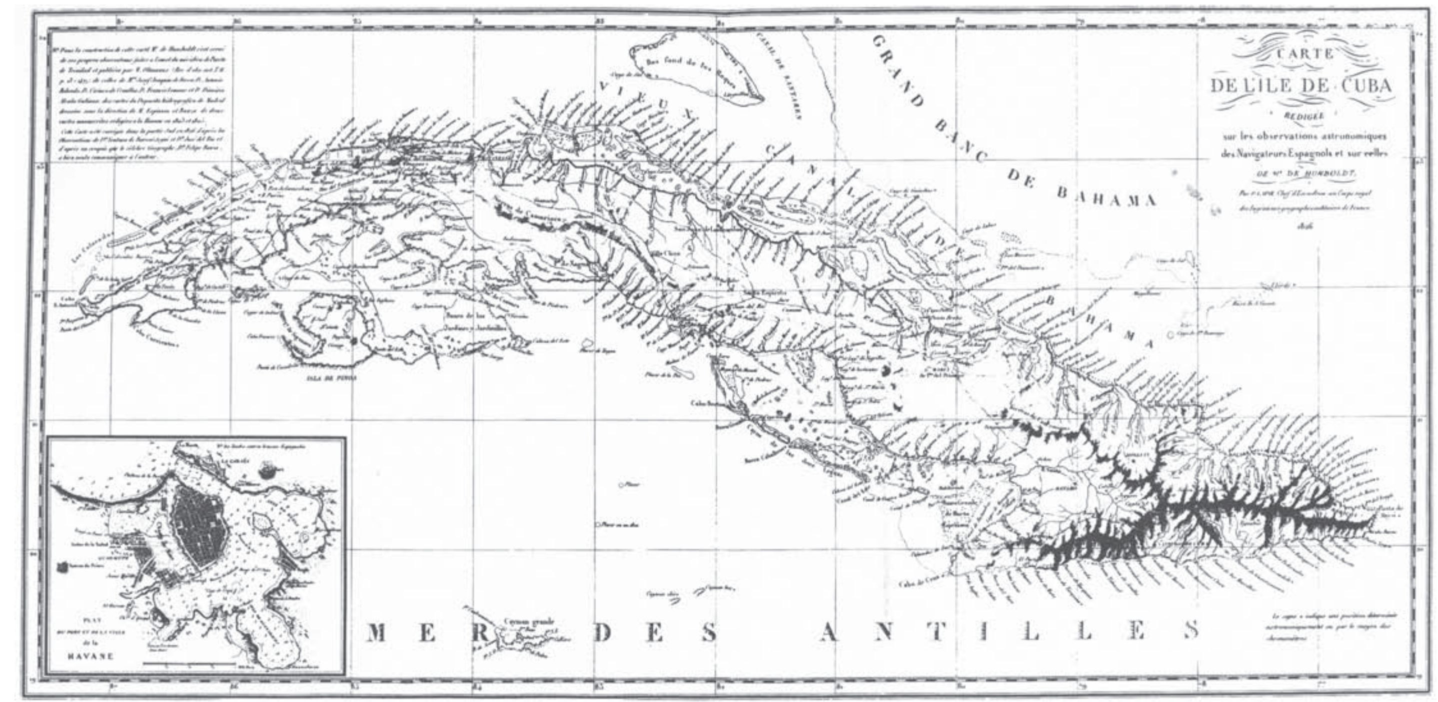


FIGURE 1.12. Map of Cuba, 1814. Almost all of the toponyms identify ports, bays, keys, coves, beaches, capes, peninsulas, estuaries, and other littoral features even though this is not a maritime map. Atlas *Géographique et Physique des Regions Équinoxiales de Noveau Continent*, sheet 23. Librairie Grecque-Latine-Allemande, Paris, 1814. From Humboldt (2001, 2).

A. Pérez (1999) argues that the Revolution was a partial response to the Cubans' dissatisfaction about the way America achieved rampant modernity while Cuba did not. With the island geographically discrete and disconnected, insularity, then, has conditioned Cuba's geopolitical fortunes in undeniable ways.

Insularity also defines the ways in which the island has historically responded to its surroundings, or "relative location," as geographers might describe it. Although its attribute as an island has proven to be a strong allure in developing a tourism industry, neither colonial, republican, nor socialist Cuba has always welcomed insularity. Pirates, corsairs, buccaneers,[2] and European navies lurked offshore in the colonial era. In the republican phase, proximity to the United States might have ensured a steady flow of tourists and investment, but it also established a small part of the island as a corner point in a triad of gambling and prostitution that included Miami and Las Vegas (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002, 77; Schwartz 1997). Proximity to the United States during Prohibition (enacted by the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1917) triggered investment in molasses production and rum running between the island and the southeastern states, at least until the 21st Amendment ended Prohibition in 1933. And the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961 by nearly 1,500 Cubans who were trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) resulted in good measure from Cuba's closeness to the United States. In October of the following year, 1962, the world was brought to the brink of nuclear war as Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy had a showdown about the presence and removal of nuclear weapons on the island. The Cuban Missile Crisis stemmed from Washington's objection to Soviet-supplied missile systems in Cuba. That these missiles could strike targets in many areas of the United States once again underscored the importance of Cuba's relative location and geographical character. Even though its insularity had impeded land invasions by foreign armies, it also made the island vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the Cold War when intercontinental ballistic missiles rendered the 90 miles between the United States and Cuba meaningless.

PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Cuba's shape and surface features derive in large measure from diverse rock formations. They generally appear as folded and overthrusted belts of limestone, marble, schist, tuff, serpentine, granite, and amphibolites. The sedimentary coat forms the relatively ample plains of Pinar del Río,

Havana and Matanzas, Ciego de Avila and the Cauto River valley. It is a generally gentle sequence of limestone and marls whose only deformations correspond with some minor vertical horst and graben ruptures (caused by fault lines or cracks in the crust). With 109,886 square kilometers (42,444 square miles) Cuba remains a small, long, and narrow island comparable in size to the state of Tennessee (42,143 square miles) or the European nation of Bulgaria (42,683 square miles) (see Figure 1.13, a general map for this and later chapters).

Cuba's landscape diversity strikes visitors and specialists alike. A trip from the coast to the inland reveals dry (xerophytic) marine terraces carved in limestone and bored by caves, mangrove wetlands, and boney hills. There are a series of low karstic mountains in just a few miles of cross section. Geology and isolation account for such diversity. The island is part of an intricate folded belt created by the collision zone between the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates, which were formed by a series of orogenic (i.e., mountain building) episodes lasting from the mid-Eocene to the Quaternary period (roughly 1.8 to 15 million years ago).

Two main and neatly distinctive groups can be identified in the island's geology. The first is a complexly folded sedimentary and volcanogenic belt encompassing Early-Middle Jurassic to Late Eocene rocks (about 30 to 200 million years ago) with frequent inclusions of ultramafic and granitic rocks. This ancient folded belt stretches from east to west for most of the island and is partially covered by a thin deformed coat of sedimentary rocks, mostly carbonated and ranging in age from the Oligocene (24 to 33 million years ago) to the present (Iturralde-Vinent 1998). This diverse geological foundation is essential for the development of the rest of the physical geographic components of the landscapes and directly or indirectly determines the characteristics of the relief, soils, runoff, and natural vegetation. It also sets a frame for the cultural shaping of the landscapes.

Cuba's ample plains rise from 0 to 200 meters high (650 feet) and in some cases reach 260 meters (845 feet). Terraces at different heights grade these largely marine or deltaic plains. On the surface, they often show the scars of karstic dissolution. For a predominantly flat island, a small group of elevations rising several hundreds or thousands of feet above the surrounding lands gain immediately the sometimes pretentious category of mountains (Figure 1.13). There are in Cuba four mountainous areas: the Sierra Maestra and Nipe-Baracoa mountains in the east, the Guamuahaya mountains (more often called Escambray) in the center, and the Guaniguanico range in the western end. They rise abruptly from the surrounding plains or the seashore to a top altitude of 1,974 meters (6,476 feet) at the Pico Turquino in the Sierra Maestra; 1,231 meters (4,039 feet) at Pico

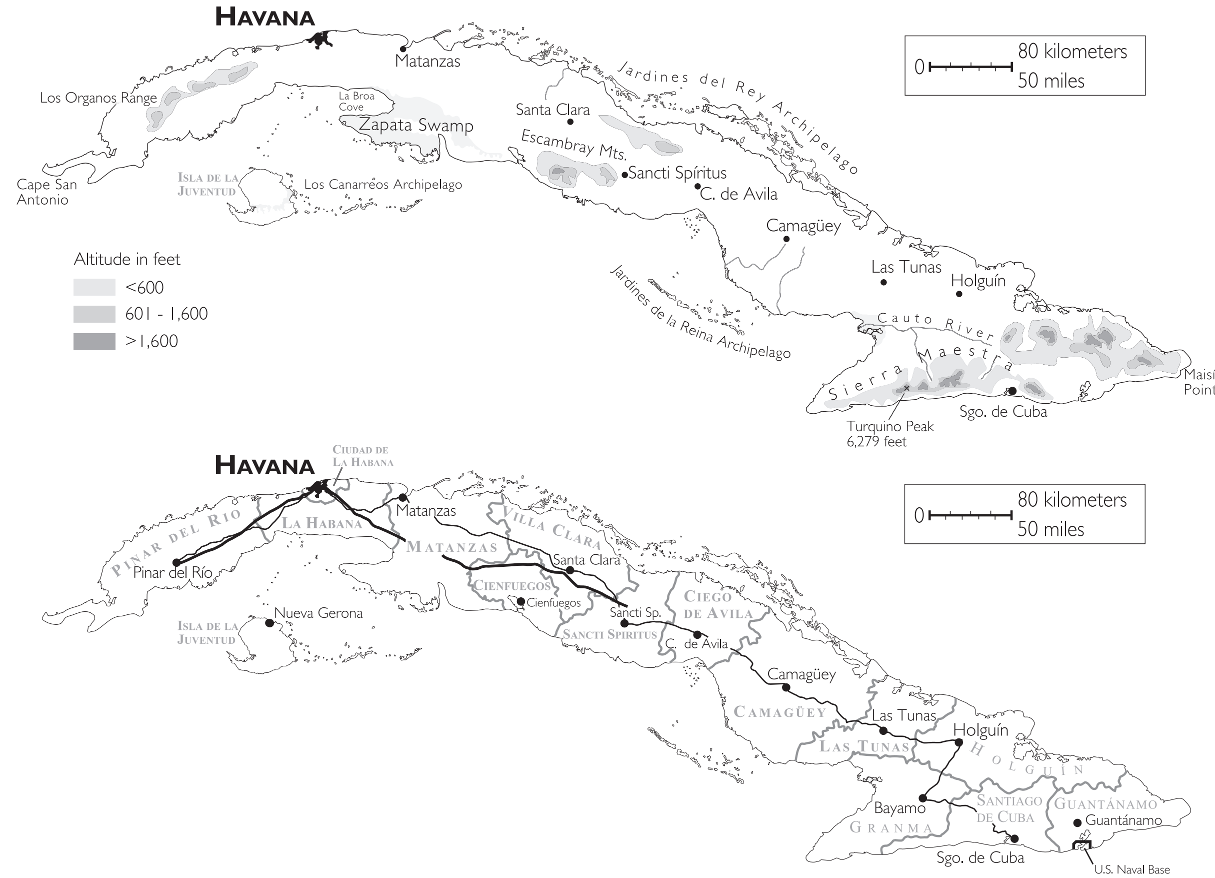


FIGURE 1.13. General political and location map of Cuba.

Cristal in Nipe-Baracoa; 1,140 meters (3,740 feet) in Guamuhaya at Pico San Juan, and 692 meters (2,270 feet) at the Pan de Guajaibón in Guaniguanico.

Cuba lies in a climatic zone characterized by a high hydrothermal balance. The annual average temperature is 25.2°C (77.4°F), and average rains reach 1,375 millimeters (54.1 inches) annually. A wet season, extending from May to October, accounts for roughly 80% of the precipitation, and a dry season, from November to April, includes the rest. Droughts are not uncommon and often inflict serious damage on crops and the economy. However, some years are extraordinarily humid, especially during the hurricane season (June 1 to November 30). Extreme rainfall generally associated with hurricanes can be catastrophic, as evidenced by the deluge that accompanied Hurricane Flora in October 1963; it dropped 1,500 millimeters (59 inches) of precipitation in 3 days and changed the course of some rivers and the shorelines in eastern Cuba.

The rich medley that constitutes Cuba's roughly 7,000 plant species, more than half of them endemic to the island, results from its proximity and one-time connection to North, Central, and South America. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain pines, palms, and hardwoods found in Cuba also exist in Florida, Hispaniola, Mexico, and Central America. It is estimated that about 90% of the island was forested in 1492. However, tree clearing for sugar cane and citrus production, cattle ranching, shipbuilding, and urbanization have today reduced that surface area to just under one-fifth. Nearly 75% of the island is in the form of cleared plains or savannah, just less than one-fifth is confined to mountains, and about 4% is swampland. Other vegetation types include a variety of scrub (upland, rain forest, coastal) and those that are unique to the bedrock found in the limestone outcrops of tobacco-rich Viñales in the western province of Pinar del Río (Figure 1.14).

There are hardy savannah vegetation formations that survive quite well in nutrient-deprived silica soils, as well as drought-resistance (xerophytic) woodlands and scrublands found along the "rain shadow" areas of southern and southeastern Cuba (Figure 1.15). More than 30 species of palm trees have generated more than 20 million palms on the island. One species, the royal palm (*palma real* in Spanish, or *Roystonea regia*—its Latin botanical classification), forms part of the Cuban coat of arms (Barredo 2003, 21–22).

High levels of endemism and biodiversity also characterize Cuba's fauna landscape. The Atlantic coast traffic of migratory birds relies heavily on Cuba for food, water, and rest as the birds island hop from North America to South America. Cuba's abundant wetlands, especially along

FIGURE 1.14. Limestone formations called *mogotes* (haystacks) in the Viñales Valley sprout a unique vegetation cover growing in bare vertical cliffs and on soil where some of the world's finest leaf tobacco is produced.

FIGURE 1.15. Cacti and other drought-resistant plants (xerophytes) thrive in the rain shadow of Cuba's southern coast, along the Caribbean Sea, in Guantánamo Province, and on the lee side of the Nipe-Baracoa mountains.

the north coast, provide ideal habitat for both resident and migratory birds (Figure 1.16). The island is home to more than 13,000 bird, reptile, amphibian, insect, fish, and mollusk species. Barredo (2003) argues that the island's natural landscape is unique because of the number of small animals located there. He cites the froglet (*Eleutheraodactylus limbatus*), dwarf bat (*Nyctiellus lepidus*), and bee hummingbird (*Calypte helenae*, no larger than a grasshopper at just 2 grams) in this diminutive category. Cuban coastal waters contain nearly 900 species of fish, most of which are edible, even though the island remains a net importer of fish (Silva 1997). The vast array of species forming Cuba's natural heritage has, according to Linden (2003, 2), given Cuba "by design or by default" some of the best-kept wildlands in the Caribbean. One explanation for this wildland condition is that Cuba boasts a very low population density, despite a population boom in the 20th century (noted later in this discussion). With just 97 persons per square kilometer, only five other island-nations are less densely settled (Table 1.2).

Soon after the 1959 revolution, the government reconceptualized the relationship between society and nature. The sudden disappearance

FIGURE 1.16. Pink flamingos, a.k.a. Caribbean flamingos (*P. ruber ruber*), Cayo Coco, Ciego de Avila Province, 2004. The island's extensive archipelago with saline lagoons and muddy lakes provides a fine habitat for a variety of fowl.

TABLE 1.2. Range of Caribbean Population Densities in Ascending Order

Country	Rank	Population density (people/km^2)
Anguilla	24	20.9
Bahamas	23	27.8
Turks and Caicos Islands	22	34.9
Dominica	21	88
Virgin Islands, British	20	93.3
Cuba	19	99.6
Montserrat	18	130
Antigua and Barbuda	17	145.5
Cayman Islands	16	146.2
Saint Kitts and Nevis	15	156.1
Dominican Republic	14	165.3
Trinidad and Tobago	13	217.7
Netherlands Antilles	12	221.9
Jamaica	11	243.2
Guadeloupe	10	243.8
Haiti	9	246
Saint Lucia	8	249.2
Grenada	7	282.4
U.S. Virgin Islands	6	338.1
Aruba	5	352.3
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	4	352.9
Martinique	3	384
Puerto Rico	2	430.5
Barbados	1	602.3

Note. Data from International Center for Tropical Agriculture (2003).

of private property, along with the centralization of the economy and the launching of large-scale, compulsive, and often erratic campaigns for the transformation of the countryside, left a lasting imprint on the landscape. This relationship developed after centuries of agriculture had led to intense and widespread erosion. With a diffuse runoff of 5–10 liters/second/square kilometer (Lebedeva 1970), it is not surprising that the upper horizons of soils are gone, especially those lying in slopes of more than 3° inclination. Herrera and Seco (1986) calculated the erosion reaching 21 tons per hectare per year in tobacco fields, and Karasik (1989) estimated the leaching

of 20–100 tons per square kilometer per year in the plains, a figure that can be doubled or tripled in the mountains. One quarter of the island is heavily eroded, meaning that the soil horizons A and B (anywhere from 1 to 3 feet) in the profile have disappeared. More than 68% of the soils devoted to sugar cane suffer from some form of erosion; in tobacco the figure reaches 97% (Karasik 1989).

Deforestation, massive river damming, and soil erosion changed forever the landscape in Cuba. Although it was largely forest covered upon the arrival of the conquistadors in the 16th century, today Cuba is probably 18% forest covered (authorities claim 21–23% coverage, but the veracity of the official estimate is arguable). More than a quarter of the total water resources in Cuba are controlled. Nearly 9 billion cubic meters (2.3 trillion gallons) of water are retained in dams, and underground aquifers are exploited to the limit. Salinization hampers the natural productivity of 15% of the agricultural soils in Cuba (Arcia Rodriguez 1989).

Because of its long history of human impact on the environment, no natural ecosystems remain on the island. All of them have been transformed by human activity, sometimes with devastating consequences, especially in the 20th century, following the expansion of the sugar industry. The demographic boom in the past century (the population soared from 1.5 million in 1899 to nearly 11 million in 2000), along with the agricultural and industrial growth, deeply altered all the ecosystems in the plains and hills, leaving some natural remains in the most intricate mountain ranges, the peripheral keys, and the swamps (Iñiguez-Rojas 1989).

CONCLUSIONS

Landscapes, those eclectic elements that define our everyday existence, can be approached several ways. This introductory chapter has offered glimpses of these cultural geographic interpretations through sampling a smattering of travel logs, diaries, landscape paintings, field notes, music, film, cigar labels, posters, responses to disasters, wildlife ecology, geology, and population data to outline some of their defining features in Cuba. Our approach has been deliberately broad, encouraging the reader to take an equally catholic view of vernacular and symbolic landscapes. The former, we noted, include the lived-in and everyday spaces, and the latter are decidedly imbued with doses of ideology. Such ideological underpinnings are not confined to just the socialist government in power since 1959. Rather, Cuba's broad political epochs—colonial, republican, and socialist—lend themselves to displaying the values and power of those agents

that finance and modify them. Its history of slavery, capitalists' pursuit of sugar profits (and the subsequent rabid deforestation of the island), and socialism's elimination of consumerism have etched their marks on Cuban landscapes. These forces have given a poetic birth to the island's vernacular and symbolic landscapes embody *cubanidad,* and thread out among the wider interests of Cuba's social geography, the foci of the chapters ahead.

NOTES

1. Landsea (2008) claims even more names: "Hurricane derived from 'Hurican,' the Carib god of evil … alternative spellings: foracan, foracane, furacana, furacane, furicane, furicano, haracana, harauncana, haraucane, haroucana, harrycain, hauracane, haurachana, herican, hericane, hericano, herocane, herricao, herycano, heuricane, hiracano, hirecano, hurac[s]n, huracano, hurican, hurleblast, hurlecan, hurlecano, hurlicano, hurrican, hurricano, hyrracano, hyrricano, jimmycane, oraucan, uracan, uracano, and urycan."

2. Though these three terms are often used interchangeably, there are historic distinctions. "Pirates" refers to plunderers who commit violent acts at sea or on shore. "Corsairs" is often used synonymously with "pirates," though the latter are technically from the Barbary Coast (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, derived from the sociocultural term "berber"). Corsairs were also known as Arab slave traders. The term "buccaneer," derived from the French *boucanier* (literally, one who barbecues), is largely associated with pirate raids in the Atlantic and Caribbean, especially in the late 17th century. Buccaneers were also known as naval mercenaries and learned their meat-cooking skills from the Arawak peoples of the Caribbean who smoked meats on wooden barbecue frames called boucans. For a lucid account of these distinctions, see Rogozinski (1999, 34–44).

CHAPTER 2

Humboldt's Landscape

Connecting Then and Now

Alexander von Humboldt's uncanny ability to interpret and synthesize landscapes highlights his work as the engaged Enlightenment scholar-intellectual. Nowhere is that plainer than in his observations in *The Island of Cuba*, written during relatively brief visits to the island in 1800 and 1804. In this seminal work, he casts his classic external gaze upon slavery and the sociopolitical structures of Havana. The book, although delayed until 1826 and not widely disseminated until a controversial 1856 English-language translation from his original French text and subsequent publication (Martínez-Fernández 2001, 4), serves at least four purposes examined in this chapter. First, it was a powerful abolitionist work for denouncing the institution of slavery throughout the West Indies. Slavery left a permanent mark on the landscapes of colonial cities and towns. Second, the book provided fodder for American expansionists who coveted the island's wealth and conceptualized it as a buffer between the United States and the slave rebellions in the Caribbean. Third, the work gives insight into the economic geography of early 19th-century sugar production. Finally, it allows the socialist revolution to draw on Humboldt's works to promote nationalism and advocate its own agenda through myriad discourses.

The Island of Cuba documented both the physical and human landscapes of colonial Cuba. So revealing was the book in denouncing the cruelties of slavery and its living conditions that it provoked Spanish authorities to ban the work on the island. An English translation emerged two decades after the French version (1856). The American expansion-

ist James Thrasher, a merchant living in Havana, translated the original. Regrettably for scholars and the public at that time, Thrasher eliminated Humboldt's chapter on slavery in which the German scholar had vehemently denounced the institution as inhumane, writ large. Such editorial twists were part of a plan to persuade President Polk and Congress to yank Cuba out of the American Mediterranean and place it squarely within the Union. Nevertheless, *The Island of Cuba* captures the character of early 19th-century Cuba and details the conditions of slavery in the West Indies. Humboldt also draws on a variety of disciplines that allow contemporary scholars a context for tracing U.S.–Cuban relations and contemporary Cuban studies.

Fidel Castro issued a bicentennial anniversary edition of Humboldt's original work in 2002. This book serves as a rallying cry for the continued struggle against U.S. hegemony. A museum celebrating Humboldt's research operates in Old Havana and provides an interesting juxtaposition between the contemporary geopolitical situation of Castro's Cuba and the colonial economy of the early 19th century.

This chapter assesses these matters by reviewing Humboldt's descriptions of Havana, slavery, racism, and the production of sugar. In the last section, we comment on the way in which the Cuban revolution has enshrined this seminal publication and its author, a model of the engaged Enlightenment scholar-intellectual. We argue that the Humboldt discourse gives contemporary leaders in Cuba an opportunity to use a different lens in viewing the island's evolution over the past two centuries.

HUMBOLDT: ELITE GERMAN RENAISSANCE MAN AND ABOLITIONIST

Before postmodernism took hold in Anglo-American human geography in the 1980s, one might have easily posited that Alexander von Humboldt was a role model for young geographers and other students of landscape. He was a broadly trained explorer, geographer, natural scientist, archeologist, and geologist. In addition, he spoke English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese. He was, perhaps, "the last great *universal* man and a humanitarian liberal" (Aber 2003, 2; emphasis in original). Alexander von Humboldt was born into an aristocratic family in Berlin in 1769. Much of his childhood was spent at Schloss Tegel, a family estate some 12 miles north of Berlin. His father, Alexander George, was a member of the Prussian noble class and his mother, Marie Elisabeth, belonged to a family of French and Scottish Protestant refugees (Ramos 2003). At Göttingen

University in 1789, he joined his brother in university studies. There he met Georg Forster, who had been with Cook on his second circumnavigation of the world (1772). The two men then traveled to England, a trip that proved to be "a revelation to Humboldt, and after one year in revolutionary France he became a lifelong liberal" (Aber 2003, 2).

His formal training in mineralogy in Freiberg led him to a series of government positions until 1796, when he decided to pursue scholarly travel full-time (Aber 2003; Martínez-Fernández 2001, 4). Humboldt's travels through Cuba in particular, and through Spanish America in general, were extraordinary for several reasons. First, the Spanish king granted him a general license to travel unfettered throughout the empire. This unusual honor meant that the German scientist was detached from the services of any commercial enterprise or European government. In Cuba he was the guest of wealthy planters, who facilitated ample access to many sources of the information that he brought back to Europe upon his return. This generous hospitality may have overwhelmed him and lengthened the lag time between the completion of his draft manuscripts and field notes and the publication of his work.

Although Humboldt is known for his contributions to geology, astronomy, naval sciences, botany, and biology, he also had a keen eye for detailing social conditions in the Americas with uncanny accuracy. A good deal of his work addressed the flora, fauna, and geology of the Orinoco watershed. He and Aimé Bonpland doubled the identification of known species in the New World (Raby 1996, 13). Less is discussed about his brief but important stay in Cuba, yet his contributions are many, particularly his discussions of Havana, slavery and racism in Cuba, and the economic geography of sugar production. This broadly trained scientist, the ultimate geographer and Renaissance man, preceded much of the intellectual and scientific community by decades in his categorical denunciation of the institution of slavery. His writings refer often to the slave revolt and new government that occurred in the adjacent Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in 1791, highlighting this unprecedented first black republic of the modern era. The implication for white societies in the Antilles was that some amelioration and acceleration of manumission (a process for slaves to acquire freedom) was now a serious imperative. By 1820 his writings had come to the attention of the Spanish Crown and the governor of Cuba, and though his works did not lead to a ban on slave trafficking between the Caribbean and Africa (300,000 slaves were imported to Cuba between 1790 and 1820), it heightened focus on this issue (Murray 1980). Regrettably, slavery would persist on the island until 1886. Humboldt's was an enlightened agenda for a European scholar who could have settled for a comfortable life of lecturing and nature travel

(Pratt 2003). His most frequently cited assessment was that Cuba was "an island of sugar and slaves," and these words would cast light on this issue of social justice during the 19th-century Independence Wars and in the European press long after they were written.

HAVANA'S COLONIAL LANDSCAPE

Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland, his travel companion and botanist colleague, first arrived in Cuba on December 19, 1800. Ostensibly, Humboldt's purpose for visiting Cuba was to store specimens[1] he had gathered in Venezuela (Aber 2003). His meetings with the Cuban intelligentsia and leadership of the day, Romay, Espada, and O'Reilly, read like a Who's Who of Cuban history. Most of Humboldt and Bonpland's time was confined to Havana (and nearby Regla and Guanabacoa). They traveled only nine days outside the capital to visit the sugar mills in Güines Valley, Managua, San Antonio de las Vegas, Wajay, and Bejucal (as noted in Chapter 4, the contemporary park that carries Humboldt's name is located in eastern Cuba, hundreds of miles from where he traveled and observed). From peripheral points outside Havana, Humboldt traveled on to the Caribbean port of Batabanó, where he groused about not being able to procure specimens of the *caimán* (alligator) and *cocodrilo* (crocodile). From Batabanó he sailed to the Isle of Pines (today, the Isle of Youth) and Cayo Bonito before reaching Trinidad, his last port of call on the island. On March 15, 1801, he sailed off to Cartagena, Colombia, where his South American research would consume most of his professional writing and research in the New World.

Humboldt's demographic estimates separated whites from blacks and distinguished between free and enslaved blacks, a common census-taking protocol for that era. He wrote that the Cuban capital had 96,000 residents, of which 29,000 were slaves and 26,000 were free colored (2001, 82). The size of Havana's population in the first decade of the 19th century was the same as that of New York, the largest U.S. city at the time (2001, 83). However, by 1825, New York City's population had climbed to about 140,000.[2]

Havana was, at first glance, appealing to the German for both its natural beauty and vibrant industries. Although it lacked the lush vegetation of the port of Guayaquil or, as discovered in his reading, the rocky grandeur of Río de Janeiro, he described Havana Bay as "one of the most picturesque and pleasing bays on the equinoctial shores" (Humboldt 2001, 78). Another translation notes Humboldt's words as "one of the gayest and most picturesque on the shores of equinoctial America, north of the Ecua-

dor" (Humboldt and Bonpland 1849, 156). He was impressed with the synchronization of the lumber industry with shipbuilding, building construction, and street paving. The generous supply of data given to him by the island's wealthy allowed him to calculate that between 1724 and 1796 Havana's shipyards had constructed 114 ships that wielded 4,902 canons. Humboldt remarked that Cuba's hardwoods (mahogany and cedar) were much harder than European timber (2001, 85–90). Steamers and machine shops, as well as all manner of innovations that reflected advances brought on by the industrial revolution, were kept in Cadiz (2001, 89). Since the collapse of the Haitian economy after the slave rebellion, "the port of Havana [had] risen to a first-class mart in the commercial world" (2001, 77).

Despite its vibrant port activity, pockets of pristine nature were observed. Witness, for instance, the description of the back bay neighborhood of Atarés: "Atares . . . containing several springs of fresh water" (Humboldt 2001, 79). Today, remnants of a garbage dump are found there and because it is the backwater section, the waters around Atarés retain a high amount of concentrated raw sewage and petrochemical wastes from the nearby refineries (Scarpaci et al. 2002, 181). Because Havana Bay requires nine days to replenish itself, industrial waste is "naturally" cleansed at a slow pace (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000).

Havana's public streets were unusual for the Americas, observed Humboldt. Because building stone was shipped in from Mexico via Veracruz, it was a costly road building material.[3] He was struck by the governor's mandate that mahogany tree trunks be set in the ruts of roads (as was done in Germany and Russia). Remnants of these trunks were still visible in the streets of Havana. However, this method was abandoned inasmuch as it proved to be costly as well (Humboldt 2001, 79). (It is noteworthy that no virgin stands of mahogany remain in Cuba today.) Deforestation was fast approaching two centuries ago: "Civilization advances with rapid pace, but [little] remains of [the royal palm and bamboo] former wild abundance" (2001, 81).

Carriages (*volantes*) filled the streets, and their drivers were described by the German as "rude." This made walking through Havana both "vexatious and humiliating" (Humboldt 2001, 79), which was exacerbated by poorly ventilated houses and inhospitable streets (2001, 79–80). He believed there was a need for police in the streets and lamented that people often walked in them with mud up to their knees. Old Havana was especially congested. He described the walled city as roughly 3,000 yards long by 1,000 yards at its greatest width, within which 44,000 people were jammed (2001, 81). Significantly, that is the same population size that

planners claim Old Havana should have today (Scarpaci et al. 2002, 328–331). More than half of this population (26,000) was black or mulatto, most of whom worked as slaves.

Humboldt anticipated late 19th-century suburbanization, although its original impetus derived from public health and military concerns. When yellow fever outbreaks occurred, those who could afford to often retired to their country houses in the hills between Regla and Guanabacoa (2001, 81). The Spanish engineers had complained that the suburbs in the *extramuros* (areas outside the walled city) were too close to the fortifications and should be eradicated (for fear that an enemy would hold the residents hostage). This foreign observer lamented that no one showed the firmness to eradicate the houses (Humboldt 2001, 81).

RACE AND SLAVERY IN THE EXPANSIONIST DEBATE

Humboldt's adamant posture on abolition derived from a complex set of enlightened (for his time) values, his German schooling, and the citations of Bartolomé de las Casas. It is in Chapter 6 of his book, "Slavery," that his treatment of the negro in Cuba deepens. Ever concerned with population estimates, Humboldt posited that 2.8 million slaves toiled in the Caribbean islands, mostly in Cuba, Hispaniola, and Jamaica, at the time of his visit (2001, 76). He was alarmed by the low wages paid to the "free slaves." An African slave in Havana earned only 52–60¢ a day (2001, 189).[4]

Humboldt believed that manumission was much more common in Cuba than in any of the French or British islands (2001, 121). Little did he know that another 86 years would pass before Cuba would abolish slavery, which he characterized like this:

> What a sorrowful spectacle is presented by Christian and civilized nations disputing whether England (Jamaica) or Spain (Cuba), in three centuries, has destroyed the least number of Africans, by reducing them to slavery! (2001, 142)

Alexander von Humboldt was shocked to hear masters speak with the "greatest coolness" about whether it was better to get slaves and work them as hard as possible for a few years to get as much as possible out of him, or to treat them gently so as to extend their lives. Alarming too were the discussions about whether it was worth using women to care for male slaves over a longer period or not to work them so hard (2001, 143).

Humboldt's observations on the economic geography of slavery highlighted the vast differences in experience between an enslaved carriage driver in Havana and a slave on a coffee plantation (Figure 2.1). He decried "wily writers [who have] tried in vain to mask the barbarism of this situation with deceptive language. They invent terms such as *Negro peasants of the Antilles, black vassalage*, and *patriarchal protection*" (2001, 255; emphasis in original). He captured a historical geographical dimension that few observers have matched:

> A measure of the hierarchy of human deprivation can be seen in the threats leveled against disobedient blacks. The *calesero* [coachman] is threatened with *cafetal* [coffee planting], the slave working in the *cafetal* fears transfer to sugar planting. In this latter situation, the Negro who is married and lives in a separate hut and, with all the characteristic tendencies of Africans, finds comfort in the lap of his family at the end of his workday, has an immeasurably better lot than the isolated slave who gets lost in the crowd. This disparity of situation is altogether unfamiliar to anyone who has not personally seen the Antilles. Progressive improvements in the circumstances of the slave caste on

FIGURE 2.1. *Los negros esclavos*. From *Revista Bimestre de Cuba*, 1916.

> the island of Cuba make it comprehensible how the luxury of the masters and the opportunity of earning a living wage could lure more than 80,000 slaves to the cities and how the emancipation that was favored by judicious laws turned out to be so effective that, in the current epoch alone, over 130,000 freed colored people live there.... Philanthropy is not a matter of meting out "a little more dried cod and somewhat fewer thrashings"; genuine improvement of the servant class must extend to all physical and moral facets of the people involved. (2001, 256–257)

Much of Chapter VI, "The Political Essay of Cuba," in *The Island of Cuba* is written with a detached style as Humboldt aims to describe the human condition of slavery: "It would be unjust to deny that the mortality of blacks in Cuba has greatly diminished ... within the past fifteen years" (2001, 143). He also recognizes the variety of living conditions among the slaves. "The slave who has a cabin and a family, is not so unhappy as he who is folded as if he were one of a flock of sheep" (2001, 143). And, finally, "In the hot months, the mortality *during the sale* is sometimes four percent, as was the case in 1802" (2001, 143; emphasis in original).

These denouncements of the inhumane living conditions of Africans in Cuba were what the American, Thrasher, did not want the U.S. public to read. Thrasher used his racism and ethnocentrism to demonize the Chinese, calling them the "lowest of the low." Fears of the Africanization of the island as evidenced by the Haitian slave revolt of 1791 as well as the perils of miscegenation (*mestizaje*) permeated Thrasher's writings. The American confederate (he called the southern states the Pacific States) contended that the intermixing of black slaves and Chinese brought "neither host principles nor good morals" (Humboldt 2001, 145). New Englanders, Thrasher argued, feared that the black states of the south and the Caribbean divided just below the Florida Keys posed a threat to the rest of the Union. "Therefore, [New Englanders] do not wish to cross the Straits of Florida, the boundary of the great American confederacy, except for the purpose of free commerce" (Humboldt 2001, 76).

Fearmongering was inflamed through claims about the "Africanization" of the Caribbean. That prevailing discourse justified the continuation of slavery. However, it stood in opposition to Humboldt's pleas for social justice. At the end of Chapter X, Humboldt argued that the population of Cuba could reach a million within 50 years and that coffee and sugar production would not require a slave population to expand. In addition, abolition would produce "an intelligent and free agricultural people [that] would succeed a slave population that is without foresight or industry" (2001, 187). Humboldt's careful description of social structure led his-

torian Luís Martínez-Fernández (Figure 2.2) to recreate a 19th-century social hierarchy of power and control by class, race, and slave status.

Thrasher, though, appended an editorial note in his translation of Humboldt's writings in French, stating that the naturalist's "social theory" was in error inasmuch as his predicted outcome did not happen, as based on the "sad experience" of Jamaica (Thrasher, noted in Humboldt 2001, 187). Thrasher claimed that the population of former slaves increased in Jamaica after abolition and that a "semi-intelligent" group of black slaves was "retrograding toward barbarism" (Thrasher, noted in Humboldt 2001, 180). Jamaica's moral decay in a postslavery society was also evidenced by the decline in the status of women, the fleeing of pastors from the island, the closing of churches, the physical deterioration of schools, and the poor maintenance of churches on the island (Humboldt 2001, 180). Thrasher's powerful images of racism conditioned the way Humboldt's essay was received in the mid-19th century.

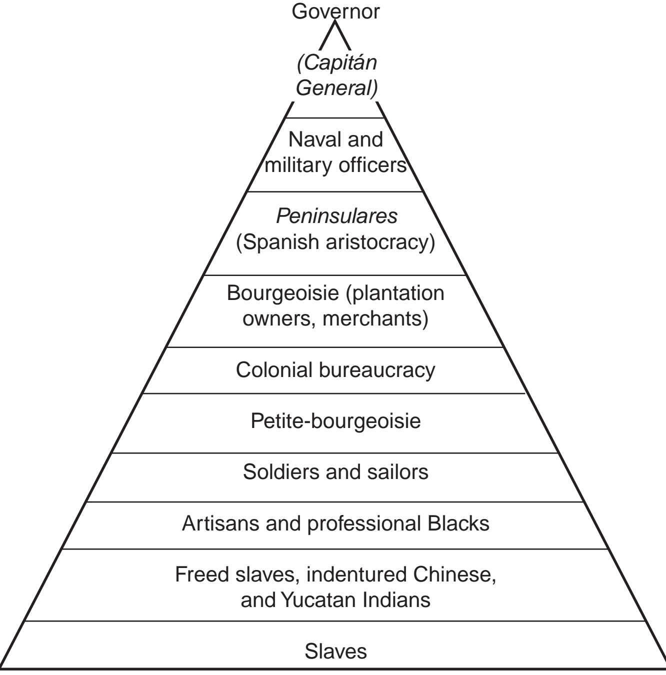


FIGURE 2.2. Cuban social pyramid, 1800–1868. Data from Martínez-Fernández (2004).

Despite the countervailing arguments of Thrasher for a more racially unjust island, Humboldt's contribution to race and social justice has prevailed. Ottmar Ette (2003) goes so far as to claim that Humboldt set the stage for a global consciousness (*Weltbewubsein*) that links ethics in the natural sciences and the humanities, in much the same way that the force of Gaia has been used in geography. To be sure, Humboldt attacked slavery from a variety of fronts: humanitarian, economic, and political. In doing so, he was able to garner support among *peninsular* reformists in the mother country as well as among Spanish American progressives (Naranjo 2003).

THE EARLY SUGAR LANDSCAPE

Humboldt had a great sense of spatial relations and drew on comparisons in the natural and social realms to make his point. In the preface to *Equinoctial Regions of America*, he stated that one of his goals was to examine "the quantity of colonial produce necessary to Europe" (1851, xvi–xvii). Subsequent Victorian travelers found his contributions to place description, science, and trade patterns useful to nonacademics, especially investors, bankers, and traders. Barby (1996, 45) argues that the word "commerce" was never used in the discussions of faraway places in Africa, Asia, or the Americas; such fiduciary matters were considered crass and inappropriate in European circles. Nonetheless, the data proved helpful for targeting investments and spotlighting overseas adventures.

Cuba's networks of sugar mills around Havana connected well to the port. The use of bagasse, molasses, brown sugar, and processed sugar formed part of a well-integrated marketing system. Driving that system, argued Humboldt, was slave labor, and he could never decouple sugar production from the human tragedy that drove it.

The German naturalist also argued that Cuba's geographic and political importance to Spain stemmed from the "geographic position of the city and port of Havana" (Humboldt 2001, 75). He also wrote "that Havana and Veracruz are to the rest of America what New York is to the United States" (2001, 180). Closer economic ties between the United States and Cuba were a possibility if tariff regulations could be balanced. For example, in 1852 U.S. flour had an "impost" (tax) of U.S. $7 per barrel and therefore represented only a small portion of the flour reaching Cuba. Yet Spanish flour from Santander could not compete with the quality of the U.S. flour (2001, 188), a situation that is repeated with the sale of U.S. flour in Cuba in 2009 after more than four decades of a trade embargo.[5]

International restrictions on Cuba imposed by third-party nations prevail throughout the island's history. Whether the result of Spain's will in the colonial era or the U.S. trade embargo over more than four decades, Cuba has been at a disadvantage in the realm of international commerce. Humboldt wrote about the important role of contraband in relations between Mexico and Cuba in the early 19th century.[6] Another historic parallel is that Mexico paid all of colonial Cuba's administrative costs (2001, 76), not unlike the Soviet Union's underwriting from the 1960s to late 1980s.

Humboldt did not decouple slavery from sugar production. He realized that the free labor input sustained the colonial economy, but was willing to denounce that wealth even though his many hosts in Cuba extracted their wealth from slave-produced sugar and molasses. Humboldt countered the fear about African uprisings and the Africanization of the world with the premise of manumission: Free and educated slaves would pose no threat to the Western world. That education and liberation were desirable goals of government is a theme that would echo on the island a century and a half later.

HUMBOLDT IN THE SOCIALIST ERA

Humboldt has been virtually canonized in contemporary Cuba. The German naturalist is honored today in Cuba by a national park named after him, as well as a museum. The park, 700 square kilometers, is located at the eastern end of the island in the provinces of Holguín and Guantánamo (Soroa and Merencio 2003). At the other end of the island, the Havana City Historian's Office opened a museum in the 1990s that is dedicated to the contributions that Humboldt made. Fernando Ortíz (1881–1969); he is considered the island's third discoverer, and the government eulogizes him for both his contributions to the natural sciences as well as his staunch antislavery platform. As is common in the socialist appropriation of property and land uses, the museum is housed in a former elite residence (owned by the Recio family in the 19th century); the symbolism of taking from the rich and sharing with the general public is a key feature of the island's curatorial expositions. One of the museum's exhibits depicts drawings of the harsh conditions of slavery juxtaposed with excerpts of Humboldt's writings, insects and plants that he collected, and the desk of Fernando Ortíz. It is a main attraction for foreign tourists, especially Europeans. The museum is the highest praised of Germany or German citizens anywhere on the island. Like the 19th-century figures of the Span-

ish priest Felix Varela and a plethora of Independence War figures (Calixto García, Antonio Maceo), Humboldt is cast as a foreigner and friend of Cuba whose ideals, commitment to social justice, and principles transcend time and place. One exhibit compares the life of the negro during slavery with lists of celebrated black Cuban politicians, sports figures, artists, writers, and other accomplished Afro-Cubans.[7] A few blocks away, in the Revolution Museum, numerous exhibits illustrate the deplorable conditions of blacks in Cuba during the Batista dictatorship (1952–1958).

The economic conditions and social pyramid of contemporary Cuba would be nearly unrecognizable to Humboldt. Sovereign Cuba no longer relies on sugar, and the saying "sugar is king" holds little meaning on the island today. Half of the island's 140 sugar mills have closed in the past few years. Blacks and mixed-blooded Cubans (mulattos) form the majority of Cubans, and slavery was abolished more than 120 years ago. However, as in Humboldt's era, monoculture and a complicated international sugar market full of market distortions (Soviet subsidy for 30 years) and political imperatives (the U.S. trade embargo) still condition the island's economic well-being. This historic legacy remains part of Cuba's new political discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

Alexander von Humboldt's intrepidity is most widely recognized in the natural sciences. His field research in the Spanish New World Empire helped erase the ignorance surrounding this vast expanse of *terra incognita*. Although most of his research aimed to discover the unity of the natural landscape, his humanism and social empathy were also powerful. Humboldt was not only a great naturalist and student of the physical landscape, but he was also committed to social justice and abolition in describing the island's myriad landscapes. Whether his "social-science" bent derived from the impact of the French Revolution on him, his diverse schooling and travel in Europe, or some combination of these forces is a matter of speculation. Not long before his death, he wrote of his contributions: "I have never been able to hoodwink myself as I have always been surrounded by people who were superior to me" (Kellner 1963, 233). His humility and keen observation of the human condition connect him with the Cuba of today as well it did with the island 200 years ago.

Cuba's second discoverer serves the socialist government as a historical and cultural symbol that links the 19th and 21st centuries in three key ways. First, Humboldt will live on through a museum in Havana and a

national park named for him (see Chapter 4), located far from where he traveled. Second, his ideas of social justice and human dignity echo socialist and progressive chords. He set the stage for this and related studies about Cuba's political and economic issues that form the cornerstone of Cuban studies as an intellectual field of social-science inquiry. Third, the socialist government promotes a color-blind society and has coupled that value with casting off the yoke of United States imperialism. We revisit this theme in detail in the discussion of information and political landscapes in Chapter 6.

NOTES

1. According to Thomas (1960, 131–132), the specimens never made it to Cadiz, although they left the port of Havana while Humboldt was there: "Somewhere at the bottom of the sea between Africa and America lie the ship and, buried in it, all the butterflies, the plants, the minerals—and the bones of the Atoribe skeletons."

2. Many of the statistics were updated between 1804 and the time of subsequent publications.

3. Ship ballast was also a source of street paving material.

4. Although the currency and purchasing power are different, it is curious that such a daily wage is not much less than the amount a state worker earns today.

5. The popularity of the plump chickens occasionally finding their way into the current rationed food diet today is an interesting parallel; the Cubans immediately notice the differences between the *pollos yuma* (American chickens) and the locally raised ones.

6. Its dealing in contraband in the early 1800s is not unlike Cuba's continued strategic role as a go-between for drug runners between South America and the lucrative U.S. market. As proof, the eastern edge of the island, Punto Maisí, is off-limits to tourists (and other foreigners) inasmuch as cigarette boats pass through the area to pick up bales of drugs dropped from aircraft. In turn, those drugs are conveyed northwesterly along the Bahaman chain of islands and into the United States. Rosalie Schwartz's study of pirates and buccaneers covers this topic well. See Schwartz (1989).

7. On December 9, 2003, one of us (J. L. S.) witnessed a local elementary school class taking a tour of the museum. The instructor gathered the students into the exhibit hall seating area and imparted what seemed to be an impromptu lecture about Humboldt's antislavery stance. It seemed significant, that the teacher and all but two of the nineteen students were Afro-Cuban. The author observed a similar event in the same museum on April 17, 2008, but this time with a Cuban tour guide and group of Brazilian tourists.

CHAPTER 3

Sugar[1]

Cuba's geographical setting in the subtropics, access to the large United States market, and dependence on African slaves gave sugar cane production on the island an unprecedented advantage. No single human-environmental action has modified Cuba's landscape as much as sugar production. The history of sugar production, however, developed unevenly over four centuries. Plantations spread quickly in the 18th century, especially after the Haitian slave revolt. Planters and slave traffickers in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) and French Louisiana found a safe haven in Cuba. It was not hyperbole in Cuba to claim for well over two centuries (1792–1992) that "sugar is king." This agricultural system began as simple sugar mills (*ingenios*) and evolved into modern facilities (*centrales*). In the process, planters felled virgin forests and disturbed complex ecosystems. Today, sugar does not reign supreme. In fact, it eventually cost the Cuban government nearly three times as much to produce a pound of sugar as it earned on the world market (Peters 2003). As a result, more than half the island's 156 sugar mills had closed by 2006.

This chapter explores sugar production as a major agent of landscape change. It does so by employing a historical-geographic assessment. We begin with the rise of sugar plantations and cultivated fields around Havana and in parts of central and eastern Cuba, and then trace their diffusion. We use a series of maps to show how rail lines expanded the cultivation of sugar cane. Next, we examine four stages of sugar production in the post-1959 era: (1) nationalization of mills, production, and distribution; (2) Cuba's membership in the Soviet trading bloc, the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance (CMEA); (3) the demise of the Soviet Union and its subsidized markets; and (4) the dismantling of the sugar industry.

We conclude with an assessment of how these historical periods have changed the natural and cultural landscapes of the island. Centuries of infrastructural developments in roads, factories, telecommunications, rail lines and port facilities have left an ineffaceable mark on the island's industrial and rural infrastructure. Mill closings in the early 2000s, though, seemed to offer modest respite in reviving the economy. These actions included switching over to molasses production and establishing industrial museums for heritage tourism. The state's challenges in handling massive un- and underemployment, as well as retraining its labor force, are seemingly daunting. A recent spike in the market for ethanol in 2006–2008 may provide a key impetus for reviving the sugar landscape. As one analyst notes: "Cuba is more and more venturing out into the capitalist-dominated, fast-growing alternative energy fields to develop new possibilities for its perennially straitened economy" (Council on Hemispheric Affairs 2006).

ESTABLISHING CUBA'S SUGAR LANDSCAPE

Ever since Columbus carried sugar cane to Cuba on his second voyage, the plant has been commonplace in the gently rolling plains of the island. So widespread is this Old World crop, which is the principal contributing species to cane cultivation (*Saccharum officinarum,* also called "noble cane" or "cultivated sugar cane") that it has been called the "grass of Cuba." Yet Cuba's ascent and recent decline in sugar production have been tied to world demand. Sugar became a luxury product in 17th-century Europe. Only when production levels in the West Indies and Brazil grew did sugar enter into common use by the masses in both the Old and New Worlds. Increases in sugar production lowered prices worldwide. Cuba benefited greatly as industrialization incorporated sugar as the primary sweetener for processed foods and beverages. Even Cubans had high consumption levels as recently as the 1990s (greater than 80 kilograms per capita), though by the new millennium levels had dipped to about 60 kilograms per capita (Kiple and Ornelas 2000).

Sugar in Cuba flourishes in the red clay Matanzas soils, which reach a depth of 8 meters or more. Such permeable and fine-grained bodies possess a clay content between 75 and 90%. High-clay soils can naturally absorb large quantities of water, which is essential for cultivation, even after heavy tropical rains. Matanzas soils cluster along the middle of the

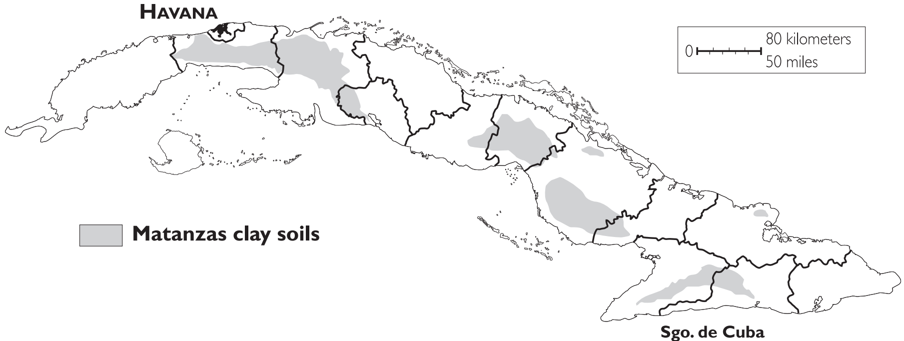


FIGURE 3.1. Distribution of Matanzas soils.

island and stretch from Artemisa in Pinar del Río to Ciego de Avila (Figure 3.1). Rarely is cane produced in places greater than 304 meters or so (about 1,000 feet) above sea level, and the crop has prevailed in areas less than 91 meters (300 feet) in elevation. Even though railroad expansion in the 20th century propelled cultivation eastward (into Camagüey and eastern provinces with poorer soil conditions), Cuba's richest sugar-growing areas have always done well where high-clay soils abound (West and Augelli 1966, 115).

Sugar and Population

Cuba's population growth and racial composition have been closely tied to the island's plantation agriculture. We can trace a high association between the elimination of certain infectious diseases (malaria and yellow fever) and political disturbances on the island and in nearby islands. For example, the barbaric introduction of 65,000 African slaves to work on the small *trapiche*-type (stone-roller cane mill) sugar industry characterized the pre-plantation period. Neighboring Haiti's slave rebellion in 1791 released waves of French sugar growers to Cuba and drove the demand for more slaves (about one million). Political instability and warfare during the Wars of Independence (roughly 1868–1898), along with the abolition of slavery (1886-87), led to a leveling off in population growth. Cuba's quadruple population rise between 1899 and 1959 was spurred by the advent of free black laborers from Haiti (190,000 between 1902 and 1932) and Jamaica (121,000 during the same period), as well as European immigrants (who did work as sugar laborers) (West and Augelli 1966, 122–124). A ruinous collapse of the sugar market in 1921, coupled with a xenophobic move-

ment to "keep Cuba white," severed black West Indian migration to Cuba. Geographers Robert West and John Augelli described the demographic and economic relationship (before the provincial reorganization of 1976) like this:

> The correlation between population growth and sugar production has been all but absolute in the history of Cuba. Not only has the total number of inhabitants risen in almost direct proportion to sugar output, but also the greatest population increases have taken place precisely in the provinces of rising cane production. For example in 1911, the eastern provinces of Oriente, Camagüey, and Las Villas contained 52 per cent of the total population and accounted for 60 per cent of the island's sugar output; in recent years [1950s] the percentage of population and sugar production in these same provinces has risen to roughly 60 and 75, respectively. The correlation is even more striking when one considers the fact that the three western provinces (Pinar del Río, La Habana, and Matanzas) include the huge concentration of metropolitan Havana. (1966, 123)

Precursors to Sugar as a Landscape Modifier

In considering how sugar came to dominate Cuba in the 19th century, it is important to identify the processes of landscape modification that preceded the planting of this cultivar. Felling trees for agriculture and cattle ranching began well before sugar plantations took hold in Cuba. Precious woods, especially termite-resistant and sturdy species, supplied the Spanish palaces of Havana and the royal fleet. The local *guayacán* tree (*Guaiacum sanctum* or Hollywood lignum vitae, and *Guaiacum officinalis* or common lignum vitae), used today for wooden percussion instruments and sculptures, was especially abundant in riparian, coastal, and mountain settings where limestone-derived soils prevail. Its high resin content (up to 26%) makes it scratch-, insect-, and water-resistant. Although it is difficult to nail, its natural attributes made it quite useful for shipbuilding, especially as part of the pillow block used in making wooden ship propellers. Today, though, it is relatively scarce (Fors 1956, 62). A number of colonial buildings—particularly the Convento de Santa Clara in Habana Vieja (Figure 3.2) reveal very similar construction techniques for both roofs and ship hulls (*Urban Design and Planning in Havana, Cuba* 2002). Road building, especially around the capital, consumed vast forest resources. Given that road stone was often shipped in from Mexico, that source proved to be too costly for highway construction. Cuba's endowment of limestone and other softer sedimentary rocks was fine for building construction but less suited for road projects. As noted in Chapter 2,

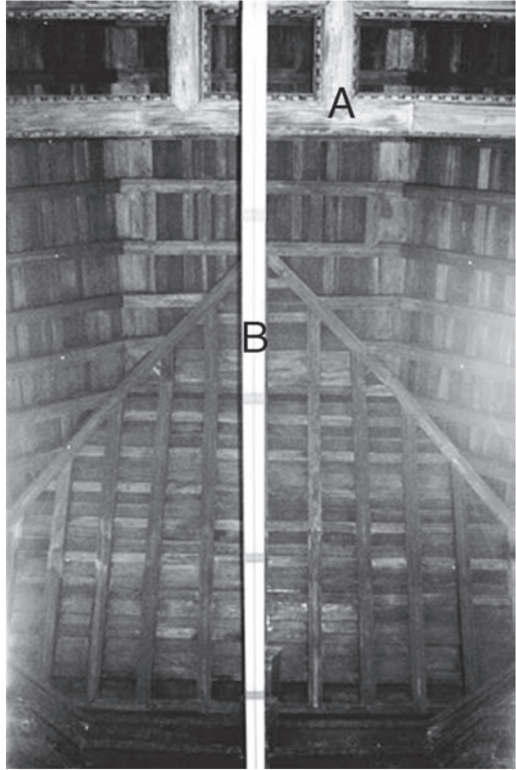


FIGURE 3.2. Ceiling of the Convento de Santa Clara chapel, Habana Vieja, 2007. Looking upward at the ceiling, A indicates the decorative cross-bracing used for support; B is the dual track of fluorescent lights hanging from the ceiling. The concave form of the ceiling reflects the similar design of ship hulls built during the colonial era. Building construction trades and shipbuilders often worked in tandem in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Alexander von Humboldt observed the use of mahogany tree trunk inserts in the ruts of roads so that carriages could pass through Havana's muddy streets during the rainy season (2001, 7). Humboldt remarked that using tree trunks in roads was also a rudimentary yet common practice in late 18th-century Germany and Russia.

Spain's monopoly over trade with the island and its strict control over what ships could dock at Cuban ports contributed to the island's lagging behind other Antillean colonies by at least two centuries. Only in the late 18th and early 19th centuries did sugar production and maritime commerce increase significantly. There were monumental chapters in the Carib-

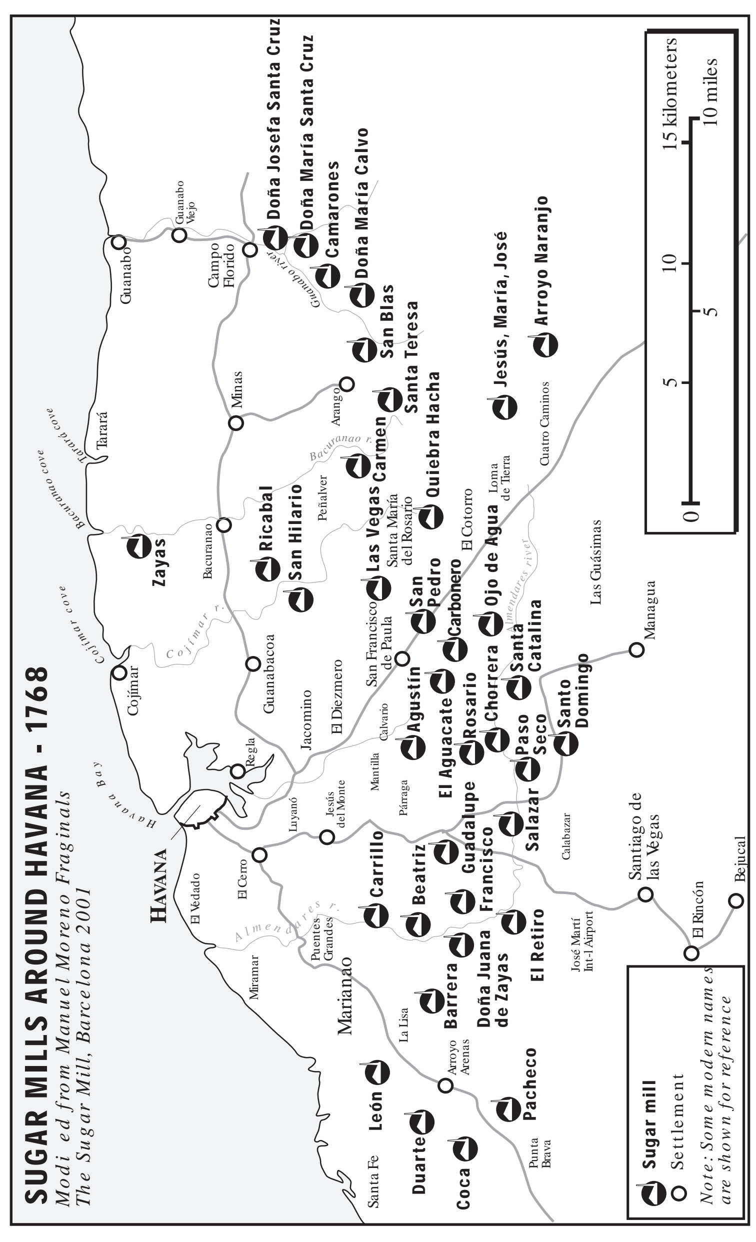
bean's environmental history. Richardson (1992, 28–34) calls the spread of sugar production throughout the Caribbean as "the great clearing," and Moreno Fraginals (1976) describes the process in Cuba as "the death of the forest." Although the need to fell trees in Cuba was certainly no exception in the Caribbean, deforestation had already begun before widespread sugar cane planting because of the demand for the island's precious woods. Sturdy and termite-resistant hardwoods served in building the Spanish fleet as well as in road and building construction, especially in the areas surrounding Havana because of the shipbuilding industry in Havana Bay. Moreno Fraginals (1976, 76–77) describes Cuban forest clearings:

> Sugar exterminated the forests. Deaf and blind to history, focusing on the present, the sugarocracy [a term he coined by combining "sugar" with "aristocracy"] destroyed in years what only centuries could replace—and at the same time destroyed much of the island's fertility by soil erosion and the drying-up of thousands of streams.

By 1768 about three dozen sugar mills ringed Havana within a 5- to 15-mile radius (Figure 3.3). Traditional mills (*ingenios*) relied heavily on slave labor to harvest and transport the cane and to turn the grinding stone (*trapiche*) for extracting and then boiling the juice (Knight 1970). Proximity to ports for exporting processed sugar determined the location of these *ingenios*. Accordingly, most sugar production clustered in the shallow valleys and plains that flanked the ports in the western provinces (Havana, Matanzas) and, after the settling of the port of Cienfuegos by the French in 1819, the central portions of the island (Figure 3.4, top panel) entered into sugar cane production. Demand for slave labor mounted in the 1840s and most of these workers were utilized on sugar plantations (Piqueras Arenas 2003).

Sugar and Technology

Two key technological developments in the 19th century catapulted the spread of cane growing. The first was the introduction of the railroad. No longer were the plantation owners reliant on primitive oxcarts and the muddy roads traveled by the carts; railroads allowed them to settle new lands and extend cultivation inland. Allied with foreign capital, sugar planters were no longer confined to areas near ports and could increase efficiency (Zanetti and García 1998). Even during the Independence Wars, sugar production was formidable; it averaged about one million tons annually between 1892 and 1898 (Santamaría García 2003).


SUGAR MILLS AROUND HAVANA - 1768
Modified from Manuel Moreno Fraginals
The Sugar Mill, Barcelona 2001
Sugar mill
Settlement
Note: Some modern names are shown for reference
0
5
10
15 kilometers
5
10 miles
HAVANA
Havana Bay
Cojimar cove
Bacuranao cove
Tarará cove
Cojímar
Tarará
Guanabo
Guanabo Viejo
Campo Florido
Minas
Bacuranao
Guanabacoa
Regla
Peñalver
Arango
Jacomino
El Diezmero
Luyanó
Jesús del Monte
Mantilla
Calvario
Párraga
El Vedado
El Cerro
Miramar
Puentes Grandes
Marianao
La Lisa
Arroyo Arenas
Santa Fe
Punta Brava
San Francisco de Paula
Santa María del Rosario
El Cotorro
Loma de Tierra
Cuatro Caminos
Las Guásimas
Managua
Calabazar
Santiago de las Vegas
José Martí Int-l Airport
El Rincón
Bejucal
Cojimar r.
Bacuranao r.
Almendares r.
Almendares river
Guanabo river
Doña Josefa Santa Cruz
Doña María Santa Cruz
Camarones
Doña María Calvo
San Blas
Santa Teresa
Quiebra Hacha
Jesús, María, José
Arroyo Naranjo
Zayas
Ricabal
San Hilario
Las Vegas
Carmen
San Pedro
Carbonero
Ojo de Agua
Agustín
El Aguacate
Rosario
Chorrera
Santa Catalina
Santo Domingo
Paso Seco
Salazar
Guadalupe
Francisco
Carrillo
Beatriz
Barrera
Doña Juana de Zayas
El Retiro
León
Duarte
Coca
Pacheco

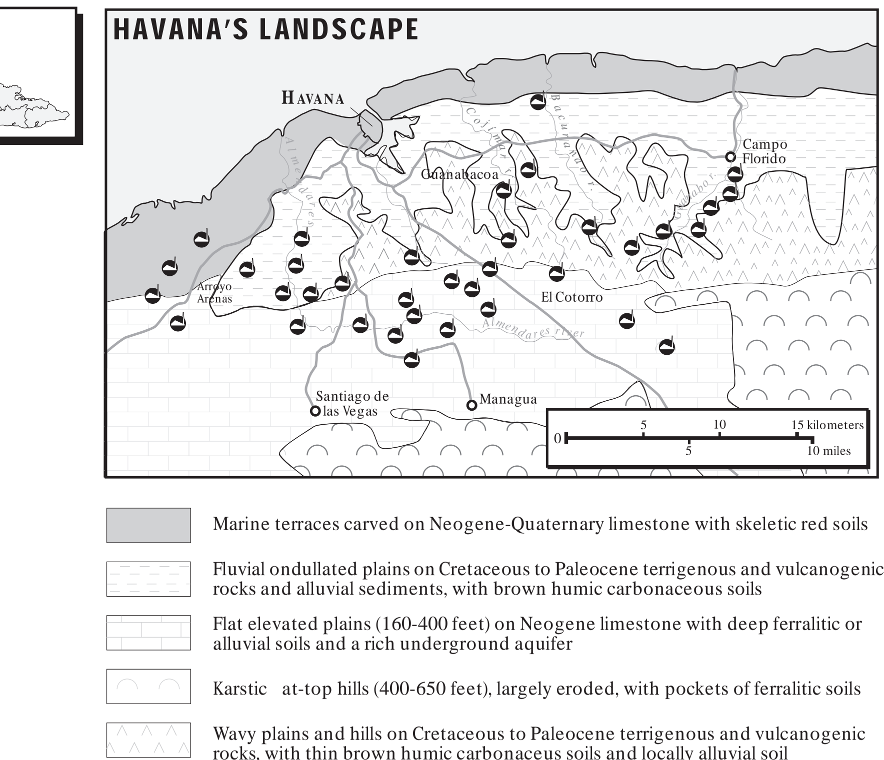


FIGURE 3.3. Sugar mills surrounding Havana, c. 1768.

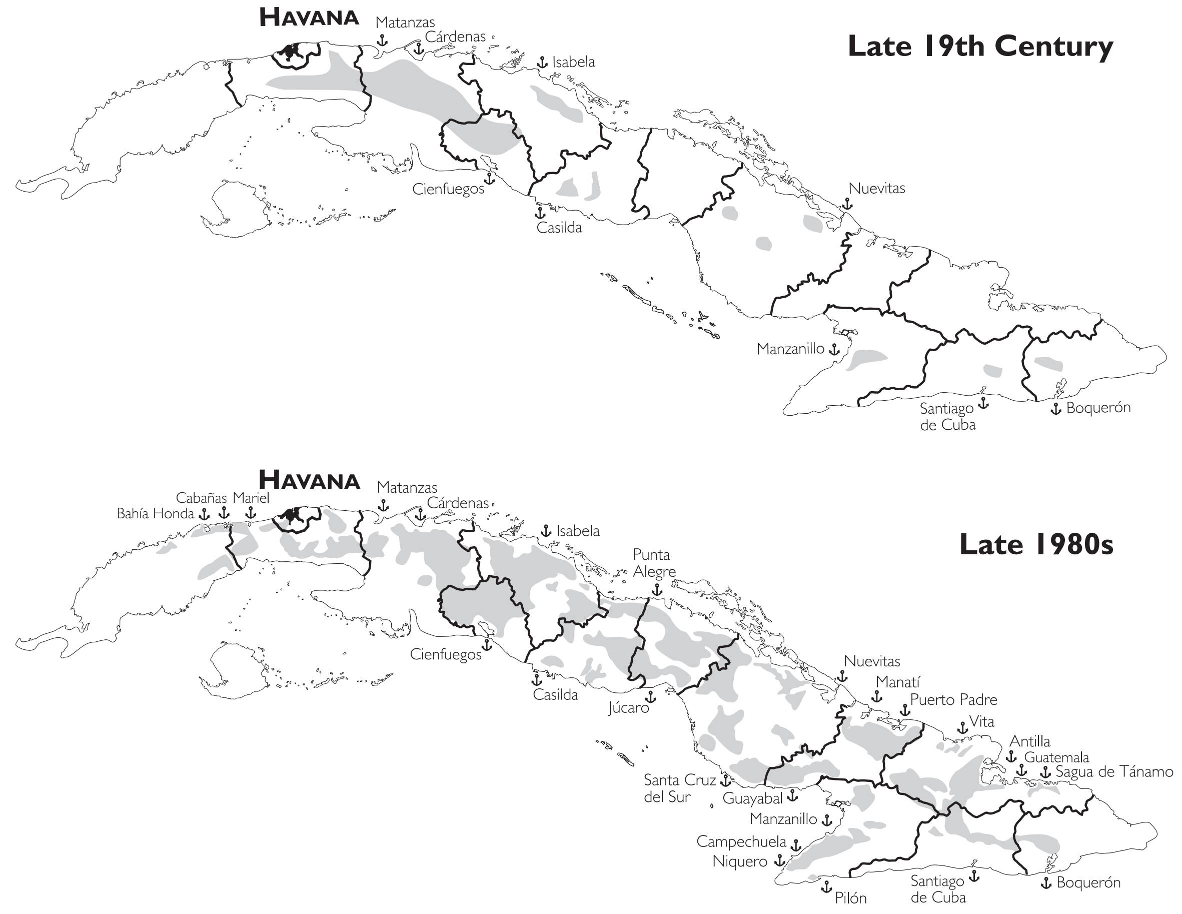

Late 19th Century
Havana
Matanzas
Cárdenas
Isabela
Cienfuegos
Casilda
Nuevitas
Manzanillo
Santiago de Cuba
Boquerón
Late 1980s
Havana
Bahía Honda
Cabañas
Mariel
Matanzas
Cárdenas
Isabela
Punta Alegre
Cienfuegos
Casilda
Júcaro
Nuevitas
Manatí
Puerto Padre
Vita
Antilla
Guatemala
Sagua de Tánamo
Santa Cruz del Sur
Guayabal
Manzanillo
Campechuela
Niquero
Pilón
Santiago de Cuba
Boquerón

FIGURE 3.4. The spatial distribution of sugar cane plantations at three points in time.

A second innovation was the shift to modern central plants (*centrales*) that used large efficient boilers for extracting cane juice. These more sizeable modern sugar mills were largely built by U.S. companies, especially on new lands purchased in Camagüey province in the 20th century. Cuba was one of the first Caribbean territories to use a steam engine (1797, in the Seybabo mill) that was capable of grinding stalks.

Practically every Cuban schoolchild knows that the first railroad in Cuba ran between Havana and the small town of Bejucal in 1837, even before the "mother country" (Spain) had a rail line. Over the next 14 years, 11 railroad lines expanded the rail network an average of 37.2 kilometers per year, or 558 kilometers in all (Zanetti and García 1998, 56). Four-fifths of that network was concentrated in the western half of the island. It spread south from Bejucal (just outside Havana) to the Caribbean port of Batabanó and then east to Macagua (roughly halfway between Matanzas and Santa Clara). It would take another decade for Santa Clara to be connected with Havana; again, rail expansion was linked to sugar cane planting and new cultivation (Zanetti and García 1998, 46) (Figure 3.5). The eastern rail network spread much more slowly and unevenly. Between 1837 and 1854 one line ran from Puerto Príncipe (Camagüey) approximately 50

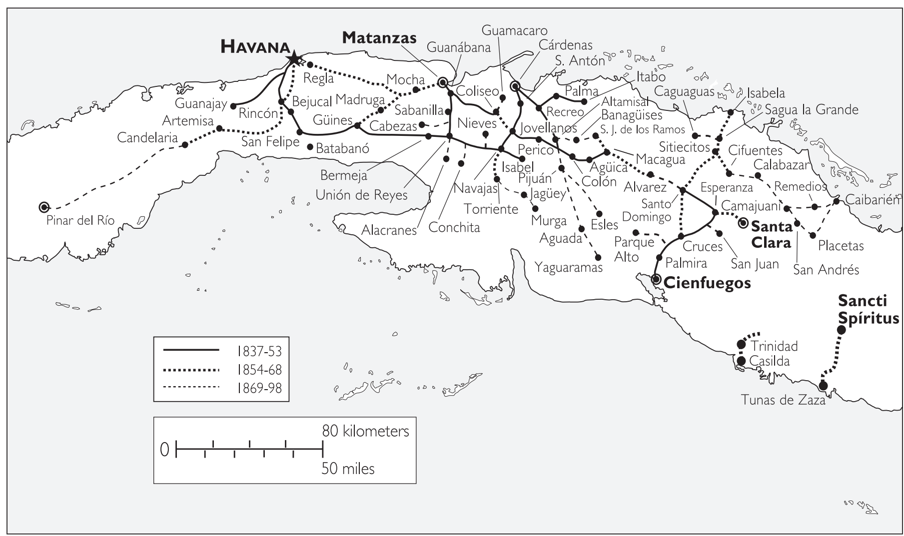


FIGURE 3.5. Expansion of the western rail network, three 19th-century time periods.

miles to the north coast port of Nuevitas. However, not even Trinidad—arguably the most productive sugar-producing region of the world in the 1840s—benefited from railroad investment during that time. The only other connection between 1837 and 1853 was a short spur between Santiago de Cuba and El Cobre.

Cuba's contribution to world sugar production has dropped steadily since the 19th century. In 1860, the island produced about one-fourth of the global total. By 1895, Cuba's global contribution fell to just one-sixth, resulting, no doubt from the complications of the Independence Wars. Output hovered at this level up to the beginning of World War I. After the war, it rose slightly and continued until 1948, when Cuba accounted for 18.4% of the world's sugar output (Marrero 1950, 203, Figure 151).

Cuba's transition from a political colony of Spain to an economic outpost for the United States quickened with the spread of rail lines. Ortiz describes the "tentacles" of rail lines emanating from the large sugar mills as "monstrous iron octopuses" with a seemingly endless demand for cane (Ortiz 1947, 51–52). Even holdings by U.S. banana producers such as the Boston Fruit Company, which had established plantations in Cuba in the 1880s, converted to sugar production. During the 1920s and 1930s the profits of railroad companies were inextricably linked to the value of the sugar harvest (Zanetti and García 1998, 326).

Between 1899 and 1929 the number of sugar mills fell from 1190 to 163, but higher efficiency and more plantings made the sugar crop soar from a half million to five million tons. Mill closings reflected the destruction of the Independence Wars. Less than one-fifth of the mills operating in 1894 survived until the end of the war in 1898. Cane fields had been intentionally burned by the Spanish and equipment was sabotaged or destroyed. Moreover, Cuban planters were unable to come up with sufficient capital to revive their industry. Under the terms of the U.S. occupancy of Cuba spelled under the Platt Amendment (1898–1902), there were few options for these planters to secure capital, and U.S. investors were only too pleased to purchase cane fields and production facilities for pennies on the dollar (McCook 2002, 50).

It was not only through U.S. financial speculation—especially by the Cuban Railroad Company in 1916—that the formerly inaccessible uplands of eastern Cuba came into production (Richardson 1992, 33). The world demand for sugar during and following the First World War resulted in amazingly high prices, high profits, upper-class prosperity, and significant public works projects. Sugar prices hovered around 4.5¢ per pound during World War I, but then soared to 22.5¢ per pound in 1919, only to collapse

to 1.6 cents per pound in 1921. Such a frenzy brought unprecedented investment in the nation's industrial and transportation infrastructure during the presidential term of García Menocal (1913–1921). Wartime prices also pushed up the value of sugar and land (Rippy 1958, 406). By 1920, high sugar prices (and profits) were evidenced by the construction of opulent homes in the upscale residential neighborhoods of the Vedado and Miramar sections of Havana. Indeed, the "fat cow" years (literally, *vacas gordas*, or "high on the hog" in idiomatic English) peaked in 1920, only to be followed by a devastating collapse in prices (*vacas flacas*, or "thin cows") (Scarpaci et al. 2002, 59–62). Jenks described this bonanza-like investment setting, as well as the attendant environmental disregard, as follows:

> Vast forests [could] be purchased cheaply, growing on cane-land of unequalled richness. . . . Corps of wood cutters were set to leveling trees. Where there was hardwood, it was sometimes hauled out by ox and chain. The remainder of the trees lay as they fell for several months, and then were fired—thousands of acres at a time, in a conflagration that drew the entire countryside to prevent its spreading. Cane was planted between the blackened stumps, without the trouble of plowing. (1928, 181)

This sugar frenzy gave rise to the popular saying "Without sugar, there is no country" (*Sin azúcar, no hay país*). Two distinct schools of thought interpret this sugar boom. Marxists claim that avaricious capitalists failed to invest in new sugar technologies, which the outdated mills from the late 19th century desperately needed in the decades of the following century. Industrial capitalists—especially predator-like U.S. investors—spun a web between sugar and railroad production. As a monocultural producer, Cuba was extremely vulnerable to shifts in price and demand (Dye 1998; Zanetti and García 1998). Others contend that U.S.- and Cuban-owned companies were rational actors who responded to fluctuations in land, labor, yields, and sugar beet production in Europe (Dye 1998). What is clear, though, is that the Spanish colonial authorities discriminated against *criollo* producers by allowing Spanish producers access to capital that modernized production. As a result, the *criollos* continued to rely on outdated technology and clung to expensive and inhuman slave labor.

If topography and technology shaped the direction and pace of sugar cane production in Cuba, so too did the myriad trade agreements and tariff restrictions between Washington and Havana. To these influences we must add the vicissitudes to which monocultural production is always susceptible.

> Subordinated to the needs of sugar production, the railroads remained dependent on market fluctuations in the price of sugar. During the sugar boom, the railroad lines grew. Their expansion was halted each time the price dropped and was finally ended when the restrictive policy expressed in the agreements, legislation, and sugar tariffs imposed by U.S. interests set permanent bounds to the growth of sugar plantations. The last sugar mill in Cuba was built in 1925. The last important section of track laid in the neocolonial period was completed just two or three years later. (Zannetti and García 1998, 407)

Indeed, North American capital transformed Cuba's sugar industry. Small-scale farmers (*colonos*) were displaced quickly as modernized sugar mills dominated the 20th-century landscape. The plantation system (*latifundia*) deepened its hold on the agrarian labor market that, in turn, brought in thousands of Antillean laborers. Although Cuban capitalists would increase their investment in the island's production system between 1938 and 1948, the U.S. influence in ownership, production, and tariff quotas prevailed in the 1950s (Marrero 1950, 204). These issues would drive Cuban sugar production and development over the next four decades of the socialist government.

SUGAR IN THE SOCIALIST ERA: 1959–2008

Our interpretation of the past nearly half century of sugar production in socialist Cuba reveals four distinct periods: (1) rapid nationalization of sugar mills, production, and distribution; (2) Cuba's membership in the Soviet trading bloc; (3) demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its price-supported markets; and (4) erratic dismantling of the sugar industry.

Nationalizing the Sugar Industry

Shortly after the 1959 Revolution, the sugar industry underwent radical reforms. The new leadership accused the nation's dependence on sugar and the private ownership of mills, infrastructure, and land as being a key variable of Cuba's underdevelopment. In just a few years the government nationalized sugar mills and plantations and port facilities. The state took ownership of landholdings of more than a certain size; the only way to avoid that was to have private owners reallocate their farms to family members. By 1962 the sugar sector was fully in state control and the decision-

making process in regard to sugar—previously made up of thousands of discrete decisions—had become highly centralized. Foreign trade (i.e., who sold what and at what price) also fell under the state's purview.

These radical economic development schema of the early 1960s entailed a heavy reliance on a workforce that could mobilize quickly. Sugar labor included conscripts, students, urban blue- and white-collar workers, and even prison inmates to labor in the *zafra* (sugar harvest). An ambitious goal of this early period was a 10-million-ton harvest of 1970—an Olympic effort to raise output by 40%. Reaching that goal centered on the spread of sugar cane plantations and augmenting the number of laborers in this manually intensive process. Although the 1970 harvest produced a record 8.5 million tons, it inflicted collateral cost by ignoring other economic sectors.

Cuba's Entrance into the Soviet Trading Bloc

In 1972, Cuba gained admission to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the Soviet-centered trade bloc that joined the communist nations of Eastern Europe with Mongolia and Vietnam. Cuba had lost a trading preference and guaranteed quota with the United States before 1959, and the island nation now sought comparable price support from Moscow during the peak of the Cold War. CMEA offered Cuba secure markets for sugar and demanded that it specialize and become CMEA's only sugar supplier. CMEA and Cuba reflected a complex relationship in providing Cuba a guaranteed market and fixed prices. The complexity stemmed from the varying exchanges and prices that mirrored both nations' needs at key times (Zimbalist and Brundenius 1989). In a relationship not unlike that of the United Kingdom with its Caribbean colonies and ex-colonies, or between France and its territories as stipulated by the Lomé Convention, Cuba and CMEA worked out a complex web of trade and subsidy arrangements. This face of socialist Cuba's sugar policy contradicted earlier efforts to diversify the nation's economic base; Cuba would deepen its reliance on sugar through CMEA.

State commitment to the agro-industrial sector ensured that annual sugar output hovered around 7.5 million tons throughout the 1980s, versus the 6 million tons of the 1950s. With hindsight, it is arguable that such heavy financial, labor, and chemical inputs were not sustainable. Official discourse downplayed the environmental impacts and (subsidized) production costs (Portela and Aguirre 2000). Nevertheless, inputs in the 1980s rose dramatically. Machinery use increased tenfold, hundreds of

miles of canals and culverts were built to accommodate sugar production, the water in reservoirs rose nearly 200-fold, and the consumption of agriculture fertilizer reached more than one million tons. Land area committed to sugar cane production grew by 30% (Figure 3.4, middle panel), and eight new sugar mills were constructed, most of them on low-lying and poorly drained lands. One plan entailed draining a large section of the Zapata Swamp to bring more arable land into sugar production; it was, however, discarded at the last minute because of possible irreversible soil salinization conditions that would have been ruinous, resulting in altering one of the largest ecosystems in the Antilles (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000, 17). That sugar dominated the thinking in the first decades of the Revolution is revealed in Figure 3.6, where the proposed projects to reclaim land for the sea—mostly to sustain the sugar agro-industry—would have greatly altered the shape of Cuba. Witness, for instance, the land that would have been filled in between the Isla de Juventud and the main island. "These projects, of course, never got off the ground … [because they were] unfeasible, uneconomical, or both, and [were] quietly abandoned" (Díaz and-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000, 17). Had they been implemented, they would have been the most drastic environmental modification of the island's landscape ever.

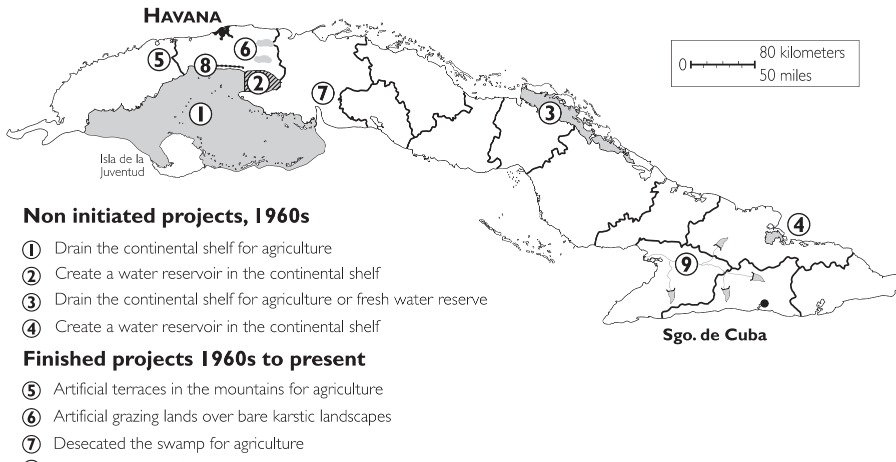


FIGURE 3.6. Proposed projects to reclaim land from the sea and to drain swamplands. Based on data from Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López (2000, 16).

The Collapse of the USSR and Its Subsidized Markets

The demise of CMEA in the early 1990s severed the island from its principal trading partners. With the flow of cheap inputs to support the behemoth sugar industry suddenly eliminated, the industry nearly collapsed. Yields fell by half in 6 years. Sugar plantations and mills lapsed into disrepair. Cuba's sugar economy, long accustomed to Soviet subsidies, faced difficulty in competing on the world sugar market. Within a short period, Brazil surpassed Cuba as the world's largest sugar exporter and as Russia's main supplier.

Downsizing the Sugar Industry, Revamping Its Landscape

The same forces that made sugar king would also lead to its rapid demise in the 21st century. Cuba's restructured sugar industry in the 21st century brought to a grinding halt the prevailing role that the crop had played in the island's population, agricultural, and economic geographies (Castellanos Romeu 2001). If the popular saying "Without sugar, there is no country" rang true historically, nothing like that slogan remotely captures the role of sugar today.

In the new millennium, the number of working sugar mills plummeted from more than 140 in 2000 to 70 in 2003 (Figure 3.7). The downsizing of Cuba's sugar sector became evident in the 1990s when the island's production fell in absolute terms and relative to other producers. At the same time, world prices fell and new and strong competition entered the world market from Brazil, China, India, and Thailand. Rising world production confronted a saturated sugar market that also faced alternative sweeteners in the form of high-fructose corn syrup and artificial sweeteners (Peters 2003, 6–7).

Although Cuba's current position in the world sugar market is relatively easy to quantify on the basis of world production and market trends, much less is known about the impacts of restructuring at the local level. Government publications on industry downsizing are vague and erratic. We know little about how sugar's demise affects household consumption (because of decreased government revenues) or about alternative employment opportunities. In 2004 we spoke with workers at a sugar mill in Cienfuegos, who reported that they were learning the basic suite of Microsoft Office software as part of a retraining program. However, attendance at the free training had waned as many become disappointed upon discovering that a transfer into a new line of work was not a sure thing. In 2006 we meet several former sugar cane workers from Matanzas who were liv-

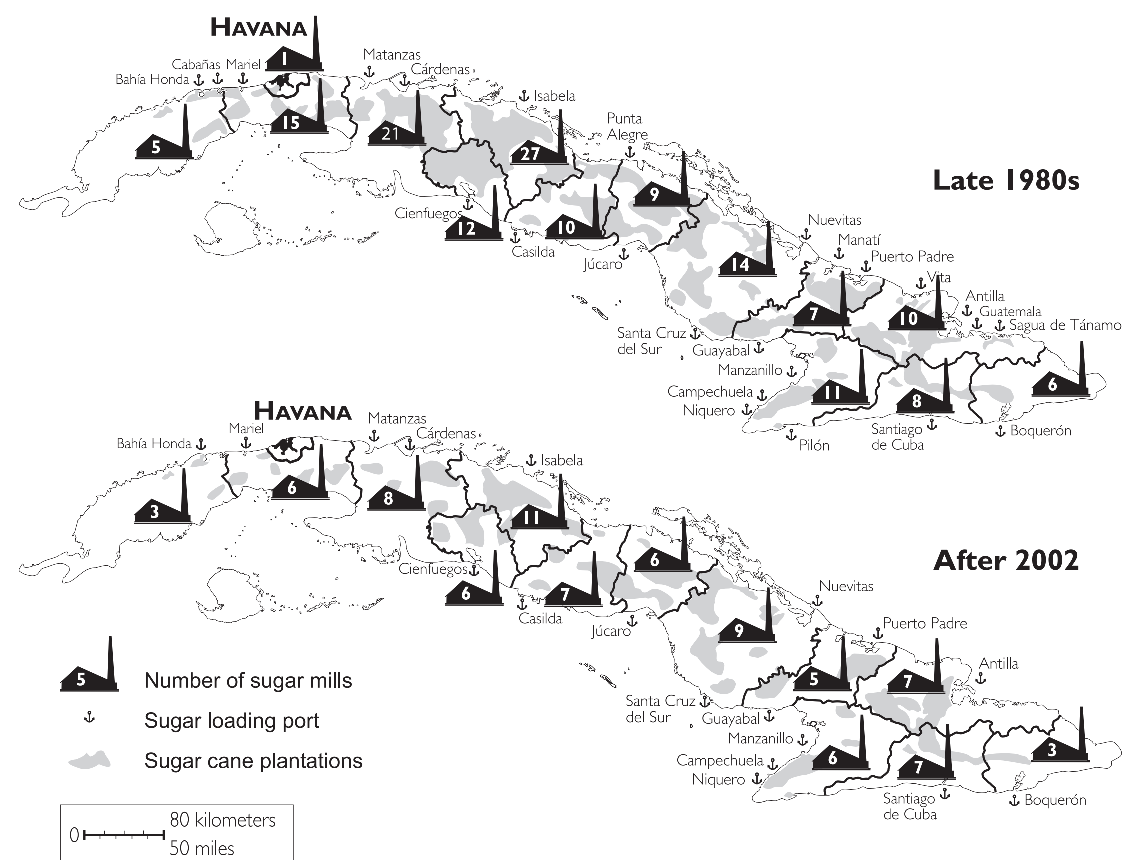


FIGURE 3.7. Downsizing the sugar industry.

ing with relatives in Havana, doing "whatever [they] can" (*lo que podamos*) to sustain their families back home. Significantly, those activities were not legally sanctioned and had forced them into an underground status.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter offers a historical-geographical assessment of Cuba's sugar landscape. It shows how Cuban sugar plantations influenced the racial composition and growth of the island's population. The availability of African slave labor and Europe's demand for sugar were major determinants of sugar's rise in the 18th and 19th centuries. Initially, planters cleared forests south and then east of Havana. Expansion, using African slave labor, allowed the colony to satisfy Spain's demand for sugar, but it also opened markets in Europe and the United States. Nineteenth-century sugar cane production, however, derived from two main factors. One was the expansion of railroad lines after 1837, and the second was the political and economic vicissitudes created by the Cuban colonial struggle and the independence movements in nearby Haiti. Rapid deforestation resulted from these forces.

The diffusion of sugar production left two indelible marks on Cuba's landscape. Cane production spread to parts of Pinar del Río, Matanzas, and Las Villas provinces; rail transportation quickened that expansion. The end of the 19th-century civil wars gave U.S. and, to a lesser extent, British investors a chance to modernize infrastructure and open up new lands in Camagüey. This expansion, in turn, tapped into more ports for international trade.

Sugar cultivation during the 1960s and 1970s increased greatly, in part to meet the 10-million-ton harvest goal of 1970, and to take advantage of the Soviet Union's patronage and the CMEA trade agreements. Although the 1970 harvest reached 8.5 million tons, Cuba would never again reach such a high yield. High chemical inputs proved to be unsustainable once price subsides ended. Fortunately, many of the ambitious land reclamation projects that were proposed in the early decades of the Revolution were not carried out. Since the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a changing global economy has altered the pattern of sugar mills and cultivation even further. By 2007 more than half of the mills that were in production at the Triumph of the Revolution had closed. A good number of those mills have been dismantled (Figure 3.8), and others have shifted to molasses production for the rum industry.

FIGURE 3.8. Sugar mill "Central Bolivia" in Ciego de Avila, photographed in 2003 after it had been closed. The main exhaust chimney and elevated cane-loading belt are seen here.

A smaller number have become museums, reflecting the island's substantiated industrial heritage (see Chapter 4).

By July 2006, the price of sugar on the world market rose from about 5¢/pound in 2000 to nearly 17¢/pound, but 2 years later, the commodity plummeted to 9.9¢/pound (illustrating the vicissitudes of the industry). The demand for sugar in the soft drink industry—particularly in China and India—seemed to be driving prices upward (Patton 2006), but the spike appeared to be short-lived. The Cuban government announced that it would consider putting more mills back into production in order to take advantage of this price trend, but doing so meant anticipating the following planting season. U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba has a direct impact on future production levels in Cuba. One of the major forces supporting

the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba is the alliance of sugar cane and beet sugar producers in the United States. Reopening trade with Cuba would cut their competitiveness in sugar pricing for the domestic market. Even though these producers are unabashedly free-trade focused, a major sugar lobby in the United States—the American Sugar Alliance—had this to say about sugar pricing and trade:

> Governments of all foreign sugar-producing countries intervene in their production, consumption, and trade of sugar. This makes sugar one of the most heavily subsidized and distorted markets in the world. The result: There is no true "world market" for sugar that bears any relationship to actual global supply and demand conditions. Today, 80 percent of the world's sugar is not traded on an open market. It is sold in the country where it is produced for prices that, on average, are similar to American prices. Only 20 percent of foreign sugar is dumped on the global marketplace for any price it will bring. This surplus sugar is heavily subsidized and historically has received a price that is about half the world average cost of production. (2008)

What is clear, though, is that no single economic, political, or cultural practice has altered Cuba's landscape as greatly as sugar production. The felling of trees, clearing of forests, and planting of "seas of grass" left an indelible mark on the island; so did the reliance on a principal source of foreign exchange. Beet sugar and corn syrup will continue to curtail the global demand for sugar cane, as will artificial sweeteners. Still, reopening the United States to Cuban sugar—either as a sweetener or as a "new" source of fuel in the form of ethanol—might transform the rural landscape of the island, as sugar would once again become king.

NOTE

1. A preliminary version of this chapter appeared in Scarpaci and Portela (2005). Adapted by permission.

CHAPTER 4

Heritage

Heritage landscapes are appropriately suited for geographic inquiry because of the concern about location and the array of ecological, social, economic, and political variables that make up these places. Interest in heritage landscapes has risen enormously in recent years (Muir 1999). As noted in Chapter 1, architects, urban designers, historians, archeologists, landscape architects, and especially geographers, pursue this line of study because local objects (monuments, historic sites, national parks) can be situated in different geographic and social scales of analysis. Approaches to the study of landscape are as varied as the number of research topics in the field. Geographers Daniels and Cosgrove (1988, 8) examine landscapes from a postmodernist perspective, claiming that

> landscape seems less like a palimpsest whose "real" or "authentic" meanings can somehow be recovered with the correct techniques … [like] flickering text displayed on the word-processor screen whose meaning can be created, extended, altered, elaborated and finally obliterated by the nearest touch of a button.

Rose (1992, 10) argues that in human geography, "pleasure in the landscape was often seen as a threat to the scientific gaze." Mitchell (1994, 14) notes that "landscape is itself a physical and multi-sensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded."

Heritage means using the past as an economic resource for the present. Historic districts and monuments allow countries to create national identity, forge ideologies, and "ground" abstract notions of history and

heritage in tangible forms (Hall 1995; Hobsbawm 1990; Woolf 1996). The wish to preserve relics of past environments is often tied to an influential elite. However, the tension created over what is to be preserved and whose collective memory should be celebrated is often ignored in official public circles. A bewildering array of places and objects determines what is included in the web of historic preservation projects. As Graham and colleagues (2000, 17) argue:

> Clearly, [heritage] is an economic resource, one exploited everywhere as a primary component of strategies to promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration. But heritage also helps define the meanings of culture and power and is a political resource; and it thus possesses a crucial sociopolitical function. Consequently, it is accompanied by an often bewildering array of identifications and potential conflicts, not least when heritage places and objects are involved in issues of legitimization of power structures.

Government approaches to the identification, safeguarding, and maintenance of national heritage sites and monuments defy a simple division into whether a nation is a market or a centrally planned economy. For instance, images of historical small town America drive the present construction boom by the Walt Disney Corporation in Celebration, Florida. The town is a planned community that embraces the pre-automobile period that typifies Disney's Main Street pedestrian boulevard at the entrance to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The United States housing market has displayed a strong demand for neotraditional design structures such as those at Seaside, Florida, and related projects of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk of DBZ Associates (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000). In the community where one of us (J. L. S.) lives—Blacksburg, Virginia—a developer touts a neotraditional community (a.k.a. New Urbanism), the Village at Tom's Creek, this way:

> The Village is a planned "traditional neighborhood development," built according to the principles that shaped traditional Virginia villages. Its character is revealed in its respect for the beautiful rolling landscape of the Tom's Creek Basin. It is designed to create an intimate neighborhood surrounded by and connected to its open meadows and woodlands. Traditional close-knit Virginia communities evolved around distinctive civic spaces. The Village's informal parks, tree-lined boulevards, and small central shops are designed with respect to this tradition. The streets and alleys will provide both intimate lanes of small yards and friendly porches and formal boulevards with flowered medians and small shops. The variety of house styles and sizes will

> echo the finest traditional Virginia architecture. (The Village at Tom's Creek 2006)

This example of heritage draws on both cultural (traditional neighborhood development, close-knit Virginia communities, civic spaces) and natural elements (beautiful rolling landscapes, meadows and woodlands, flowered medians). Heritage, therefore, is carefully packaged on the developer's website to conjure up history, lifestyle, and landscape in the roaring U.S. housing market of the early 2000s. Its marketing conveys history, prestige, respectability, and a sensibility toward the fine (middle-class) aesthetics of life.

Yet the question arises: Are such descriptions of heritage so different from promotions of heritage landscapes in Cuba? In the first place, recall from Chapter 1 that islands exude a certain allure as novelty sites. They lend themselves as convenient platforms for all seasons and tastes, for practically any whim or fancy (Baldacchino 2007, 166). Witness, for instance, how historic Trinidad is promoted on the government's national press (Prensa Latina) website:

> The cultural treasure that distinguishes Trinidad gives it a unique distinction in the Greater Antilles. Between mountains and sea, the city called the "Museum of the Caribbean" expresses a proud and unique natural beauty to whoever visits it.... Passing through its narrow cobble-stoned streets allows the walker to discover artistic balconies, curved balustrades of precious wood, complex iron grillwork, surprisingly decorated walls, and romantic patios. (Primeras Villas 2006, our translation)

As in the earlier description of the Virginia village, noting its small-town image, natural and cultural attributes pepper the discourse about the charms of this colonial Caribbean town. Yet assessments of heritage are not always black and white. In the case of Trinidad, there are Cubans who would argue that Trinidad was neglected intentionally in the first decades of the Revolution because the government wanted to punish Trinidadians for the support that some locals lent to the anticommunist guerillas in the Escambray Mountains during the insurgency of the 1960s. When old towns became "fashionable" and when the government discovered that European backpackers were enthralled with Trinidad, the government decided to capitalize on its assets.[1]

In an era of global travel in a deregulated market for the middle classes, heritage is becoming an important niche market in international tourism. Hewison argues that heritage is produced just like any other commod-

ity, "which nobody seems able to define, but which everyone is eager to sell" (1987, 9). If heritage tourism is indeed commodified, then the pressure on developing nations like Cuba is great because the need for hard currency may conflict with what locals want. Cheryl Shanks (2002, 17) describes this paradox as one of the many dilemmas of "artificial authenticity": "Commodifying culture simultaneously preserves, transforms, and destroys it."

This is a sensitive issue for politicians and local officials in developing countries like Cuba because economic development creates pressure to attract dollars or Euros, which, in turn, may corrupt the authenticity of the local culture (Barberia 2002). As examples, we note Ernest Hemingway's favorite bars in Habana Vieja, or dancing the tango in Buenos Aires's San Telmo or La Boca neighborhoods. Both images (Hemingway and tango dancing) garner a disproportionate amount of publicity in promoting heritage even though they may be only marginally related to the history of the neighborhoods in which they are promoted. And the unwitting tourist may know little about the historic veracity of these representations; in fact, he or she may not even care to know (Urry 2002). Nevertheless, as David Lowenthal (1985) has shown, rebuilding historic landscapes offers a familiarity and guidance to present-day residents and tourists even though their historical veracity may be suspect. To be sure, heritage tourism legitimizes the social history of local peoples and portrays positive images of the past. Latin America has no shortage of heritage tourism venues: *favela* (slums) tourism in Brazil (Mahieux 2002), immigrants' heritage tourism in South America (Schlüter 2000), human rights tourism (Burtner 2002; Haddock 2002), and historic district venues (Scarpaci 2005), to name just a few.

Debates internal to Cuba about heritage have thus far been exempt from the neoliberal economic waves rocking other Latin American nations. Breglia (2006) examines heritage in Mexico as an arena in which multiple public and private actors compete for the right to control cultural patrimony. Starting in the early 1990s, she demonstrates how farmers, ethnic minorities, politicians, heritage site managers, and local developers aim to control cultural patrimony as a form of legitimizing how archeological sites should be managed. Her discussion is set against the privatization policies that prevail in Latin America. Although Cuba has thus far been spared these debates, it is unclear how financing heritage projects in a post-Fidel Cuba will unfold and what the role of for-profit management arrangements portends for the island.

Against this backdrop of the debates and issues surrounding heritage, this chapter turns to a brief review of Cuba's heritage sites. These sites have been selected for membership on the United Nations Educational, Scien-

tific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage List. In the following section we describe Cuba's participation in UNESCO's program and situate the island's heritage record in an international context. The rest of the chapter summarizes the key features of Cuba's nine World Heritage Sites and the many national landmarks and protected zones. We conclude by revisiting the literature discussed above regarding the meaning of heritage landscapes and their significance in Cuba.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE SITES IN CUBA

Cuba became a signatory of the World Heritage Convention in 1981, the year before Old Havana was placed on UNESCO's list as a World Heritage Site. The World Heritage Convention promotes preservation of cultural properties and the conservation of rich natural elements. The UNESCO list emphasizes how particular peoples interact with their cultural and natural environments and attempts to preserve the delicate balance between the two. Inscription on the World Heritage List requires that a particular place exhibit "outstanding universal value." Specifically, 10 criteria guide the assessment of heritage sites (Table 4.1), and we refer to these criteria (using lowercase Roman numerals) in our discussion of each site. Cuba has nine entries on this list: seven cultural and two natural (Table 4.2). Given the size of its territory and the absence of a large indigenous population, Cuba places respectably well on the list when compared with its Caribbean and Latin American neighbors, as well as selected European, African, and Asian nations.

By mid-2009, the UNESCO World Heritage List included 878 sites, of which 679 (77.3%) were cultural, 174 (19.8%) were natural, and 25 (2.8%) were mixed properties. And the list keeps growing (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2007). The 2006 annual convention held in Lithuania reviewed 37 nominations: 27 cultural sites, 8 natural sites, 2 mixed sites, and 3 transboundary sites, presented by 30 countries (Doubleday 2006). By 2009, 186 countries had ratified the World Heritage Convention.

CUBA'S WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Cuba boasts nine World Heritage Sites: Six are cultural environments (the Archeological Landscapes of First Coffee Plantations in Southeast-

TABLE 4.1. Selection Criteria for World Heritage Status and Cuban Site Qualification

i	To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; *Desembarco del Granma National Park*.
ii	To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning, or landscape design; *Urban Historic Center of Cienfuegos, Alejandro de Humboldt Park*.
iii	To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization that is living or that has disappeared; *Archaeological Landscapes of First Coffee Plantations in Southeastern Cuba; Desembarco del Granma National Park*.
iv	To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape that illustrates significant stage(s) in human history; *Old Havana and Its Fortifications, San Pedro de Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba; Trinidad and Valley of the Ingenios; Viñales Valley, Alejandro de Humboldt Park; Viñales Valley; historic center of Camagüey.*
v	To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea use that is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; *Old Havana and Its Fortifications, San Pedro de Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba; Trinidad and Valley of the Ingenios; Urban Historic Center of Cienfuegos; historic center of Camagüey*.
vi	To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.)
vii	To contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
viii	To be outstanding examples representing major stages of the earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.
ix	To be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems, and communities of plants and animals.
x	To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for *in situ* conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Note. Data from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2006a).

TABLE 4.2. World Heritage Sites, 2009, by Selected Nations

Argentina	8	Guatemala	3
Bangladesh	3	Haiti	1
Belgium	9	Honduras	2
Belize	1	Indonesia	7
Bolivia	6	Japan	14
Brazil	17	Kenya	4
Canada	13	Lebanon	5
Chile	4	Mexico	29
China	31	New Zealand	3
Colombia	5	Nicaragua	1
Cuba	**9**	North Korea	1
Costa Rica	3	Norway	7
Czech Republic	12	Panama	5
Congo	5	Peru	10
Dominican Republic	1	South Africa	8
El Salvador	1	Syria	5
France	33	United States	20
Greece	16	Venezuela	3

Note. Data from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2009).

ern Cuba, Urban Historic Center of Cienfuegos, Habana Vieja and its fortifications, San Pedro de Roca Castle in Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad, and Viñales Valley) and two are natural settings (Alejandro de Humboldt National Park, Desembarco del Granma National Park) (Table 4.3). These landscapes are evenly distributed throughout the island (Figure 4.1). Since 1992, UNESCO has used the term "cultural landscape" to refer to the interaction that exists between the cultural and natural environments (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2006a). UNESCO inscribed Tongariro National Park (New Zealand) as its first cultural landscape on the World Heritage List because it displayed spiritual links of the indigenous Maori people with their land (Rössler 2004b). Cuba's Viñales Valley and the Archaeological Landscapes of the First Coffee Plantations in Southeastern Cuba are two "cultural landscapes" out of 37 recognized by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2006a). In the sections that follow we first discuss the natural heritage sites and then the cultural ones.[2]

Natural Heritage Sites

Well before the demise of the former Soviet Union and the disbanding of the Eastern bloc nations, there was legitimate concern about the impact

TABLE 4.3. Cuba's UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Site	Location	Cultural or natural site (year established)	Attributes
Alejandro de Humboldt National Park	Holguín and Guantánamo Provinces N20° 27′ W75° 0′	Natural (2001)	Large concentration and high diversity of endemic fauna and flora. Landform variety, altitudinal diversity, and rich lithologies. Freshwater biological diversity stems from one of the largest watersheds in the Caribbean. Named after Alexander von Humboldt for his research in Cuba in the early 1800s.
Archeological Landscapes of First Coffee Plantations in Southeastern Cuba	Santiago and Guantánamo Provinces N20° 01′ 48″ W75° 23′ 29″	Cultural (2000); also a designated "cultural landscape"	Remnants of 19th-century coffee plantations in Sierra Maestra foothills stand as testimony to an enterprising agricultural system carved out of steep topography. Construction highlights the technological, social, and economic conditions, of the Caribbean at that time.
Cienfuegos: Urban Historic Center	South central port city of 150,000 residents N 22° 08′ 50″ W80° 27′ 10″	Cultural (2005)	Settled by French settlers rather late in Cuba's history (1819), Cienfuegos became an important agricultural trading center and port. Its historic core displays an eclectic architectural ensemble that embraces the ideas of modernity and hygiene in 19th-century Latin America.
Desembarco del Granma National Park	National Park, southeast corner of Cuba N19° 53′ W77° 38′	Natural (1999)	Established in 1986 as a national park, its 26,180 hectare area includes some of the best examples of elevated marine terraces and karst topography. Considered one of the finest natural landscapes along the Atlantic Ocean.
Old Havana (Habana Vieja)	City of Havana Province N 23° 8′ W82° 21′	Cultural (1982)	Settled in 1519 by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar as one of the island's seven initial settlements (*villas*). Includes the core of the historic settlement of San Cristóbal de La Habana and its fortifications from the 16th through 18th centuries. Encompasses most of the municipality of Habana Vieja, which is one of 15 such jurisdictions in Havana City Province.

(cont.)

TABLE 4.3. *(cont.)*

Site	Location	Cultural or natural site (year established)	Attributes
San Pedro de Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba	Santiago de Cuba City N19° 58′ 0″ W75° 52′ 15″	Cultural (1997)	Citadel located at the entrance to the harbor of Santiago de Cuba. Considered a prime example of Spanish colonial military architecture derived from Renaissance and Italian designs.
Trinidad and Valle de los Ingenios	South central Cuba, Sancti Spiritus Province N21° 48′ 11″ W79 59′ 4″	Cultural (1988)	The town of Trinidad and valley adjacent to it where sugar production in the 18th and 19th centuries reigned supreme and sugar mills (*ingenios*) dominated the landscape, especially in the first half of the 19th century.
Viñales Valley	Pinar del Río Province N22° 37′ W83° 43′	Cultural (1999); also a designated "cultural landscape"	A visually striking valley because of large limestone erosive remnants called haystacks or *mogotes* (in Spanish). Includes the island's prime tobacco production system, largely unchanged over the centuries. It possesses unique vernacular architecture and a multiethnic population that mirrors that of the broader Antilles region.

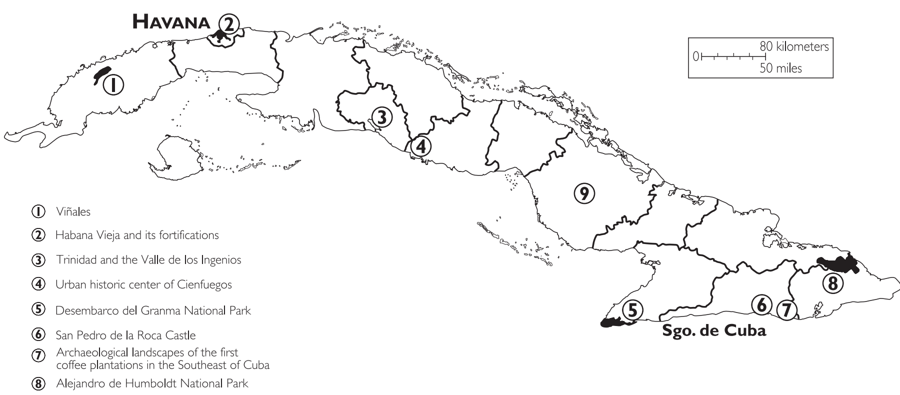


FIGURE 4.1. Location of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Cuba, 2009.

that centrally managed economies were having on the natural environment. Crucial to this preoccupation was the idea that "scientifically" guided centrally planned nations were paying little attention to industrial and urban externalities. Verifying health statistics and validating environmental impacts were virtually impossible for outside agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Stalinist and post-Stalinist industrialization policies proved to be the culprits, as the Soviet bloc nations forged their own industrial-military complexes in the zero-sum game that cast the Cold War into two distinct camps. Although the communist camp argued that environmental destruction could stem only from industrial capitalism's relentless pursuit of profits, there was legitimate concern—corroborated later by a postcommunist "autopsy" of environmental impact—that the Soviet bloc was destined for a sort of "ecocide." As Feschback and Friendly (1992, 1) noted in regard to the Soviet Union soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, "No other great industrial civilization so systematically and so long poisoned its land, air, water, and people. None so loudly proclaiming its efforts to improve public health and protect nature so degraded both." Given Cuba's three-decade attachment to the Soviet bloc's trading group (CMEA, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), it is appropriate to ask the question: What about the environmental record of the "Pearl of the Caribbean"?

Law 33, passed in 1981, was a thin document (just 25 pages) that addressed environmental protection based on the "principles of the Cuban Communist Party concerning the environment" (Segre, Coyula, and Scarpaci 1997, 169). As in the former Soviet Union, environmental degradation was seen as a by-product of industrial capitalism. Other analysts summarized socialist Cuba's environmental policy this way: "[The] wise use of natural resources by communist countries versus the indiscriminate use of natural resources by the Capitalistic World" (Barba and Avella 1996, 34–35). Cuba's environmental record has been rightly criticized by others, particularly because of its disregard for industrial waste, expansive land-clearing projects in the early years of the Revolution, and lack of urban water and waste treatment facilities (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000; Scarpaci et al. 2002, ch. 10). Nevertheless, the past half-century has seen a gradual reforestation of the island.

In 1812, for instance, it was estimated that 90% of the island was forested. By 1900, that figure dropped to 54% as a result of the spread of sugar cane cultivation (Scarpaci and Portela 2005) and continued to fall to 14% in 1959. By 1975, however, reforestation programs produced a comeback in forest cover (to 18%), and today that figure hovers around 20% (*Atlas de Cuba* 1978, 40; Linden 2003). A relatively low population density, areas that are topographically difficult to access, and early land

conservation in the eastern part of the island may account for this recovery. Linden (2003, 102–103) argues that when an illiterate farmer provided protection for Castro's guerrillas after they landed the boat *Granma* on the shores of then Santiago de Cuba Province in 1957, this farmer—Guillermo García Frías—assumed political positions in the Castro government once Batista was overthrown. "A nature lover," writes Linden, "García turned to preserving the Sierra Maestra" (Linden 2003, 102). Regardless of the reasons, Cuba does boast some spectacular natural heritage sites, to which we now turn.

Alejandro de Humboldt National Park

Located in the southeastern corner of the island in the province of Granma is Alejandro de Humboldt National Park; this protected area is perhaps the most important biodiversity spot in the nation. As discussed previously, it is named after the German naturalist who briefly visited the island in 1800–1801 and then in 1804 (Humboldt 2001).

The flora and fauna inventory of the park encompasses an extensive array of landscape elements: mountains, valleys, plains, marine terraces, keys, bays, and coral reefs. The park holds key natural habitats for conservation and terrestrial biological diversity for the insular Caribbean region. It is home to 16 of 28 plant formations that are specific to Cuba, making it a distinct biogeographic realm. According to León Moya (2001), along with New Caledonia in Australia, the park is a place with one of the greatest density of endemic species on the planet. Of 905 endemic species—one-third of the island's total—are within the park's limits. Almost 70% of the 1,302 spermatophytes (seed plants) found are endemic to the park. Accordingly, it "is one of the most biologically diverse terrestrial tropical ecosystems in an island setting anywhere on earth" (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2008).

The steep Cuchillas del Toa (Toa Peaks) biosphere occupies half of the park's area, which is one of six biospheres on the island (the others are Baconao, Buenavista, Ciénaga de Zapata, Península de Guanahacabibes, and Sierra del Rosario). The Sagua Baracoa mountain ranges forming the northern edge of the park are geologically some of the oldest on the island, dating to the Mesozoic era, Jurassic period (169 million years old) (León Moya 2001; Marrero 1957, 33), and form the core of the park's mountains. Particularly noteworthy in the mountains is the Cuban dragon tree (*Dracaena cubensis*), whose botanical relatives stem from the Canary Islands, North Africa, and Madagascar. The elusive royal woodpecker (*carpinerto real* in Spanish, or *Campephilus principalies bardili*) is also sought by the most avid bird-watchers (*Atlas de Cuba* 1978, 41).

There is further speculation about the existence of another woodpecker on the island: "If the ivory-billed woodpecker still exists anywhere on the earth, it is likely to be atop a plateau deep inside Humboldt Park" (Linden 2003, 98).

Desembarco del Granma National Park

In 1999, UNESCO added the Desembarco del Granma National Park to its World Heritage List. It is named after the landing (*desembarco*) of Fidel Castro and 82 rebels who had traveled from Mexico to Cuba in 1956 to overthrow the government of Fulgencio Batista. The ship they had purchased in Mexico was called *Granma*, a name that was later given to one new province (of three) created out of the former province of Santiago de Cuba in 1975. The daily official newspaper published by the Cuban Communist Party is also called Granma.

The park is noteworthy for the layers of marine terraces and its well-defined karst topography. The area is a good example of the tectonic forces that create uplifting as the Caribbean plate collides with the North American plate. Dramatic stair-step terraces and cliffs create unique ecosystems. UNESCO considered the coastal cliffs in the region to be some of the most pristine along the Western Atlantic region between South America and the Canadian Maritime provinces (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 1999).

In a 1999 pronouncement, UNESCO commended the Cuban government for its conservation efforts in the park, despite the difficult economic conditions gripping the nation (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 1999). The national commission of ICOMOS (International Commission on Monuments and Sites) petitioned the World Heritage Fund for technical assistance so that a tourism management plan might be included for the park's administration.

Cultural Heritage Sites

Archeological Landscapes of First Coffee Plantations in Southeastern Cuba

Chocolate drunk by the elite at leisure, was the principal nonalcoholic beverage consumed during the first two centuries of the colony's history. It was not until the introduction of coffee about 1750 that the beverage became popular. Coffee production in nearby Haiti and the Dominican Republic was firmly established at this time, and it is alleged that traders brought coffee to Cuba from Santo Domingo. As discussed in Chapter 3, it was the Haitian slave rebellion of 1791 that pushed producers and trad-

ers out of Hispaniola, and many settled in Cuba and New Orleans (at that time, French territory). Santiago de Cuba became the first coffee producer on the island. Production takes advantage of the humid, cool, and forested slopes of the Sierra Maestra (Portela 2003). UNESCO considers these old coffee plantations a designated "cultural landscape" because of the unique way it represents how humans interacted (i.e., terraced, planted, harvested, and processed) with the natural landscape.

Reflecting the French colonial origins of coffee in Cuba, other French cultural practices established a foothold in the Spanish colony. In the early 1800s cafes sprang up in Havana and Santiago, accompanied by an interest in French music and culture (Segre et al. 1997). Climatic conditions in the Sierra Maestra mountains and their foothills were conducive to coffee plantations and cultivation. French émigrés etched their estates into the lush vegetation of southeastern Cuba, and coffee soon rivaled sugar as a profitable investment for both local consumption and export. However, competition and greater yields from investments in Costa Rica, Brazil, and Venezuela hurt the Cuban coffee market. By the late 19th century the island was cast in intermittent war with Spain, most notably the Ten Years' War (1868–1878).

In 2000, UNESCO acted favorably on the Cuban petition to include the remnants of these 19th-century coffee estates on its World Heritage List. Several coffee plantations in the vicinity still operate. Cuba produces mainly Arabica beans, known for their full flavor and relatively low levels of caffeine. Among the most popular brands of coffee for domestic and international consumption are Caracolillo, Cristal Mountain, Cubita, Serrano, and Turquino.

Cienfuegos

The historic quarter of Cienfuegos is the most recent addition to the island's list of cultural heritage sites. Unlike Havana and Santiago, Cienfuegos was not settled by the Spanish in the 16th century. Rather, a group of French immigrants from Bordeaux and Louisiana petitioned then-governor José Cienfuegos for permission to establish this port town on a deepwater bay on the Caribbean Sea. Table 4.1 shows that the World Heritage List attributes of Cienfuegos are cultural criteria (ii) and (iv). Specifically, the historic town center of Cienfuegos displays key influences of architectural design and planning that hark back to the Spanish Enlightenment. It also includes a choice selection of urban planning in Latin America in the 19th century (Figure 4.2), with its emphasis on segregating different land uses (industry from residences) and its strict adherence to an orthogonal grid plan (Hardoy 1992).

FIGURE 4.2. *Bottom:* Cienfuego's town hall (*ayuntamiento*) located on the south side of the main plaza in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site is presently the seat of the provincial government. Its dome is allegedly modeled after Havana's Capitolio (completed in 1930), which, in turn, is modeled after the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, DC. *Top:* Gazebo and church on same plaza.

Cienfuego's main town square is, according to the "decision text" of ICOMOS' commission, "an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble representing the new ideas of modernity, hygiene and order" (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2006b). An interesting complex of buildings cluster around the main plaza (Parque Martí), including the Cathedral of the Purísima Concepción (1833–1869), Provincial Museum (1896), Palacio Ferrer (Figure 4.3), and Tomás Terry Theater (1886–1889). These attributes are partly why Cubans call Cienfuegos the "Pearl of the South."

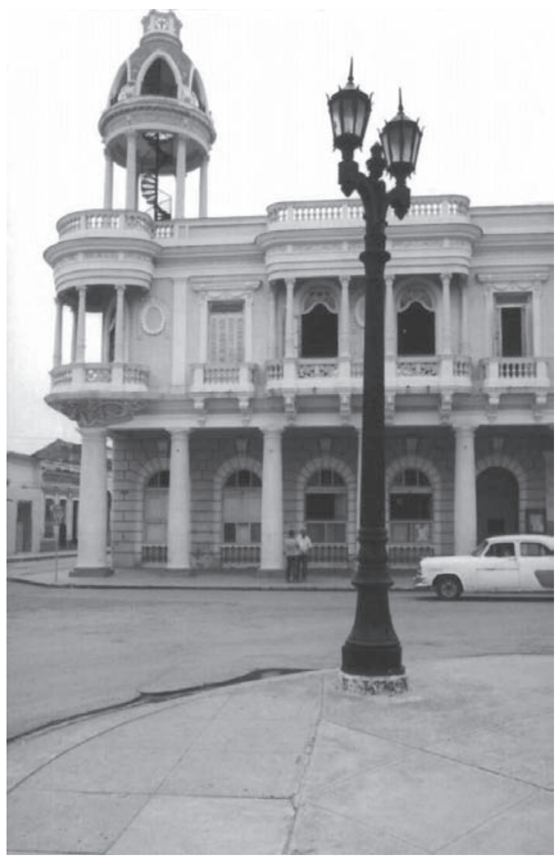


FIGURE 4.3. Palacio Ferrer sits at the western edge of Parque Martí in the heritage site of Cienfuegos. Built in the early 1900s by a wealthy sugar baron, José Ferrer Sirés, it is unique because of the blue mosaic cupola and spiral staircase. Famous opera stars, such as Enriquo Caruso, who sang at the nearby Terry Theater, purportedly stayed at the Palacio Ferrer during visits to Cienfuegos.

Old Havana and Its Fortifications

The 142 hectares that constitute Old Havana (Habana Vieja) are part of a legally protected area that contains a spectacular layering of historic buildings and public spaces spanning nearly half a millennium. If Lewis Mumford's (1986) legendary statement that "in the city, time becomes visible" has any veracity, then surely it is so in Havana. Founded in 1519 as one of the original *villas*, the city changed its location twice before settling on a cape at the western edge of the bay, originally called Puerto Carena (today called Havana Bay or *Bahía de la Habana*). The first site in 1516 was on the southern (Caribbean) shore of the island, near the present port of Batabanó. Adjacent swamplands and an unprotected bay led the military expedition that followed Diego de Velázquez's party to relocate to the northern (Florida Straits–Atlantic Ocean) site, near the Almendares River (the present-day divide between Vedado and Miramar municipalities). Soon thereafter the current site of Habana Vieja was selected because of its bag-shaped harbor and more defensible port.

Perhaps no other heritage site in Latin America and the Caribbean has received as much attention as Habana Vieja, the historic municipality in Havana City province. Because much has been written about the district, our remarks here are brief. It is a relatively large UNESCO designation and is home to about 85,000 residents. Long neglected by many governments before and after the Revolution, the property was admitted to UNESCO's heritage list in 1982, but it was not until the creation of Habaguanex and a number of related construction and real estate firms tied to the City Historian's Office (directed by Dr. Eusebio Leal) that the systematic restoration of Habana Vieja began in the mid-1990s. It includes some the largest collections of Spanish colonial architecture in the Americas (Figure 4.4). Three key plazas (Catedral, Armas, and Vieja), as well as several pedestrian boulevards (Prado and Obispo), anchor the historic preservation projects (see also Colantonio and Potter 2006a, 2006b; Edge, Woofard, and Scarpaci 2006; Scarpaci 2000; Scarpaci et al. 2002).

The City Historian's Office has been an engine of economic development, not just for Habana Vieja, but also for all of Cuba. Its annual budgets rocketed from just U.S. $3 million in 1993 to more than U.S. $60 million in the new millennium. It employs perhaps as many as 6,000 workers spread among construction (Puerto de Carena), real estate (Fénix and Aurea), historic preservation and tourism (Habaguanex), travel (San Cristóbal), monument restoration, and other agencies (Scarpaci et al. 2002, 340–343). The City Historian's Office (the office, henceforth) rightly boasts a huge list of redevelopment projects. What is unclear, however, are the actual revenues generated by heritage tourism in the old city, the

FIGURE 4.4. San Francisco Plaza with the former San Francisco Church in the background, and the Sierra Maestra warehouse and ocean terminal to the left (on Havana Bay). The former church is used mainly for conferences, meetings, and concert recitals as administered by the Office of the City Historian, not the Roman Catholic Church.

portion that is directed to the national treasury, and the percentage that actually reaches local residents (Colantonio 2004). It may be significant that the southern tip of Habana Vieja contains the poor neighborhood of San Isidro, which has been targeted by the office for residential rehabilitation. Unlike the approach in Trinidad, though, the office labors in multiple areas and its efforts are a powerhouse in a city and national economy that has faced setbacks in tourism and sugar production.

Another contentious issue is the extent to which residents of Habana Vieja are displaced, especially across the bay to the sprawling public housing complexes in Habana del Este. Foreign tourist investment and public–private partnerships with foreign capital are a top priority policy objective in Cuba, where the office contracts with mostly European investors in revitalizing Habana Vieja. Historic preservation enhances social stability while supporting the country's environmental and socioeconomic resources. Colantonio (2005) argues that the revitalization of Habana Vieja is drawing key personnel from other "badges of honor" touted by

the Revolution: health care and sports. This labor transfer has resulted from the higher-paying jobs in national currency and access to hard currency (gratuities) in tourism. Focus groups conducted by Scarpaci (2005, 141–145) showed that residents of Habana Vieja are generally pessimistic about the benefits of heritage tourism that will accrue to them, but their cynicism is not much different from that of residents in the UNESCO historic sites of Cartagena, Colombia, or Cuenca, Ecuador. Nevertheless, restoration efforts cannot proceed fast enough to rescue the historic shell of the old quarters, which have been debilitated by humidity, storms, high temperatures, and a lack of maintenance.

UNESCO also included military fortifications in its designation. The fortresses of El Morro (Figure 4.5), Real Fuerza, La Punta, and La Cabaña constitute the largest collection of colonial architecture concentrated in one district in the Western hemisphere. Inspired by Renaissance and Italian military designs from the 16th to the 18th centuries, these garrisons complement the ramparts that surrounded Habana Vieja until 1861, at which time they were torn down because of their military obsolescence. During the colonial era this network of forts guarded the riches pouring out of Mexico and South America, which found their way as part of the famous flotilla sailing from Havana to Cádiz, Spain, at the end of the hurricane season in late October.

FIGURE 4.5. El Morro Castle.

These former castle-fortresses now serve largely as museums and mixed heritage venues. La Punta (built between 1589 and 1600 to guard the “point” or western entrance to the bay) houses a naval museum. Castillo de los Tres Santos Reyes del Morro (or simply El Morro), built between 1589 and 1630, is an impressive polygon-shaped fort sitting on a rocky bluff at the eastern mouth of the bag-shaped bay. Its museum holdings focus on military and naval themes, and many visitors are drawn to its lighthouse dating from the 1840s.

La Cabaña (Forteleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña) was completed in 1774 in response to the British taking of the city in 1762. It sits on a high ridge overlooking Habana Vieja and was designed to thwart repeat land attacks from the east. Each evening there is a colonial reenactment of the canon firing ceremony that announced the closing of the city gates (Figure 4.6).

La Cabaña also has a complex history and allows myriad interpretations of the meaning of heritage landscapes in contemporary Cuba. It houses a museum dedicated to Che Guevara. However, there is little curatorial attention given to Guevara’s role as head of the military tribunals (*Comisión Depuradura*) held immediately after the Triumph of the Revolution in 1959, in which suspects were tried and executed; some allege that these “puppet” courts ignored well-established judicial review and instead opted for military court procedures that are enacted during states of siege and national emergencies (Brown and Lagos 1991; Valladares 1986; Vargas Llosa 2005). La Cabaña is also where political prisoners were kept, including the Cuban author Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990). His life in Cuba as a persecuted political dissident, author, and homosexual led to his imprisonment (see Arenas 1991). In 1973 the authorities arrested him for “ideological deviation.” He was tortured in La Cabaña, where the harsh living conditions included backed-up sewage and whose visual portrayal reached mass audiences in Julian Schnabel’s film *Before Night Falls.* Spanish actor Javier Bardem played Arenas, and the movie was based on Arenas’s original Spanish-language book *Antes de que Anochezca* (1993). While imprisoned, Arenas was threatened with death if he failed to renounce his writings. Arenas’s amusing yet tragic statement about the differences between capitalism and communism reads:

> The difference between the communist and capitalist systems is that, although both give you a kick in the ass, in the communist system you have to applaud, while in the capitalist system you can scream. *And I came here to scream*. (Reinaldo Arenas, shortly after arriving in Miami, 1980, cited in *The Sunday Times*, May 14, 2006; emphasis added)

FIGURE 4.6. La Cabaña's evening ceremony reenacts the closing of the city gates in Habana Vieja, across the bay from the fortress. This historic reenactment is one of the few ceremonies where international tourists (paying the equivalent of U.S. $5) and Cubans (paying about U.S. 25¢) mingle in the same public space. Soldiers from Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces don Spanish colonial military garb as they march from the barracks to the canon, load it, and fire it at 9:00 P.M.

Information presented at La Cabaña fortress and museum reveal no history of either political prisoner holdings or summary executions. Estimates of the number of executions carried out there and over which Che Guevara presided range from 179 to several thousand (Brown and Lagos 1991). Mario Vargas Llosa (2005) describes Che's actions as comparable to those of Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria (1899–1953), who was Joseph Stalin's head of Soviet security and police apparatus during the Great Purge of the 1930s. Not surprisingly, La Cabaña's themes of English naval attacks, corsairs, and pirates exclude Arenas and other political prisoners (e.g., prisoners of conscientiousness) who served time in this 18th-century fortress. However, in other nations political imprisonment, torture, and extermina-

tion serve as a niche-type heritage industry, as evidenced by Nelson Mandela's South African imprisonment on Robben Island (12 kilometers offshore of Cape Town; *see* Mandela 1994), detention centers that have come to light in post-Pinochet Chile (Scarpaci and Frazier 1993), and the rise of holocaust or atrocity tourism (Ashworth 2002; Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990), respectively. As this chapter has shown, heritage interpretation and the development of curatorial displays are an evolving process in Cuba, and such recognition of the darker side of La Cabaña's Spanish colonial façade may some day be revealed.

San Pedro de Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba

Santiago de Cuba, one of the original seven *villas* on the island founded by Diego de Velázquez, was the colonial capital until 1592, at which time the Spanish Crown transferred the main government powers to Havana. Santiago was the target of pirate and corsair attacks, and its isolation from the capital led to a productive contraband trade during the colonial period (Martínez-Fernández 2003). Like many Cuban cities, Santiago de Cuba possesses a bag-shaped (or pocket) bay, consisting of a narrow entrance that widens in the back bay area. San Pedro de Roca is perched on a cliff at the top of the eastern side of Santiago de Cuba's harbor (Figure 4.7).

Colonial Governor Pedro de la Roca commissioned Italian military engineer Giovanni Battista Antonelli to design this fortress in 1637, about 10 kilometers southwest of the city of Santiago de Cuba. The citadel, built between 1638 and 1700, was capable of housing 400 soldiers. As is true of much colonial and institutional architecture (convents, hospitals, forts, castles), its uses have changed from a fort protecting the city against pirate trades, to a prison in 1775, and then again to a fort in 1898 during the Cuban-Spanish-American Wars.

FIGURE 4.7. El Morro Castle, UNESCO World Heritage Site, evening canon ceremony in Santiago de Cuba.

The fort was included in the list because of its outstanding features noted in criteria (iv) and (v). Specifically, UNESCO recognized that the military construction "constitute[s] the largest and most comprehensive example of the principles of Renaissance military engineering adapted to the requirements of European colonial powers in the Caribbean" (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization 2006c). The casemates on one of the upper levels house a permanent display of prints that highlight the history of forts in the Santiago de Cuba region. An original winch at the drawbridge that covers a moat, and an intricate set of stone stairways lacing through six distinct levels, give San Pedro de la Roca considerable tourist appeal.

Trinidad and Valle de los Ingenios

Trinidad was also one of the island's original villas founded by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar. It was settled in 1514 and named after the Holy Trinity (called *Santísima Trinidad* in Spanish). The town was a key transshipment and refurbishment point for maritime traffic between eastern (Santiago de Cuba) and western (Havana) ports. One point reflecting Trinidad's fame, or infamy, is that it was the last refurbishing point for Hernán Cortez in 1519 before he set out to conquer the Valley of Mexico and embark on what turned out to be one of the largest genocides in the European domination of the Americas (Figure 4.8).

Trinidad's relative isolation fostered a regional economy based on illegal trade with Dutch, English, and French merchants, while also leaving it vulnerable to attacks by corsairs, buccaneers, and pirates. As in other parts of Cuba, the Caribbean, and North America, the Haitian slave revolt sent French colonial sugar cane growers in search of new lands and their settlement in eastern Cuba introduced distinctive vernacular architectural details (Figure 4.9).

Trinidad's elite benefited greatly from this sugar investment and took advantage of the fertile soils located in the adjacent valley, where the periodic floods from local rivers draining the Escambray Mountains provided rich alluvium for sugar cane production. In the first half of the 19th century, Trinidad and its adjacent valley (called the *Ingenio,* or grinding-stone sugar mill) attracted significant investment and, in turn, produced considerable exports of sugar (Figure 4.10). The elite built opulent palaces in town, such as the Palacio Cantero, mansions in the adjacent valley, and religious architecture (Figure 4.11). This slave-based production (Figure 4.12) peaked in the 1850s or so as the local cane growers failed to update their *ingenios* with more modern mills (*centrales*) that used steam-powered processing and grinding mechanisms.

FIGURE 4.8. A statue in Trinidad dedicated to the memory of Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, one of the few clergymen who objected to the enslavement and mistreatment of Native Americans during the 16th century. Located at the entrance to the Hotel Las Cuevas in Trinidad. Neither Trinidad nor the rest of the island had a particularly large indigenous population, but the native Tainos and Arawaks were quickly decimated as a result of infectious diseases, warfare, and their mistreatment as slaves who labored in the mines.

Railroad expansion in western Cuba (Havana and Matanzas provinces) gave sugar cane growers greater proximity and lower transportation costs to the United States market. Eventually, other sugar cane regions in Cuba and Latin America exceeded Ingenio Valley production levels. The shift in sugar production and investment left a museum-like cluster of colonial homes, palaces, churches (Figure 4.13), and streets in Trinidad, many of the latter adorned with ship ballast from Hamburg, Germany, as well as a blending of cut stone with stream rock, called *chinas pelonas* (Figure 4.11). Relative isolation from the larger port of Cienfuegos (a paved road did not connect the two places until the 1950s) indirectly resulted in a rich collection of 19th-century artifacts, less by design and more by default; Cubans call the town the "museum city" (Scarpaci 2005, ch. 7).

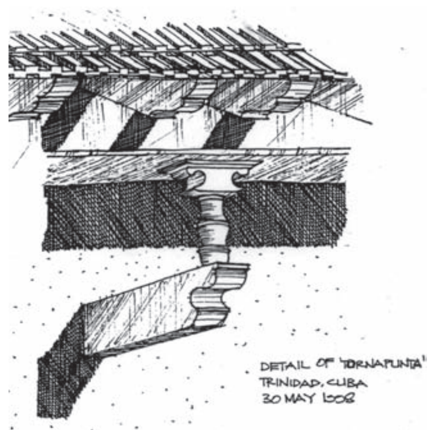


FIGURE 4.9. French migration to Cuba introduced minor but interesting changes into the vernacular design. French roof tiles, for instance, consisted of a series of rectangular "locking" pieces that contrasted with the traditional Spanish tile. The latter were "curved" by traditional artisans, who molded the clay tiles on their thighs before firing them in kilns. Trinidad's homes also contain a cantilever bracing system called *tornapunta*, seen above. It is a mounted spindle fastened to a beam protruding from the exterior wall of Trinidad homes. Courtesy of Marisa Masangkay.

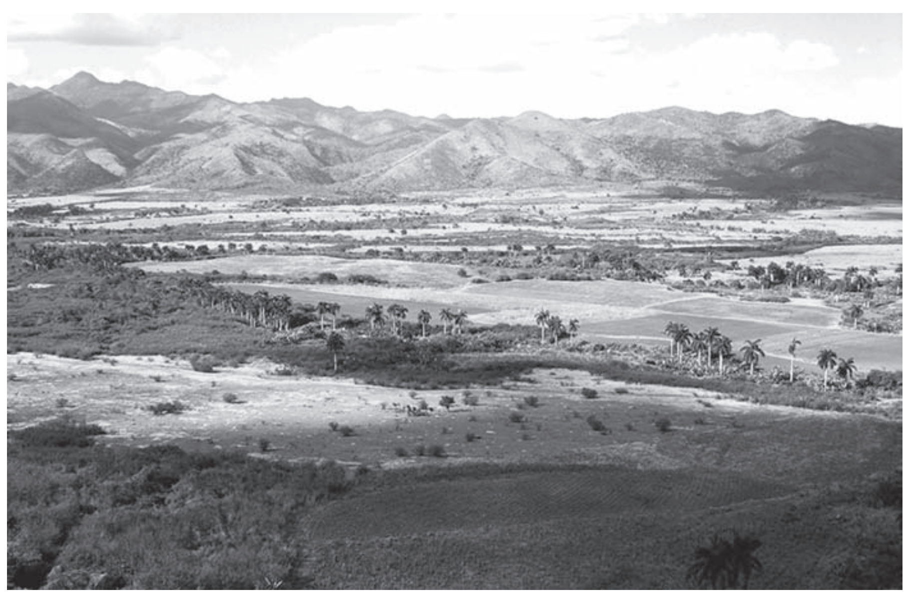


FIGURE 4.10. Valley of the Ingenios, UNESCO World Heritage Site, adjacent to Trinidad.

FIGURE 4.11. Many of the streets in Trinidad are built with a blend of local river rock and ship ballast from European ports.

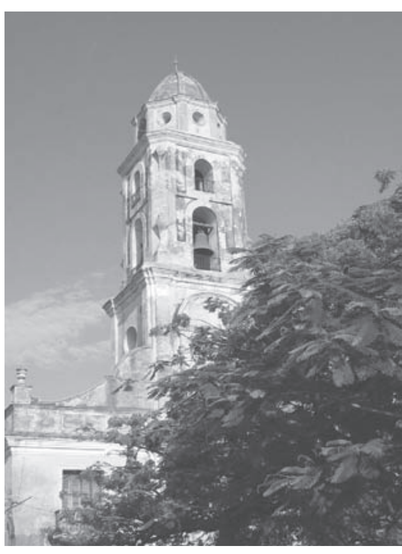


FIGURE 4.12. The former San Francisco Convent and Monastery in Trinidad, now a school and a museum dedicated to the revolutionary fighters who fought against the anti-Castro uprising in the Escambray Mountains (called the "Cleansing of the Escambray") between 1961 and 1965. It is now called the Museo de la Lucha contra los Bandidos (Struggle against the Bandits Museum). The bell in the tower dates from 1853.

FIGURE 4.13. This tower built in the 1840s, called the Iznaga Tower (after the plantation owner), allowed the overseer (*mayordomo*) to keep an eye on slaves working the sugar fields. When the Restoration Office in Trinidad was established in 1988, rebuilding the steps in the tower was the first project completed.

An expanding team of talented professionals, headed originally by the late Trinidad native and architect Roberto "Macholo" González and later by architect Nancy Benítez, maintains the properties in much of the historic district. A 2% tax imposed on hard currency operations (hotels, restaurants, taxis, bars, art galleries, etc.) and a 1% tax on peso-run establishments produced an annual budget of more than $400,000 in the early years of the millennium. Significantly, the Trinidad restoration team does not prioritize restaurants, art galleries, museums, or other entities devoted strictly to tourism. After an early phase (1988–1992) of restoring key "elite" structures from the 18th and 19th centuries, the group has focused largely on improving run-down residential structures in the Three Crosses Neighborhoods (*Barrio Tres Cruces*), with the assistance of the Barcelona-based nongovernmental organization (NGO), Architects without Borders (*Arquitectos sin Frontera*). Efforts are under way to develop a network of bed-and-breakfast facilities and an agricultural museum (Figure 4.14) in the Valley of the Ingenios, as well as to curtail impending beachfront hotel

FIGURE 4.14. The former living room of Guaímaro Plantation, in the Valley of the Ingenios, about 8 kilometers outside Trinidad. The house dates from the 1830s and contains frescoes by Italian muralists. The Restoration Office of Trinidad has plans to convert the former plantation into an agricultural heritage and machinery museum in an effort to decentralize heritage tourism away from urban Trinidad and into the valley.

development along Ancón Peninsula, some 11 kilometers from Trinidad proper (Scarpaci 2005, ch. 7).

Viñales

UNESCO's "cultural landscape" classification stems from the long-standing tradition of tobacco cultivation as well as the area's tobacco sheds and other distinctive vernacular architecture (Figure 4.15). This valley's proximity to the capital makes it a common day trip for visitors to Havana. It is located about 112 miles (180 kilometers) west of Havana in Pinar del Río Province. Its green tobacco fields, coffee, and mixed cropping convey a postcard-perfect beauty (Figure 4.16). Moreover, a unique combination of even temperature, hills and valleys (Figure 4.17), humidity, solar exposition, and soil conditions create a unique biogeographic realm and microclimate that produces some of the world's finest tobacco leaf.

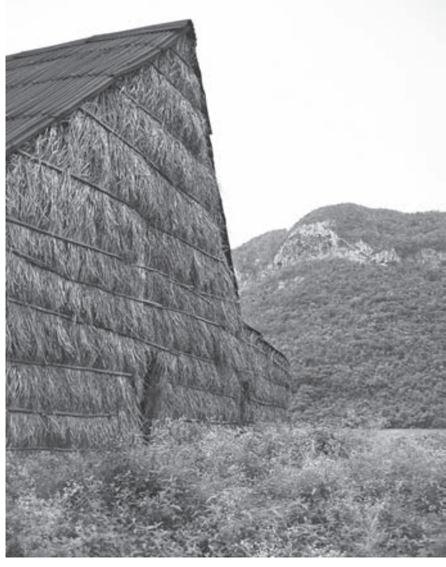


FIGURE 4.15. UNESCO was impressed with the Viñales tobacco-based agricultural system, which has remained fairly unchanged throughout the years, thus leading the Geneva-based institution to designate it as a "cultural landscape." Tobacco drying sheds such as these have changed little over time in terms of design and building materials. Thatched walls consist of local palm leaves and the roof is made of the traditional ceramic tile, not zinc. Local farmers claim that the tile roofs "breathe" better than metal ones and, in turn, produce ideal drying conditions for the tobacco leaf.

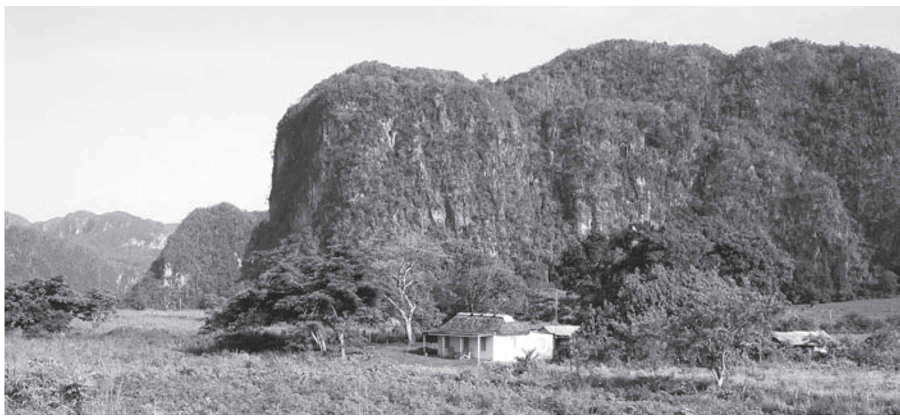


FIGURE 4.16. Viñales Valley, Pinar del Río Province, in western Cuba.

FIGURE 4.17. This detail of a pen-and-ink relief map popularized by Cuban cartographer Gerardo Canet and Harvard professor Edwin Raisz reveals the knob-like hills (*mogotes*) and mountains (Sierra de los Organos and Rosario chains) that run northeast–southwest in the Viñales Valley (right middle of map) in Pinar del Río Province. From Marrero (1957, 406, map insert). Courtesy Harvard University Press.

Unlike sugar production elsewhere in the island, tobacco production was mostly a nonslave agricultural system, and therefore the majority of the population is largely made up of white descendents from the Canary Islands who settled there in the late 17th century. Cultivation has remained relatively unchanged since the 18th century except for the use of chemical fertilizers and some diesel-powered tractors (though ox-driven plows prevail). Fine shade and filler tobacco is well suited to the local climate and soils (Marrero 1957).

A series of underground streams has carved out the striking limestone haystack (*mogotes*) hills, offering photographers and sightseers a spellbinding view of the valley (Figure 4.18). Geomorphologically, the *mogotes* are "transported mountains" or "mountains without roots" (*klippes* in German) because, through heavy erosion, uplifting, and deposition, the mogotes are huge fragments of rock that have been superimposed over strata to which they have no affinity—in this case, limestone overlying shale (Marrero 1957, 410). Viñales offers an ideal venue for speleology and leisure boat rides throughout its many caverns and caves. The *mogotes* date back to the Jurassic period (roughly 146–198 million years ago) and contain a mixed and endemic plant cover.

FIGURE 4.18. Haystack (*mogote*) karstic formation in a Viñales landscape.

HERITAGE AT RISK

Cuba's economic downturn in the 1990s increased competition for scarce public resources. Not surprisingly, matters of food provision, health care, and energy tended to receive priority over matters of cultural patrimony. In 2001, ICOMOS identified scores of heritage sites in Cuba that were considered "at risk." This entailed a list of establishments and types of structures designated as Agro-Industrial Heritage (mostly sugar mills), Wooden Architecture (largely late 19th-century buildings and verandas), Urban Industrial Heritage (mostly cigar, beer, timber, electricity, and paper production facilities), and 20th-century Legacy (mostly Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Eclectic structures) (International Commission on Monuments and Sites 2001–2002).

Of special significance are the famous art schools (*Escuelas de Arte*) located on the former golf course of Havana's western suburbs. The World Monuments Fund placed them on its "100 Most Endangered Sites" list in the early 2000s. The schools, designed and built (1961–1965) by Ital-

ian architects Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti and Cuban architect Ricardo Porro, were never fully completed and fell into disrepair. Some *machista* (macho) interpretations of the sinuous shape of the walkways, the bulbous forms of the pavilions, and the earth tone colors of the brick and tiles conjure up images—in the minds of some viewers—of a beautiful dark-skinned woman. The schools were to house higher education classes in dance, music, and the plastic arts. All of the schools have been functioning for four decades, but not all have been completely built (Loomis 1999) (Figure 4.19).

In general, their maintenance has been lacking (Figure 4.20). Built from local clay tiles and drawing on colors, forms, and textures of the island, they are perhaps among the best examples of modern architecture done since the 1959 Revolution (Loomis 1999). However, in the early millennium, the Cuban government prioritized the repair of these structures and a multimillion-dollar project is under way. The Havana City Historian's Office heads up a major part of the renovation. The schools were removed from the World Monuments Fund endangered list in 2004.

One of the iconic images of Havana that would not seem to form part of heritage or tourism landscapes is that of American writer and Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway. A longtime resident of Cuba, the writer frequented many of the bars, restaurants, and hotels in Habana Vieja. Between 1959 and the early 1990s, there was hardly an image of him to be found in

FIGURE 4.19. A portion of the incomplete Escuelas de Arte, in Cubanacán, western Havana City Province. Construction started in the early 1960s.

FIGURE 4.20. Cuba's Escuelas de Arte. One of the finest complexes built in Cuba since 1959. The schools are known for the use of local building materials that draw on red clays that characterize most of the island's soils. Terra-cotta materials and Catalan vaulted ceilings symbolize both the authenticity and optimism of the design. The domes seen in the top and bottom images grace the complexes, and are framed by concrete lattice sunscreens that serve as glassless "windows." High-vaulted domes (light colored, top image) allow for rising warm air to escape through the ceiling tops. These pod-like domes serve as art and dance studios. Cracked and flaking brick and tiles can be seen in the ceilings of both images, taken in 2004.

the old quarters. Today, though, hotels, restaurants, T-shirt vendors, and bartenders pay tribute to him (Figure 4.21). His permanent residence was Finca Vigía (Lookout Farm), located in the Havana southeastern suburb of San Francisco de Paula. This is where the Nobel laureate penned *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. The original structure was built in 1886 and Hemingway acquired the house in 1939, where he resided until 1960 (a year before his suicide in Idaho).

The house serves as the official Ernest Hemingway Museum, and foreigners pay a hefty $25 to visit the site. However, the house has not been well maintained during the period of the socialist government. In the early millennium the house was identified as being at risk, and by 2006 it had remained on the World Monuments Fund and ICOMOS lists of endangered structures. Tourists have never been allowed inside the home. Instead, they peer through windows to see Hemingway's books, clothes, photographs, office, and paintings. The house-museum suffers from foundation instability and problems induced by the high humidity of the region. Normal aging, high winds, tropical rains, and storms have debilitated the structure. According to the Cuban government, it has no funds to restore the facility, despite the hefty entrance fees.

A binational effort between the United States and Cuba has led to the gradual renovation of the house. Relatives of Hemingway, his former edi-

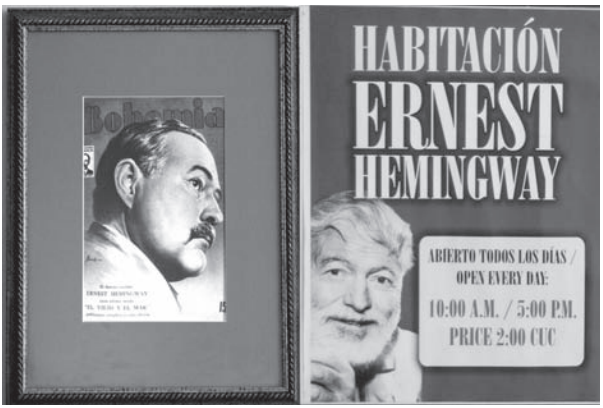


FIGURE 4.21. Two images from the Ambos Mundos Hotel, in Habana Vieja, where Ernest Hemingway was a frequent guest. Hemingway was a popular figure, as illustrated by his picture on the cover of the Cuban weekly news and arts magazine, *Bohemia* (left). The hotel has recreated the room where Hemingway was a guest and where he often wrote (right). Tourists can visit the room for the price of approximately U.S. $2.

tor Maxwell Perkins, and several film stars founded the Hemingway Preservation Foundation, Inc. In an unprecedented arrangement under the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba, the foundation made a case for "binational heritage" before the U.S. government. Roadblocks imposed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury have kept funds from reaching the project directly. However, the restoration efforts have involved the microfiching of some draft manuscripts found in the basement of Finca Vigía, part of a joint project between Boston University and the National Library of Cuba. Finca Vigía found its way on the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2005 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Places.

OTHER FORMS OF HERITAGE

The Cuban government administered 289 museums in 2006. According to UNESCO's classification system of museums, 164 are general museums, 14 are art museums, 68 are historical museums, 9 are specialized museums, 9 are history and science museums, 4 are archeological museums, and the remainder are unclassified (Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural 2008). Most are dependent on central funding from the Ministry of Culture. Cubans enjoy free admission to most museums or are nominally charged in local currency; foreigners always pay in hard currency when admission is required.

Since the demise of the Soviet Union and CMEA, Cuba has embarked on a strong movement to rescue historical places, promote museums, and celebrate nationally and internationally acclaimed sites and monuments (Scarpaci 2000, 2005). One of the catalysts of this movement has been the city historian of Havana, Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler. He was perhaps first known to millions of Cubans for a television show he hosted, *Andar La Habana* (Walking through Havana), in which he highlighted the city's historical and cultural assets. An elegant speaker and an elected member to the National Assembly, he describes the nation's pursuit of heritage this way:

> We have brought life back to every neighborhood in all aspects, as a worthy place to live where schools, cultural institutions, and health facilities proliferate. Resurrecting what once seemed to be lifeless provokes confused looks at such a romantic crusade. And even if it were that way, we would not feign ignorance nor feel ashamed of being romantics in an age defined by apocalyptic events. Our work projects other forms of hope: that which is born from recovering memory, from dreams shared by many to create a new order. (Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana 2006; our translation)

Perhaps no single Cuban has been more affiliated with heritage preservation than Dr. Leal.

LOST HERITAGE: DISPLACED OR TEMPORARILY ON LOAN?

Revolutions are messy. They divide nations, neighborhoods, and families. The Cuban Revolution is no exception. The population of the Cuban diaspora since 1959 easily approaches 2 million individuals who consider themselves Cuban even though they live outside the island. Without delving into the polemics surrounding the Revolution, one current of discussion about heritage concerns the definition of what is "Cuban" (*lo cubano*) and whether or not one must reside on the island to contribute to this debate. A related aspect of the Revolution and heritage concerns the socialist government's use of personal and corporate property before the Revolution. Émigrés leaving the island were usually allowed to take only a small amount of personal property; often they could leave with only the clothes they were wearing. Personal artifacts (jewelry, photographs), family heirlooms, and artwork stayed behind. Although these items do not individually constitute significant parts of a heritage landscape, they may form parts of curatorial exhibits in museums, which, in turn, make up Cuban heritage.

Alberto Bustamante, a fervent anti-Castro exile and chairman of the board of Cuban National Heritage in 2001, is one of many advocates who claim that Cuba is losing its heritage. Writing in a special issue devoted to Cuban culture and heritage in *Herencia* magazine, he argued that

> with tremendous sacrifices we have presented the truth [about Cuban heritage] because the search for it is a condition of liberty. . . . The loss of our patrimony is doing irreparable damage to young Cubans in the island as well as to those in exile. . . . Many bright and honest people inside Cuba are dedicated to saving our patrimony and we have recognized their effort in the restoration and preservation of historical buildings in Havana, Cienfuegos, Trinidad and other cities. (Bustamante 2001, 3)

He also contends that some of the island's personal property and artwork has been either sold abroad or "taken" without proper compensation. Table 4.4 lists a few of his concerns surrounding this matter. If the eastern European countries and former Soviet Union serve as examples in regard to indemnifying the previous owners of heritage items, it appears that the matter of compensating and repatriating Cuban heritage will not be easy.

TABLE 4.4. The Appropriation of Cuban Heritage since 1959

1. Since 1959 thousands of artistic artifacts of Cuban patrimony, most from private residences of families that had fled the country, were disposed of by prominent members of the regime. Most were taken to large warehouses on the Avenida del Puerto and sold.

2. Between 1960 and 1970, approximately 30 million dollars' worth of books, most from private libraries, and small valuables were sold to Western Europeans through East Berlin. There were also sales to dealers in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Madrid, and Barcelona. Many auctions were held in Toronto and Montreal. Advertisements were placed, describing lots as being furniture, paintings, and jewelry from the palaces of Havana and other Cuban cities. There is a documented example of this type of sale in Canada, held at Montreal's Frazer Brothers Auctioneers in 1969.

3. For the past 39 years [*Note*: written in 1998] the Communist Cuban government has aggressively pursued smaller family heirlooms. To gain access to precious metals and gemstones, the government manipulated the chronic scarcity of consumer goods by establishing "trading centers" where ordinary citizens were encouraged to exchange jewels and artifacts for necessities such as electronic appliances, household goods, and cash. The exchange rates were so abusive that the centers were soon nicknamed "centros Hernán Cortez," referring to the beads-for-gold deception practiced by the early conquistadors.

4. In May 1994 in Milan, Italy, the Casa Delle Aste, Instituto Italiano Realizze, sold, at auction, 700 lots that were described as decorations and objects from the diplomatic residences of Cuba. The "diplomatic residences" were, in reality, the private homes of Cuban families. The total sale of 138 paintings alone was estimated at more than U.S. $8 million. Notice of the auction by the Italian press indicated that the items had received approval for export from the Cuban Ministry of Culture on March 12, 1994.

5. Periodically, shipments of Cuba's cultural heritage were moved through the Port of Barcelona to supply multiple dealers active in the Costa Brava.

6. The Cuban government, capitalizing on the Cuban people's need of dollars for basic survival, has encouraged and allowed the Galeria Las Acacias in Havana to accept art and antiques on consignment for sales overseas. Upon completion of a sale, the owner receives 70% and the state retains 30% of the proceeds. Officers of the Museum of Fine Arts have often sold museum works at this gallery.

7. From the archival heritage, the loss has not been any less. Thousands of documents from the National Archives and the National Library have been systematically sold to dealers worldwide. The stamps and seals of these institutions are easily identifiable on books and documents, clearly indicating their place of origin.

Note. Based on Bustamante (n.d.; c. 1998).

NATIONAL SITES AND MONUMENTS AND PROTECTED ZONES

Aside from Cuba's nine World Heritage Sites, the Ministry of Culture has developed an extensive list of national monuments, local sites, and protected zones (Table 4.5). In this section we briefly discuss these national monuments and protected zones.

Cuba's "national sites" encompass all urban historic centers and all construction sites or objects that possess exceptional character and deserve to be conserved for their cultural, historical, or social significance to the country. A National Commission of Monuments makes such a determination. It should be noted that "social" significance also entails political importance. Our analysis shows that about 10% of the sites discussed below have "sociopolitical" significance based on the Triumph of the Revolution from 1959 onward. This may mean that the naming of national heritage sites and monuments in socialist Cuba is not as politically charged as some have suggested (Préstamo 1995).

TABLE 4.5. Cuban National, Local, and Protected Zones and Sites, 2008

Province or municipality	National sites	Local sites	Protection zones	Province/ municipal totals
Pinar del Río	10	14	3	27
La Habana	7	19	2	28
Ciudad de la Habana	35	6	11	52
Matanzas	14	14	4	32
Villa Clara	9	3	7	19
Cienfuegos	11	12	0	23
Sancti Spiritus	10	22	1	33
Ciego de Avila	2	7	25	34
Camagüey	7	7	0	14
Las Tunas	3	2	1	6
Holguín	10	7	2	19
Granma	15	5	1	27
Santiago de Cuba	47	41	8	96
Guantánamo	10	18	3	45
Isla de la Juventud	4	9	1	14
Dispersed	1	0	1	2
Totals	215	186	70	471

Note. Data from Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (2008).

"Local monuments" include all elements of the built environment, sites, and objects that do yet entail the necessary conditions to be declared national monuments. Still, the National Heritage Commission deems them to be worthy of conservation because of their historical, cultural, or social interest to local communities.

"Protected zones" are sites with the potential to be declared national monuments. A protected zone is reviewed for a final evaluation and is subject to special regulation to guarantee its protection as a monument or as an urban zone of historical-cultural value that deserves to be protected. In 2006, 70 such zones existed (Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

For a relatively small nation—not much larger than the U.S. state of Tennessee—Cuba has a remarkable array of insular heritage. Its cultural and natural sites, national landmarks, and cultural landscapes are varied and special. Not all of the heritage sites have developed under carefully designed management plans; Trinidad and other sites evolved as museum-like places as much by default as by design. A relatively low population density on the largest island in the Caribbean may be an important criterion in accounting for the preservation of these sites. Idiosyncratic and technological factors have led to the destruction of historical landscapes; politicians and private owners have dispensed with properties for various reasons. For instance, Havana's walls were torn down because they were militarily obsolete and exacerbated crowding. Although heritage preservation was not particularly well supported or encouraged in the decades following the Triumph of the Revolution, it has recently received considerable attention. To be sure, heritage sells, and the Cuban government unabashedly seeks—in the parlance of free-market economics and neoliberalism—new comparative advantages to sustain the economy. It will be a test of time to determine whether the Revolution is successful in defining its own version of socialist heritage that will add to the national stock. As Graham and colleagues (2000, 25) note, "It follows that once a subversive heritage succeeds to power, it quickly loses its revolutionary intent and becomes a conservative force in itself."

There is a trend in heritage preservation to acknowledge the spiritual values tied to historical monuments, natural features, and cultural landscapes. In a similar vein, Anthony Tung poses an almost anachronistic question, in this age when technological gains capture the public's imagination about what is new, not what is old:

> If the historic cores of major cities are vigorously protected and their architectural forms are fixed in time, as if they were living museums, can such metropolises prosper in the unforgiving world of global economic competition? Have we arrived at a moment when . . . conservation assumes an unprecedented urgency because of the historically unparalleled power of modern humans to alter whole cityscapes overnight? (2001, 1)

This urgency to conserve without being reactionary also entails documenting rituals, belief systems, and oral traditions. Given Cuba's low level of formal religious participation, we might expect to see some movement whereby the "spiritual" and "belief systems" could, over time, incorporate many more political values embraced by the Revolution, or by Cuba's African heritage, which has only since the 20th century been celebrated and recognized (de la Fuente, Garcia del Pino, and Iglesias Delgado 1996; Ortiz 1975; Tannenbaum 1992). Behind most of the UNESCO cultural sites described in this chapter are the blood and sweat of anonymous slave labor. Indeed, there is a huge resurgence of Afro-Cuban heritage tourism throughout the island (Figure 4.22) that also consists of microenterprises.

FIGURE 4.22. An Afro-Cuban priest who practices *palo monte* (derived from African religions grounded in nature) spits rum into an altar devoted to several syncretic deities in his home in Atarés, Havana, in 2001. He lists his home as a "cultural center," though government authorities turn a blind eye to centers like this, which may, on occasion, receive compensation from heritage tourists in remote corners of the island.

Because the transmission of national values to young people is a celebrated form of promoting national cultural identity that UNESCO supports (Rössler 2004b), such a trend is quite likely, particularly as the Revolution approaches its 50-year anniversary. To date, however, the number of national sites (non-UNESCO) in Cuba is just 10% of the 215 sites. We might even envision a new kind of heritage landscape emerging at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo, Cuba, once it returns to Cuban control. Fidel Castro claims that he will turn the facility into a free education center for the people of Latin America. At present, tourists can observe the base from only a single observation town several kilometers north of the base (Figure 4.23). The international uproar over the use of the U.S. Camp X-ray for detaining alleged terrorists has resulted in unprecedented scrutiny of what was once a sleepy coaling station negotiated dubiously from the Cuban nation in the Platt Amendment of 1902. In fact, Cuban maps since 1959 make no reference to the U.S. naval base. Nevertheless, new venues of atrocity heritage tourism lurk on the horizon, whether it denounces political oppression (e.g., La Cabaña) or international violations of human rights (Camp X-ray). The possibilities for new heritage landscapes are unlimited:

FIGURE 4.23. European and U.S. tourists observe Guantánamo Naval Base (a.k.a. "Gitmo") and search for a glimpse of Camp X-ray from a hilltop north of the base in Cuban territory. The restaurant-bar is draped in guerrilla-chic camouflage netting and is run by the government's military tourism branch, *Gaviota* (meaning "seagull").

Camp X-ray could some day be a sort of international Islamic heritage or antiwar site in a post-Iraq war, postembargo, and post-Fidel era. Regardless of its future use, it is in many ways the Cuban version of Abu Ghraib prison, even though Camp X-ray is in U.S. and not Cuban territory. One of President Barack Obama's first acts in office was to order the closing of this detention center at "Gitmo."

Given that Cuba is a socialist island, there are relatively few political monuments from the revolutionary era. For instance, although there are communist monuments to Mao in China, Kim in North Korea, and Soviet leaders in the former USSR, there are no monuments to Fidel (until now, during his lifetime); there is a small plaque in Vedado on the corner of intersection where he declared his revolution to be a communist one (Figure 4.24). Havana's Plaza de la Revolución, formerly Plaza Cívica, was completed for the most part during the Batista government of the 1950s. Havana does contain a few smaller civic art projects commissioned during the Revolution that may someday approach national landmark status. This includes the Student Martyr Park in Centro Habana and the monument in Colón Cemetery (Figure 4.25) to students who attacked the Presidential Palace on March 13, 1957, nearly killing Batista.

The structure enduring the most significant architectural neglect is Havana's School of Arts, which in 2000 was placed on the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites. However, it is now undergoing a multimillion-dollar repair. The island's checkered attempts at environmental stewardship may some day endanger its cultural land-

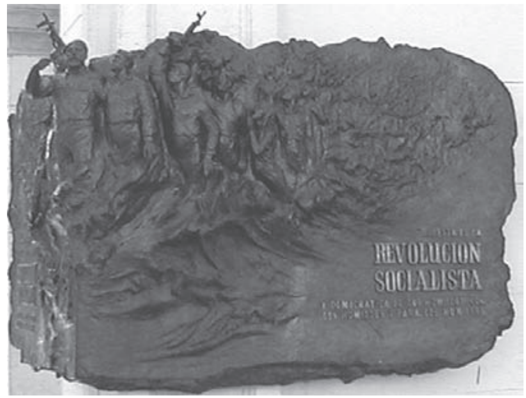


FIGURE 4.24. Bronze plaque designating the location where Fidel Castro declared his socialist revolution, in Vedado, Havana, Avenida 23 and Calle 12.

FIGURE 4.25. Student martyr monument and burial ground at Colón Cemetery, Havana (cemetery basilica on right center horizon). Built and designed in 1983 by Mario Coyula, Emilio Escobar, Orestes del Castillo Sr., and José Villa. The site consists of small rises that represent the "sierras" where the Revolution was launched and uses rough cobblestones that force pedestrians to look down as they walk, which, at the same time, is a sign of respect to the 13 fallen students the monument commemorates. At the exact time of the attack on President Batista's presidential palace, 3:20 P.M. on March 13, the sun casts a shadow along the axis of the stainless steel Cuban flags (one for each fallen student) and culminates at a torch in the ground, which is lighted. The ceremony takes place annually. A large yagruma tree (*Cecropia* spp.) sheds leaves that are gray and somber on one side, and bright and green on the other, in reference to the lives and deaths of the deceased.

scapes and natural sites. To be sure, heritage evolves and is ongoing. The revolutionary government has done much recently to promote its hundreds of UNESCO and national sites and protection zones, endowing the island with a plethora of heritage sites. Cuba's relative standing vis-à-vis Caribbean and other nations is considerable. Perhaps the greatest challenge may lie in marshaling the necessary resources to manage these landmarks as the economy struggles to regain the level of the 1989 Soviet era. *New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger (2001) identifies the risk in leaning toward too much free-market activity and too much state control:

> It is a striking paradox that right now in Cuba, the Communist regime seems quite eager to sell anything it can to bring in short-term income—whereas it

> is here, in the United States, this citadel of capitalism, that so many people are looking at Cuba with more of a long view, and urging it to move slowly, to make rules, to enforce a certain amount of governmental authority to limit and guide development. . . . The answer for [Cuba]—this "third way"—is not merely a matter of preserving what is there and preventing new construction which is absurd and impractical. And it is emphatically not the theme park. . . .

Future heritage projects in Cuba will be ambitious but necessary. And they will not be confined to just land projects either. They might include underwater cultural heritage as it is fast becoming a focus of extrainsular relevance as international agencies explore shipwrecks and preserve fragile coral reefs surrounding Cuba (Grenier, Nutley, and Cochran 2006). Heritage landscapes will continue to offer constructive lenses through which we can interpret Cuban history, culture, natural resources, and politics.

NOTE

1. We are grateful to architect Orestes del Castillo Jr. for making this point.
2. The inclusion of a more detailed discussion of the historic center of Comagüey in 2008 came about while this book was in production and, therefore, we could not give it more attention.

CHAPTER 5

Tourism

The rise of international travel in the 20th century is inextricably linked to an increase in leisure time and expendable income in the advanced capitalist nations. A mass market makes travel and lodging relatively affordable to a rising middle class across the globe. No less important is today's tourists' perception of possible destinations; whatever forces shape the tourists' gaze, advertising, media portrayals, and information technologies—rightly or wrongly—spark an interest in travel, exploration, and relaxation (Urry 2002). The confluence of these forces is powerful, and there are crosscurrents touting both merits and detriments in exploring the island of Cuba. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, Alexander von Humboldt noted this contradiction: Its institution of slavery was abhorrent, yet the island's natural beauty and variety were astounding (Humboldt 2001).

Fast-forward two centuries from Humboldt's 1802 observations, and similar ironies arise. For instance, international organizations lambaste the island for its human and civil rights records. The European Union—often a supporter of Cuba, especially when the latter is confronted by U.S. exigencies—concluded that it would continue to "condemn acts of repudiation . . . [and] call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners . . . [and] facilitate the free flow of information" (2006, 1). In a similar denunciation, the Heritage Foundation's 2008 Index of Economic Freedom situated Cuba 156th in regard to the 157 countries among political, economic, and social liberties (Heritage Foundation 2008). The Heritage Foundation ranks Cuba 29th out of 29 countries in the Americas, and the island's overall score is less than half the regional average. Cuba performs least egregiously in corruption, trade freedom, and monetary freedom. Its

business freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights, freedom from corruption, and labor freedom are all weak. It is significant that Cuba ranked just ahead of North Korea, which scored at the bottom of all "economically repressed regimes." At the heart of these assessments lies the argument that the government of Cuba violates basic human rights. Moreover, the Cuban government dominates matters of labor organization, higher education, media outlets, and the national economy. Carlos Alberto Montaner argues:

> Cuba must eventually face up to history. The country cannot continue as an anachronistic, collectivist, communist dictatorship in a world where Marxism has been completely discredited. Cuba belongs to Western civilization. It is part of Latin America, and it makes no sense for its government to keep the country isolated from its surroundings.... After all, the dictatorships of Latin America, both on the left (like Velasco Alvarado in Peru) and on the right (Augusto Pincohet and the military regimes in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay), were all replaced by governments legitimized at the ballot box. (2007, 58)

If Cuba is so horrible, what drives its tourism industry? Why are countless Americans clamoring to get to their island neighbor? The charges previously noted are not new in this long-standing global polemic. To be sure, the Cuban government counters that it conceptualizes human rights differently. It does not profit from medical care to the masses and the government prioritizes housing and food subsidies, despite the poor quality in both realms. The nation is proud that there are no homeless people and contends that it could do more if it were not for the 1961 trade embargo that frustrates the government and impedes access to U.S. markets, credit and finance capital, consumers, and distribution networks. Cuba points to other "badges of honor" to counter charges of economic and political repression. For instance, its life expectancy ranks 53rd (77.4 years) as compared with the United States' 46th place (77.9 years), and the Central Intelligence Agency (2007) estimated the 2006 Cuban infant mortality rate (6.22 deaths within the first year of life per 1,000 babies born) to be lower than that of the United States (6.433). Ignacio Ramonet, countering the claims made by Carlos Alberto Montaner in *Foreign Policy*, argues:

> No serious organization has ever accused Cuba ... of carrying out "disappearances," engaging in extrajudicial executions, or even performing physical torture on detainees. The same cannot be said of the United States in its five-year-old "war on terror." ... [Cuba] has succeeded in increasing life expectancy and lowering infant mortality.... These successes constitute a great

> legacy of Fidel Castro's, one that few Cubans, even those in the opposition, would want to lose.... Cubans enjoy full employment, and each citizen is entitled to three meals a day, an achievement that continues to elude Brazil's [President] Lula [da Sliva]. But Castro will not only be remembered as a defender of the weakest and poorest citizens. Historians 100 years from now will credit Castro with building a cohesive nation with a strong identity, even after a century of the white, elitist temptation to side with the United States out of fear of the numerous and oppressed black population. They will remember him correctly, as a preeminent pioneer in the history of his country. (Ramonet 2007, 61)

We will not enter this perennial debate between Washington, DC, and Havana, as there is already a broad literature on the subject. Both sides question the conceptual assumptions that buttress the data hurled back and forth in this dispute. And each party contends that the data and conceptual underpinnings of the other camp are suspect. Suffice it to say, the positions staked out in this exchange are firm and no review of the literature will resolve the impasse. As Ramón Vázquez astutely noted about the bipolar and entrenched positions between the exile community in Miami and the government in Havana: "Nothing is more similar to a Cuban Communist than a Cuban anticommunist" (Vázquez 1994, 7–8; our translation).

Our concern in this chapter is to trace the magnetism of Cuba for the international tourist, regardless of the merits and detriments of the communist government. As the sixth decade of the Revolution begins, few would have expected Cuba to resort to a conventional neoclassical economic tenet—comparative advantage—as an economic development tool. Allegedly, Fidel Castro stated in the early years of the Revolution that he did not want an island of bartenders and chambermaids; his vision of Cuba was that it would become a "different America" that supports social justice and equality (Chafee and Prevost 1992). What advantages does Cuba hold in the tourist market? Geography and political perception explain some of Cuba's advantage in this enterprise.

First, Cuba is 90 miles from one of the largest pools of tourists in the world. Although the halcyon days of the 1950s are over—when hourly flights carried gamblers and adventure seekers from Miami to Havana—airlines and hotels today are primed to tap into this new and exotic market once again. The international tourist industry suffered significant setbacks in the early years of the new millennium. Y2K spooked potential travelers and then the attacks of September 11, 2001, deepened the shock. A strong global economy in the late 1990s dissipated when the information technology bubble driving the stock market broke in March 2000. Cultural and

economic exchanges between United States citizens and Cubans increased from the mid-1990s until June 2004, and the executive order imposed by President George W. Bush (to curtail undergraduate student and cultural trips) could easily be rescinded by the stroke of a different presidential pen. Cuba is closer to most Americans who live east of the Mississippi River than to those in the desert southwestern states.

Second, the Cuban landscape remains largely unexplored by international tourists, who have visions of tall palm trees and clear blue seas. Washed by the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Caribbean, it remains indelibly enticing. It bears repeating that Cuba has a relatively low population density, thanks in part to its being the largest island in the Caribbean and its moderate population growth. Only the Bahamas (27.8 people per square kilometer), Dominica (88), and the British Virgin Islands (99.3) display lower population densities than Cuba (99.6) (Overpopulation.com 2007). It is also noteworthy that its 11.2 million residents are sprinkled along a 1,250-kilometer (775-mile) length, which is comparable to the distance between Long Island (New York) and Chicago. An average width of just 60 miles allows tourists to visit the northern Gulf/Atlantic side and the southern/Caribbean shores within a short drive. Unlike those on other West Indies islands, Cuban settlements are not largely confined to narrow coastal plains, narrow valleys, or restricted back bay locations. Instead, the island's broad expanse of inland plains affords a different kind of settlement geography. The Dominican Republic is the only Caribbean nation with a larger percentage (72%) of its population living beyond 10 kilometers of the coast; in Cuba, 59% live beyond that 10-kilometer band (World Resources Institute 2007). To the delight of some tourists, this means there are large tracts of open spaces (much of it waterfront), dotted with small and medium-size settlements, all potentially waiting for a burgeoning U.S. market to explore them. And if there is any hope that proper wastewater and industrial management might someday safeguard Cuba's coral reefs, it will be helped by the relatively large "inland" population, as compared with those of other Caribbean nations (Burke and Maidens 2005). All of this, of course, assumes the necessary environmental and civil engineering investments as well as the political and economic will to thwart coastal degradation.

Third, international visitors to Cuba seem to relish finding themselves in a place where most Americans cannot travel, whether they are British citizens commenting on the relative absence of "Yanks" on the island, Mexicans remarking about the few *gringos*, or Spaniards noting the lack of *norteamericanos*. Cuba is generally off-limits to U.S. citizens except for journalists, academicians, and religious groups. As America's popularity

wanes in the new millennium—not least because it has waged a highly unpopular war in Iraq—America bashing has found a new source of comfort: Cuba. British writer James Leavey sums it up this way:

> "So what was it like?" asked the man serving drinks at Bar Cuba, in Kensington High Street.
>
> "Cuba was the place I dreamt about for 30 years," I told him, "after reading Hemingway's novels and Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. It's funny how over the years little things fix an impression of a distant country in your mind. Cuba was the place I thought you only got hijacked to.... Cubans were some of the friendliest people I had met anywhere, bearing in mind that only a few years ago they would have been arrested for talking to a foreigner.... What's suprised [sic] me is how well-educated [Cubans] are, which explains why Cuba probably has the world's most literate beggars. Where else could you discuss Bertolt Brecht and Karl Marx with a doctor or dentist who is working ... [not to mention a] *total lack of American tourists*." (2007; emphasis added)

There is more evidence that anti-Americanism and Cuba are a perfect match. A BBC public opinion poll in 2007 queried 11,000 adults in the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Indonesia, South Korea, Jordan, Australia, Canada, Israel, Brazil and the United States about their views and opinions of America (British Broadcasting Corporation 2007). When asked, "In general, how would you say you feel toward America?" just 18% of the sample gave a "favorable" response (among favorable, less favorable, or average), and that figure included the American respondents in the fold (British Broadcasting Corporation 2007).

Contemporary journalistic accounts echo similar themes, albeit with the usual dose of misinformation. The following quote posted on the popular MSN home page corroborates this:

> Cuba. American traveler's forbidden fruit. Palm trees tower over cobblestone streets. Taxi drivers careen through the Old City. Lovely verandahs create the perfect atmosphere to enjoy a rum-and-coke. The smell of sweet cigar smoke and the sound of *merengue* are everywhere. And Americans, for the most part, aren't allowed to visit. (Isenberg 2007)

The "forbidden fruit" image permeates the popular press (even though merengue music is more likely to be heard in the Dominican Republic than in Cuba). This description captures key visual elements of the tourist landscape (cobblestones, palms, verandahs) as well as leisure pastimes (cigar smoking and drinking) carried out in an exotic place.

Fourth, Cuba is unabashedly appealing on the global political stage. In a classic David-and-Goliath saga, a small island has stood up to the most powerful nation in the world. One of the more poignant scenes to reach a world audience might be found in Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola's famous 1974 Hollywood blockbuster *Godfather II*—part of a film trilogy that earned more than $1 billion in worldwide revenues—which captures well the discontent of Cuba in the 1950s (Maiello 2002). The following exchange between the fictitious organized father–son crime figures Hyman and Sam Roth and the junior mafia don Michael Corleone (played by Al Pacino) takes place at the senior Roth's birthday party.

> MICHAEL: I saw an interesting thing today. A man was being arrested by the military police; probably an urban guerrilla. Rather than be taken alive, he exploded a grenade hidden in his jacket, taking the command vehicle with him.
>
> *The various men look up as Michael eats his cake, wondering what the point of it is.*
>
> MICHAEL: It occurred to me. The police are paid to fight, and the rebels are not.
>
> HYMAN ROTH: So?
>
> MICHAEL: So, that occurred to me.
>
> *View on Roth: He understands Michael's point, if the others do not.*
>
> HYMAN ROTH: This country has had rebels for the last fifty years; it's part of their blood. Believe me. I know. . . . I've been coming here since the twenties; we were running molasses out of Havana when you were a baby. To trucks owned by your father (*he chuckles warmly over the memory*). We'll talk when we're alone.
>
> *And he returns his attention to the men who are gathered with him on his birthday.*
>
> HYMAN ROTH: You have to be careful what you say in front of the others . . . they frighten easy. It's always been that way, most men frighten easy. (Puzo and Coppola 1996, 110–112)

The presence of organized crime in Havana was well known. The 1950s cabarets and gaming tables at the Caribe, the Sans Souci, the Riviera, the Capri, and the Nacional were of international renown (Palero and

Geldof 2004, 254). The 1959 Revolution, however, tarred and feathered them as symptoms of runaway capitalism, neglect by Fulgencio Batista's corrupt government, and the result of vice and prostitution. Alas, Cuba's tourist landscape had turned Havana into the "brothel of the Caribbean" (Robaina 2004).

As of this writing, Fidel Castro has survived ten American presidents, avoided several assassinations, weathered international economic sanctions, and defeated the American-funded Bay of Pigs invasion that was hatched under the Eisenhower administration (but launched during John F. Kennedy's first hundred days in office in April 1961) (Szulc 1986). The Cuban Revolution champions the causes of antiglobalizationists, denounces neoliberal economic policies, and supports antihegemonic forces. And even though Fidel Castro is the man who has personified the Revolution for nearly five decades, it has been embodied in no small measure by the Argentine physician-turned-revolutionary, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Perhaps no counterculture icon of the 20th century has been more widely disseminated than that of Che's. In both public and private spaces within Cuba (Figure 5.1), as well as in a mass consumer culture outside the island, Che's image embodies a defiant idealism of revolution, charm, and anti-imperialism. This has endeared him to countless millions worldwide.

Finally, Cubans have a strong cultural allure; they are internationally appealing at many levels, and, perhaps, always have been. Cuban fashion, the Cuban sense of street humor (*choteo*), and a grand display of style are endearing attributes (Kapcia 2000, 2005; Levi and Heller 2002). Whether through racial blending (miscegenation, or *mestizaje*) or the cross-fertilization of cultures that constitute the island, Cuba and its landscape—with all its sensory components—is powerfully attractive. Witness Hermer and May's visual description of Cuban fashion and style back in 1941:

> Color is exciting to Cubans of every class. If they err in taste, it will be by wearing florid shades or combining too many. The Parisian love of detail and intricate fabrics is also quite Cuban, and the most common fashion blindspot is in the failure to ensemble properly. (Hermer and May 1996, 61)

Perhaps the most endearing element of the Cuban tourist landscape, therefore, is the Cuban people.

In sum, Cuba embodies geographic, cultural, and political attributes that make it highly appealing to international visitors. It is the consummate underdog in a classic David-and-Goliath showdown. That it is so close to the United States, yet surprisingly inaccessible to Americans, adds

FIGURE 5.1. The ubiquitous Che (Ernesto Guevara de la Serna). Ever since Alberto Korda snapped a somber photograph of Che Guevara, who was attending a funeral in March 1960, the face of this revolutionary has become a universal icon. *Clockwise from upper left:* A street mural painted in Baracoa, Cuba; a T-shirt on sale in a hotel gift shop in Santiago de Cuba; a teenager in Sikkim, India, who was unaware of whom the face represented but liked the shirt's design; and a monument to Che Guevara built in Santa Clara (designed by sculptor José Delarra)—as Che gazes toward Bolivia, where he was killed in 1967 by Bolivian soldiers as he tried to spread the revolution in the Andean nation.

a particular charm. And if the political and anti-American sentiments are not enough for the potential market of 5.7 billion non-U.S. travelers, there is a unique blend of African culture and music giving further impetus to visit the island—at least once. Wim Wender and Ry Cooder's 1997 musical documentary, *Buena Vista Social Club*, pulled in $23 million in box office receipts by promoting the island's unique blend of *son, guajíro, boleros, danzón, mambo, cha cha chá*, and other rhythms (The Numbers 2007). Even the island's largest exporter of rum, Havana Club, has tapped into promoting the sultry look of brown-skinned beauties dancing in the Caribbean moonlight and in the shadow of Spanish colonial architecture (Figure 5.2). Cuba beckons.

FIGURE 5.2. Havana Club magazine advertisement.

HISTORY

Tourism is not new in Cuba (Table 5.1). The drawn-out Cuban independence wars (1868–1878, 1895–1898) in the late 19th century prevented the Spanish Crown from investing in the island's infrastructure. Developments in modern technologies such as public lighting, telegraph, telephones, paved roads, and port infrastructure received short shrift as Madrid tried to snuff out the island's revolutionary fervor. When the Americans arrived in 1898, they found a lackluster and undercapitalized island, ripe for speculation, construction, and investment (Scarpaci et al. 2002, ch. 2). A number of U.S. veterans from the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 became enthralled with the "Pearl of the Antilles" and stayed behind after the war to tap into this new market. A supply officer, Frank Steinhart, became a prominent businessman in the early 20th century, investing in and later owning Havana's electric tram cars (Aruca 1996). He also served as a consular officer for the U.S. embassy in Havana in 1906. His Italianesque mansion still graces Prado Boulevard at the edge of Old Havana and stands as a testimony to the untroubled days of U.S. investment in Cuba.

A rising middle class in the United States and Canada meant more leisure time and new opportunities for travel and exploration. Cuba emerged as a perfect market for an increasingly curious and prosperous pool of

TABLE 5.1. Cuban Tourism Policy, History, and Goals: In the Ministry of Tourism's Own Words

Tourism is not a new activity in Cuba. Just as in the rest of the world, it had its peak in the 1950s. At that time, when tourism affiliated with the largest [nation of the] Antilles, it was very connected with the North American presence of the Mafia. The United States was the main market and gambling and prostitution were the principal offerings of the island. This city tourism allowed little development of our gross domestic product in that stage. The U.S. trade embargo that began with the Triumph of the Revolution ended tourism with United States. Starting in 1959, economic development was directed to other important programs in the country, and for that reason, tourism became basically focused on national tourists, which made lodging not very competitive with international tourism facilities. In the 1980s, tourism reopened to foreigners and in 1990 there was a new focus on this sector. The first [tourist] joint-ventures were created and there was an accelerated rise in visitor arrivals and revenues. Since 1996, when the number of visitors surpassed one million, Cuba has aimed to become a world destination, in addition to a Caribbean destination. To market its tourist product, the largest Antillean island relies mainly on quality local hospitality, exceptional natural attractions, authentic historical heritage, a prolific cultural and artistic life, a healthcare system in a class of its own, political stability, and security for all tourists (our translation).

Note. Our translation. The Cuban Ministry of Tourism describes it this way: "El turismo no es una actividad nueva en Cuba. Al igual que en el mundo, tuvo su auge a partir de los años 50. En esa época, cuando el desarrollo turístico en la mayor de las Antillas estuvo muy ligado a la presencia de la mafia norteamericana en la Isla, Estados Unidos era el mercado principal, y el juego y la prostitución eran las principales ofertas de la Isla. Este turismo de ciudad condicionó el poco desarrollo de nuestro producto natural en esa etapa. Con el triunfo de la Revolución comenzó la política norteamericana de bloqueo y se eliminó el turismo proveniente de Estados Unidos. A partir de 1959, el desarrollo de la economía estuvo dirigido a otros programas importantes del país, por lo cual el turismo era entonces fundamentalmente nacional, hecho que condicionó una estructura habitacional poco competitiva como producto internacional. En los años 80 comienza la reapertura al turismo internacional, pero es en 1990 que se produce un nuevo enfoque del desarrollo de este sector, se crean las primeras empresas mixtas y hay un crecimiento acelerado en los arribos de visitantes y en los ingresos. Desde 1996, cuando se logró por primera vez sobrepasar el millón de visitantes, Cuba se ha propuesto consolidarse como destino mundial y del Caribe. Para comercializar su producto turístico, la mayor de las Antillas cuenta, principalmente, con la hospitalidad popular y calidad de su pueblo, excepcionales atractivos naturales, un patrimonio histórico autóctono, prolífica vida artística y cultural, un desarrollo sanitario único, la estabilidad política y la seguridad para los turistas." From Ministerio de Turismo (2007).

travelers. By the 1920s a growing line of steamships began offering service from U.S. ports. For instance, the Standard Fruit Company accommodated small but regularized passenger traffic on its ships as they plied Caribbean waters in the Antilles and off the coast of Central America to pick up bananas, coffee, and spices (Karnes 1978). Although transatlantic travel between eastern seaports in the United States and Europe flourished, it was not inexpensive, but afforded North Atlantic travelers a kind of "planned serenity" (Coons and Verias 2003). A proximate and more economical market emerged in the interwar years. Galveston, New

Orleans, Biloxi, Tampa–St. Petersburg, Miami, Key West, Jacksonville, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston offered passenger travel to Havana at more affordable rates (Schwartz 1997). Enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution between 1920 and 1933 (prohibition of alcohol) heightened the attraction of Cuba; so close, yet so far away; familiar yet exotic. Bars such as Sloppy Joe's became icons of Cuba's carefree ways (Figure 5.3). In fact, so entrenched is that icon, that a Sloppy Joe's establishment surfaced in Key West, Florida, on December 5, 1933, the day Prohibition in the United States was repealed (Sloppyjoes 2007). The economic development branch of the City Historian's Office in Havana planned a reopening of the original Sloppy Joe's for 2009.

Tourism boomed in the 1920s as hotels, racetracks, casinos, and dog tracks enticed international visitors. Colonel Charles A. Lindberg's arrival in early 1928 underscored Cuba's position as a prominent tourist destination. However, unlike the 1990s fall of sugar prices, when tourism was there to rescue the national economy, the 1920s decline in sugar prices hurt the tourist industry. President Machado tried to keep beggars off the streets (not unlike the contemporary scene), but tourists became ill tempered with work stoppages and street protests. To offset these troubles and to bolster the new tourism economy, a major $7 million development project was launched atop an old quarry near Havana's Malecón (seaside promenade). This project, the Hotel Nacional, would serve as a powerful anchor in expanding tourism away from the "old" city and into the "new" city (Figure 5.4). However, the stock market crash of 1929, coupled with the mutiny of 1933 led by then-sergeant Fulgencio Batista and other sergeants and corporals against the provisional government of Carlos Manuel

FIGURE 5.3. Advertisement for Sloppy Joe's Bar, Havana, c. 1938. From *Havana Journal* (2007).

FIGURE 5.4. Hotel Nacional (center left with two towers), located on the Malecón, was built in 1930 and anchored the rise of Vedado in Havana's "new" section, in contrast to Havana's old quarters (top center).

de Céspedes y Quesada, was not enough to revive the economy. Even Irene Dupont's plan to make Varadero Beach (2 hours from Havana by car) an exclusive playground for U.S. business executives could not jump-start the island's recovery (Figure 5.5).

The end of Prohibition proved to be the final straw. As Rosalie Schwartz describes it:

> Aside from alterations to the Havana landscape, Cuba had changed little. The impact on traditional Cuban culture was minimal. Few Cubans relinquished cockfights for tennis or replaced the *danzón* [a traditional dance] with the fox-trot. Cubans continued to think the sea too cold for swimming in winter, tourist brochures notwithstanding. (2004, 251)

Cuba's tourist landscape would have to wait until the 1950s for its rebirth.

Capital cities or large prominent ones often exaggerate tourists' perceptions of the larger nation. For instance, it can be argued that New York is a different kind of place within the United States, London is but one facet of England, and Beijing portrays just a sliver of China. So too is the image of Havana, which, rightly or wrongly, becomes the window through which the rest of the island is often portrayed. Graham Greene's novel and subsequent movie *Our Man in Havana* did much to place Havana in the 1950s in the minds of many readers when he wrote:

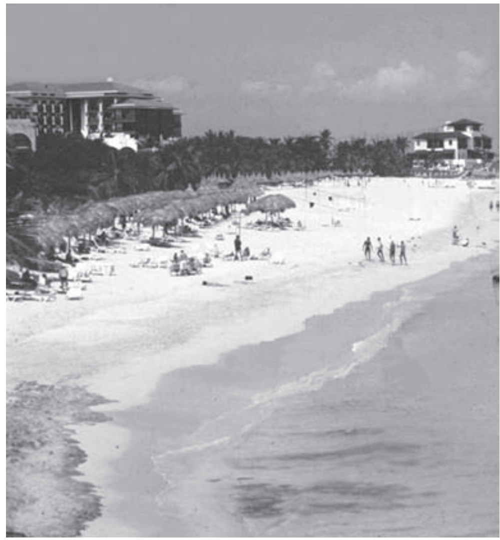


FIGURE 5.5. Varadero Beach, 2000, with the Dupont mansion on the right and a new joint venture Spanish hotel on the left.

> The long city lay spread along the open Atlantic; waves broke over the Avenida de Maceo [Malecón; see Figure 5.6] and misted the windscreens of cars. The pink, grey, yellow pillars of what had once been the aristocratic quarter were eroded like rocks; an ancient coat of arms smudged and featureless, was set over the doorway of a shabby hotel, and the shutters of a nightclub were varnished in bright crude colours to protect them from the wet and salt of the sea. In the west, the steel skyscrapers of the new town rose higher than lighthouses into the clear February sky. It was a city to visit, not a city to live in. . . . (1996, 122)

Greene's 1958 description of the Malecón captures one of the most spectacular waterfront landscapes in the Americas.

ENVIRONMENTAL BACKDROP TO CONTEMPORARY VENUES

Havana is challenged by issues of proper waste and water treatment planning. Raw sewage drains into Havana Bay and is also pumped into the Florida Straits. Just over two million *habaneros* (Havanans) already tax

FIGURE 5.6. The Malecón: Havana's seaside promenade in Centro Habana looking west toward Vedado, with the 1958 former Habana Hilton, now Habana Libre, at the righthand horizon.

a water system that may leak as much as half of its fresh water (owing to broken water mains). In addition, on any given night thousands of tourists debilitate the system further. The original 1893 Albear aqueduct was designed for a city of 600,000, and although it has been updated, it is inadequate for the burgeoning population (Scarpaci 2006).

Geographers Andrea Colantonio and Robert Potter studied the impact of tourism on Havana's environmental condition and concluded:

> The environmental impact of tourism on Havana ... has been mixed. While in some instances tourism has indirectly prompted environmental improvement, such as the upgrade of the local water and sewerage systems, in others it has been responsible for increasing flooding problems, for example, in Havana's western district. (2006b, 211)

The future of Cuban tourism will also be able to draw upon niche nautical tourism, which includes a growing network of marinas (Figure 5.7). Except for rounding the eastern point of the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba, the island is well endowed with marinas to accommodate yachters. More than a dozen marinas on the Atlantic and Caribbean shores are within a day's sail from each other. They are poised to tap into the market made up of yachters who travel from the United States: There are

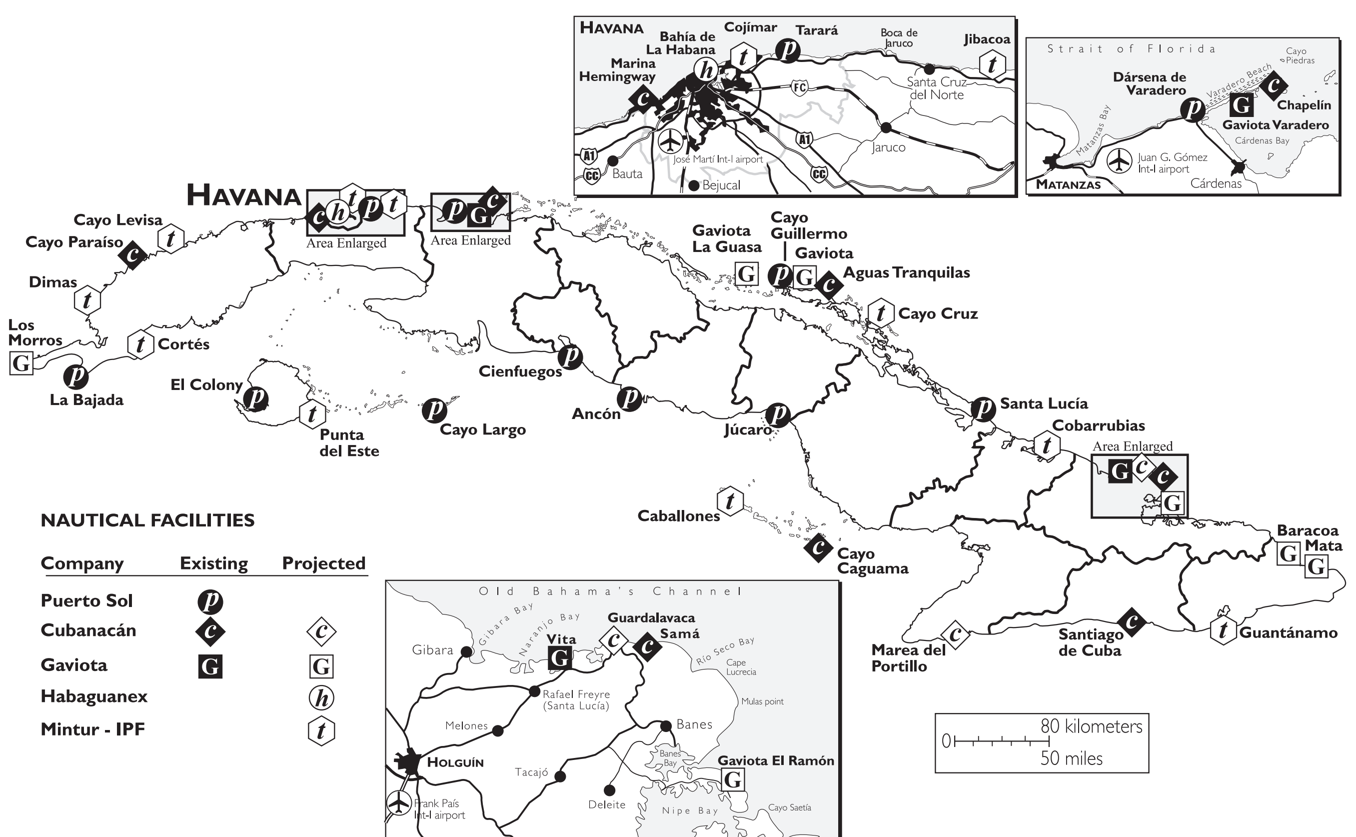


FIGURE 5.7. Cuban nautical facilities.

thousands of privately owned ships between Tampa–St. Petersburg, and Ft. Myers and Key West, and from Miami to Boca Raton that will be able to circumnavigate Cuba when travel restrictions are rescinded. As unemployment in the rural sugar-growing areas rises, port-, marina- and resort-based employment will become an important alternative. Polly Pattullo refers to this shift from agriculture to tourism across the Caribbean as the "from banana farmer to banana daiquiri" phenomenon (1996, 52). In terms of marina employment elsewhere in the Caribbean, Conway (2006) has shown how important and lucrative skilled marinas are in this segment of the Caribbean's tourist industry. The development of a network of marinas located about a day's travel from each other, coupled with a regular cruise ship industry coming out of Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, would quickly increase the percentage of Western hemisphere visitors (e.g., from the Americas) beyond its current 50% level (Figure 5.8).

Cuba's principal tourist regions span the island and offer an array of distinctive landscapes, several of which we discussed in Chapter 4. Figure 5.9 shows the geographic distribution of these regions. Most include a

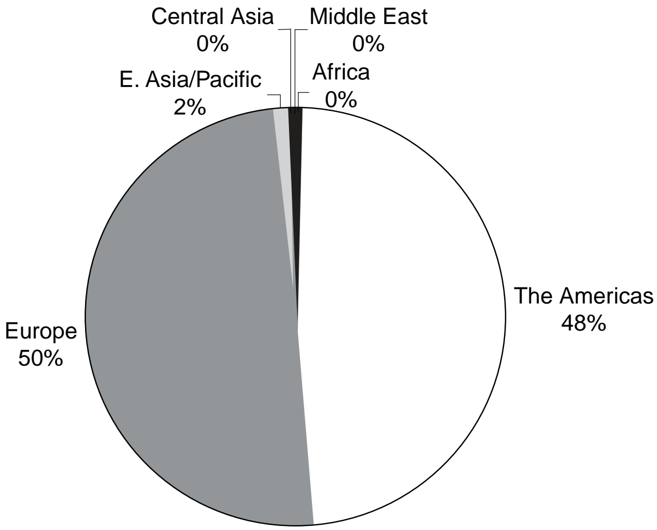


FIGURE 5.8. Visitors to Cuba by region. Data from *Cuba Facts: Tourism in Cuba: Selected Statistics*. Cuba Transition Project, Institute for Cuban and Cuban American Studies, University of Miami and USAID (Funded by USAID under the terms of Award No. EDG-A-00-02-00007-00, Publications, CD-ROM).

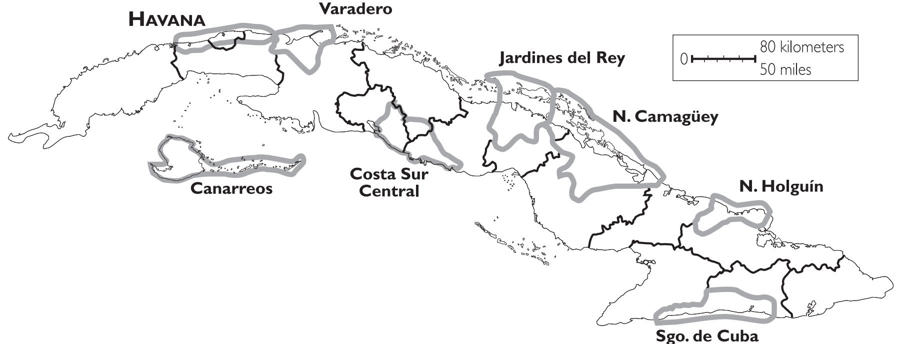


FIGURE 5.9. Cuban tourist regions. After Espino (2006).

combination of city-beach locations, for instance, Havana has the Playas del Este (Eastern Beaches) and the Marina Hemingway (in the far western suburbs). Trinidad sits back just 11 kilometers from the Caribbean Sea (Ancón Peninsula) and relies on the unspoiled landscape of nearby Topes de Collante within the Escambray Mountains for ecotourism; this complements Trinidad's cultural heritage, beach, and ecological offerings. North Camaguey includes the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Camaguey, and within a short drive offers access to Santa Lucia beach. Only Santiago de Cuba remains a largely urban setting, with limited sandy beach coves along its Caribbean shores. However, the draw for visitors to the nearby town of El Cobre is the famous basilica. It is just a half-hour drive from Santiago and is the island's most widely recognized place of worship. Cubans pay homage to the island's patron saint—the Virgin of the Charity of Copper (*La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*)—at a shrine where thousands make requests in prayer and in small notes and offerings before the black Madonna, draped in a diamond-, ruby-, and emerald-encrusted gown.

Varadero, the Canarreos, North Holguín, and the Jardines del Rey offer mostly beach and aquatic activities. Varadero is located at the end of the Hicacos peninsula and is no more than a 2-hour drive from Havana. Once a playground for the very wealthy, including the heirs of the Dupont chemical empire, it has undergone tremendous hotel development since the early 1990s. A toll both built in the 1990s earns revenues from international visitors and also serves to keep out hustlers who want to work the tourist crowds (Figure 5.10); only those Cubans who work in legitimate establishments or have official business in Varadero are allowed to pass, underscoring what is probably the most tourist-apartheid (i.e., segregated) setting on the island. The Canarreos region in the Caribbean Sea includes

FIGURE 5.10. Varadero/Matanzas toll both at the access point to the Hicacos Peninsula leading from the mainland to Varadero Beach.

the special municipality of Isla de Juventud and bead of small islands that offer prime fishing, snorkeling, and scuba diving. The north shore of the island includes Holguín, which mostly represents the resort of Guardalavaca, hugely popular and affordable for Canadian and European charter groups.

Perhaps the most environmentally criticized new tourist region is the Jardines del Rey, the center of a large archipelago off the north-central shore. A significant feature of the Jardines del Rey is that it contains 1,249 species of flora and fauna, of which 20% are endemic. As early as the 1980s, these islands were eyed as a potential development resource. In 1983, Fidel Castro allegedly stated, "What we have to do here is to throw rocks and not look ahead" (Cepero and Lawrence 2006). The comment preceded the construction of the Cayo Coco Causeway (*pedraplenes*), running through shallow marshes and mangroves, which separated the main island and the archipelago (Figure 5.11).

Cepero and Lawrence (2006) conducted an environmental impact study on the causeway's cutting Dog's Bay (Bahía de los Perros) in half. Using spectral analyses derived from remote satellite images, they examined plant reflectivity before (1990) and after (2000) the causeway was built to assess whether the reduction in water circulation hurt the marsh. The amounts of nutrients and phytoplankton, as well as the interchange of organic matter and temperatures, might be altered because of the road project. Because healthy vegetation absorbs visible light and unhealthy or sparse vegetation tends to reflect it, these researchers were able to measure changes between the two data sets. Focusing on the mangroves—generally a good indicator of tropical marshland ecology—they found an increase in silicates (2.35 micromoles/liter and ammonia (21.07 micromoles/liter),

FIGURE 5.11. Cayo Coco Causeway (*pedraplenes*), 2004. Clockwise from upper left: Looking south from the Jardines del Rey "crown" entrance toward the mainland; a truck along the causeway; one of several intermittent underpasses allowing water to pass from west to east (note water main pumping fresh water from mainland to Coco Key); and marshland to the east of the causeway.

a rise in salinity to between 50 and 80%, and a reduction in fish stock. The most deleterious situation found was that 6.5 million square meters of black mangrove had been destroyed or was in the process of dying (Figure 5.12), all at the expense of building hotels on several islands on the Atlantic beaches.

These findings are sobering, inasmuch as mangroves are nursery grounds and breeding sites for territorial organisms. Sediments, nutrients and carbon, and contaminants collect there. Moreover, mangroves afford protection against coastal erosion (Alongi 2007). Although research like that of Cepero and Lawrence is highly controversial and difficult to corroborate because of restrictions on peer-reviewed field research conducted in Cuba, it does underscore how environmental matters in Cuba—not unlike the situation in the former Soviet Union or even in countries with unfettered market capitalism—can receive low priority when political deci-

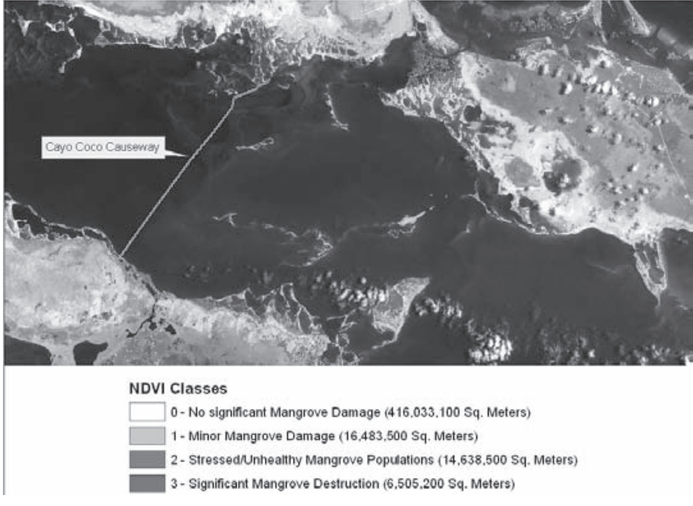


FIGURE 5.12. Geographic information system layered image of impacted mangrove in Bahía de los Perros. Note the shading for "significant mangrove destruction" on the island at the bottom center of the image as well as the Cayo Coco Causeway connecting the main island (lower left) with Cayo Coco (top of image). From Cepero and Lawrence (2006).

sions are used in the name of centralized planning or profit making (Diá-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000).

Cuba's international tourism industry was relatively insignificant before the rise of the Special Period in a Time of Peace, ushered in after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its trading bloc. The decade between 1990 and 2000 triggered a significant increase in international visitors to Cuba (Figure 5.13). In the early 1990s tourism increased only slightly; infrastructure was poor, power outages were frequent, and the level of necessary ancillary services was limited (Figure 5.14). By 1996, however, the number of tourists surpassed the one-million mark, and the figure might have surpassed the two-million level 4 years later had Y2K concerns not developed. After September 11, 2001, the upward trend continued. By 2005, just fewer than 2.4 million visitors reached Cuba, a trend that continued until 2008 (Juventud Rebelde 2009).

Anticipated but unfulfilled growth in the tourist industry is shown in Figure 5.14. About 10,000 hotel rooms were added between 2000 and 2004, but occupancy rates actually fell from the upper 40% realm to below 40% during the same period. It is unclear whether the broader global economy, lower return visitation rates, or a combination of factors account for the gap between the number of hotel rooms and occupancy rates.

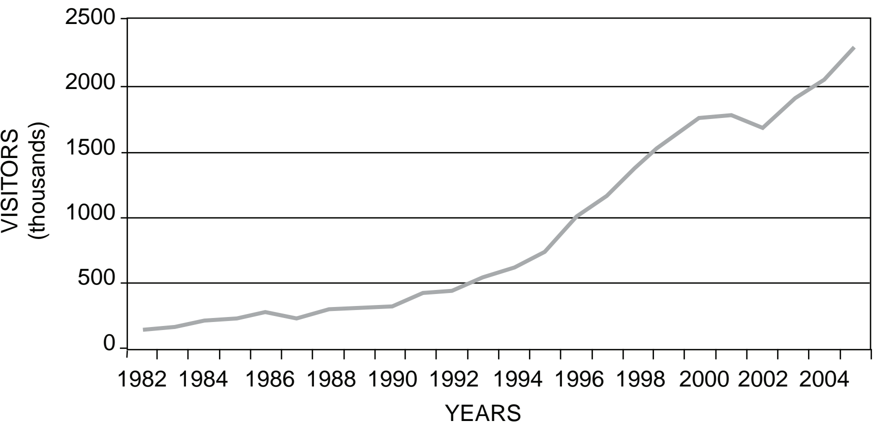


FIGURE 5.13. Tourist arrivals to Cuba and the Caribbean, selected years, 1982–2005. Data from Espino (2006).

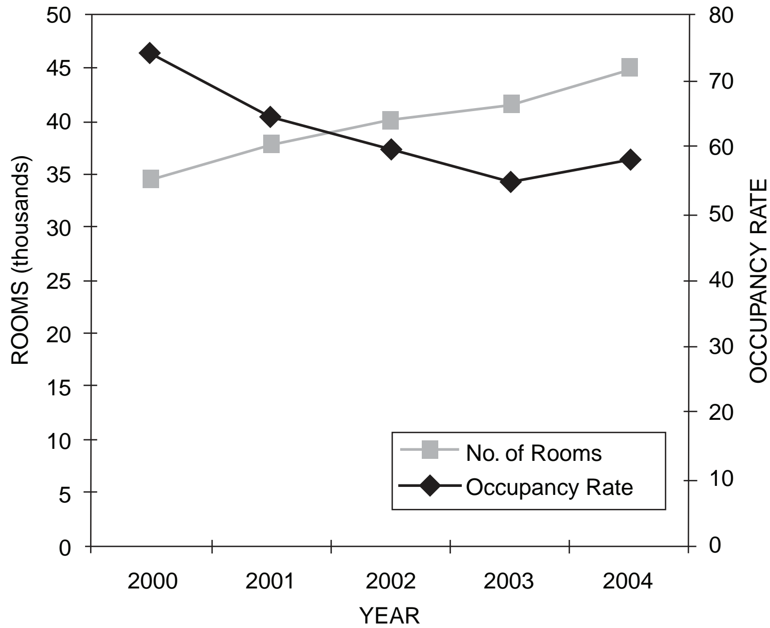


FIGURE 5.14. Cuban hotel rooms and occupancy rates, 2000–2004. Data from *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba*.

Not surprisingly, the vicissitudes of the late 20th- and early 21st-century market trends indicate a significant proportional increase in Cuba's share of the Caribbean market over that of the 1990s. Rising from 3% in 1990 to 10% in 2000, the relative take of the West Indies travel industry appears to have flattened out for Cuba (Table 5.2). It is unclear whether there is dissatisfaction among those who have visited the island for the first time, or whether other travel bargains can be had elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The ranking of leading foreign visitors to Cuba between 2000 and 2004 parallels political and economic trends. Canadians, equipped with purchasing power and good relative location, remain the single largest national group of tourists. In addition, the island's tourism offers prospective Canadian visitors with a survey of investment opportunities. As Seguin (2007, 63) argues in *Canadian Business*, "Canadians can prosper in post-Castro Cuba." Travelers from the European Union make up the second largest block of tourists. Overall, four trends emerge. First, Italians have held steady at a consistent level (about 180,000 per annum; Figure 5.15). Second, the proportion of Germans has dipped while the contribution of British tourists has risen. This may indicate a rise in more affordable tourist packages for the British and a slight shift in more discerning German preferences. Third, Venezuelans were relatively small contributors to the tourist stock until 2002, when their numbers rose sharply. This trend paralleled a growing political alliance between Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro. Finally, despite the U.S. trade embargo and travel restrictions, the United States was contributing about 100,000 visitors per year

TABLE 5.2. Cuban Tourist Arrivals in the Caribbean Context, 1985–2005, Selected Years

Year	Tourist arrivals to Cuba (thousands)	Tourist arrivals to Caribbean (thousands)	Cuban market share
1985	238	8,000	3%
1990	327	11,400	3%
1995	742	14,025	5%
2000	1,741	17,180	10%
2001	1,736	16,902	10%
2002	1,656	26,058	10%
2003	1,895	17,198	11%
2004	2,017	18,385	11%
2005	2,297	19,028	12%

Note. From Espino (2006). Courtesy María Delores Espino.

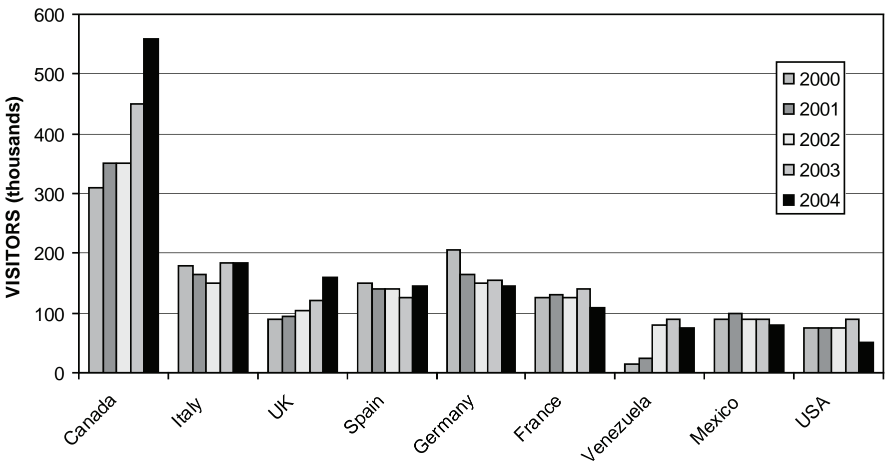


FIGURE 5.15. Leading foreign visitors to Cuba, 2000–2004.

until 2004, when President George W. Bush issued an Executive Order in June of that year, scaling back most undergraduate student travel and all cultural travel (alumni groups, art groups). Workers in the Cuban tourism industry feel the decline in American travelers, who have a reputation as being better tippers than Europeans.

Following the Dominican Republic and the combined ports of Cozumel and Cancún in Mexico, Cuba ranks highly in Caribbean basin tourism. Table 5.3 shows the ranking of tourist arrivals in the region for 2005. As noted earlier, it remains to be seen to what extent repeat tourism can be sustained. This impressive rise has not been without its problems. Cuban art critic Gerardo Mosquera has observed foreign investors realign themselves with the Cuban government since the collapse of the Soviet trading bloc. Also germane is the extent to which the Cubans themselves can enjoy the benefits of Cuban tourism. Mosquera writes:

> The Cuban people have had to confront neoliberal policies without even having the option of legally participating in the informal economy. This curious mixture of "socialist" fundamentalism and "neoliberalism" has created corruption, widespread theft, marginality, the black market, mass exodus, and jinetero [prostitution and illegal hustling] as survival strategies. (1994, 4)

The paradox is not lost on others who observe Caribbean tourism. Although tourists relish walking barefoot on the sandy beaches, going barefoot in the region has always been a sign of poverty. In Cuba, however,

TABLE 5.3. Visitors to the Caribbean Basin, 2005

Country	Visitors (millions)	Percentage
Dominican Republic	3.69	20.3
Cuba	**2.32**	**12.7**
Cancún	2.13	11.7
Bahamas	1.51	8.3
Jamaica	1.48	8.1
Puerto Rico	1.45	8.0
Aruba	0.73	4.0
U.S. Virgin Islands	0.7	3.8
Barbados	0.55	3.0
Martinique	0.47	2.6
St. Maarten	0.47	2.6
Trinidad and Tobago	0.46	2.5
British Virgin Islands	0.34	1.9
St. Lucia	0.32	1.8
Cozumel	0.28	1.5
Bermuda	0.27	1.5
Antigua and Barbuda	0.25	1.4
Belize	0.24	1.3
Curacao	0.22	1.2
Cayman Islands	0.17	0.9
Suriname	0.16	0.9
Guyana	0.12	0.7
Granada	0.1	0.5
Saba	0.1	0.5
St. Eustatius	0.1	0.5
St. Vincent and Grenadines	0.1	0.5
Anguilla	0.06	0.3
Bonaire	0.06	0.3
Monteserrat	0.01	0.1
Total	18.86	100.7[a]

Note. Data from Caribbean Tourism Organization (2006). Figures for Cuba deemed “preliminary.”
[a]Figures do not add up to 100% because of rounding.

it is safe to say that the general population understands the reasons for its popularity with international visitors to their island: It is beautiful, rich in history, and full of culture. Less acceptable has been the rise in illicit activities such as Mosquera (1994) notes.

CONCLUSIONS

The somewhat schizophrenic portrayal of Cuba in the international media, on one hand, shows the island as an authoritarian outpost that mistreats

civil society. On the other hand, its nearly 2.5 million tourists per annum suggest that despite these concerns, the island has much to offer. In early 2008, Raúl Castro announced that the purchase of cell phones for the masses would be permitted and that the island's hotels would now allow Cubans to lodge there if they paid in hard currency. It is too early to determine whether this suggests a reorientation of the leadership's policies on civil and individual liberties. Moreover, the number of Cubans who have the necessary cash to purchase a cell phone contract or stay in a tourist hotel is likely quite small. Nevertheless, the gesture of liberalizing these two regulations continues to confound Cuba watchers.

This chapter examines selected layers of Cuba's tourist landscapes. It may be useful to recall what the famous landscape architect Kevin Lynch (1972) had to say about Havana's historic cityscape in the 1970s. In his book *What Time Is This Place?*, he argued that the city's unique built environment, rich architectural variety, and impressive vistas and promenades make it a singular place. Hardly the first to remark on this feature, he also focused on the blending of cultures from Europe and Africa and how each had left its imprint. He shows that a city's attractiveness depends largely on how it manages different layers of history and culture. Writing in the era of the "urban crisis" of the 1960s and the "eco crisis" of the 1970s, Lynch makes a clarion call—using Havana's landscape as an example—for planners to become more cognizant of rich historical cities so that they can use the past to inform present and future planning (Ford 1976). In a similar vein, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz described, decades earlier, the island's cultural mélange—which he calls "transculturation"—this way:

> A steady stream of African Negroes coming from all the coastal regions of Africa along the Atlantic, from Senegal, Guinea, the Congo, and Angola.... And still other immigrant cultures ... Jews, Portuguese, Anglo-Saxons, French ... even yellow Mongoloids from Macao, Canton, and other regions of the sometime Celestial Kingdom. And each of them torn from his native moorings.... The concept of transculturation is fundamental and indispensable for an understanding of the history of Cuba, and, for analogous reasons, of that of America in general. (2004, 27)

Cuba's tourist landscape and imagination make that clear. That tourism has become an engine of economic growth has not been lost on the Cuban leadership. When the World Tourism Organization (2007) claimed that "tourism is firmly established as the number one industry in many countries and the fastest-growing economic sector in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation," Cuba could hardly dispute that claim.

The Antillean nation aims to cash in on this market, politics and ideology aside. Cuban tourism officials contend that an immediate suspension of the U.S. ban on travel to the island would produce 1 million visitors (roughly half of the 2006 market) in its first years.

> Americans are expected to flood to Cuba to enjoy its pristine beaches, sip daiquiris at Ernest Hemingway's favorite bars and take a step back in time riding in vintage cars in a city that was once a Mafia playground. (Boadle 2007)

Although the island's capture of the international tourist market is still small, it is sandwiched between the third (United States) and seventh (Mexico) largest tourist destinations in the world. If Cuba could tap into just 10% of Florida's 40 million annual visitors, Price Waterhouse tourism analysts argue, that would bring an unprecedented 6 million visitors to the island and would provide a huge infusion of hard currency into Cuba (Seguin 2007, 66). Enticing tourist circuits of tomorrow might include, for instance, a Disney World–Key West–Havana–Key West itinerary, connected by air, rail, and ship transport. The proposed itinerary would include fantasy, cultural heritage, and conventional mass tourism beach settings, with the option of adding or dropping any of the "s" ingredients in the "sun–surf–sex–sangria" formula. If Cuba's tourist landscape is ambiguous now, then multiple scenarios will surely find a market niche in the world tourism map of tomorrow.

The Cuban diaspora—largely in south Florida but also in Spain and Mexico—will be eyeing their homeland as a possible second home or retirement destination, as well as aging non-Cuban baby boomers in the United States who seek low-cost, high-amenity living in a fiscal era when Social Security payments may dwindle, and even 401(k) retirement funds pose some risk. If health care and long-term care inch up from 14% of the U.S. gross national product to, say, 20% by 2030, then Cuba could become a major economic service provider in the health care, long-term care, and geriatric markets. The island's socialist revolution may have thwarted the fast-food chains and endless miles of commercial strip development that have plagued the United States, but the aging young urban professional (yuppies) segment of the United States—part of the 76 million of the baby boom generation of 1945–1964—will become a cohort of "gray urban maturing professional" (grumpies) that could profoundly transform Cuba's tourist landscape in unexpected ways. An onslaught of American visitors in any capacity (e.g., college students on spring break, retirees, curious travelers, party revelers) has not gone unnoticed by Cuban authorities.

CHAPTER 6

Information[1]

Cuba, like much of Latin America, is often romanticized in the humanities and social sciences because of its striking beauty, diverse peoples, and other distinctive attributes of place (Robinson 1989, 157). As noted in Chapter 1, the imagination of travelers to Cuba—The Pearl of the Antilles—has always been full of hyperbole. William Joseph Showalter, for instance, wrote in the July 1920 *National Geographic* that Cuba had "rivers of sugar flowing out and the streams of gold flowing in" that made the island unique, as did the palm avenues outside sugar plantations, which were "to be seen in almost every landscape" (Showalter 1920, 1, 3). Early republican-era hyperbole about the island's natural beauty lent itself to profit making (e.g., "rivers of sugar … streams of gold"), a premise derived by annexationist elements that likely persisted at the time. One of the grandest accolades was that given by Christopher Columbus: The island was "the most beautiful land [his] eyes had ever seen." Chapter 1 also stated that Columbus made this comment at other landings, and the veracity of his remark is speculative. However, there is no doubt that the distinctive landscape of the largest island in the Antilles has been widely portrayed in literature, travel accounts, and, recently, in the political discourse of the socialist government.

This chapter examines how various ideologies and political messages surface through the communication media to further the socialist imprint on what we call the "information landscape." Information technology, especially in the form of simple roadside billboards, creates a unique sense of place and landscape in a country where messages encouraging people to consume goods and services are largely absent. We use these selected ideo-

logical narratives to explore the rhetoric of place making and the creation of *cubanidad* in socialist Cuba.

We begin with a brief review of some key geographical writings by humanistic geographers that situate the discussion of political landscapes. We posit that an understanding of how places are constructed forms part of the human imagination and creates multiple meanings of place. Here we avoid descriptions of socialism, which often include "perversion," "evil empire," "criminal system," and so on (Juraga and Booker 2002, 2). Instead, we select key iconographic and political symbols of Cuba's 19th- and 20th-century history that are used in the design and dissemination of political billboards. A brief discussion of class, legitimation, and propaganda situates our discussion. The main body of the chapter discusses access to information technology and interpretations of political billboards and representation: patriotism and socialism, U.S. hegemony, conservation, social justice, and civic participation. On the basis of our own experience in living in Cuba and our field research, we believe that such discourses cover the preponderance of the messages disseminated by the communist leadership. Except for conservation and ecological billboards, these icons and political symbols embody the pillars of the revolution and at the same time leave a distinct imprint on the island's landscape. So common are these signs that they are virtually inescapable in the course of quotidian life. We show how ideology, landscape, and the social construction of space manifest themselves uniquely in socialist Cuba, giving the island a distinctive stamp in a world of globalized consumer culture.

ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF "PLACE" IN THE HUMAN IMAGINATION

Images are a part of everyday life, and in every corner of the globe. Some are fabricated by ordinary people, some by companies, and some by governments. Those who witness such images, whether commercially, publicly, or individually fabricated, from various perceptions of each type of image. These perceptions, in turn, carry meanings and symbols that form part of the process of representation. Ideology is a key component of this communication process between individuals and these images (Seamon and Mugerauer 1985). Simply put, an ideology is

> a powerful system of ideas . . . [whose impacts] manifest everywhere in geographic landscapes at all scales. . . . All ideologies, whatever their provenances or manifestations, are involved to varying degrees in the political organiza-

tion of social and spatial relationships involving authority. (Nemeth 2006, 241)

As is by now obvious, Cuba's landscape is largely void of any consumer advertising. Perhaps only North Korea shares this attribute with Cuba. Therefore, the use of political slogans on billboards constitutes the advertising and marketing that most countries permit. In this regard, the historicism that the socialist leadership uses sets it apart from its Caribbean, Latin-, and Anglo-American neighbors. The historical struggles for independence in the 19th century and the socialist rhetoric of the 20th and 21st centuries forge a powerful sense of place identity in contemporary discourse. The Castro government relies heavily on historic events, battlefields, rallying cries from the 19th century and the guerrilla struggle of the 1950s, and images of heroes to advance its political and ideological agenda (Table 6.1). The use of these historical events and images goes beyond, for instance, what in the United States might correspond to respect for a Civil War culture, or reverence for the holocaust in Europe. In those countries there are parks, museums, statues, and commemorative monuments to these historic events. In Cuba, however, historic events, slogans and rallying cries, and historical political figures can be seen daily on television, billboards, and murals or heard on the radio. The contemporary Cuban landscape reveals these messages through myriad political advertisements and special public squares used for protesting, mass organizations, and assorted political art. It is noteworthy that the protesting allowed in this public space is only against the United States, and massive public assembly is usually permitted only when the state has an anti–United States event planned.

A recent diplomatic exchange of cat and mouse between the United States government and the Cuban government illustrates the important role of billboards. In 2006, the U.S. Interests Section* in Havana installed an electronic bulletin board on the upper floors of its building, a modern structure designed by the firm Harrison & Abramowitz, part of the same team that designed the United Nations headquarters in New York. This bulletin board, actually a series of panels, carries news items that are meant to provide alternative interpretations of both Cuban and international news, as well as U.S. sports scores. The United States claims that these news stories are important because Cubans do not have access to them

*The United States does not have full diplomatic relations with Cuba. Instead, it has a consulate there and leases the former U.S. Embassy from the Swiss government. Nevertheless, with more than 50 employees, it is the largest diplomatic staff in Cuba.

TABLE 6.1. Nineteenth-Century Cuban Independence Heroes

Hero	Profile
José Martí	(1853–1895). Author, poet, journalist, and overall "apostle of Cuban Independence," he lived in exile in New York City, Tampa, and Spain. Martí wrote eloquently about the virtues of a free Cuba and the evils of both Spain and the United States as menaces to his homeland. He was killed in battle against the Spanish. Although it was not he who put his poem "Guantanamera" to an already popular tune in the 20th century, his volumes of writings are both scholarly and highly popular among the public.
Carlos Manuel de Céspedes	(1819–1874). A wealthy landowner from eastern Cuba who pronounced the *Grito de Yara* (Cry of Yara) that marked the beginning of the Cuban independence struggle and led to the Ten Years' War (1868–1878). He was briefly the president of Cuba in Arms before being overthrown and executed by the Spanish army.
Antonio Maceo	(1845–1896). Called the Bronze Titan, he was a mulatto Cuban independence fighter and political strategist who was recognized for his fighting in the Ten Years' War, as well as his writings on Cuban independence and sovereignty. José Martí remarked that he was as strong in his mind as in his body (he stood 6 feet tall and weighed 200 pounds). He was killed by the Spanish.
Calixto García	(1839–1898). Born in the eastern province of Holguín, García fought against the Spanish as a teenager until his capture 5 years later. Although he fought with the American troops in 1898 in their brief confrontations with the Spanish, he was not allowed into the surrender ceremony in Santiago de Cuba at the end of the war. He died of pneumonia on a diplomatic mission to New York in 1898 and was buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.
Father Félix Varela	(1788–1853). A Spaniard born in Havana but raised in St. Augustine, Florida. He returned to Havana to study at the San Carlos Seminary, where he later became a young and distinguished professor of philosophy, religion, physics, and chemistry. In 1821 he was elected to the Spanish legislature, where he argued for Cuban and Spanish American independence. This bold stance earned him a death sentence, and he escaped to New York where he entered the priesthood. While pastor in an Irish neighborhood in New York City, he published *El Habanero* (*The Havanan*), which although published only seven times, became a highly prized and smuggled document in Cuba. He became vicar general of the New York Archdiocese. He died in St. Augustine the same year José Martí was born (1853). His remains were taken to the University of Havana in 1912.

otherwise. In response, the Cuban government retaliated by placing a series of black flags (called the "mourning flags") to block the bulletin board from public view (Figure 6.1). Media sources have referred to this tit-for-tat diplomatic action as the "battle of the electronic bulletin boards." In June 2006, the Cuban government cut off power to the building in a protest against the bulletin board, but it was later restored. Cuban authorities claimed that there was a problem with the local power grid in the Vedado neighborhood where the building is located (Robles and Bachelet 2006). Consular officer Michael Parmley, however, claimed that power was restored only after the *Miami Herald* carried a newspaper headline denouncing the sanctions imposed on the diplomatic building. When Parmley, then chief of the U.S. Interests Section, was asked whether the United States would tolerate a similar bulletin board running Al Jazira news stories on one of Washington, DC's embassies, he responded that the U.S. government probably would not like it, but would tolerate it. Parmly went on to claim that the Havana board was appropriate because of the "total propaganda found [in Cuba]; it helps that it is an island" (National Public Radio 2006). Once again, geography played a key role.

This so-called battle of the billboards between the governments is one indicator of the deteriorating diplomatic condition between Havana and Washington. However, the situation has not been confined to just the electronic bulletin board incident. In 2004, Cuba erected several billboards near the U.S. mission in Havana that included pictures of American soldiers pointing rifles at Iraqi children and bloodied and hooded inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison. These billboards, along with a swastika and the word "fascist" next to it, juxtaposed the U.S. Interests Section display of 75 Christmas lights; each light corresponded to one of the 75 prodemocracy activists (called "dissidents" in Cuba) who were given lengthy prison terms in 2003. On one hand, senior Cuban diplomat Ricardo Alarcón referred to the U.S. Christmas display as a "provocation" and "rubbish." On the other hand, the U.S. State Department remarked, "Any government that puts up swastikas ought to answer its own questions about why it does that.... We think that the remembrance of the 75 people in jail is entirely appropriate to the season. And we intend to leave the lights up" (Franc 2004). Thus, in a geopolitical setting where two nations do not maintain full diplomatic relations with each other, the use of "outdoor advertising" ratchets the tenor of discourse up a notch about the meaning of civil society and government legitimacy. A tropical "cold war" still lingers between Havana and Washington, and Cuba's information landscape is one arena in which this battle is fought.

FIGURE 6.1. The *protestatario* (protest plaza) located on the Malecón seaside boulevard, facing the U.S. Interest Section. Originally built in a very short period of time while the Cuban boy Elián González was awaiting his custody case to be adjudicated in U.S. courts in 1999–2000, it is a place of public protest. Speakers and stage face the U.S. Interests Section (leased to the United States by the Swiss government). In 2006, the U.S. Interests Section began running an electronic bulletin board around the top floors of its building. *Top*: Looking west toward the U.S. Interest Section with the "mourning flags" (banderas de deluto) in the background and the José Martí statue (cradling a young boy in his arms, symbolizing Elián González). *Bottom*: Looking east shows scaffolding for lighting and sound systems.

CLASS, LEGITIMATION, AND PROPAGANDA

In Marxist terms, ideology entails the reproduction of the social relations of production; that is, how society guarantees its social and economic structures from one generation to the next.

> Ideology is how the existing ensemble of social relations represents itself to individuals; it is the image a society gives of itself in order to perpetuate itself. These representations serve to constrain [those who live in a particular society] . . . they establish fixed places for us to occupy that work to guarantee coherent social actions over time. Ideology uses the fabrication of images and the processes of representation to persuade us that how things are is how they ought to be and that the place provided for us is the place we ought to have. (Nichols 1981, 1)

In this regard, the work of Jürgen Habermas (1975), in *Legitimation Crisis*, is particularly useful in understanding Cuba's information landscapes. Habermas identified three broad subsystems operating in society: work as formulated in an economic system, language as a sociocultural system, and domination as a political system. These are useful lenses through which we can understand how the Cuban government employs political billboards in Cuba because, as Weinar (1981, 119) shows, these discourses can stop the masses from raising "truth claims" that may challenge the political status quo. The political mark made by any socialist nation can manifest itself several ways. Without competing political parties advertising in the print or electronic media, the single-party system is guaranteed a monopoly on discourses to deliver its messages to the masses. We agree with Kubik (1994, 7), who argues that the use of legitimacy is key in studying the political systems of communist nations. Legitimacy is essentially the regime's successful continuation because it can "allow"—to a certain extent—the claims of a government to maintain control over a people. Seymour Lipset (1960, 19) stated it succinctly a half century ago: "Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society."

Political propaganda in the form of billboards is one part of many "spatial vocabularies of power" that individuals, organizations, and governments employ (Allen 2003; Von Blum 2002). Other venues that the Cuban government uses include—but are not limited to—comics, declarations, harangues, public shaming (in Cuba, called *actos de repudio*[2]), mass rallies, focused news programs (recently called *mesas redondas*), newspa-

pers, political manifestos, pictorial magazines, propaganda leaflets, public announcements, revolutionary songs, and speeches, among others (Holm 1991, 18). Together, these venues constitute the rhetorics of place.

The concept of place holds a prominent position in 20th-century Anglo-American geography. It is foremost a portion of geographical space that people or objects occupy. John Agnew (1987) argues that place consists of three distinct attributes. One is the "sense of place" that invokes a local "structure of feeling." A second dimension is the location of things or people in a designated geographical area. This notion shares the concepts of relative location, that is, the relationship of a fixed point (absolute location) with the surrounding area. A third component entails "locale," or those settings where social relations take place. Taken together, these constructs of place provide an alternative to the more positivist positions in human geography and embrace phenomenological approaches to geographic research on place. By "phenomenological," we mean how individuals experience their world without preconceived constructs to categorize their experiences. Rather, a sense of place can be described inductively and uniquely according to each individual (Relph 1976; Seamon 1979).

By the close of the 20th century, however, interest in the concept of place had expanded beyond its original humanistic confines and came to inform studies in economic, social, and political geography (Agnew 1987; Johnston 1991; Kirby 1982, 1993) and communication studies. Place serves as the empirical or observable part of power and political processes, where outcomes can be observed and landscapes reveal these imprints. Studies at a variety of geographic scales show how the study of place sheds light on complex phenomena: urban sprawl; where to build and maintain locally unwanted land uses (or LULUs, such as garbage dumps, incinerators, noxious industries, prisons, mental health and substance abuse facilities, and water treatment plants), and the use of advertising and political propaganda.

Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan (1967) was among the first to argue that new electronic media (particularly television) were homogenizing our world and invoking plainness. It is important to note that his observation came before "globalization"—the shrinking of time and space through advanced communication technologies—became a household word (Waters 1985). McLuhan, whom *Time* magazine called "The Prince of the Global Village," observed that "ours is a brand new world of all-at-onceness . . . we live in a global village . . . created by instant electronic movement. It is at once as wide as the planet and as small as the village" (*Time* 1992). In his conceptualization of space in the precomputer era, the lines between the local and universal become blurred.

The works of Appadurai (1986, 1996), however, bridge the gap between the local and the universal. He joins the roles of media and ideology in his discussion of "ideascapes" in which prominent ideologies are used to leave their marks on landscapes, reshape the relationships between state power and citizens, and summon an allegiance among citizens who are exposed to both overt and covert messages of political propaganda.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN CUBA

Cuba's "ideascapes," to borrow Appadurai's (1996) term, embrace the virtues of the Revolution, celebrate the accomplishments of national martyrs, victimize the island as a casualty of U.S. hegemony, and are widely distributed throughout Cuba.[3] Carty argues that the societal role of mass media in Cuba is rather mixed. "On the positive side," he writes, "[the media] do interpret domestic and international events and trends from the Marxist–Leninist perspective in a systematic and rigorous manner. On the negative side, mass communicators do not provide a needed critique of the goals, accomplishments and failures of leaders and organizations" (1990, 134). In other words, there are no open op-ed columns in the state-run newspapers and no opposition press exists. Critiques against state policy must be veiled and indirect, and only the highest public officials can even allude to such criticism. In the electronic media, there is no affordable Internet access in Cuba for private citizens; only select employees at public institutions or joint venture firms can access the Web and maintain e-mail accounts. In addition, there is no cable TV beyond the hotels and restaurants, although there is a thriving trade in illegal satellite dishes and pirated cable TV services (Peters and Scarpaci 1998). Unauthorized access to the Internet and satellite TV carries a punishment under the Cuban legal system. Nonetheless, illegal Internet and cable access is growing through an underground network of dealers, installers, and embezzlers.

A defining feature of the modern nation-state, especially an authoritarian one, is its relationship to the media. Besides control of the armed forces, media control is of paramount importance in how a government projects its legitimacy to civil society. During the Cold War, news agency information pooled by the nonaligned nations (Nonaligned Movement) served as a counter to Western-based news services such as Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters, Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation, and other sources.

The Cuban government has long seen itself as being "influenced by a barrage of news and commentary from international media but seldom having any input of their own [or other] Third World leaders" (Milner 1979, 17). In Cuba's final declaration of the 1971 Cuban Congress on Education and Culture, the government declared:

> Culture, like education, is not and cannot be apolitical or impartial. . . . Radio, television, cinema and the press are powerful instruments of ideological education and for creation of a collective conscience. . . . The mass media cannot be left to change or used without direction. (*Granma Weekly Review* 1971; cited in Milner 1979, 18)

Despite these restrictions, there are many newspapers, radio stations, and television channels on the island. Although there are about one dozen national Cuban portal servers (Table 6.2), Internet use and access are tightly controlled. Only researchers and bureaucrats at public institutions gain free access to the World Wide Web. Cubans willing to pay in hard currency can rent Internet machines; rates range from about U.S. $3 to U.S. $6 per hour, comparable to about one week's wages. Cubans have free access to an intranet service that operates within the island. This allows Cubans to send e-mails from many post offices and other computer centers, but only within the island. Those Cubans who work for joint venture operations can access internationally sent e-mail and the World Wide Web from their work sites. The dredging and filtering of e-mail entering and leaving the island is a common government practice. Palmer argues that access to the Internet on the island is "prohibitively expensive and . . . [blocks] unsuitable material (roughly defined as any site that doesn't promote Cuban tourism). Only a small minority of state officials [are] allowed limited Internet access" (2005). Cuban authorities confine fax machines to hard-currency accounts and lines, which most Cubans cannot afford. Our recent review of Cuban websites indicates that there are 2 national newspapers, 15 provincial papers, 26 magazines, 3 national TV stations, and

TABLE 6.2. Selected Cuban National Computer Servers (.cu)

Ceniai	Cubamar
Infocom	Cubaciencia
Cubaweb	Cubasi
Isla Grande	Portal del medio ambiente en Cuba
Infomed	Cubarte
Citmatel	

10 national radio stations. It is significant that these are all state owned, monitored, and censored.

Like Communist North Korea and Vietnam, the Cuban government occasionally allows limited public debate on selected issues. These are carefully orchestrated events; as Milner (1979, 18) contended nearly 30 years ago, "communist societies make no pretense of guaranteeing the right to such debate and they do not, even in periods of latitude, allow criticism" (1979, 18). Cubans enlist a variety of sayings that soften what others might call censorship. The French NGO Reporters without Borders noted that

> in 2006, Cuba is still the second biggest prison in the world for journalists after China. Three years ago it was the first, following an unprecedented crackdown which saw the arrest of 27 journalists, speedily tried and sentenced for alleged collaboration with the United States against "Cuba's economy and national independence" under the terms of the 88 law or "gagging law." (2006)

A saying about the distinction between public and private speech is noted in the following remark heard in official circles: "In Cuba there is no culture of criticism" (*En Cuba no hay una cultura de crítica*) or "Within the Revolution, everything; outside the Revolution, nothing" (*dentro de la Revolución todo, fuera de la Revolución, nada*). This conceptual clash surfaced in the controversial interview that U.S. journalist ABC News correspondent Barbara Walters had with Fidel Castro in 1977, when Castro remarked:

> If you ask us whether some periodical against socialism could come out here, I tell you frankly that it could not. Neither the [Cuban Communist P]arty, nor the government, nor the people would permit that. In that sense, we do not have freedom of the press which you have in the United States.... Our mass media work is a function of the revolution. (cited in Milner 1979, 18)

Twenty-five years later, Walters again interviewed Castro, and he emphasized his government's role in health care and education as metrics that define human rights in Cuba. Walters remarked:

> For Castro, freedom starts with education. And if literacy alone were the yardstick, Cuba would rank as one of the freest nations on Earth. The literacy rate is 96 percent. (*The Agitator* 2006)

To be sure, Fidel Castro is media savvy. The Walters interview of 1977 took place over 10 days, during which the famous U.S. journalist traveled

in a jeep across the island as a guest of the Cuban leader. World media disseminated images of the virile fatigue-clad revolutionary driving the scarf-adorned Walters over the island's mountains and beaches. His appearance helped to humanize his regime, which, at that time, had been demonized in the U.S. media for nearly 16 years. He learned about the use of the media during the early days of his revolutionary struggle, beginning with the now famous interview he gave to Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times* in 1958, after President Batista's army had allegedly killed the guerrilla fighter. That interview led *The National Review* to its tongue-in-cheek remark that Fidel Castro "got his first job in the New York Times" (1961, p. 44).

THE RHETORICAL CRY OF INDEPENDENCE IN 19TH-CENTURY CUBA

If the contemporary media and landscape of Cuba are steeped in political symbolism, then its wellspring surely derives from the island's long colonial history. The colony of Cuba did not partake in the independence wars that inspired other Central and South American colonies to throw off the yoke of Madrid. By 1830, all Spanish colonies in the New World, except Puerto Rico and Cuba, had broken free of Spanish domination. Spanish rule in Cuba was tightened because of the wealth the island produced for the motherland, mostly in the form of sugar, molasses, rum, and wood products (Moreno Fraginals 1964). The ports of Havana, Nipe, Matanzas, and Santiago served as key refurbishing points for transatlantic fleets journeying to the Spanish port of Cádiz. The Cuban-born creoles, however, launched a series of wars in claiming their independence: 1860–1878, 1882, and 1895–1898. Although the U.S. Army intervened at the end of the Cuban independence wars and snatched victory from the hands of the Cubans, important liberation symbols emerged from the Cuban struggle against Spain.

The first is the machete-wielding Cuban soldiers, the *mambises*, who folded the forward brim of their straw hats that survived, as a sort of "peasant helmet" in contrast to the modern garb of the Spanish colonial army. Humility, perseverance, and valor embody the noble *mambises*. A second nearly ubiquitous feature is a historic figure, the bust of José Martí, the father of Cuba's independence movement. The mass-produced concrete busts are found in schools, clinics, government offices, and parks, among many other locations. A third, but less widely distributed symbol, is the array of civic art that depicts 19th-century war heroes. Carlos

FIGURE 6.2. A political billboard denouncing state-sponsored terror, Rancho Boyeros, Havana City Municipality. The play on words denotes the card game term "full house" by using the Spanish word *ases* (aces), which constitutes the first few letters of "assassins" (*asesinos*). *From left to right:* Adolph Hitler, George W. Bush, Luis Posadas Carriles, and Orlando Bosch. Photography courtesy of Korine Kolivras.

Manuel de Céspedes, Antonio Maceo, and Calixto García are just a few of the heroes most commonly depicted in sculptures, which are found in Havana and nearly every provincial capital. Finally, political billboards—the focus of the rest of this chapter—are distributed throughout the island (Figure 6.2).

THE POLITICAL BILLBOARD

Cuba's cultural revolution in the 1960s strove to bring all aspects of art—poetry, civic art, painting, sculpture, and other forms—to the masses (Kapcia 2000, ch. 2; Block 2001). The Ministry of Culture's Casa de las Américas was created in the early years of the Revolution and continues as a particularly important disseminator of poems, books, short stories, novels, including more than 10,000 original works. It has won international prizes for its publications, which have given it considerable legitimacy (Carty 1990, 155). Not surprisingly, perhaps, foreign ownership of the mass media in Cuba is not permitted.

The Revolution also introduced new forms of mass communication, such as the street mural on buildings and walls and outdoor advertising

(billboards). Political billboards are works of art that carry a political or civic message. As Juraga and Booker show, socialist art and propaganda serve partly to "challenge the hegemony of Western bourgeois aesthetics … [and] ideology" (2002, 6, 9). Graphic arts—posters, billboards, paintings, and murals—also fostered political education, the values of the socialist revolution, and a chance to exploit "a new commitment and also the population's newly awakened enthusiasm" (Kapcia 2000, 14).

Thousands of political billboards dot the island. They are positioned at major streets and highways to maximize their visibility. Political billboards constitute virtually the only form of public advertising in Cuba, other than signs used to identify buildings, state-run establishments, ports, roads, and tourist facilities. Although a few billboards promote tourist destinations and facilities, such places were off-limits to Cubans who could afford meals or lodgings that are charged in hard currency (Scarpaci 1998); this changed when Raúl Castro authorized it in 2008. Although there is no standardized format for billboards, they usually include a quote from a historical figure, celebrate the virtues of Cuban socialism, or both. Indeed, it is the billboard (12 meters × 5 meters is the norm) whose mark on the Cuban landscape is most pronounced.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 gradually began phasing out private sector activity, and with that came the end of commercial advertising, including radio and TV spots, print media and, of course, commercial billboards. New messages needed to dominate the media and reinforce to the masses that life in Cuba would be different under the leadership of Fidel Castro and his cadre of guerrilla fighters. By the end of 1961 practically all housing, firms, services, factories, and transportation systems came under state control. Nationalization eliminated private sector advertising. Market economies encouraged the consumption of nonessential consumer items, which are the anathema of a socialist society. Instead, most daily needs were satisfied by the state: Food was procured at the corner grocer (*bodega*) with a ration book (*libreta*), housing was the property of the state, which assigned living areas as based on need and political criteria, and virtually everyone worked in the public sector.

In the frenzy of these early years, public notices became essential in keeping Cubans apprised of the rapidly changing state of political and economic affairs. For instance, the need for volunteer work had to be announced at the national, provincial, and local levels. Word about production quotas at the national level and that of the firm also had to be disseminated. Electronic media (TV and radio) played a key role in providing public information, as did print media in the form of newspapers. And sugar cane harvest amounts—the backbone of the Cuban economy until recently—could be readily posted at the level of state farms, govern-

ment offices at county (*municipio*) and provincial levels, and the national level. Billboards proved to be the ideal medium for accomplishing these tasks.

Billboards have several functions. First, they are relatively inexpensive; once installed, paint and the labor required for painting them are the only costs. Second, they are large and fixed in place and allow a message to be communicated directly or indirectly over a long period. Moreover, they can be repainted fairly quickly if a timely message must be disseminated. Third, they are a good medium for spreading popular slogans, which can be read and interpreted in a few short seconds. As such, they are ideal for informing commuters on the crowded buses and trucks that haul Cubans to and from work. Finally, they serve as constant reminders that the state is present, promoting welfare, safety, history lessons, and socialist ideology for the masses. We suspect that this is their most powerful use, though we have no empirical evidence to support the claim.

PLACE, LANDSCAPE, AND DISCOURSE

In this section, we define five categories or discourses of messages that pervade political billboards. These messages form part of broader discourses that are widely distributed in town and country, mountain and valley, east and west. The sample we review includes patriotism and socialism, conservation, U.S. hegemony, social justice, and civic participation. Although not a complete list of the many types of messages conveyed by political billboards, they do represent a broad sampling of the prevailing political and civic messages (Table 6.3).

Patriotism and Socialism

To the ire of the exile community, the socialist leadership enlists the images of historical figures in promoting the principles of socialism and a centrally planned economy (Grenier and Pérez 2002). Only men of letters, politicians, statesmen, and soldiers who have figured in the promotion of historical events appear with contemporary political rhetoric. It is interesting to note that the images of neither Fidel[4] nor Raul Castro are widely distributed, because both men are still alive.[5] Linking the historical images of the past with the contemporary socialist struggle provides a historical thread, which is important in forging a national identity that is cast as both bellicose and just. Billboards of this ilk aim to legitimize the state.

TABLE 6.3. Sampling of Cuban Political Billboards and Murals by Category

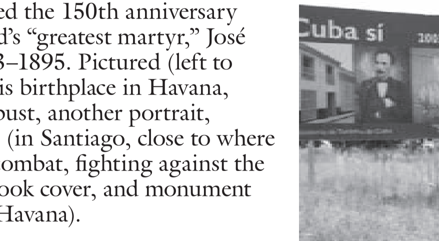
Category or discourse	Billboard or mural title	English translation	Significance	Selected images
Patriotism and Socialism	*Bolivia: Monumento Nacional.*	Bolivia: National Monument	Attaching image of Argentine-born physician Che Guevara on sign that renamed the Cunagua sugar mill as the Bolivia sugar mill, even before Che was killed in Bolivia.	
	Señores imperialistas, no le tenemos ningún miedo.	Imperialists: We have absolutely no fear of you	Located next to the United States Interest Section in Havana. Portrays an old Uncle Sam facing off against bearded guerrillas.	
	La caña es tradición, cultura, identidad	Sugar care is tradition, culture, identity	Heralds a former economic mainstay. Half of the 156 mills on the island have closed since 2000.	

(cont.)

TABLE 6.3. *(cont.)*

Category or discourse	Billboard or mural title	English translation	Significance	Selected images
	Somos de la misma casa	We are all from the same house	All Cubans share a common heritage and therefore share a common responsibility in overcoming challenges.	
	Face of Che (no text).		Famous image of Che based on a photograph by Korda, widely reproduced on posters, postcards, and T-shirts, appears here on a rooftop cistern in Pinar del Río.	
	Los cienfuegueros son firmes, no hay duda.	There are no doubts that cienfuegueros [residents of the city or province of Cienfuegos] are committed [to the revolution]	Spoken by Fidel on the 46th anniversary of the guerrilla attacks on the Moncada army barracks. Fidel praises residents of *cienfuegos* for the commitment to the revolutionary struggle. In revolutionary circles, this is a badge of honor. The billboard is located in the city of Cienfuegueros.	

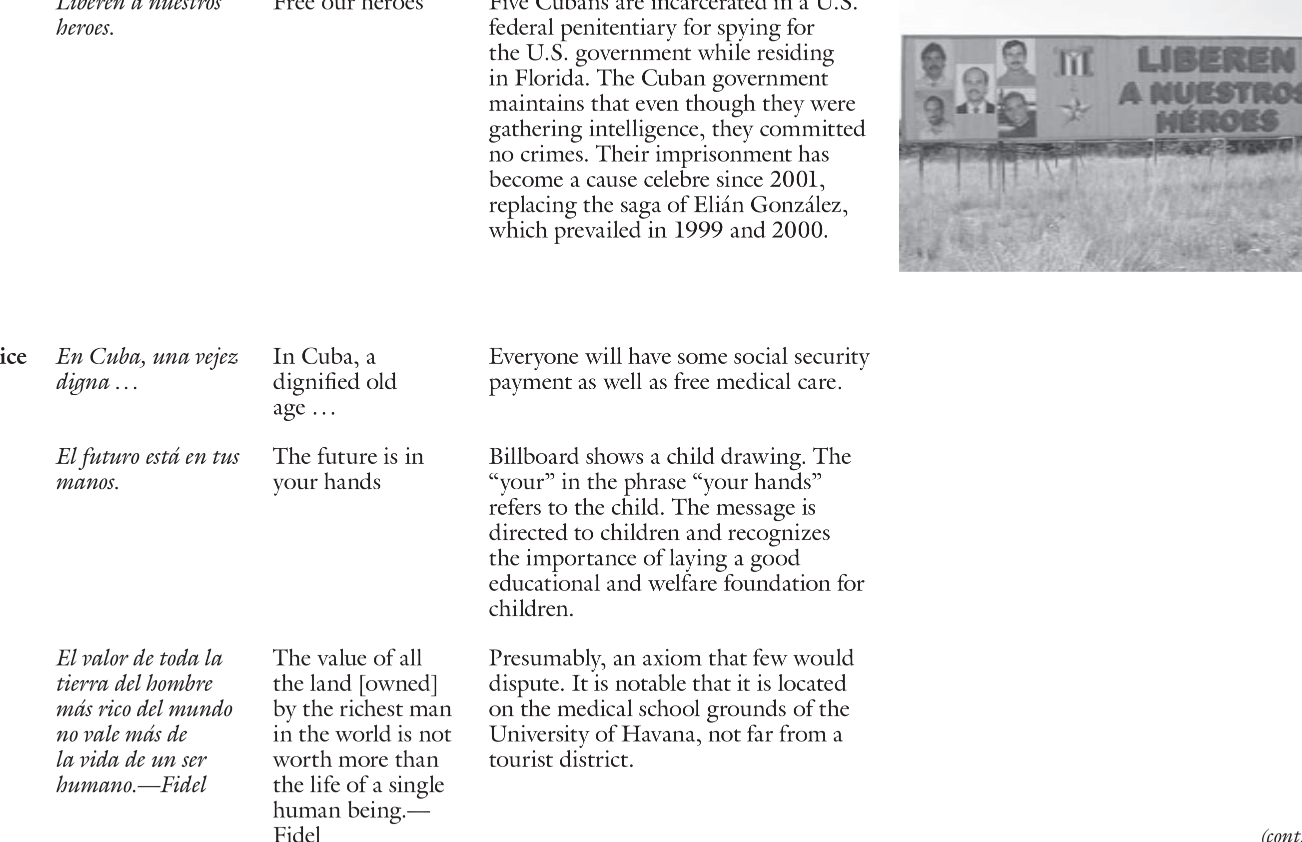
Cuba sí! 150 aniversario del natalicio de José Martí. "Será inmortal quien merezca serlo."	Cuba yes! 150th anniversary of the birth of José Martí, who is quoted: "Those who will be immortal are the ones who deserve it."	2003 marked the 150th anniversary of the island's "greatest martyr," José Martí, 1853–1895. Pictured (left to right) are his birthplace in Havana, a portrait, bust, another portrait, mausoleum (in Santiago, close to where he died in combat, fighting against the Spanish), book cover, and monument to him (in Havana).
La Revolución es intocable.	The revolution is untouchable	Heralding the steadfast course that the state has charted.
Una Asociación de Patria o Muerte.	An association of Homeland or Death	"Homeland or Death" is the conventional way of ending a speech, often followed by "*venceremos*," or "we will prevail." The billboard is sponsored by a veterans association.



(cont.)

TABLE 6.3. *(cont.)*

Category or discourse	Billboard or mural title	English translation	Significance	Selected images
	Ellos señalaron el camino de seguir adelante.	They showed the road to keep going forward	Located in the populous suburb of eastern Havana, the billboard shows 19th- and 20th-century statesmen and soldiers; left to right: Máximo Gómez, Manuel de Céspedes, unknown, José Martí, José Antonio Echevarría, Camilo Cienfuegos, and Che Guevara. The billboard underscores the historical thread that connects 19th-century struggles against Spain with struggles against Batista and the United States in the 20th century.	
Conservation	*No al desplifarlo. ¡Ahorrala!*	[Say] No to wasting it [water]. Save it!	Fresh water is a concern in Cuba. Although the island receives more than 54 inches of rain in most parts, the high evapotranspiration rate and short river lengths make conserving water an ongoing challenge.	
	Te presto mi mar, mis ríos, y mis peces. ¡Cuídalos!	I lend you my sea, my rivers, and my fish. Take care of them!	Ecotourism promises income potential in future years. However, not even Havana has a primary water treatment facility. Havana Bay is one of the dirtiest bodies of water in the Americas.	

U.S. hegemony	*Liberen a nuestros heroes.*	Free our heroes	Five Cubans are incarcerated in a U.S. federal penitentiary for spying for the U.S. government while residing in Florida. The Cuban government maintains that even though they were gathering intelligence, they committed no crimes. Their imprisonment has become a cause celebre since 2001, replacing the saga of Elián González, which prevailed in 1999 and 2000.	
Social justice	*En Cuba, una vejez digna …*	In Cuba, a dignified old age …	Everyone will have some social security payment as well as free medical care.	
	El futuro está en tus manos.	The future is in your hands	Billboard shows a child drawing. The “your” in the phrase “your hands” refers to the child. The message is directed to children and recognizes the importance of laying a good educational and welfare foundation for children.	
	El valor de toda la tierra del hombre más rico del mundo no vale más de la vida de un ser humano.—Fidel	The value of all the land [owned] by the richest man in the world is not worth more than the life of a single human being.—Fidel	Presumably, an axiom that few would dispute. It is notable that it is located on the medical school grounds of the University of Havana, not far from a tourist district.	

(cont.)

TABLE 6.3. *(cont.)*

Category or discourse	Billboard or mural title	English translation	Significance	Selected images
Civic participation	*CDRs: Una revolución en cada barrio. "¡Mientras existan en el hombre ansias de progreso, de superación de perfeccionamiento, tendrán una tarea los CDR!"—Fidel*	CDRs [Committees for the Defense of the Revolution]: A revolution in every neighborhood. "As long as men strive from progress, betterment, and perfection, the CDRs will always have work!"—Fidel	Originally formed in 1961 as a defense unit against U.S. military aggression, the CDRs now monitor community behavior (antirevolutionary behavior), neighborhood watch functions, and the normal array of planning functions such as waste removal, police patrolling, youth and elderly citizen monitoring, among others.	
	Queremos que sean como el Che.—Fidel	We want [the students] to be like Che.—Fidel	Fidel exhorting the youth to dedicate themselves to the revolution.	
	Si Uds. triunfan, habrá milicias en Cuba.—Fidel	If you are victorious, there will be militias in Cuba.—Fidel	Praising the efforts of voluntary local militias.	
	No hay oxígeno para la contrarevolución.	There is no oxygen for the counterrevolution	Volunteerism and loyalty will be rewarded. The picture of the fist that crushes the worm refers to the state and "traitors" (worms, Cuban exiles, or *gusanos*), respectively.	

Conservation

Cuba is a small island with limited resources. It is also a developing nation with less than 1% of the population of China. Cubans are keenly aware that many essential materials cannot be produced on the island but must be imported and paid for in hard currency (Aranda 1968). Aside from nickel and some oil, it is relatively resource poor. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, economic necessity has forced Cuba to increase crude oil production (high in sulfur) from just 15% of national consumption to practically 100%. The soils in parts of the country produce some of the world's finest tobacco and indicated a rich agricultural history where sugar cane (now in steep decline) figured prominently. Fresh water for both irrigation and drinking is a major concern. The capital loses as much as 55% of its fresh water supplies through leakage in the pipelines drawing on two aquifers south of Havana. Therefore, water conservation is paramount. One of the few political protests that took place under the socialist regime happened in the heat of August 1994 when power blackouts impeded the distribution of water to parts of Habana Vieja and Centro Habana. Another conservation practice is the promotion of recycling. However, there is no domestic (e.g., household pickup) recycling in place anywhere on the island (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2000; Scarpaci et al. 2002).

U.S. Hegemony

The predominance of the United States in Cuba's political, economic, and social history dates back to the island's colonial period. From snatching political victory from the Cuban colonial forces in 1898, to supporting a series of corrupt regimes that were sympathetic to the United States in the 20th century, to the coordination of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961—the record of fact provides the socialist leadership with myriad examples of U.S. imperialism and domination. These political messages remind those who pass by the billboards of the nefarious record of Cuba's northern neighbor while deflecting blame from the government because of a menacing bully just 90 miles away.

Social Justice

Universal health care, education, free housing, and guaranteed levels of retirement have long been hallmarks of the Revolution. Although the news media often reports the high cost of medical care in the United

States, it is at once keen on promoting the plethora of free social services to the masses in Cuba (Feinsilver 1993). This socialist security net is likely the sine qua non of Castro's socialist government (Chaffee and Prevost 1992). Homelessness, costly universities, poor inner-city schools, and the expensive real estate market in the United States contrast with a modicum of welfare state services in socialist Cuba. Billboards that carry these messages remind Cubans of the stability they enjoy under a centrally planned economy, though the conditions of the schools, hospitals, and clinics are very different from what they should be.

Civic Participation

The fundamental premises of socialism prioritize collective versus individual actions. Social solidarity is built on the collective social action that benefits society at large. Voluntarism is central to these notions. It is a civic duty in which altruism surpasses private material rewards (August 1999). Cuba's social history between 1965 and 1985 is replete with examples that showcase the accomplishments of the socialist economy; people had life expectancies comparable to those of the capitalist industrial economies of the North Atlantic, and their basic needs were satisfied. Food has always been plain, but scarcity was not a serious problem until the 1990s. Raúl Castro's statement in December 2006 was one of the frankest assessments of food shortages and other structural problems:

> In this Revolution we are tired of excuses. . . . The Revolution cannot lie. . . . This isn't saying that there have been comrades who have lied, but the imprecision, inexact data, consciously or unconsciously masked, can no longer continue. (Prima News Agency 2006)

Leading the list of top issues are public transportation problems, poor housing, insufficient food, and salaries that cannot cover a modicum of expenses (Snow 2006).

Whether these remarks signal a new departure with Raúl Castro as leader, mass organization participation in such bodies as the Cuban Federation of Women, student associations, and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution were encouraged because the state had been generous in satisfying minimum material needs. Today, however, material rewards are surpassing certain moral incentives that encouraged voluntarism in the past. The legalization of the dollar in 1993 and the subsequent creation of a two-tier dollar-and-peso economy have contributed to this

material and moral schism. Nonetheless, social and occupational mobility in state enterprises is still premised on the comportment of a good socialist citizen. Voluntarism forms a key part of that civic participation, and the neighborhood CDR (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution) is the most widely distributed grassroots organization of this kind. Its seal is seen on at least one door in each neighborhood, which signifies the residence of the block leader. This carving up of the nation's political map into smaller jurisdictions can be traced back to 1976 when planning authorities increased the number of provinces from 6 to 13, ostensibly to cater to the local geographic nuances that were not captured by the larger jurisdictions (Slater 1982). Critics contend that such a territorial reorganization was more a way to impose social control than to enhance planning mandates (Jatar-Hausman 1999).

BEYOND THE INFORMATION LANDSCAPE

We have outlined just a few aspects of political space in Cuba. A complex and varied array of representations herald the triumphs of the Revolution, praise martyrs who have sacrificed their lives in a variety of historical struggles against imperialism, and encourage environmental sensitivity. These civic and political messages form a key part of we call the island's political landscape; they stand out in a country where the market economy advertisements for consumer products, fast-food dining, and other nonessential goods do not exist. In some fashion, these billboards create a sense of place unique to the island, much like a low-tech communist version of Times Square in Manhattan. To what extent these messages tether civil society to the state cannot be known, but it is clear that they form a distinct element of place. We concur with Lefebvre's (1991) phenomenological view that power and social space consist of something beyond ordered diagrams (billboards) and their static distribution. This medium is subtle and ever-present, silent yet imposing.

The exercise of authority in Cuba is striking to us, if only because during our research and living on the island we have seen very little any antigovernment graffiti[6] or the destruction or vandalism of any political billboards. At the surface, this may suggest unquestionable allegiance and the pervasive authority of the state, a disciplined civil society, a great fear of countering these billboards because of harsh recriminations, or some combination of these elements. Indeed, this is remarkable if we consider Allen's assessment:

> There is something rather odd about the claim that the whole weight of government, in both its state and non-state appearances, rests upon the exercise of authority, when seduction, manipulation or inducement, even coercion, would all seem to have a part to play in what it takes for people to bring themselves "into line." (Allen 2003, 143)

Globally, alternatives to the marketplace have surfaced as a visible counterforce to the pressures of neoliberal development strategies. For example, Von Blum (1982) shows how resistance art in Los Angeles provides an important social, political, and ethnic-based voice for the poor and non-Anglo groups. The art movement there emerged from the Mexican mural renaissance between the 1920s and 1940s, the migrant labor and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the gangs of the 1980s and beyond. Blacks, Chicanos, Latinos of all stripes, gays and lesbians, Asians and other cultural minorities have found an expression in resistance art whose aim is to "cause passing viewers to rethink traditional attitudes about consumption and refocus on contemporary political controversies.... Billboards, after all, are supposed to sell products and services, not criticize American foreign policy" (Von Blum 1982, 195). Graffiti artists may also employ guerrilla tactics to disspell prevailing norms and "provide alternatives to ... governmental dogma" (Von Blum 1982, 195). A recent review of modern architecture and modernity in Latin America suggests that the use of public spaces and advertising in southern California are increasingly showing up in the literature on Latin American urbanism (Scarpaci 2003). However, these forms of expression and uses of public space are uncommon in Cuba.[7]

Many argue that the notion of community around the globe has been eclipsed by a crass commercialism that erodes the traditional bonds that linked households with local merchants, local farmers, and domestic manufacturers. Marxist theory has had a "tendency to absolutize the power of commodification. The universalization of capitalism thus undermines the social significance of place" (Agnew and Duncan 1989, 4–5). In the case of Cuba, this is both accurate and misleading. At one level, there is no doubt that advertising nonessential goods is anathema to centralized planning. At another level, although commodification is absent in the case of Cuba, there is an imposition of state media that disallows alternative discourses. In other words, only the state can advertise, and political billboards are a pervasive form of the information landscape.

CONCLUSIONS

Power is an amorphous concept, and in this sense we share Weber (1978) and Arendt's (1951) argument that there is no "thing" we can identify as "power." Despite its ambiguity, many individuals and nation-states operate as if there exists such an entity. The ability to define the use of public space in Cuba accounts for the lack of consumer messages that dominate places in market economies. Although multinational logos such as those of McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, Gap, Old Navy, Coca-Cola, and other icons of capitalism can be seen on (used) clothing worn by Cubans, they do not appear on marquees, storefront displays, or billboards.[8] Some Cuban landscape architects, architects, and planners have commented that many of the billboards are of poor or brash design and deface the natural landscape in the countryside much the way a billboard of a commercial nature does in the United States and Europe. Nonetheless, for nearly a half century the state has invested in a wide distribution of thousands of political billboards whose markers extol a variety of political, ecological, civic, and historic messages that serve as an extension of state power.

Cuba's information landscape—especially political billboards—reveals at least four types of discourse that reflect state power in a variety of places: patriotism and socialism, conservation, U.S. hegemony, social justice, and civic participation. In keeping with much of the literature on how place is created, this chapter identifies a regularity and ordering in how the socialist leadership defines place, controls information technology, and uses political billboards, providing a "spatial vocabulary" for broadcasting state-sanctioned ideology on the virtues of socialism. Cuba's tightly scripted information landscape is part of a spatial expression of ideas whose mark on the island is both powerful and distinctive.

NOTES

1. We are grateful for comments on an earlier draft of this chapter by Orestes del Castillo Jr. However, all errors and omissions are ours alone.

2. One website monitoring these *actos de repudios* in Cuba defines the term as "official acts of public intimidation and repression against individuals and their families because of their views, through the use of trained mobs and violence, akin to those employed by Nazi Germany and the Ku Klux Klan as practiced by the Cuban regime" (Cuba Verdad 2006). In 2006, in response to awarding the Sahkarov Prize for Freedom of Thought to the Cuban group Damas de Blanco (Women of White, a group that peacefully demonstrates against the detention

of their husbands, held for several years in jail for opposing the government and, allegedly, conspiring with the United States government), the European Union justified the prize because of the "recognition of their action in favour of the political prisoners in Cuba" (European Union 2006).

3. We base this statement on 48 research trips to the island since 1990 (J. L. S.) and hundreds of photographs taken of billboards and public spaces. It also derives from a long residency on the island of nearly 40 years (A. P.).

4. Although the Cuban American exile community largely believes that Fidel Castro is an egomaniac, our sense is that those on the island believe that his lack of self-promotion in the form of civic art is a genuine sign of modesty. Even since his major surgery in July 2006 and the turning over of powers to his brother Raúl, there has been no public display or grieving. It is unlikely that any large monuments will be constructed until he dies, and then only after burial in his hometown of Santiago, near the gravesite of José Martí.

5. Unlike the practice in China, North Korea, and the former USSR and Soviet bloc nations, only dead heroes are promoted in civic art and political billboards in socialist Cuba. There are, for instance, no large public sculptures or billboards of the leader as there were of leaders in the former USSR or as there are now of leaders in China and North Korea. However, his image does appear on several denominations of paper currency and he is often on TV.

6. Though rare, we have seen graffiti in the form of "abajo Fidel" (down with Fidel) scratched in small letters into the backs of bus seats several times in various buses in Havana, Santa Clara, and Santiago. There are also brief spray paintings of "Fidel Asesino" (Fidel, Assassin), "8A" (for Ochoa, when the general was executed by firing squad in 1989), and even "Viva Gorbachov" in about 1990, when there was some hope that Cuban-style perestroika might unfold.

7. A common protest graffiti message is "abajo Fidel" (down with Fidel), but such messages are erased by participants of mass organizations like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. In the 1980s there were murals in Old Havana that conveyed a challenging message, but in an artistic fashion (versus text). Defacing government property through the use of "enemy propaganda" carries a jail sentence of up to 20 years.

8. There are times and places which advertisements for consumer items appear. During the 1991 Pan American Games, for instance, ads for *Tu Cola* (a soft drink) appeared on Cuban television. Billboards for consumer products can be found around the immediate confines of airports and hotels—places where foreigners are likely to be found. These billboards promote cell phones, car rentals, alcoholic products, and even foreign-brand (mostly Asian) consumer durables. For an amusing account of a consumer promotional campaign for cigarettes, see Corbett (2002, 134–138).

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

Whither Cuban Landscapes?

> The best way to avoid working with the . . . community isolate is not to insist that the Caribbean is no longer made up of islands . . . but to explore the ways in which Caribbean islands are constructed and given meaning in regional and global, as well as local contexts.
>
> —Karen Fog Olwig (2007, 260–270)

Landscape is inextricably bound to the study of places. It is paramount in fields of study ranging from cultural geography, biology, and landscape architecture, to the fine arts and urban planning. Our book shows how human activity and the forces of nature have modified parts of the Cuban landscape. We argue that the allure of the island's landscape, however, is that it has not been restricted to academe. Far from it. Cuba is so remarkable that it has been widely portrayed in Hollywood Productions, music, television, popular music, leisurely pursuits (travel, cigar smoking, rum sipping), and political analysis. Like John Gillis's (2004) contention about islands in general, we believe that the less Cuba has been occupied and dominated by non-Cubans, the more it has fascinated others.

We developed this argument in Chapter 1, where we noted that European landscape painters were struck by the island's beauty, which also surfaced in travelers' diaries, newspaper reports, and personal letters. Readers of the United States who are familiar with the Hudson River School of landscape painting in the 19th century will find parallel trends in Cuba's nonphotographic representation of itself. Whereas the U.S. painters

responded to modernity and industrialization, Cuban painters like Esteban Chartrand, in his 1877 work, *Marine Landscape* (*Paisaje Marino*), and Valentín Sanz Carta in *The Malangas* (*Las Malangas*), captured the colonial countryside in ways that represented the humblest of Cuban society (*lo cubano*). Gone were the European trappings of elite peninsular lifestyles (ornate carriages, palaces, manicured gardens). Instead, the common folk figured centrally in these new Cuban paintings, as did interesting uses of tropical and insular sunlight.

A growing body of scholars focus on threaded conversations related to "islandness," whose meaning differs over time and from place to place. In a physical sense, one can argue that the traditional differences between continents and islands—once clearly a part of the geographic imagination and cartographic reality of the world—have become dubious or muted, especially in a electronic age where territoriality has made the

> entire world … archipelagic, with islands appearing everywhere, inland as well as offshore.… Islandness is no longer associated only with water-bound places. The planet itself is now perceived as Earth island. (Gills and Lowenthal 2007, iii)

No longer are islands associated with backwardness and remoteness, thanks to electronic media and jet travel for the masses of rich nations. What is distinct, though, is how islands elicit a medley of responses: They are places of recreation and refuge, punishment and pilgrimage, as well as the popular stereotype of places that contain the sea, sand, sun, and sex. These "four-S" paradisiacal images certainly encompass the "demand" dimension of island Cuba (Figure 7.1), but clearly there is more. Islandness and pleasure appear to go hand in hand, especially when representing Cuba's historic places (Figure 7.2). We argue that the multiple approaches to understanding the island of Cuba necessarily engage the conjunction of art and science.

If, as Godfrey Baldacchino (2007) claims, islands truly are "novelty sites," it behooves us to consider why Cuba figures into this niche. This book has shown that the island's representations have been serious and avant garde, yet also platforms for fancy and whim. To be sure, Cuba has been "on the edge" throughout its 500 years of European occupation, first as a marginal player in Spain's colonial empire but then as a key supplier of wealth and sustenance for the motherland. It has been coveted as *tabula rasa* by corsairs, exiled French Haitian plantation farmers, and U.S. expansionists alarmed by Humboldt's writings on slavery in Cuba (see Chapter 2). Its marginality eroded soon after the American occupation in 1898.

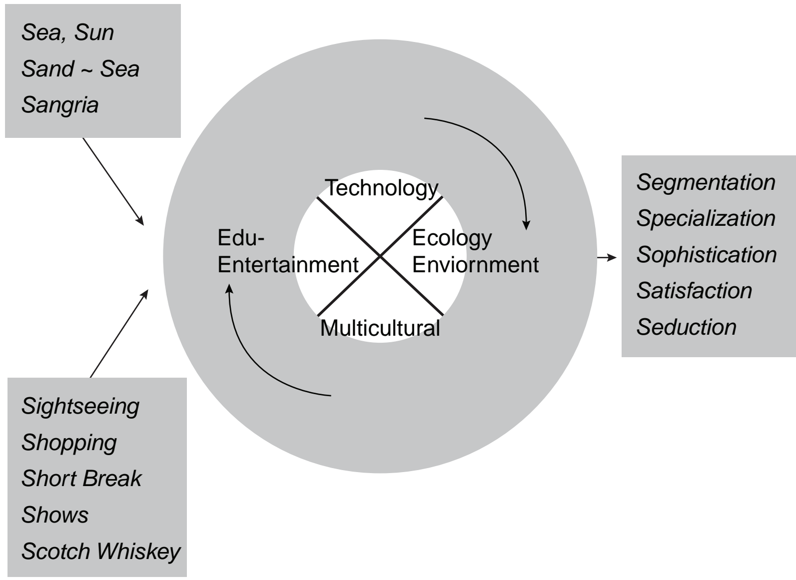


FIGURE 7.1. Demand trends in the tourist experience. From Scarpaci (2006, 10; after Buhalis 2000, 70).

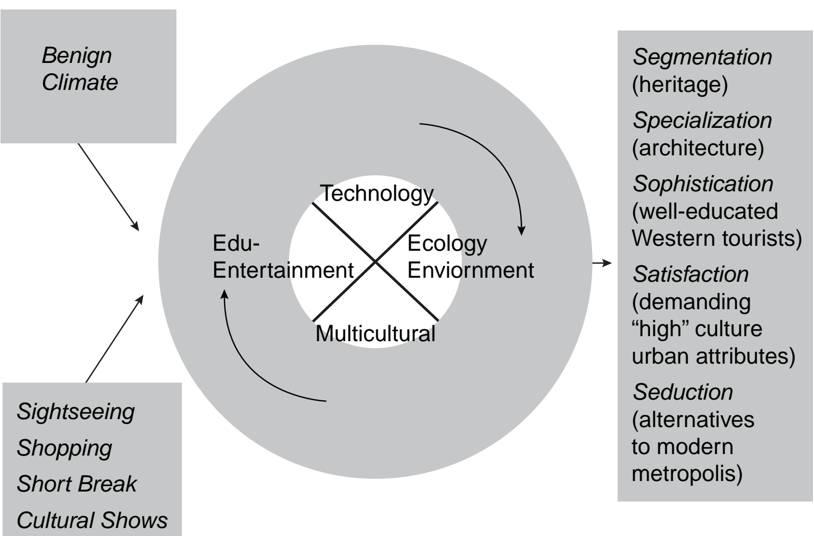


FIGURE 7.2. Dynamic heritage tourism trends in Cuban tourism. From Scarpaci (2007, 11; after Buhalis 2000, 70).

Later, it drifted back to its exotic "novelty" status, only to take world stage again in 1959 with the overthrow of the Batista government. The island of Cuba has thus propelled itself and its Cubanness as a place of innovative conceptualizations (hedonistic and communist, remote yet dangerously close to the United States). It is a frontline zone for celebrating budding yet stifled entrepreneurship under socialist rule, yet in some regards serves as a model for higher education, primary health care, and biotechnology. Cuban representations, ranging from landscape paintings to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, have gained extraordinary and extrainsular importance. Culturally, we have seen how Cuba can use a sort of "in-betweenity" in time and space; aspects of Africa, Spain, and even South Florida crop up in quotidian life. *Cubanidad*, and its myriad landscapes of the past and present, truly offers a conceptual place for experimentation.

To guide our inquiry into *cubanidad*, we enlist the perspective of a "new cultural geography, " which has added social and cultural theory to interpret changes in landscape. In emphasizing political and sociocultural processes, this new cultural geography also assesses how landscape shapes political and sociocultural processes in a particular place. We make the case that no single theoretical lens consistently informs the study of landscape. In line with the work of other geographers (Duncan and Duncan 1988; Price and Lewis 1993), we show how landscape is a central ingredient in cultural, political and social systems.

This book has shown how Cuba's landscape has been shaped by distinct stop-and-goes that have "frozen" and even retarded the evolution of the island's change. Whether the Independence Wars (1868–1878; 1895–1898), which thwarted investment in modernizing infrastructure, or the socialist period (1959–), which tended to ignore efforts at historic preservation until it became a necessary dollar generator, these have been distinctive period markers. Together, these sweeping historical events have given an uneven ebb and flow to the quality of the island's built environment. Mother Nature too—especially in the form of hurricanes—has lent a hand in reshaping shorelines, keys and islands, and river courses. Whether social networks and social solidarity increased in 19th-century Cuba as neighbors helped each other during the hurricane season remains to be studied further. Nevertheless, Cuba's insularity and vulnerability to these forces has been a defining feature of the island's physical, political, and social fabric.

Cuba's developing sugar industry in the late 18th and early 19th century provoked considerable interest by the European elite because of the potential wealth it promised. Thanks in part to the observations by Alexander von Humboldt, it also revealed the evils of slavery. Humboldt,

Cuba's "second discoverer," provided accurate descriptions of daily life that cast the economy of this "island of sugar and slaves" in noneconomic terms that, perhaps in some small measure, helped end slavery, albeit eight decades after his initial visit. Yet this notion of Cuba's being "safe yet exotic" led Fernando Ortíz, the "third discoverer of Cuba," to document the rich tapestry woven by African culture. Together, both "discoverers" carried forth an important ideological theme that would be picked up by the socialist government: Cuba need not be saved by outsiders. To be sure, Cuba was American Creole, but it was also shaped by centuries of Spanish rule. Its allure today in the burgeoning tourist and heritage industries is that it is at once Cuban, African, Spanish, American, and Soviet in intricate yet visible ways. We have argued that many iconic attractions, writings, and paintings portraying Cuba (tropical landscapes, powdery beaches and aquamarine waters, cigar-filled bars, Spanish military architecture, "fiery" mulattas) became important symbols in the island's tourist economy and remain so today despite the socialist turn in Cuba's political economy. Such place depictions, rightly or wrongly, bring international visitors who explore these landscapes.

Cuba's symbolic landscapes portray the values and power of those agents that finance and modify them. In socialist Cuba, the state is the only actor to invoke symbolic values, and, naturally, its intentions are largely political and represent the ideology of the Cuban leadership and the Cuban Communist Party. Chapter 6's review of the information landscape argues that in a globalized world of mass marketing, the Cuban landscape lacks commodity and service advertising. Instead, the state has made astute use of certain symbolic landscapes that dominate contemporary Cuba, because the state has replaced the market as the principal source of information dissemination. Our review of heritage in Chapter 4 shows that there does not appear to be a politicization of national landmarks that were forged during the socialist era. In fact, one might argue that Cuba's heritage sites are relatively less "politicized" than those of other socialist nations (e.g., the former USSR, Communist China, the former Eastern European Soviet bloc countries). Among the striking vernacular and symbolic elements today are the uniformed students walking to and from school and the thick web of health care facilities. These are in no way unique to Cuba, but they do underscore one of the social welfare badges of honor (universal education and health care) that the Castro government touts.

Without referring to the philosophy of environmental determinism (e.g., that climate, resources, and location determine a nation's destiny), there is a good case to be made that Cuba's insularity has played a key

role in the nation's political geography; we are not the first to make this point (see Martínez-Fernández 2004, for example). Although Spain preferred to interpret Cuba's lingering 19th-century colonial status as a sign of the island's loyalty to the Spanish Crown, the Spanish American liberators' lack of a navy impeded the ability of Cuba and Puerto Rico to resist Spanish domination. The insularity of a place not much bigger than Tennessee is not such a unique feature. However, the diversity of landscape has inspired scholars and visitors alike. Insularity made the Cuban Missile Crisis possible and has made it easier for Washington to impose a trade embargo for almost half a century. The island nation also boasts a rich stock of about 7,000 plant species, most of which are endemic to the island. Its one-time connection to the North American and South American land masses contributed to such biological diversity, and this will be a powerful ecotourism attraction in the years ahead. To paraphrase Linden (2003), Cuba is, by default or design, one of the best-kept wildland secrets in the Caribbean. Despite such natural variety, we have pointed out how deforestation, massive river damming, and soil erosion forever changed the landscape in Cuba. About one-fourth of total water resources in Cuba are controlled, and salinization hinders the natural productivity of portions of the island's soils. Had the expansion of arable lands for increasing cultivation been carried out fully in the 1960s and 1970s, we shudder to think what the irreversible consequences might have been. Insularity, then, has conditioned Cuba's geopolitical fortunes in undeniable ways.

Our historical analysis in Chapter 2 draws upon Alexander von Humboldt's *The Island of Cuba*. Humboldt's description of Havana, racism, slavery, and sugar production has been invaluable in understanding the unequal social class pyramid noted in that chapter. In turn, the Humboldt discourse has given socialist leaders an internationally recognized Renaissance man-scholar to justify the historical grounding of the island's social, economic, and political history. His belief in manumission may have hastened abolition in 1886. Moreover, Humboldt's description of the economic geography of slavery—conveniently omitted by the American annexationist John Thrasher—helped to combat slavery on the humanitarian, economic, and political fronts.

As in many Caribbean nations, the demand for sugar has been the most deleterious landscape modifier in Cuba. The small network of sugar mills around Havana in the 18th century spread far and wide once the Independence Wars ended, and American investors capitalized on this. Although Humboldt never anticipated the spread of American investment in the sugar industry, he has been virtually canonized in contemporary Cuba because of his naturalist contributions and his avant garde and

progressive views on the injustices of slavery. As the Castro government copes with under- and unemployment, there are global market signals that indicate that a growing demand for ethanol may revive the centuries-long production of sugar in Cuba. Since the new millennium, however, sugar has not reigned over the island's landscape, as half of its mills have closed in recent years.

Our brief review of the sugar landscape allowed us to incorporate salient economic and political events that shaped the island's environmental history. If underdevelopment is characterized by limited ways to employ locals, especially with monoculture and commodities that are susceptible to the vicissitudes of the world market, then perhaps no crop reflects this weakness as does sugar. The popular saying "Without sugar, there is no country" (*Sin azúcar, no hay país*) prevailed until the 1990s, when state inefficiencies made it cheaper to subsidize the unemployed than to pay three times the amount needed to produce sugar than the product fetched on the world market. No single economic, political, or cultural practice—not even the 1959 Revolution—has changed Cuba's landscape as much as sugar production. Reopening the United States to Cuban sugar could transform the rural landscape of the island, as sugar would once again become king. A post-Fidel era, with cooler heads in both Washington and Havana, may effect a return to the old days (pre-1959) when trade agreements and tariff restrictions favored Cuba. Reaching that accord will mean that the U.S. cane sugar, sugar beet, and fructose corn syrup producers will allow this to happen.

Regardless of political developments, the forces of nature continue to shape the subtropics in profound ways. As noted in Chapter 1, tropical storms have been especially formative, and Cuba has suffered a series of hurricanes in recent years. The devastation in September 2008 wreaked by Hurricane Ike in northeastern Cuba was particularly cruel (Grogg 2008). Rather than elaborate on the impact island-wide, we focus on the community level—the municipality of Jesús Menéndez—to illustrate how disaster and opportunity form a thread throughout Cuba's landscape history.

Located in Las Tunas province, the municipality is a mostly flat and rural place (Figure 7.3). It has been devoted to sugar cane cultivation since the early 20th century. The Cuban American Sugar Company (CASCo) built it between 1899 and 1901 as the Chaparra mill, and it remained one of the largest in Cuba. Its first harvest was in 1902. In the 1950s it had the capacity to grind 6,800 metric tons of sugar cane per day, in 1952 the mill scored its pre-Castro production record high at 150,188 tons, and in 1960 it was nationalized and renamed Jesús Menéndez. In 2004 the mills had a grinding capacity of 8,500 tons of sugar cane per day, but the following

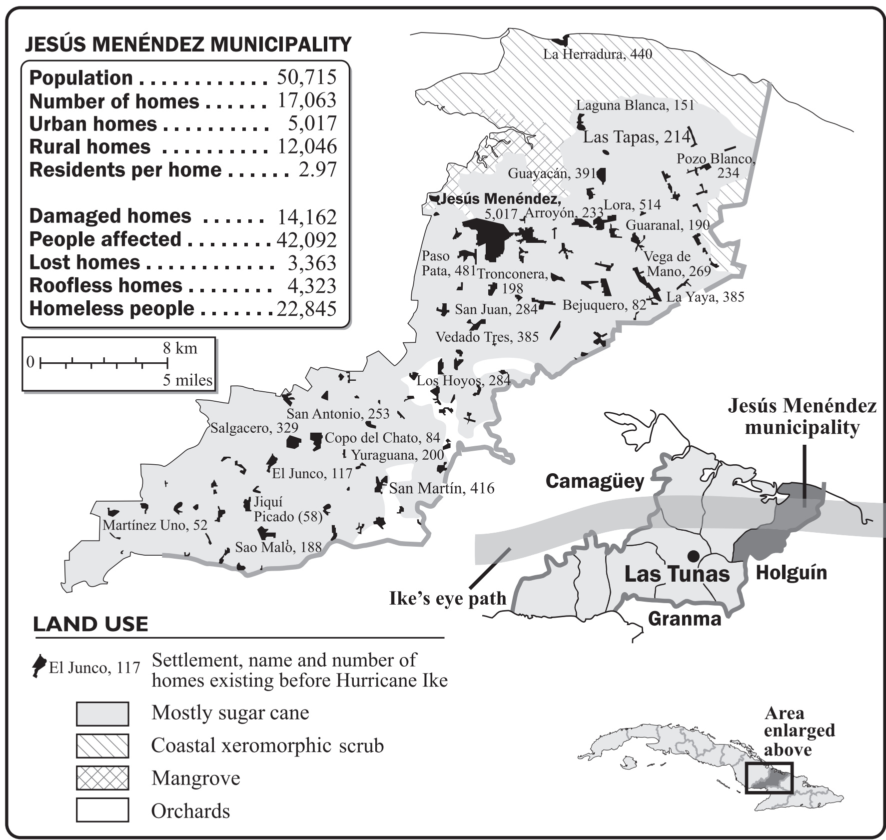


FIGURE 7.3. The municipality of Jesús Menéndez. Oficina Nacional de Estdadísticas (2007) and *Granma* (*www.granma.cu*).

year all production was halted because of low agricultural yields and poor quality cane. The mill has a bagasse board factory on-site with a capacity to produce 60,000 cubic meters per year (2.119 million cubic feet or 78,477 cubic yards). However, output has dropped drastically in tandem with regional sugar production (Portela 2007).

A share of the housing stock was updated after the Revolution, which left a large stock of fragile houses, poor infrastructure, and unpaved roads. Agricultural settlements are sparsely distributed and range in size from a few dozen to hundreds of homes. They stretch over broad sugar cane plantations that are linked by dirt roads or narrow-gauge railroads.

Hurricane Ike struck in the early hours of September 8, 2008, as a formidable category-3 storm. In this municipality alone, it knocked down one-fifth of the housing stock: 3,363 homes. More than four of every five houses (83%) suffered serious damage among the existing 17,063 homes. In its wake were lumber and thatch roofs intermixed with soaked personal belongings. Winds tore the roofs off 4,323 houses, one-quarter of the total.

The human dimension of the tragedy meant that 42,092 people—four of every five residents–lost some part of their homes. About half had no place to go other than to government shelters or perhaps the less damaged homes of relatives and neighbors. Some of the villages are gone. La Herradura on the northern shore, with 440 houses, nearly disappeared that fatal night.

Although the scars left on agricultural production will last only a year or so (the time it takes to grow one crop of cane), the blow to the housing stock will last longer because of the current economic conditions. An outpouring of international aid will partially mitigate the storm's devastation, yet, Jesús Menéndez may be transformed into a post-sugar economy regardless of the way its population geography has been altered. The scene at Jesús Menéndez is but a microcosm of the devastation felt elsewhere along Hurricane Ike's path. And even though the government will likely manage the scarcity of food in the months ahead, it will be daunting to provide shelter for tens of thousands of homeless people across the island, let alone gainful employment. In one century, the community—carved out of scrub and pasture—has risen and fallen, like scores of others across the island.

Social forces compound those of nature. We have seen how cultural globalization and the forces of modernity homogenize a given area quickly. However, unique places like Cuba afford a new wave of international tourists with a cultural focus. Cuba has been able to graft this niche tourism to its well-endowed beaches, mountains, and wildlife reserves. The socialist government understands that heritage allows it to use the past as an economic resource for the present. The island's eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites and scores of national historic sites serve two purposes. First, they help forge national identity, develop ideologies, and "ground" abstract notions of history and heritage in visible form. The Cuban government identifies, safeguards, and maintains these national heritage sites and monuments in ways that make it difficult to determine whether this is a market economy or a centrally planned economy. Second, these heritage landscapes generate hard currency, and this has proven invaluable in the

post-Soviet trading bloc setting. A key question in regard to Cuba's heritage industry is the extent to which locals are benefiting. On one hand, Old Havana's Habaguanex (state corporation) is creating millions of dollars for the national treasury, but it is difficult to tease out the direct local benefit (though clearly there is some). On the other hand, the UNESCO site of Trinidad, Cuba, focuses only on residential housing in the poorer parts of town. These examples indicate that there is some decentralization in managing heritage landscapes despite rhetoric to the contrary. Whether the example is Che Guevara or Ernest Hemingway in Havana, or the fight against the "bandits" of the Escambray in Trinidad, both heritage landscapes legitimize local history and portray positive images of the past, much as Lowenthal (1985) pointed out in other Caribbean settings. And although debates within Cuba have avoided the neoliberal economic polemics that afflict the rest of Latin America, there has yet to be an open discussion on the island: Who wins and who loses in cashing in on heritage landscapes?

Economic difficulties, macroeconomic mismanagement, rising energy prices, the U.S. trade embargo, and theft from state firms have hindered rehabilitation projects. Cuba's endangered heritage landscapes have recently included the Escuelas de Arte, agroindustrial sites (mainly sugar mills), wooden buildings, and some Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and eclectic-style buildings. Nonetheless, the Cuban government is aware of these endangered sites and manages to administer 289 museums. Although no single individual has been more closely affiliated with heritage preservation than Dr. Eusebio Leal, it appears that the locus of control is shifting to a new generation.

An impending polemic will be how to recover Cuban heritage that has allegedly been sold abroad, and how the expatriot community in exile—if given a chance—will respond to this displacement or loss of heritage. To be sure, revolutions cannot be easily compartmentalized, and Cuba's is no exception. We believe that matters of compensating for and repatriating items of Cuban heritage located abroad (or even on the island) will not be easy, given the experience of the Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union in indemnifying previous owners of heritage items. That controversy notwithstanding, we may anticipate new landmarks in Cuba's heritage landscape that include the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo, Cuba, especially Camp X-ray. And once the Castro brothers die, we can expect tributes to these revolutionaries to appear, despite the ire of the exile community.

Tourism, an ally of the heritage sector, is increasing in Cuba. Can Cuba succeed in this new market even though (according to the Heri-

tage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom) it is a country with scant political, economic, and social liberties? We have shown that the absence of Americans makes Cuba appealing to some tourists. The Cuban landscape remains largely unexplored by international tourists, whose visions of palm trees, blue waters, and live music—reinforced with electronic and print media—prime the world's demand for such places. The island's low population density and narrow width make it eminently appealing even if some argue that it is becoming the "brothel of the Caribbean" (Robaina 2004).

As discussed in Chapter 4, new transportation amenities await the island, which will increase its connectivity with the rest of the world. Cruise line travel emanating from Galveston, New Orleans, Biloxi, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Miami, Key West, Jacksonville, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston may soon become a reality again. A challenge, however, will be avoiding the trappings of vice, narcotics, and prostitution. Sustainable tourism will require Havana and other tourist destinations to implement costly waste and water treatment facilities if the current (2005) level of 2.3 million visitors is surpassed, and if Cuba's portion of the Caribbean market will exceed 10% or so. Revoking the U.S. travel ban to the island would unleash the arrival of 1 million visitors (roughly half of the 2006 market) in its first years and could prove devastating; a small and poor infrastructure might spoil repeat visits, which have always been a hallmark of the Caribbean tourism market. Alternatively, will Cuba eschew mass tourism and focus on niche markets? Its relative location between the third (United States) and seventh (Mexico) largest tourist destinations in the world is fortuitous. We concur that even if 10% of Florida's 40 million annual visitors visited the island, it would overwhelm the current infrastructure. In addition, a Disneyworld–Key West–Havana–Key West circuit, connected by air, rail, and ship transport, would likely be extremely popular. In this regard, it would be wise to recall what the Victorian era Irish writer Anthony Trollope predicted back in 1859: "Havana will soon become as much American as New Orleans" (Trollope 1859, cited in Pérez 1999, 1). As precursors to what we now recognize as globalization, these are just a few scenarios suggesting the tourist map of tomorrow.

Sustainability is already being combined with heritage projects and other aspects of the built environment. Heritage, however, changes often, and who is to say that the bland public housing units built throughout the Revolution will not be celebrated, upgraded, and enhanced? A number of Cuban architects have taken up the task to beautify, modify, and enhance the rather monotonous and dreary public housing "projects" that prevail across the island (Figure 7.4). Moreover, repeated poundings by tropical

FIGURE 7.4. El Vallecito, a public housing complex in Guanahacabibes Peninsula, extreme western Pinar del Río Province, 2007. Shown here is the GP-4 (*Gran Panel*) design commonly used during the socialist period. Thousands of units were built across the island. The photograph (top) shows clotheslines, few trees, solid concrete balconies, and even tobacco leaf drying (upper left balconies). Computer-aided design (CAD) proposal (bottom) remedies some of these issues (e.g., visual clutter), but mainly provides more shade and improves air circulation by using trees and new eaves and balconies. Wood and stone materials come from the local area. Photograph and CAD courtesy Mabel Matamoros Tuma.

storms take a toll on the housing stock; Hurricane Gustav in 2008 damaged an estimated 90,000 houses in Havana and Pinar del Río provinces (Franks 2008).

One sustainability and beautification project by architect Mabel Matamoros and colleagues envisions adding eaves, shutters, shaded entrances, bus stops, public telephones, and modest landscaping to enhance both public and residential spaces (Matamoros, González, Rodrigues, and Claro 2006; Figure 7.5). A whole host of such projects exists on the island, yet it takes financial resources and a growing economy to transform these designs into reality.

Across the Florida Straits, there are many in the exile community who have also proposed sustainable redevelopment projects but in a post-Castro Cuba. Cuban American architect Nicolás Quintana and landscape architect Juan Antonio Bueno of Florida International University have proposed a redevelopment plan for Havana that, if someday desired by the Cuban people and government, would leave a unique imprint on the capital. They propose an approach for policy makers and investors in a market economy to meld heritage, services, and functionality into a postsocialist Cuba.

> Under a political and economic transition that could provide strong incentives for investment, Havana will face the challenge of preserving the city's remarkable architecture and cultural integrity in an environmentally conscious way while also addressing the pressing needs of residents, such as housing and infrastructure.... [The authors use] technical documentation to simulate future growth, taking into account Havana's unique urban, rural and natural landscapes. The objective of [the project] is to visualize future development of the city in an environmentally sustainable way, recognizing historic values and at the same time providing for the needs and aspirations of society. (Woodrow Wilson Center 2008)

Figure 7.6 illustrates a high-density proposal for the Vedado district of Havana. The concept shown, an urban activity center (UAC), attempts to counter the "sprawling suburbia anti-urban development" common in the United States, in which open-air parking surrounds intensively used spaces that are occupied only at certain times of the day (business hours) and year (Christmas holiday shopping). This proposal encourages high-density land use while promoting pedestrian activities. Endowed with lush tropical landscaping and integrated into a public transportation corridor, UACs use a relatively small "footprint" (i.e., the perimeter of the building's base on the ground). Lower floors would attract commercial uses (offices, shops, restaurants, entertainment areas, service facilities) and indoor parking, with residential apartments on the higher levels. If Havana is to retain

FIGURE 7.5. Architectural model that aims to sustainably enhance the quality of life at a public housing project, El Vallecito, in Pinar del Río Province. The proposal includes adding eaves over windows, planting trees around the complex for beautifying the site and creating more shade, developing more community gardens (right center, to the right of baseball diamond), and rimming the rooftops with a facade to hide cisterns. Courtesy Mabel Matamoros Tuma.

its pedestrian-friendly setting, an element like a UAC would help to ensure this essential component of the Cuban landscape.

As tourism continues to increase, leisure and recreational facilities will no doubt spread to more remote and literally "darker" corners of the island. Electrification has long been the bane of stargazers, who are disturbed by the artificial luminosity the lighting brings to the night sky (Ekirch 2005). Remotely sensed images of luminosity in the Caribbean, taken over the past decades, illustrate how modernity has crept into what were once rural areas (Table 7.1). By calculating a ratio of bright-to-dark pixels, as measured by satellite images in the years 1993 and 2000, Sforza and Scarpaci (2008) calibrated how these ratios changed between the time when Cuba was in the worst of its Special Period and the recent time when it was expanding into tourism aggressively. The data show that although there were more lighted evening spaces in Cuba in the new millennium, especially along the northern archipelago, it was still relatively "underlighted" as compared with the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, even though it did surpass neighboring Haiti (Figure 7.7). For instance, Table 7.1 shows that there were more than 5 times as many bright pixels (equal-sized segments of the island's surface) as dark pixels in Cuba, whereas in Puerto Rico that ratio reached 184, and the island of Hispaniola was almost twice as illuminated at nighttime than Cuba (i.e., 9.491 vs. 5.365

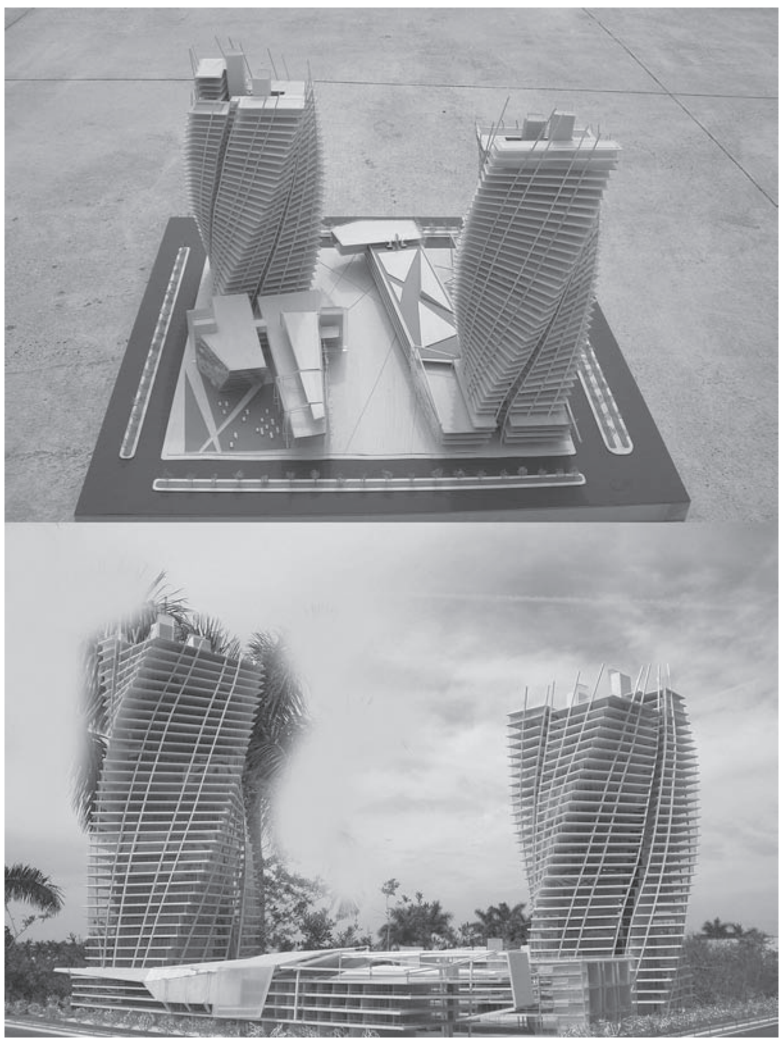


FIGURE 7.6. Architectural scale model of a possible urban activity center proposed for Vedado, in Havana. The model (top view, aerial; bottom, lateral) was designed by Florida International University architecture students Jorge Garciga, Gilbert Atick, Andrea Rodríguez, and Yanina Corbea.

TABLE 7.1. Brightness-to-Darkness Ratios: Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico

Country	Brightness-to-darkness ratio
Cuba	5.365
Hispaniola	9.491
Haiti	2.378
Dominican Republic	11.914
Puerto Rico	184.745

Note. Data from Sforza and Scarpaci (2008).

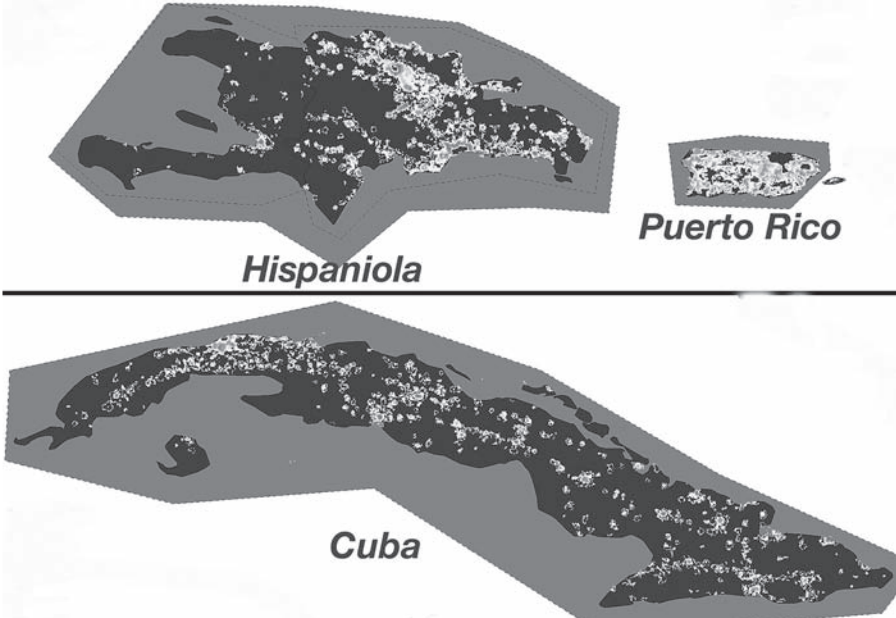


FIGURE 7.7. Generalized brightness-to-darkness ratios, 1992–1994. Although lacking a scale in black and white, the maps show the nighttime "light pollution" in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico (top panel) and Cuba (bottom) based on calculations of luminosity from nighttime satellite images of the Caribbean. From Sforza and Scarpaci (2008).

pixels). An opening of Cuba to increased modernization portends changing rhythms, rituals, work and, most of all, landscapes in the years ahead.

If an expected rise in tourism is on the horizon, then surely the island will experience new energy demands. Cuba is aggressively searching for new and alternative energy sources. To assist the island, several multinational energy and mining firms have mapped and staked out a partnership with the Cuban government in order to tap into to new hydrocarbons. Figure 7.8 identifies several of the fields Cuba has identified for oil exploration. These fields lie within Cuba's internationally recognized maritime resources. Although it is unlikely that a tourist in, say, Key West, Florida, will actually see an oil drilling platform, any spills would no doubt be carried quickly northbound by the Gulf Stream and could surface on Florida beaches. As in any oil exploration, there will be a risk to flora and fauna should these Vietnamese, Canadian, Malaysian, or Spanish drilling operations go awry.

Chapter 6 examines the information landscape, a melding of politics, ideology, media, and semiotics. Information technology, particularly in the form of simple roadside billboards, creates a unique landscape in a country where mass consumer culture is absent. To illustrate this, we examined several discourses of political billboards and representation: patriotism and

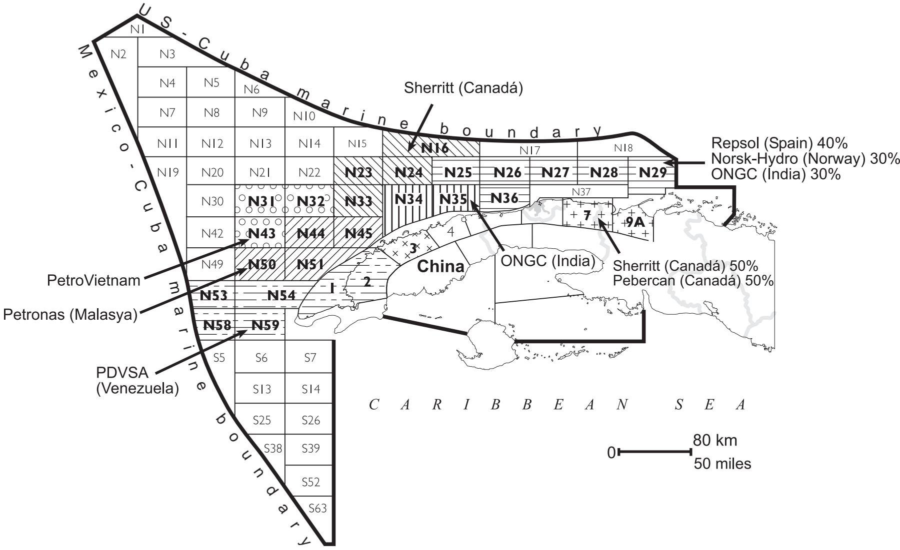


FIGURE 7.8. Cuban-approved international offshore drilling concessions, 2008.

socialism, U.S. hegemony, conservation, social justice, and civic participation. We reviewed how ideology, landscape, and the social construction of space give Cuba a distinctive mark. In particular, historic events, slogans and rallying cries, and historical political figures are widely disseminated by the socialist government. The Cuban landscape displays these ideological messages through advertisements, special protest plazas, mass organizations, and political art. The contemporary manifestation is evidenced by the diplomatic cat-and-mouse game between the United States consulate building on Havana's Malecón and the Cuban government. This entails the Cuban government's use of black flags (called "mourning flags") to block an electronic bulletin board on the U.S. consulate building. If we use Jurgen Habermas's (1975) three broad subsystems operating in society—work as formulated in an economic system, language as a sociocultural system, and domination as a political system—we can assess part of Cuba's "truth claims" about its Revolution. The single-party system monopolizes discourses to deliver its messages to the masses, which, in turn, form a powerful "spatial vocabulary of power." Related information landscapes include comics, declarations, harangues, public shaming, mass rallies, and other forums. Our argument, then, is that place serves as an observable part of power and political processes, and those outcomes are well marked in Cuba. Borrowing Appadurai's (1986) term, Cuba has a unique "ideascape" that champions the Revolution, celebrates martyrs, and victimizes the island in David-and-Goliath fashion. Civil society is particularly constrained in the new electronic media markets, largely because Internet access is highly restricted. We posit that the defining feature of the modern nation-state is its relationship to the media. Like North Korea, China, and Vietnam, the Cuban government constrains public debate on issues that jeopardize the government's status quo.

The current leadership is media savvy. It is steeped in political symbolism whose wellspring derives from the island's colonial history. Cuba's cultural revolution in the 1960s brought poetry, civic art, painting, and sculpture to the masses. A new information landscape includes street art and billboards; the latter decidedly not for dishwashing detergent, facial creams, or automobiles. Instead, these billboards carry political and civic messages steeped in the virtues of what a "new" Cuba should be. They constitute the only kind of public advertising in Cuba and serve as a constant reminder that the state provides welfare, safety, history lessons, and socialist ideology for all. Our review of political billboard messages includes patriotism and socialism, social justice, civic participation, and conservation. This information landscape clarifies the rules of citizenship. Simply stated, the state will do its share if citizens do theirs. Taking these

precepts together, the state would argue that this is why Cuba is a "different America." Given the state's total control of information, it is perhaps not surprising that there is little, if any, antigovernment graffiti. In a society where nonessential consumer goods and services are virtually absent, thousands of political billboards stare down on regular pedestrians, bus passengers, and drivers. They became passive, perhaps subconscious reminders, of what is allowed and what is not. In keeping with the literature on how place is created, we trace in Chapter 6 a regularity and ordering in how the socialist government creates place, controls information technology, and enlists political billboards as part of its strict "spatial vocabulary" that disseminates state-approved ideology.

Although the informatics issues are important, it appears that the island's geopolitical reality looms increasingly important on the world stage. As one conservative geopolitical consulting company argues, Cuba's geographic and insular aspect will continue to place it at odds with the U.S. government unless there is a fundamental change in Washington, DC, or Havana, Cuba.

> From the U.S. standpoint, Cuba is always a geographical threat. If the Mississippi River is the great highway of American agriculture and New Orleans its great port to the world, then Cuba sits directly athwart New Orleans' access to the world. There is no way for ships from New Orleans to exit the Gulf of Mexico into the Atlantic Ocean but to traverse two narrow channels on either side of Cuba—the Yucatan channel, between Cuba's western coast and the Yucatan; or the Straits of Florida, between the island's northern coast and Florida. If these two channels were closed, U.S. agricultural and mineral exports and imports would crumble. Not only New Orleans, but also all of the Gulf Coast ports like Houston, would be shut in.
>
> Cuba does not have the size or strength in and of itself to close those channels. But should another superpower control Cuba, the threat would become real and intolerable. The occupation of Cuba by a foreign power—whether Spain, Germany, Russia or others—would pose a direct geopolitical threat to the United States. Add to that the possibility that missiles could be fired from Cuba to the United States, and we can see what Washington sees there. It is not Cuba that is a threat, but rather a Cuba that is allied with or dominated by a foreign power challenging the United States globally. Therefore, the Americans don't much care who runs Cuba, so long as Cuba is not in a politico-military alliance with another power. (Friedman 2006)

We are left with the question about the extent to which *cubanidad*, and the condition of Cuban landscapes, in part framed insularity (or, "islecentricity," as Olwig 2007, calls it), define this place called Cuba. At the risk of flirting with environmental determinism, we confront this question: To

what extent does insularity make up the nonmaterial culture of Cuba (as a parallel component to its many phases and landscapes)? Philip Conkling (2007) poses this question in an essay about islanders and "islandness." He draws on the works of George Putz (1984), who in an amusing listing of attributes (Table 7.2) of Maine islanders and their fishing communities has unwittingly touched on features of what we may call the "Cuban personality."

Although the comparison between Anglo-Saxon islanders off the coast of Maine and the Afro-Cuban-Spanish souls of Cuba may be seem a far reach, the accuracy of the traits in Table 7.2 is uncanny. "Islanders share

TABLE 7.2. Maine Islander Personal and Cultural Traits Adapted to Cuba(ns)

Independence—small boats and social circles demand it if a personality is to survive. (Although the small fishing village of Cuba is largely a relic of the past, Cubans' resourcefulness and self-assertiveness are defining features of *lo cubano*.)

Loyalty—ultimate mutual care and generosity; even between ostensible enemies. (Despite a half century of hostility between the United States and Cuba, the Cuban diaspora rarely relinquishes its ties to the island.)

A strong sense of *honor*, easily betrayed. (Nationalism in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries was, and remains, widely prevalent.)

Polydextrous and multifaceted competence, or what islanders call *handiness*. (Problem-solving talents include the ability to *resolver* or *solucionar* [to make ends meet] when confronted by problems on the island.)

A belligerent sense of *competition*. (Sports landscapes have been a defining feature of the Cuban Revolution, and the island of just 11 million residents competes often and successfully in Olympic and Pan American Games.)

Earthy *common sense*. (Cubans are practical and realistic in quotidian activities; there is a social stigma associated with being unrealistic or ignoring harsh realities [*hacer el bobo*].)

Opinionated *machismo* in both the male and female mode. (The former requires little comment; the latter is well portrayed in the Cuban film *Lucía*, produced in 1968 by Humberto Solas; it shows the lives of three women at different times in Cuban history: 1895, 1933, and the early years of the Revolution in the 1960s.)

Fragile discretion within a welter of *gossip*. (City and country folk rely heavily on rumor, which is popularly called *radio bemba*—[literally, "lip radio"].)

Highly individualized blends of *spirituality* and *superstition*. (Although traditionally the island is nominally Catholic, church attendance has always been low, even after the liberalization of freedom of religion in the constitutional reforms of 1992. Although many Cubans are nonbelievers, these individuals may have crucifixes or small altars in their homes devoted to a particular *orisha*, as part of the syncretism that *santería* brings in merging Catholicism with African belief systems.)

And, finally, a canny *literacy* and *intelligence*. (One might argue whether the state media outlets permit an impartial view of world events, but Cubans of all occupations have opinions and are well informed about sports, world culture, and politics.)

Note. Adapted from Putz (1984, 26).

a common sense with other islanders worldwide, in much the same way that scientists share a common sense worldwide on such things as denotation, logic, control, and proof," argues Putz (1984, 27).

A final consideration to which we turn our attention addresses a "landscape" that is internal and out of view; certainly it is unseen by most foreigners and is perhaps all too familiar to many residents (Figure 7.9). Drawing on Putz's notion of the commonsense approach that islanders seem to display universally, we highlight the creativeness of the Cuban population in carving out living spaces at a time when resources are limited. We refer to the *barbacoa*, a platform or mezzanine built inside a house to create an extra room. Wooden beams serve as the framing, and planks cross over the framing as a series of joists. Cubans usually build these improvised bedroom and apartment lofts in towns and cities to redress the problems of crowding. Wood is used most commonly, but there are examples of tubular and steel beams throughout the island. Almost all of these materials are taken from collapsed buildings to erect the *barbacoas* (De Real and Scarpaci forthcoming).

FIGURE 7.9. *Barbacoa*, exterior. Lamparilla and San Ignacio streets, Habana Vieja. Courtesy Sergio Valdés.

Cuban author José Antonio Ponte wrote a short story, "*Arte de Nuevo Hacer Ruinas*," in which he describes the vertical generosity provided by the high ceilings of many colonial homes. The character in his fictitious account remarks:

> When you need to add to the size of your house and there's no courtyard in which to build anything more, no garden, not even a balcony; when you need more room and you live with your family in an interior apartment, the only thing left to do is to lift your eyes and discover that the ceiling is high enough so another level could be fitted in, a loft. In short, you discover the vertical generosity of your space, which allows the raising of another house inside. (2002, 21)

Ponte's ideas are the focus of a recent documentary, *Habana: Arte Nuevo de Hacer Ruinas* (*Havana: The New Art of Making Ruins* 2006), produced and directed by German filmmakers Florian Borchmeyer and Matthias Hentschler. The film examines the lives of Havana residents who toil inside the decaying buildings of a ruined city. Once elegant works of eclectic architecture from the beginning of the 20th century now reflect the tattered lives of the people living inside them. Antonio José Ponte serves as guide and interpreter of the devastated landscape of Havana by enlisting the personal narratives of common people. He lends political meaning to the everyday narratives of average Cubans.

Ponte poignantly observes in one scene of the ruined urban landscape:

> If in your private space you cannot rebuild what has fallen down, then you cannot do it any place else. That is why the rulers of the country have a purpose about these ruins: to show their subjects that they cannot change anything. If you cannot renovate your house, you cannot renovate the kingdom. This private failure precedes public failure. . . . Let the buildings collapse, but you cannot change anything. And I think that has been the most important contribution of the revolution to urban thinking. The idea that nothing can be restored. Nothing can be repared [*sic*]. Then the country cannot be repared [*sic*]. Let it be.[1]

This astute and controversial interpretation of the built environment challenges the power of the state by allowing individuals to create their own landscapes. Ponte's description of Havana emphasizes the Revolution's distrust of the capital which, in many ways, has been seen as more cosmopolitan than Cuban. Its rundown condition becomes the punishment for its prerevolutionary success on the international stage of world cit-

ies. This discourse in the film is emphasized by including black-and-white footage of Havana of the 1950s and early 1960s. The decadent images of bars, beautiful women, and crowded streets in the early years of the Revolution portray a landscape—in the eyes of socialist leaders—as a moral ruin. However, the film uses these images to create a cosmopolitan city of loveliness, uneven wealth, and carefree living that contrasts with the present material ruin of Havana. In the end, the ruined become a metaphor for the ruined political subject, which as Ponte claims, is powerless to change anything. Contemporary Havana is but a metaphor of the ruined lives of its inhabitants, ruined not because they lived in and among ruins, but because they are unable to rebuild themselves, except for the *barbacoa*.

Barbacoas, therefore, represent a new type of *cubanidad* in light of the historic evolution we have traced thus far. They capture creativity, and their distribution is significant; in 2004, there were more than 17,000 in Habana Vieja municipality alone. We argue that these lofts constitute a new frontier in Cuba. They represent how households conquer unclaimed spaces in a real estate market that is restrictive, and in a distribution system that makes it difficult to acquire home building supplies. As capital and labor become available, these high ceilings are transformed incrementally to accommodate residents in crowded housing (Figure 7.10). In line with Ponte's story, in which the protagonist returns to the ruins of his dwelling, *barbacoas* represent a sort of Phoenix rising out of the rundown buildings in Cuba. Drawing on historian Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," used to explain the pioneer mentality of the United States in the 19th century, we believe this activity captures the spirit and entrepreneurship of the contemporary Cuban faced with limited options. The internal spatial growth of Havana and other cities represents the image of another possible city, of new spaces in which Cubans can aspire to satisfy part of their dreams. Unlike the construction of the 19th-century settlers of the American West, pioneers of the Argentinean pampas, or the early *bandeirantes* of Brazil who created a myth about that nation's frontier, these Cuban spaces are vertical and do not expand to the horizon. Thus, in Ponte's narrative, the builders turn inward, to the only expansive space left to them.

As national and joint venture hotel and recreational companies snatch up selected sites in Cuba, options for expressing this new frontier are limited. The lack of a formal real estate market in socialist Cuba forces islanders to swap homes (*permutarse*), attempting to colocate work and home with as little separation as possible. As a result, the only spaces available for many are the vertical dimensions in cities, where rugged individualism surfaces in creative ways. Cubanologists know that islander ingenuity

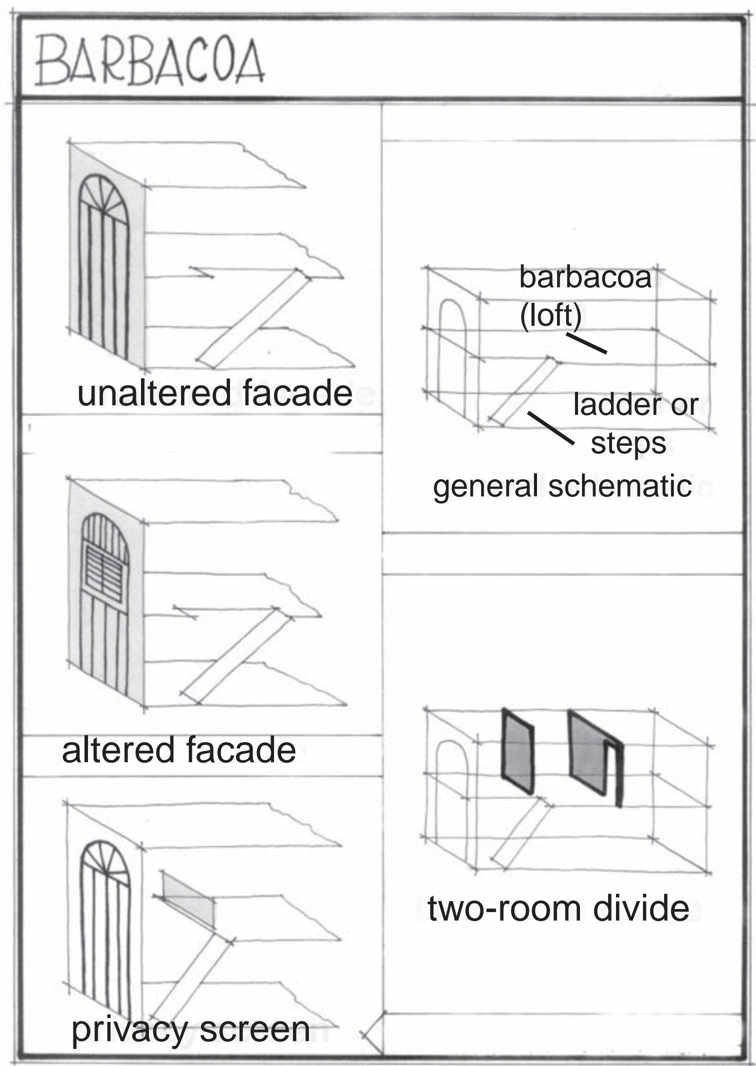


FIGURE 7.10. Cuban loft options. Adapted and used courtesy of Luis Valdés.

in solving daily problems has a long history. Pérez (2001b) explains how 19th-century Cubans joined forces to handle the devastation of hurricanes. These civic efforts did much to forge a cultural and national identity as well as a broader sense of community; it did as much as the revolutionary movement in that same century. A century later, with the demise of the USSR and the Special Period in a Time of Peace, a new form of Cuban resourcefulness is apparent in "making ends meet" and providing for family. This is how the closed spaces of the *barbacoa* represent a rational, creative, and indelible landscape of the new Cuban frontier.

Beyond such resilience, this book has aimed to show how natural and social history has left its mark across Cuba. The island's landscapes offer a road map for traversing many historical contours. Cuba's natural, historical, sugar, heritage, tourist, and information landscapes create a distinct spatial expression. These patterns have been aided by unique and long historical periods: a colonial era in the context of Spanish America, the prevalence of monocultural sugar exports for nearly three centuries, and a socialist government that interrupted a well-defined period of market capitalism. If market capitalism offers a "landscape of persuasion" where desires are created by a culture of cluttered marketing and advertising, one can only hope that in the near future the most basic needs (food and shelter) are quickly satisfied and that the attributes that have made this island so special will not be lost. Cuba will continue to capture the geographic imagination of future observers by creating a powerful web of landscapes that reveal from where it has come, its present course, and where it might be tomorrow.

NOTE

1. Quoted in the 2006 film, *Habana: Arte Nuevo de Hacer Ruinas*, by German filmmakers Florian Borchmeyer and Matthias Heutscher. (This English translation is provided in the subtitles.)

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