

**e-COHOTEL IN HAVANA**  
an interpretation of urban ecotourism

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# Abstract

This project is a study of ecotourism, and what it could be about within the Cuban context. To find out I went to Cuba for three months of field studies through a MFS (Minor Field Studies) Scholarship given by SIDA, the Swedish Board for

International Development. My main question is how to promote a sustainable tourism that is beneficial for the local community, being all-inclusive in a new meaning, and situated in an urban context? In my proposal I show how to meet the local conditions, embrace the identity of the place, and to boost existing functions. It is an interpretation of urban ecotourism and the proposal is a cooperative housing hotel and sustainability center with focus on social sustainability where meeting places for both Cubans and tourists is a central aspect, promoting interaction, and including all, being "all-inclusive". It also addresses ecological sustainability through providing and exhibiting information related to ecotourism and Cuban achievements and striving in the field of Sustainable Development.

The project is about understanding the local context, and it is mainly research based. It contains a proposal on how sustainable strategies attained from research could be applied at a site. I do not go into details, or explain the contents of all parts of the project. I present a program for the site that corresponds to the needs found in the analysis of the research on ecotourism, Cuban sustainability research and the site itself, and building volumes created through principles achieved from the site analysis. I also show you an apartment solution for the hotel.

**Keywords:** urban ecotourism, social sustainability, meeting places, Cuban achievements, local context, interaction, cooperative housing hotel, culture house, all-inclusive, field studies, strategies, center on sustainability, boost, apartment.





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# BACKGROUND

# 1.1 Introduction

*How to promote a sustainable tourism that is beneficial for the local community, being all-inclusive in a new meaning?*

## WHAT?

An urban ecohotel.

## WHERE?

In Havana, Cuba.

## WHY?

Cuba has a record of achievements in the field of sustainable development, and tourism is the biggest industry in Cuba today, why it is interesting to investigate how you can combine the two fields, to create a sustainable tourism on the island.

## HOW?

By combining the concept of home stay with hotel, hence creating a housing hotel, which also has a public ground floor that promotes sustainability, and connects to a culture house.

## FOR WHOM?

The hotel concept is directed towards ecotourists that wish to co-live with Cubans and get to know the Cuban culture and also learn about Cuban sustainability work, and at the same time have access to hotel amenities such as tourist information, as well as close access to cultural activities.

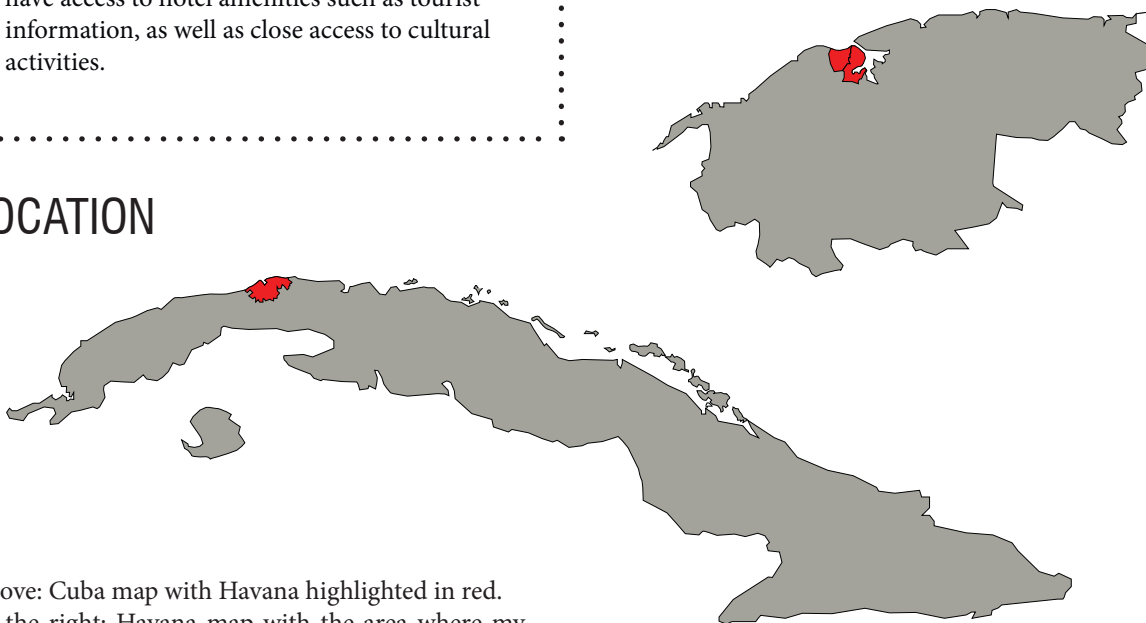
## SCOPE

This thesis is mainly research based, with approximately 70 percent research and 30 percent design. The report consists of three parts; background, analysis and proposal. In the background chapter you get an introduction to the project, in the analysis chapter I present my research in the field of ecotourism and Cuban ecotourism, as well as site analysis, and in the proposal chapter you find goals and strategies, and implementation of these at a site. The detailing is on a conceptual level, where the building volume and program, and their relation to the urban space, is in focus. I do not go in to technical details, nor materials. The end result is a program, spatial organization, and volumes for the site, based on research as well as on site analysis. I also show you an apartment module in the hotel.

## SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH

The focus is on social sustainability, through interaction between Cubans and tourists. It also promotes ecological awareness and sustainable behaviour, by the program of the public ground floor. My spatial design is thought to be a system that is flexible over time, and that allows the local community and actors to benefit from the tourism.

## LOCATION



Above: Cuba map with Havana highlighted in red.  
To the right: Havana map with the area where my project site is located highlighted in red.

## METHODS & AIMS

I have studied literature on Cuba and on ecotourism. I also spent three months in Cuba doing field studies for the project, for which I received a Minor Field Studies Scholarship. During my field studies I carried out interviews, study visits, study trips, and further literature studies.

My aim was to figure out what ecotourism could be about in Cuba, connecting the country's many achievements within sustainable development to tourism. I envisioned a new type of hotel that would be a dichotomy of a resort - community beneficial and integrated. Perhaps one could deconstruct the idea of a traditional hotel to create a new concept, one with broader and deeper benefits. I was also interested in the sustainable housing solutions on the island such as incremental housing, having heard about the great housing shortages and being interested in the development in the field. "Maybe housing solutions and ecotourism could intertwine somehow?" I asked myself.



## CUBAN BACKGROUND

According to WWF's report "Living Planet Report 2006" Cuba is the only country in the world that has succeeded in attaining high scores on the human development index as well as a low ecological footprint at the same time. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Cuba faced a period of severe energy deficiency, an energy crisis, which forced them to look for local solutions to the situation. Since then they have for example implemented urban organic agriculture, and they are researching on ecological materials in building construction, such as ecological bricks and bamboo, they also look into solar energy. In 2007 Cuba received the World Habitat Award for developing a wide range of innovative and environmentally sustainable building materials.

## PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My personal background to the project started in the winter of 1999/2000 when I visited Cuba for the first time as an alternative tourist. I was a volunteer in a solidarity brigade, working on the fields on the countryside outside Havana. Since then I have studied Latin America Studies, and now Architecture. I have also worked in hotels. These experiences are all combined in my master thesis.

Ever since my first visit, Cuba has had a special place in my heart, and it will always be a place that I return to over and over again. I went back a second time in 2002 for a short stay, and after eleven years, I returned again last year in 2013, doing field studies for this Master thesis. This trip was my third Cuba visit, but it was my first one as an architect.

It has been an interesting experience, and I am now inviting you to follow me on my journey.  
Let's go!



Me during the fieldstudies in Cuba.



# **ANALYSIS**

## 2.1 Ecotourism definition

### *What is ecotourism in relation to conventional tourism or mass tourism?*

It is important to define the meaning of the word ecotourism. Let us start by defining what tourism is. Tourism is, according to David Fennell (Fennell 2008, 2), “the interrelated system that includes tourists and the associated services that are provided and utilized (facilities, attractions, transportation and accommodation) to aid their movement”, and in terms of tourist attractions, Fennell enumerates cultural sites - historical sites, museums, natural sites - parks, flora and fauna, events - festivals, religious events, recreation - golf, hiking, and entertainment - theme parks, cinemas. Mass tourism, or conventional tourism, is non-local in the sense that very little money spent within a destination stays there. The resort is an example of that. In Cuba there are no completely foreign-owned hotels, only government-owned, foreign-Cuban collaborations and smaller private businesses renting rooms to tourists. This means that at least part of the income always stays in the country. Alternative tourism on the other hand advocates a respect for the environment and the needs of local people. Tour groups are often smaller, allowing for greater social and environmental awareness, which can be a part of the tour operators’ programs. Roger Blanco, tour guide at Cuban Adventures - a tour operator in Cuba with an “eco” profile, describes their work as “responsible tourism”, explaining that it is not just about promoting interaction between tourists and the Cuban culture, but about doing it in a way that is not only enjoyable but also responsible. The goal of sustainable tourism is described by Fennell as creating an awareness of the effects that tourism can have on environment and economy, to promote development, and to improve the quality of life of the community, and conserving the environment at the same time. The term alternative tourism includes a number of tourism forms such as nature-based tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, low-impact tourism, ethical tourism and responsible tourism, to mention a few. Nature-based tourism, which seems to be the most common version of ecotourism in Cuba, is about combining education, recreation and often adventure at a destination (Fennell 2008, 19). It is focused on motivation and behaviour. There are plenty of descriptions on what ecotourism is about, for example; “Ecotourism is a sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first-hand, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally-oriented (control, benefits, scale). It typically occurs in the natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of such areas.” (Fennell 2008, 24), but I incline to agree with Miller and Kaye (1993:37) (Fennell 2008, 23) who say that “the merits or deficiencies of ecotourism...are not to be found in any label per se, but in the quality and intensity of specific environmental and

“...it is interesting to note an emerging focus on ecotourism in urban regions. This phenomenon may be defined as travel and exploration within and around an urban area that offers visitors enjoyment and appreciation of the city’s natural and cultural resources, while inspiring physically active, intellectually stimulating and socially interactive experiences; promotes the city’s long-term ecological health by promoting walking, cycling, public transportation, promotes sustainable local economy and community development and vitality, celebrates local heritage and the arts; and is accessible and equitable to all.”

(Fennell 2008, 78)

social impacts of human activity in an ecological system”. Ecotourism typically occurs in natural areas as stated above, but can also take place in an urban environment, applying the same principles.

So what can urban ecotourism be about in an urban context? It can be about restoration of natural areas which have been degraded by human intervention. It can also be about promoting sustainable transportation such as walking, biking and public transportation, or to promote sustainable local economy celebrating the local heritage and arts, and it is accessible and equitable to all. (Fennell 2008, 78).



**Table 2.2** *Relative importance of selected attractions and benefits to Canadian travellers and ecotourists<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	General population		Canadian ecotourists	
	Mean <sup>b</sup>	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
<i>Important benefits to ecotourists<sup>c</sup></i>				
Experiencing new and different lifestyles	2.67	1.02	1.95	0.78
Trying new foods	2.85	0.99	2.43	0.82
Being physically active	2.36	1.03	1.88	0.92
Visiting historical places	2.71	1.04	2.35	0.74
Seeing as much as possible	2.01	0.99	1.77	0.81
Being daring and adventuresome	2.91	0.98	2.62	1.01
Meeting people with similar interests	2.08	0.94	1.91	0.71
<i>Important benefits to population<sup>c</sup></i>				
Watching sports	3.16	0.96	3.84	0.37
Visiting friends and relatives	1.83	1.03	3.25	0.82
Doing nothing at all	2.86	1.00	3.72	0.60
Being together as a family	1.66	0.98	2.92	1.04
Reliving past good times	2.46	1.06	3.36	0.79
Visiting places my family came from	2.70	1.16	3.45	0.84
Feeling at home away from home	1.81	0.91	2.64	0.93
Having fun and being entertained	1.95	0.88	2.72	0.94
<i>Important attractions to ecotourists<sup>c</sup></i>				
Wilderness areas	2.34	1.09	1.06	0.37
National parks and reserves	2.21	1.01	1.14	0.35
Rural areas	2.34	0.94	1.49	0.60
Mountains	2.34	1.07	1.50	0.66
Lakes and streams	2.05	0.99	1.57	0.59
Historic sites and parks	2.37	1.01	2.05	0.81
Cultural activities	2.66	0.97	2.32	0.87
Oceanside	2.15	1.07	1.97	0.78
<i>Important attractions to population<sup>c</sup></i>				
Indoor sports	2.98	0.94	3.85	0.35
Amusement and theme parks	2.74	0.99	3.80	0.54
Nightlife and entertainment	2.72	1.04	3.70	0.56
Gambling	3.61	0.69	3.96	0.34
Shopping	2.45	1.01	3.14	0.74
Resort areas	2.56	1.01	3.26	0.82
Big cities	2.94	0.93	3.39	0.69
Beaches for swimming/sunning	2.34	1.10	2.79	0.96
Predictable weather	2.11	0.97	2.40	0.81
Live theatre and musicals	2.99	1.01	3.21	0.91

Source: Fennell and Smale (1992)

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Differences between general population and ecotourists are statistically significant at 0.05 level

<sup>b</sup> Scale: 1 = 'very important'; 4 = 'not at all important'

<sup>c</sup> Attractions/benefits are in descending rank order based on magnitude of difference between groups

## 2.2 Global tendencies

*What are the global trends today within tourism and what country would be a relevant Cuban reference?*

Ecotourism is today one of the fastest growing segments of tourism globally, and within ecotourism, nature-based tourism is in the lead. Nature-based tourism accounted for between 10-20% of all international travel in the year 2000, according to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC), with growth rates around 15%, compared with a 4% growth rate for overall tourism in the 90's, and continues to be increasing rapidly.

Countries in the region that have had success within the ecotourism industry are Ecuador, Belize and Costa Rica. What they have in common are natural assets in landscape, flora and fauna, sometimes complemented by a rich cultural heritage, effective protected area networks, and a pro-active ecotourism industry sector. The governments has also been actively promoting the ecotourism attractions through the media and in international forums (Stronza 2008, 207-210). At the same time tourist 'mega-projects' continue to flourish in many countries, especially in beach areas, having well-known negative effects on nature as well as the local culture. As ecotourism has grown in popularity, the term has been misused in pseudo-ecotourism projects seeking profit, so called 'green-washing'. Despite this business is continuously developing and there has also been a number of successful projects.

### COSTA RICA

Let us take a closer look at Costa Rica. Costa Rica is known to be "ecotourism's poster child" (Honey 2008, 175). Is there anything Cuba could learn from their example?

Ecotourism started in the 80's in Costa Rica, and by 1992, she was dubbed the "number one ecotourism destination in the world", by the U.S. Adventure Travel Society. In 2006 Costa Rica was perceived internationally as "the world's prime ecotourism destination" (Honey 2008, 160).

When I read about Costa Rican tourism, I realized that the tourism sector in Costa Rica is much more than just ecotourism; it includes big scale scandals like conventional luxury beach resorts with privatizing of the coast as a consequence, big scale Eco-certified still socially unsustainable hotels, as well as a small scale ecolodge industry with numerous successful examples of sustainable practices. One might mistakenly think that their whole tourism industry is about ecotourism and

sustainability, given that the country is marketed so strongly as an ecotourism nation. In fact, the fastest growing tourism sector in the country in recent years has been resorts by big international hotel chains, according to the Costa Rican Chamber of Hotels. (Honey 2008, 224). "While all of tiny Costa Rica is being marketed as an ecotourism destination, the reality is that ecotourism exists only in certain areas." (Honey 2008, 229)

I will present a good example of Costa Rican ecotourism, as well as mention some of the incentives from the government directed towards the industry over the years.

In the 80's the Costa Rican government introduced hotel and airfare taxes as a way to raise funds for the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT) - the national tourism ministry. In 1985, a new law was passed which allowed for ICT-administrated incentives and tax breaks. Construction materials, vehicles (vans and cars), fishing and pleasure boats, jet skis, dune buggies and golf carts were exempted from import duties, and tourism facilities from property taxes. But, these incentives were only directed towards big-scale investments involving twenty rooms or more, and excluded local people from qualifying for the incentives. The locals have also been somewhat excluded when it comes to having access to national parks for fishing, hunting, logging, farming, and gold mining, and their needs only partially or temporarily addressed. (Honey 2008, 227)

When the government entered fiscal crisis in the beginning of the 90's, they turned to tourism for the first time to provide funding for the parks. Park entrance fees were raised and the intention was that 75% of the fees would go to administration and operation of the park, and 25% to support conservation areas with less income, but in reality the government withheld a part of the funds and only little money was actually reinvested in the parks, and from 1998-2005 the government used the surplus of the parks to reduce the deficit in the state finances.

In the mid-90's the ICT created a certification program for sustainable tourism, called CST. CST addresses environmental, social and community variables, and is applicable to all types of hotels - eco or non-eco. It measures (1) physical-biological environment, (2) hotel facilities, (3) guest services, and (4) socioeconomic environment, and the lowest score set for any of the four categories sets the final score for the hotel, in a way to encourage improvement in all four fields. In 2005 Costa Rica set up a committee representing all sectors of the tourism industry, as well as government and academia, to mirror the ISO-committee established the same year to achieve tourism standardization. The result was for example CST-TO for tour operators, and seven tour

operators were certified. The tour operators then stated that they in turn only would use certified hotels and this resulted in a big increase in the number of certified hotels.

Besides governmental incentives to strengthen ecotourism, another development that has been of great importance for the industry are the organizations. “Three Costa Rican organizations, Cooprena, Actuar, and ACEPESA, have played a key role in helping communities to develop and market small, community-owned ecotourism businesses. The oldest is Cooprena, a membership organization of eighteen tourism cooperatives that run lodges and activities.” (Honey 2008, 222) They offer training in management and environmental practices and help develop local tourism businesses to generate alternative income sources and environmental conservation initiatives.

staff, of the sixty-five permanent staff, only two are not from the immediate surrounding areas. In addition, Lapa Rios has agreed to preserve 920 acres a biological reserve.

## LAPA RIOS ECOLODGE



Lapa Rios Ecolodge.

Lapa Rios Ecolodge is the most famous ecolodge in Costa Rica. It was the first hotel in the country to earn five “green leaves”, which is the top rating in the Costa Rican certification program CST, and it has received a number of awards over the years. It is situated in a private reserve, twelve miles south of Puerto Jimenez, and it was built in 1990. The design incorporates native and largely renewable materials and local building techniques and styles, and consists of the lodge, thatched bungalows, dining room and reception area, and a treetop observation platform.

They produce their own bio gas from their own pigs, and use bio diesel for electricity generation and vehicle fuel. The lodge has contributed a lot to the community, by building a primary school for children living in the area, which was actually built at the same time as the lodge, after consultation with the locals. They have also supported other community projects such as the library, Red Cross, a local preschool, conservation campaign, and a recycling initiative. They hire and train locals as

## 2.3 Ecotourism in Cuba

*What is the Cuban tourism about today and what is Ecotourism to Cuba?*

The tourism in Cuba today is about so much more than just sun and beaches. There is the challenge - to broaden the image of tourism in Cuba, says Celia working at Ecotur, a governmental interface for tour operators and suppliers working within Nature Tourism. It soon became clear to me that when you asked people about ecotourism they instinctively interpreted it as Nature tourism, or conservation programs, in nature but also in Havana, where you find conservation programs for the built environment. Ecotourism in Cuba is in its infancy and is not nearly as developed as in Costa Rica. But, there are plenty of sustainable pilot projects and examples, and research going on when it comes to the field of sustainable resource use / renewable energy and development of ecological materials for example. And of course, Cuba is a well-known role model when it comes to urban farming and permaculture, and thousands and thousands of tourists visit the country each year to witness and learn from their example.

### PERFECT EXAMPLE?

When I came to Cuba to do my field studies I wanted to find a perfect example, but the truth is that no project is perfect - they were all attempts in the strive towards sustainability, with each example representing the specific needs and capacities of that very special project and context. There does not exist one central institution within the field of tourism which distributes information, but rather several sources, which makes the information dispersed, at least that is how I experienced it in my search for information about ecotourism.

Besides Ecotur I visited Infotur - which is a tourist information providing light information, maps and folders. When I asked about ecotourism I was given a leaflet on excursions in the nature, offering attractions like tracking and bird watching. In the leaflet you also found a list of hotels, from which you could get access to these activities. There was no such thing like a list of ecolodges or ecohotels.



Canopy tour in Las Terrazas - an example of a Cuban Nature Tourism attraction.

### HOTEL MOKA

During my stay in Cuba I found only one hotel that called itself "Eco"; that was Hotel Moka in Las Terrazas. In Lonely Planet guide book four "Ecolodges" were presented, among them Hotel Moka, and another one was a countryside farm. In a country-side farm, "finca" you can experience what it is like to live under the same roof as Cubans, in a rural context. You can actually do this in an urban context too - in Havana there are plenty of "Casas particulares", which means private homes, that rent out rooms for tourists. It is a good business for a Cuban and at the same time a cheap and authentic experience to the tourist. When it comes to ecohotels and lodges it seems like the Cuban interpretation is more about being situated in a close to nature environment, and giving access to nature tourism activities, than eco-designed buildings, as far as I have seen. I visited Hotel Moka and Las Terrazas and spent two days there, trying out the different nature tours offered by the hotel - canopy tour over the valley, horseback riding, swimming in waterfalls, and a guided history tour with a tour guide in the community telling me about the history and concept of the village. The only way in which the hotel building was ecological, was that it had included the trees of the surrounding nature in the design. Once there had been solar panels for water heating at the roof, but I was told they broke down years ago. When you visit Hotel Moka the most important eco-aspects are not in the hotel itself but within the concept of the community. Las Terrazas started as a social and ecological project of "Usufruit" character. Poor peasants living from the coal industry were offered free housing and work in the community, working with reforestation instead of deforestation activities, and receiving social benefits at the same time. Another example of Usufruit community is the Israelian Kibbutz. Hotel Moka and Las Terrazas are examples of an ecological conservation project.

## OPPORTUNITIES

When I was in Cuba, I was told that there are a great number of legislation changes coming through at this very moment, as a result of referendums made a couple of years ago on what issues the Cuban population thought were most important and in what direction they wanted to see the Cuban economy develop. After the referendums, the information was collected, evaluated, translated into “guidelines” and now they are implemented into a number of new laws. One of the outcomes of this is the possibilities to create and run non-agricultural cooperatives. It will also be possible for local associations to benefit locally from engagement in for example natural reserves, as the case with Cojímar. This could potentially lead to a development of ecotourism business opportunities at a local level. There are also a number of new areas on their way to being declared as nature reserves, for example El Bosque, which would give them more protection by the law. I believe that ecotourism will develop a lot the coming years in Cuba. Tourism is Cuba’s major income these days and the potential for ecotourism is huge.

There is especially, as I found it, an interest in how to use the income of tourism in investing in society and as a business opportunity, and this is where ecotourism has a role to play. Or as Fernando Martireña put it; “The ecotourism. is one of the ways to diversify the income opportunities for the population”.

## 2.4 Studyvisits & interviews

### ALAMAR ORGANOPÓNICO

Permaculture and green dreams in the biggest urban farming lot in Havana. I am guided around the site by Medardo, an agronomist working full time (as everybody do) at the organopónico. They provide me with plastic bags to put over my feet - yes, I arrived in white flip-flops, and we walk, talk and taste for hours. Permaculture as well as the auto-construction housing philosophy are products of the “Special Period” (the economical crisis in Cuba which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989) years in the beginning of the 90s, and represent two examples of Cuban achievements within the field of sustainable development and self-sufficiency in times of resource deficiency and crisis. The organopónico of Alamar is famous and they receive international visitors frequently, studying their successful example. Medardo is a great and friendly guide and I we walk and talk for hours. He tells me about the organopónico and its history and also about his green dreams - it seems that permaculture is more than just a job to him, it is how he believes humans can save the planet from the humans, who are the primary threat to the planet and themselves as Medardo explains it. Permaculture is more than urban farming, it is about system thinking, and coexistence. Medardo is dreaming of the creation of green valleys with permaculture, as the future of mankind.



Alamar organopónico.

### HOTEL MOKA Y LAS TERRAZAS

Hotel La Moka is a Cuban ecohotel and Las Terrazas - the community, is a reforestation and tourism project. It started in the 60's as a nature conservation project, as a village dedicated to reforestation of the area, and at the same time a social project, offering housing and social benefits for the dwellers. In the 90's, when Cuba entered the Special Period, the orientation of the project changed towards tourism as the major income, and tourism infrastructure as well as Hotel Moka was built.

Hotel Moka is not a certified ecohotel, nor close to being ecological in every sense; it is built in closeness and with respect to its surroundings - vegetation and landscape. It used to have solar panels in the beginning, but they broke down and was not replaced/ fixed.



Las Terrazas.

### CIDEM

CIDEM is the state department for material research located in Santa Clara. They deal with developing sustainable material alternatives like sustainable bricks and bamboo, and have received international recognition for their work. I meet up with Fernando Martireña, who works for CIDEM. He tells me that CIDEM also work with social housing and auto construction projects . He has been involved in reconstruction projects after hurricane incidents for example, and is experienced in self-sufficient solutions. The locally produced materials that CIDEM develop are sold at subsidized prices at local material centers, in 50 municipalities so far, as a part of the state housing policies of help-to-self help, or auto-construction as it is called as well. Instead of subsidizing an institution dedicated to housing construction, the aim is to let the subsidies reach the population directly, to avoid middle hands and corruption.



Sustainable brick production, by CIDEM.

## EL JOBERO

A theater community called Los Elementos, with a green philosophy and consciousness, situated in the Escambray mountains. The theater group has built an amphitheater located outdoors, in direct contact with the nature, where they perform their interactive plays in the spectacular surroundings. They strive to ignite a social and environmental awareness among the audience through their work. You can also see their environmental awareness in the rustic houses, dry toilet, bio gas kitchen, and wind driven water pump. The group is small, but dedicated, and they are going through an evaluation right now to become an ecotourism attraction, which would allow them a presentation in the international guide books. The project has received funding from a Swiss NGO in the past, but is constantly in need of funding. Hopefully we will be able to read about them in Lonely Planet soon, which would mean a welcome economic boost to the community.



El Jobero.

## ECOTUR Y INFOTUR

Ecotur and Infotur are national tourism agencies; Ecotur works as an interface for Nature Tourism agents, and Infotur is a pure information office.



Portrait of Antonio Nuñez Jiménez made by the famous Ecuatorian painter Guayasamin.

## FUNDACIÓN ANTONIO NUÑEZ JIMÉNEZ

A foundation in support of permaculture and projects related to the coexistence between humans and nature. “Towards a culture based on the nature”, as they write on the cover of the folder *Nuestro Quehacer*, meaning “Our Mission”. Their mission is to strive towards harmony between human society and its natural surroundings. FANJ is a cultural and scientific institution, working in the field of geohistorical investigations, environmental education and biodiversity conservation, local sustainable development, the relation between consumption and the nature, and patrimonial conservation programs. Antonio Nuñez Jiménez was an intellectual and revolutionary, working in close collaboration with Fidel. He was also a Cuban Thor Heierdahl, as he did a number of famous expeditions and scientific geohistorical publications.

## 2.5 Choosing context

### EL MALECÓN - URBAN

The famous beach walk and number one meeting point in Havana - el Malecón. It is partly located in the historical parts of Havana, which means that one has to take into consideration a number of regulations concerning the design if choosing such a site. It is also the face of the city, and it represents Havana when arriving from the sea, why it also has a great value for the identity of the city. The Malecón is full of life both day and night, and Cubans blend with tourists, as plenty of hotels are situated here as well. Numerous projects and proposals have been made for el Malecón over the years, both by Cubans and foreigners, and many projects are planned for - you find signs from Eusebio Leals' office with the text "Obra en ejecución", which means "project in process", in the area.



El Malecón.

### EL BOSQUE - URBAN

Bosque, also called Parque Almendares, is on its way to be declared a natural reserve; it is a park situated in a district of Havana called Playa. The vegetation in the park is rare and fairytale-like, with huge trees overgrown by parasite plants creating a green veil, and in the middle, a highly polluted river. It is a popular place for religious activities, and I run into not less than four different families/groups making offerings to the Afro-Cuban gods; there are candles, chicken feathers and music. It is a magical place. I understand why it is used for this purpose. Unfortunately these activities contribute to a downgrading of the park with a lot of garbage and pollution as a result. I visited Bosque in search of a urban context site in Havana, and my experience from research so far has shown me that ecotourism in Cuba is equal to Nature tourism, why an urban park/natural reserve with pollution problems, and a great cultural value, would be an interesting urban context for nature tourism. El Bosque is already a tour destination, with established "senderismo" (trekking) as

it seems, even though it still needs tourism infrastructure, for garbage disposal for example. It is littered with garbage of civilization.



A religious ritual in el Bosque.

### VIÑALES - RURAL

Viñales is a natural reserve declared world heritage by UNESCO. It is located about two hours drive west of Havana, in the region called Pinar del Rio. I meet up with Francis - an community architect of Viñales, and she let me attend a presentation at the office of urban planning in Pinar del Rio on the plans for the community, around tourism development, among other things. After that we go to Viñales by car, to look at potential sites for ecohotels. There are four different places with existing plans for such accommodation, and we visit three of them, or at least glance at them from afar, since they are situated in a distant valley.



Viñales, Pinar del Rio.



## COJÍMAR - COASTAL

I meet with Maritza Fortún in Cojímar, a seaside community about half an hour outside Havana. Maritza is engaged in an association called PROA, a sub-group to the national group Pro-Naturaleza. PROA is a local community group in Cojímar, with a wide field of interest groups within. There used to be a number of smaller interest groups, but they realized that their different projects all were interconnected and that they would benefit from collaboration and hence they joined in one solely group. PROA also runs a cooperative, which gives them economic power to run the projects. PROA consists of professionals from at least ten different fields, all with focus on sustainability issues. One of the challenges they are working with is the pollution of the bay, river and forest area of Cojímar. They are interested in using ecotourism to fund investments needed for the cleaning of the area, and eventually to invest in the green area along the river, which is soon to be declared as a natural reserve. The area contains many endangered species and plants and PROA is interested in saving and preserving the nature, while letting tourists visit at the most – they are not interested in exploiting the area with ecotourism constructions, as their neighboring community Alamar – known for its Organopónico – Urban farming field, wants to. Alamar is located on the other side of the nature reserve and it seems like the law changes being realized in a close future has created a situation where both adjacent municipalities are interested developing ecotourism in the area. The area is about to be declared a nature reserve, and it is situated in-between the two municipalities.

Cojímar is the place where the story “The Old Man and the Sea” takes place, and also the place where Hemingway had his boat. During high-season buses of tourists, most of them pensioners, visit Cojímar over the day.

There is no stay-over-night tourism in Cojímar today and even though Maritza adds that this is something they would like to change, she also says that the residents of Cojímar does not want any night-life tourism, just quiet tourism, like the kind of tourism they have today.



Cojímar.



1 Parking lot of the communist party, situated next to Pabellón Cuba, at the street La Rampa, a famous meeting point in the district Vedado.

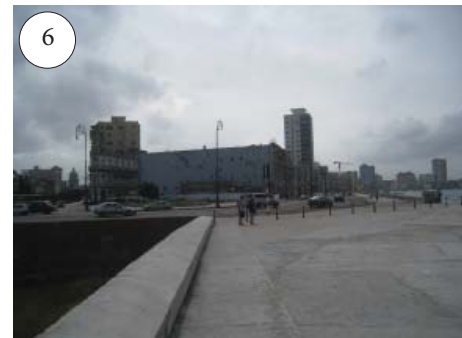
2 Parking lot of the ministry of justice situated close to La Rampa.

3 Hola Ola - a meeting point with dance evenings for older people, situated at el Malecón.

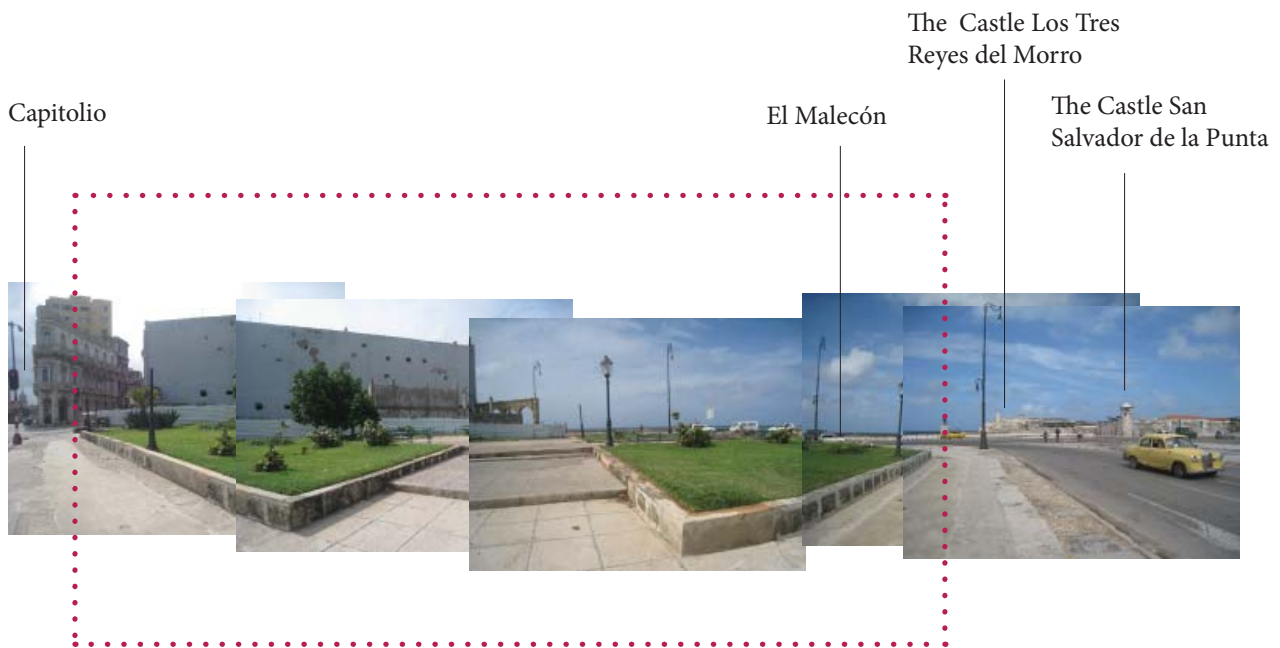
4 Vacant site located next to Park Antonio Maceo, at el Malecón.

5 Ruins and park next to Malecón, the famous seawalk in Havana.

6 Overgrown ruin / collapsed block, located at el Prado, an important avenue running between Malecón and Capitolio, the former government building and White House replication, in Havana.



## 2.7 Site



### RUINS & PARK NEXT TO MALECÓN

When I had looked at all the deserted sites I decided for this one. The place is generally called La Punta, named by the Castle La Punta. It has an interesting location - in the crossing where Old Havana meets Havana Center, and where the Atlantic Ocean and the popular seashore Malecón meets the Prado avenue with the Capitolio at its other end.

It is also connected to plenty of meeting places and landmarks, such as the Hispanic-American Culture Center, Cafeteria Prado no.12 and the Punta Castle. In the park facing the site you also find a temple-like monument which resembles features of an earlier pavilion situated at the site in the beginning of the 20th century.

There used to be a hotel at the site, called Hotel Miramar, and the planning office of Malecón wants to see a hotel built there again. There has been a number of hotel proposals over the years, among others by Cuba's most famous architect José Antonio Choy López, known

as Choy, but nothing has been built so far due to funding problems. Today the site is constituted of a deteriorated apartment block that will be demolished, ruins of a former food warehouse, and a public park.

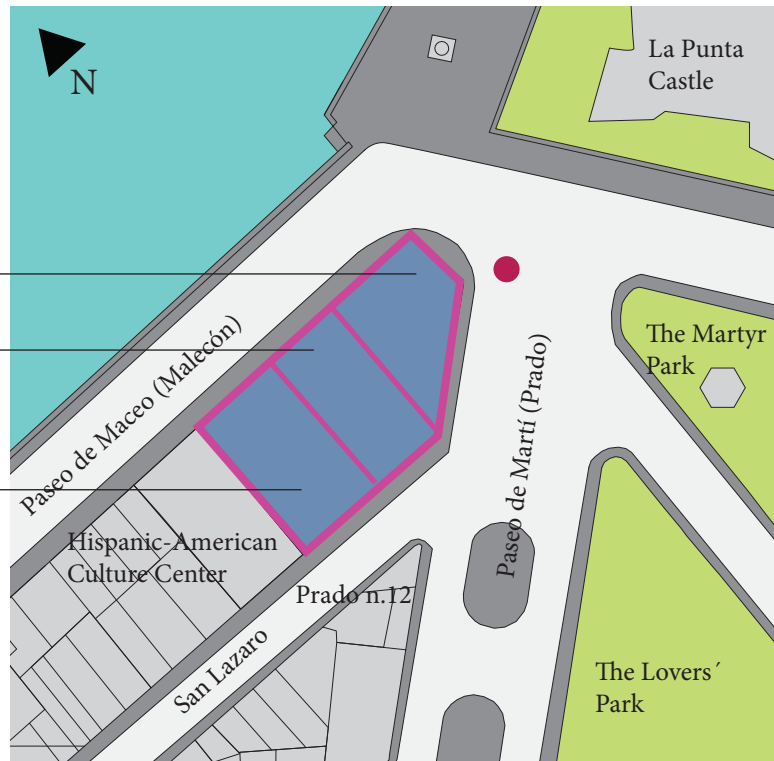
I believe the site is a good location for urban ecotourism since it is a good central location for a hotel, and a hotel is exactly what they are planning to build here. It is a site that Cubans use a lot because of the many meeting places, and that tourists pass by because of the nice view points and attractions such as the castle and the Malecón. It has potential to attract both Cubans and tourists, and a project on ecotourism at this site can inform both target groups on sustainability, and encourage interaction, which is a desirable outcome of my project. I am also attracted to the many surrounding public spaces, and how one can work with the relation between these and the site. It is an urban site connected to green areas, and I first saw a good potential for permaculture and urban farming here, but this might be difficult because of its closeness to the seashore - why only certain resistant vegetation is appropriate.

● Camera location for photo collage to the left

Park

Ruins

Apartment block to be demolished



scale: 1:2000 (A3)



Prado n.12.



La Punta Castle.



Monument in Martyr Park.



Hispanic-American Culture Center.

# 2.7 Site

## A PHOTO SEQUENCE

Malecón



La Punta



# DAY SKETCHING



*What is the spirit of the place?*

## Characteristics:

- Traditional Spanish colonial architecture with colonnades mixed with a few buildings from the 50's and some modern hotels located further down Malecón
- Concrete, steel and glass
- Endless vaults
- Water front
- Sea breeze
- Lots of pedestrians
- Lots of cars - busy corner where Prado meets Malecón
- Sea view
- View of two castles
- Fantastic view point
- An open corner
- A lot of parks
- Open space
- A meeting point
- A focal point in the city



*“ I live in the apartment building next to the park. They will demolish it because it is in very bad shape. But I am happy because I have been given a newly built apartment a few blocks further down Malecón. I love this neighborhood. It is as centric as you can get - you have Capitolio over there (pointing towards Prado) , and Malecón and La Punta (the castle) right here.”*



Osmany, 29 years old:

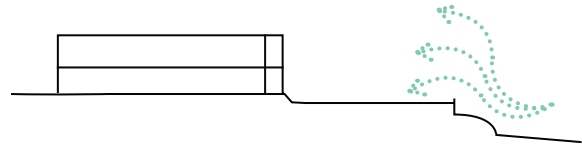
# 2.7 Site

## CLIMATE

Cuba has a tropical climate with high humidity - approximately 80 %, and warm temperatures all year around. The temperature oscillates between 20 and 35 degrees Celsius. In Havana the average temperature throughout the year is 25 degrees Celsius, with an average maximum of 32 degrees in August, and an average minimum of 18 degrees in January. There are two seasons; the cold and dry season - November til April, and hot and rainy season, also called the Hurricane season - May til October. Cuba's climate is highly affected by its geographical position, with north-east winds, warm ocean currents, and high values of solar radiation.

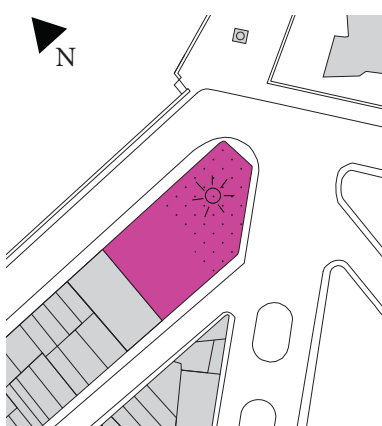
In such a climate as the Cuban, with many warm days with a lot of sun, shadow and protection from the sun is appealing, in contrary to the Swedish context where the shadow is avoided, and direct sunlight a much smaller problem. In Sweden we use power to heat our houses and in Cuba they use it to cool them. Cubans also spend a lot more time outdoors and use public space all year around, whilst we in Sweden depend on the warmer summer climate to use the outdoor spaces. You can see proof of this in the rich variety of public space found in Havana, and also on the architecture where colonnades are a dominant feature.

## Water



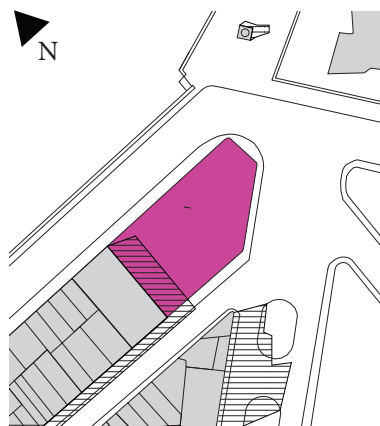
Located only three meters above sea level Malecón is at risk for inundation. At windy days the waves hit the sealine wall and spray Malecón. The water withdraws quickly though thanks to existing piping system.

## Sun



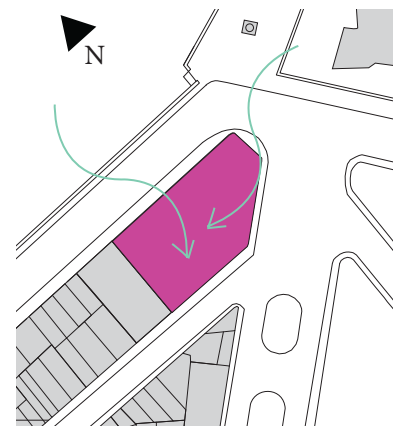
The hatched area is the part of the site with most sun hours over the year. It is sunlit all year around except for in the winter after 3 pm.

## Shadow



The illustration shows the shadows at 3 pm on the 31th of July. During the Summer months the sun stands high and there is not much shadow until 3 pm. In the winter the sun stands lower which creates shadows on the whole site area at 3 pm. (See sun study in the appendix for complete information).

## Wind

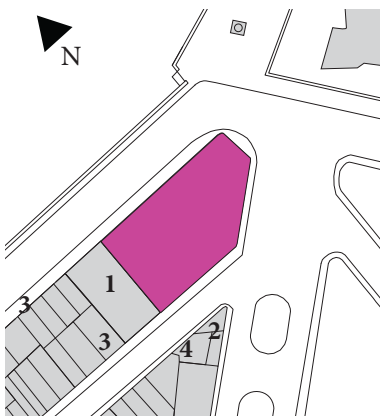


The location next to the sealine, and with open space around the site, makes it a windy site, with north-northeastern sea breezes. Salty winds hit the facade and makes it deteriorate faster.



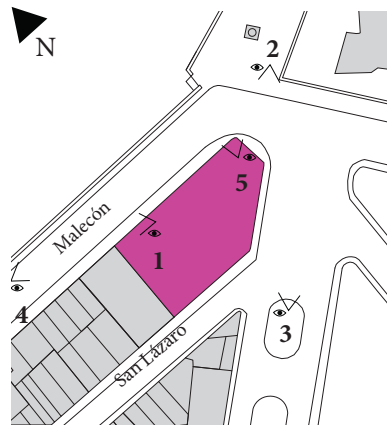
# SITE ANALYSIS

## Services



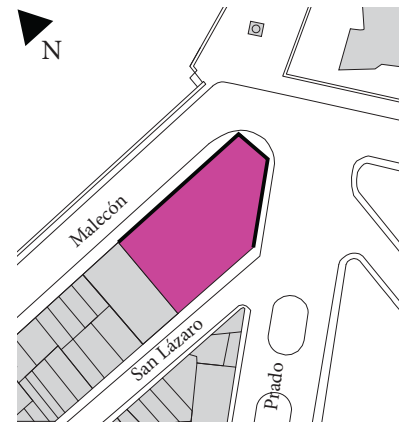
1. Culture House.
2. Cafeteria Prado n.12.
3. Restaurants.
4. Kiosk.

## Views



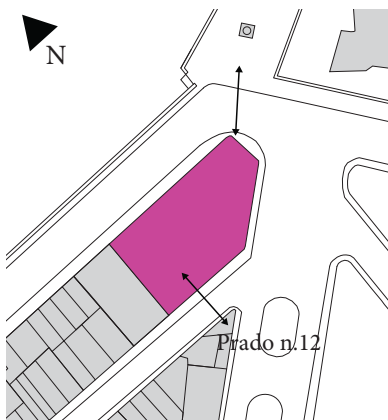
1. Malecón and the sealine.
2. The bay and the castles.
3. From the end of the Prado Avenue.
4. Meeting the Culture House and the site at the end of Malecón.
5. The Corner and face towards the sea and the public space in front.

## Public Facades



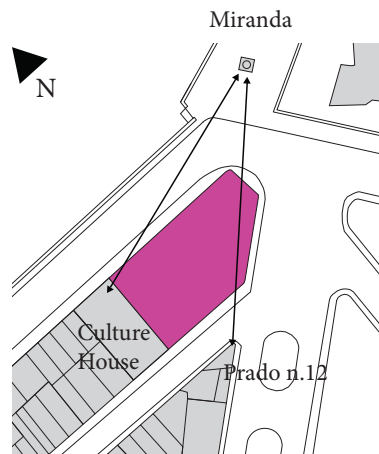
Facades directed toward public space as well as connecting to the two main streets - Malecón and Prado. San Lázaro is more of an backside, narrow, and with closed facades.

## Connections



The site is facing a public space north of it and is neighbor to Cafeteria Prado n.12 to the south.

## Visual connections



The Culture House is an important building which should be visible from the Miranda statue - public space. Prado n.12 is a beautiful Jugend building which also should be visible.

## 2.7 Site

### HAVANA CHARACTERISTICS

Colors, variety, pillars, decay, life, mixes of styles, mixes of people...

“The City of Columns” as the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier called Havana (Havanna - rummet och själen. 2011, 57), is constituted of eternal colonnades; architectural styles are mixed side by side, but the colonnades are persistent, and a striking feature across the city.

Antonio J. Ponte refers to Cuban houses as “Light Boxes” (Havanna - rummet och själen. 2011, 56) - cubes with a yard in the middle where the light as well as the breeze are filtered and cooled down through the vegetation before it is let inside the building, separating the light from the heat. This kind of houses resembles the Spanish colonial architecture built according to Spanish - Moorish ideals from south of Spain. Another characteristic of the Havana architecture is that it is very colorful; to use strong colors on the facades is another way of protecting the building against the heat. And it is very varied. The Cuban Eclecticism combines different styles and expressions and creates what Carpentier called “the carnival of styles” (Havanna - rummet och själen. 2011, 60), though you find pure Art Deco and Jugend buildings as well for example. Other styles are the Neogothic, Baroque and the Neoclassicism, and Modernism, and when it comes to interior design there is a lot of Art Nouveau.

It is hard to describe Havana without using the word decay - it is there, right in front of you; facades are weathered due to years of salty winds, humidity, and heavy precipitation, and lack of maintenance.

There is a lot of restoration work going on and you find many signs from Eusebio Leal's (the antiquarian of Havana) office telling you that at this site restoration is in progress. But the housing shortage is big, and on top of that a number of buildings collapse every year in Havana. Ruins are therefore a part of the city landscape, evoking somewhat of a Caribbean Rome.

When it comes to how the buildings relate to public space there is an openness where limits are dissolved and the street is more of an outdoor living room to the Cubans. Balconies, Colonnade, frequent mini-parks are signs of an outdoor lifestyle where interaction is important.

After the revolution most of the construction activities were focused on the countryside and little were built in Havana. Some satellite neighborhoods were built in the outskirts of Havana in the seventies according to modernistic ideals, but apart from that you find little of contemporary architecture in the city except for hotels. The greatest architectural piece from the early post-

revolution years, is the national institute for higher studies within arts - the ISA, by the Cuban architect Ricardo Porro, together with the Italian architects Vittorio Garatti and Roberto Gottardi. It resembles many to the Cuban architecture typical features, as the fluidity between indoor and outdoor space, columns, the play with light and shadow, the organic shapes of ArtNouveau and the Baroque, in a very unique mix and expression.

At the top to the right:  
The continuous colonnades at the Prado.

In the middle, to the left:  
ISA - the national institute for art studies.

In the middle to the right:  
Cuban "Reja" - iron grid - a common feature that you find in various designs, as gates, as fences, on windows, balconies, etc.

At the bottom to the left:  
Hotel Sevilla's Art Nouveau entrance.

At the bottom to the right:  
A minipark of columns.



## 2.7 Site



Hotel Miramar in the background with the former pavilion in front.

### HISTORY

The site is located on the verge of the Havana Center district, meeting the Old Town, as well as on the cross-roads of Prado - one of the most important avenues in Havana, connecting Capitolio (the White House replication) with the sea, and the famous beach walk called Malecón.

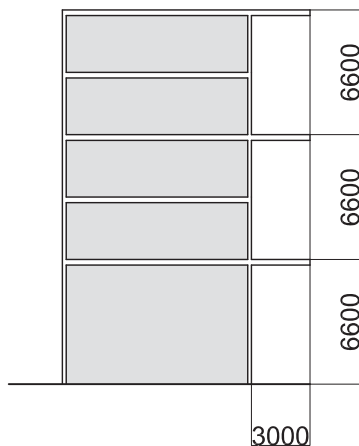
Malecón has the history of being a parade street, with American cars - "Almendrones" - Almonds, as they are called by the Cubans, replacing the horse wagons in the 50's. It is also one of the, if not the most important, meeting place in Havana. It is a social node, frequented day and night by Cubans just hanging out, or couples making out, at the wall along the sea. It is a mystical, magical place.

There used to be a hotel at the site, called Hotel Miramar, and the Master Plan as well as the Malecón office suggest that this is still a hotel site, though it has been filled with other functions for many years. There used to be a food warehouse for a period of time, and after that there were plans on building an Albergue, which is the Cuban name for a temporary housing solution for people who have lost their homes to hurricanes or similar circumstances, consisting of an apartment block. These plans were paused, and the last couple of years there has been a park on the site, while several hotel proposals have been made, none of them built til today.

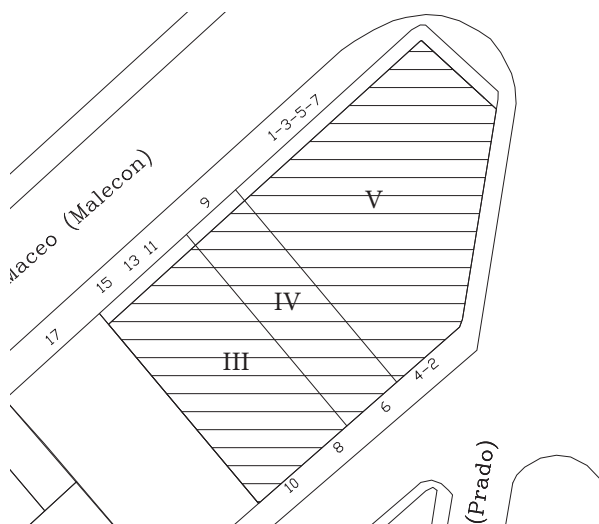
# NORMS & REGULATIONS

- Facades should open up towards public space.
- Overhangs, eaves, shutters and pergolas as a protection against the sun.
- Crossventilation to lessen dependence on artificial ventilation.
- Natural lighting to lessen dependence on artificial lighting.
- Alternative energy sources like solar energy.
- Design the microclimate in a way that lets the breeze come in.
- The facade facing Malecón shall have measurements according to section shown below. The 3-part-division of the facade should be respected, but additional floor plans on the inside are permitted.

The Malecón office responsible for the development of the area where my site is situated, wants to see a hotel at the site. They also wish for a modern proposal.



Above: Principle section showing facade division towards Malecón, and allowed floor numbers.  
 Below: Buildable part of site (hatched), as well as number of floors stipulated by the Master Plan. Archades towards Malecón and on the corner.



# PREVIOUS PROPOSALS



Hotel proposal by the Cuban architect Choy.



Chinese proposal.

Both proposals have rounded the building volume towards the corner, which is a soft and respectful approach, that I agree with. I like the diversity in volume in the Cuban proposal, as well as the organic touch on the entrance, probably inspired by Cuban Art Nouveau. The entrance of the Cuban proposal is placed in front of the public space making the building “face” it and connect to it in a sympathetic way. The Chinese proposal feels like it is trying to refer to the previous hotel at the site - Hotel Miramar, but the esthetics is not appealing to me. It is not modern, nor beautiful. The Chinese proposal is following the Master plan regulations on building heights though, which the Cuban proposal does not, having a higher building volume on the corner, than stipulated. The site is a focal point and a higher building volume could hence work, as there are other high buildings in the area as well.

# 2.8 Timeline

Meetings, study visits  
& study trips  
19/8-28/9



Prolonging the thesis another semester 29/10

Deciding project site 29/10

Summing up and preparing for hand-in 21-28/10

Meeting with my examiner IngerLise 20/12

Shall I design a pavilion instead of a hotel? 26/9

Prolonging my stay procedures 7-18/10

Leaving Cuba 11/11

aug                      sep                      oct                      nov                      dec

Arrival in Cuba 15/8

Stomach disease 1-9/10



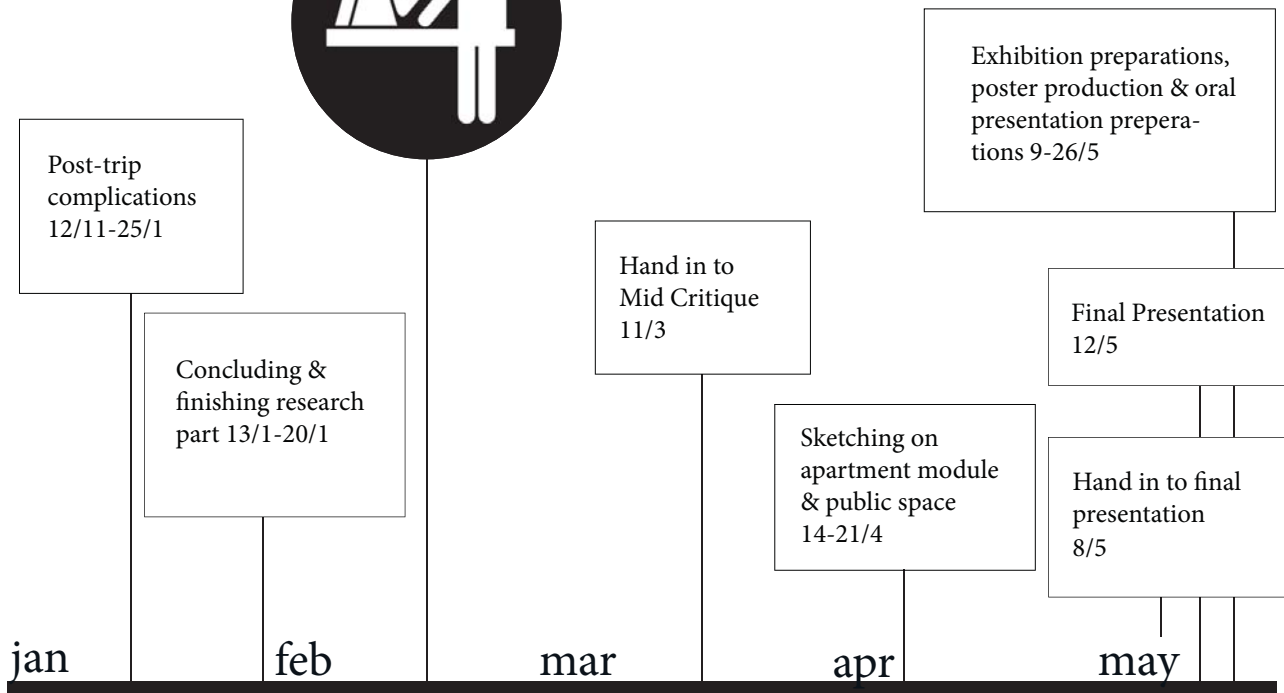
Collecting material, documenting & sketching on site 4-10/11



Looking for a site 30/9



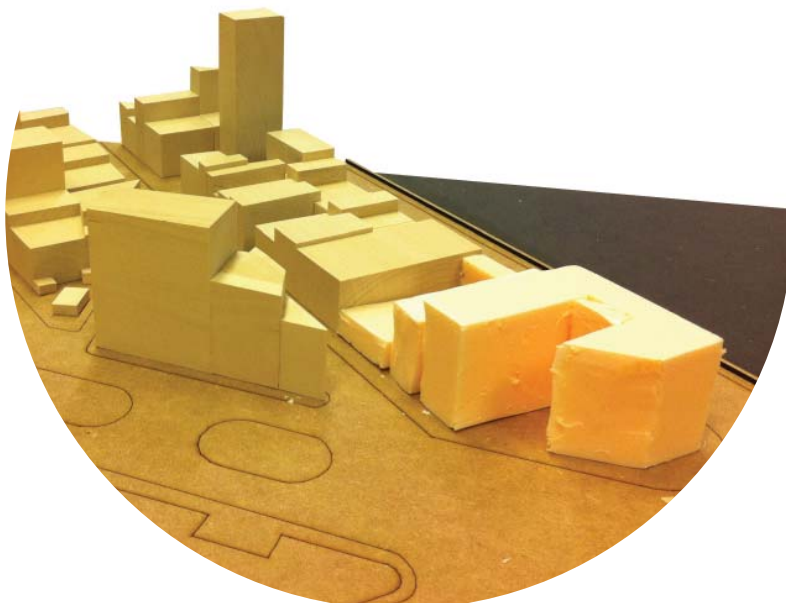
Working part time  
and studying  
part time 2/2 - 3/6



Mid Critique  
18/3

Finishing the booklet  
21/4-7/5

Public Presentation  
27/5



Building models & sketching in model 10/2-7/3

# 2.9 Conclusions

## What are the design delimitations derived from research?

When I first came to Cuba for my field studies I searched for projects and sites that would inspire and work as a foundation for my thesis. I would interview and do study visits and study trips and maybe I would find an on-going project that I could take part in or do a contra-proposal to an existing proposal. I had ideas on what my project would be about, still I had to keep an open mind to find out about the local needs, therefore I opened my mind to other possibilities than an ecotel as the end result of my studies within ecotourism and sustainable development in Cuba. That was my starting point.

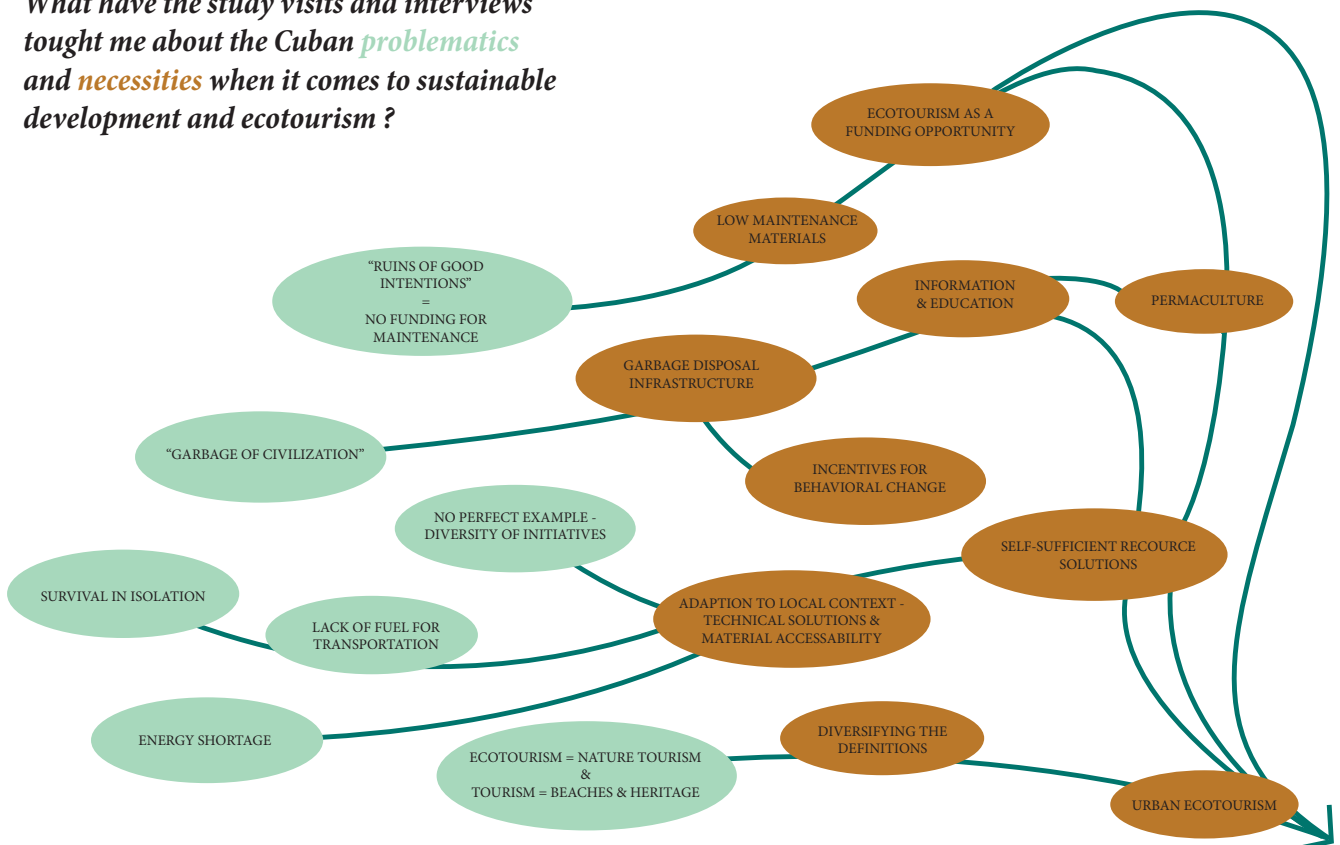
Visiting interesting places and meeting fantastic inspiring people, I noticed that every project had its pros and cons, it was successful in some aspects, and less successful in others. I think I unconsciously had some kind of rating system in my mind, where I wanted to find a project with "five stars" - being sustainable in every way, a role model project so to say, so I kept on searching. I eventually came to realize that there are no

perfect examples, rather a number of locally adapted solutions, results of not only good intentions, but also of the possibilities and delimitation at the time. I would say that the Cuban example is much about the search for better solutions. In search for a better world, in search for sustainability. In their research and pilot projects you find a constant strive towards a sustainable future.

I started to reflect upon sustainability and rating systems. Is it possible to have high scores in all fields and still be sustainable? There are eco-certified hotels that are not socially sustainable. Ecoresorts are an example of that. In Costa Rica for example. There are good examples of ecoresorts, with high scores in community engagement. But I did not want to design an ecoresort. I wanted to do a socially sustainable building and I wanted to stretch the idea of what tourism could be about in Cuba. My notion of sustainability is locally adapted, it is no longer an idea of perfection, rather of conscious decisions based on the context you are working in and the users involved. At a point in the process I considered a pavilion on sustainability, but my choice of site determined the program and I decided to do an urban hotel on sustainability, not in an isolated beach location,

## PROBLEMATICS & NECESSITIES

### What have the study visits and interviews taught me about the Cuban *problematics* and *necessities* when it comes to sustainable development and ecotourism?





but rather in an urban context, where both Cubans and tourists are included.

My conclusions about what sustainability will be about in the project is based on three parts; the local context factors - weather, surrounding building typologies, nearby functions, history of the site - previous functions and location, the Cuban sustainability (re)search - what parts of what I have seen can be included at this very site, and also my interpretation of Cuban ecotourism.

So, my learning from research is that the weather in Cuba is hot and humid which means that you should provide for shades spaces, but allow fresh breezes. When it comes to building typologies at my site there are overall low building heights but a few towers which gives the opportunity to build partly high at this site if you feel like challenging the Master Plan regulations. Great variation in expression, as well as wishes by the Malecón office allows for a modern expression, though situated in a traditional area. Arcades are a dominant feature, no matter style, and should be included.

The history of my site is that it is the previous location of Hotel Miramar, which means that it used to be a hotel site. It used to be a pavilion next to the site, a meeting place where music events took place. Could this meeting place function be recovered/reinforced in my proposal?

The site today is partly constituted of an apartment block, which will be demolished due to poor condition. The dwellers are already offered new housing, but there is a big housing shortage in Havana, why it is not a bad idea to include housing in my proposal.

Tourism often creates, in particular in off-grid, all-inclusive solutions, a separation between tourists and locals. The location of my site is very centric and frequented, which makes it a good location for exhibitions and for making a statement, on for example sustainability. It is also a good place to encourage interaction between Cubans and tourists, as an opposite to all-inclusive segregation, as a strive towards social sustainability.

Parts of the Cuban sustainability research that could be included at this site are solar energy and eco-bricks. These would represent ecological sustainability. Ecotourism on my site could be about usufruct principles (like in Las Terrazas). Ecotourism as a funding opportunity would represent economical sustainability, and it could expand the traditional definition of ecotourism in Cuba to an urban context where culture is enhanced and sustainability promoted. These factors also contribute to social sustainability. These parts are translated into design principles in the next chapter.



# PROPOSAL

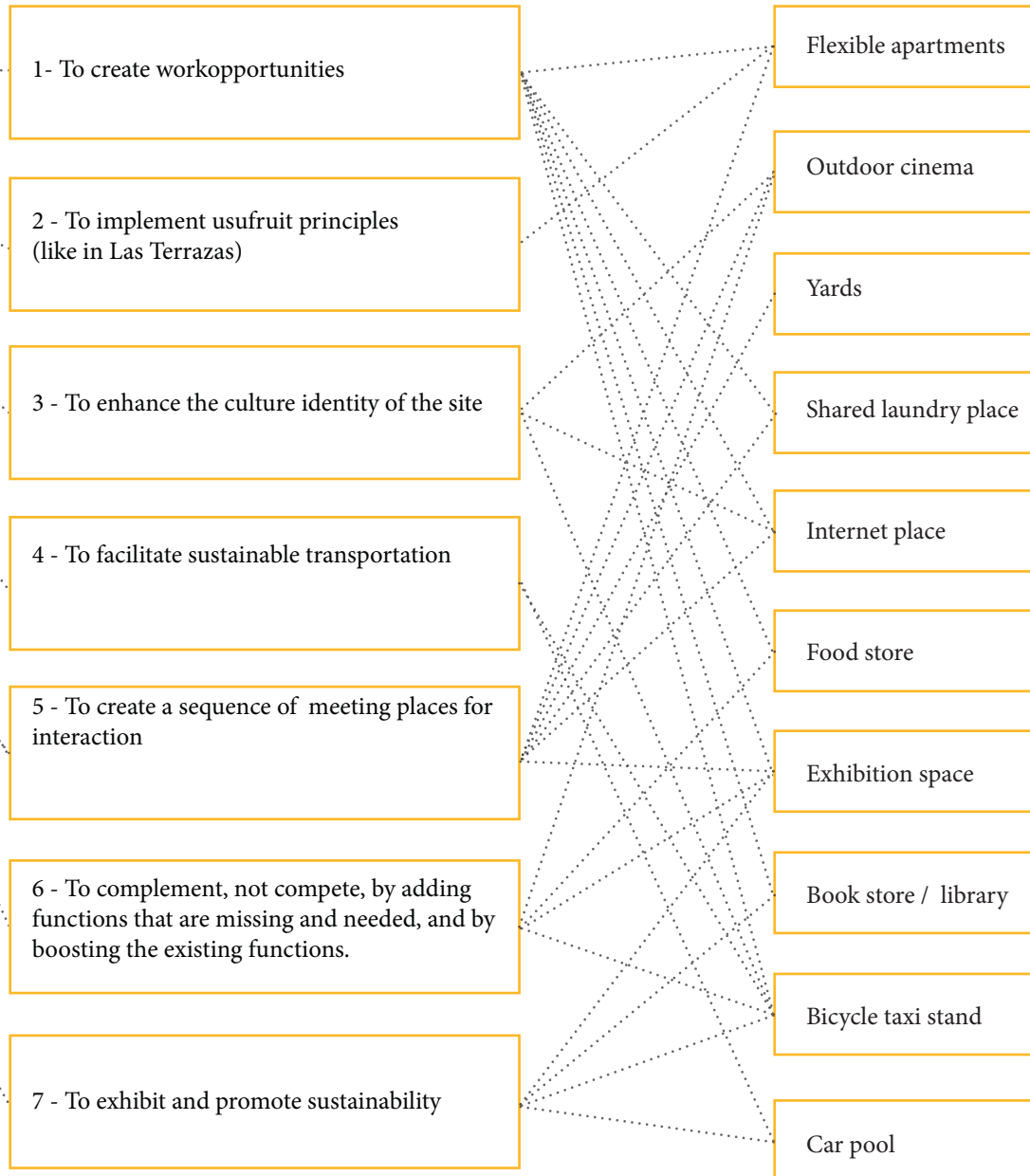


How?

Through?

## STRATEGIES

## PROGRAM



## 3.2 Introduction

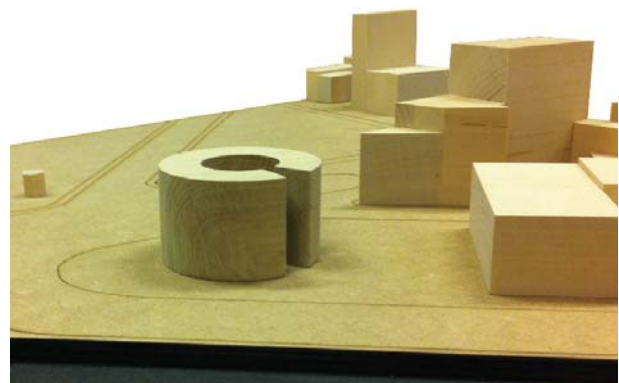


View of Malecón looking towards the La Punta Castle and the project site. You can see the existing Culture House on the right hand side of the picture.

Today there are already plans for building a hotel at my project site, and the project is already on its way. I think of my proposal as an alternative if the plans change. My approach is to with relatively small means create a unified site, with maximum outcome. The concept is about creating a co-operative hotel, where co-operation, and co-living with Cubans is central, hence the title “E-CO-Hotel”. I want to implement usufruit principles at the site, inspired by the example of the ecovillage Las Terrazas. Usufruit means that you work and live at a site which is lended to you, you are not the owner of the property, and in return you receive benefits from it. In my hotel this means that the Cubans living there have access to use public services offered at the ground floor. In return they work there. They use, and enjoy the fruit of their labour.

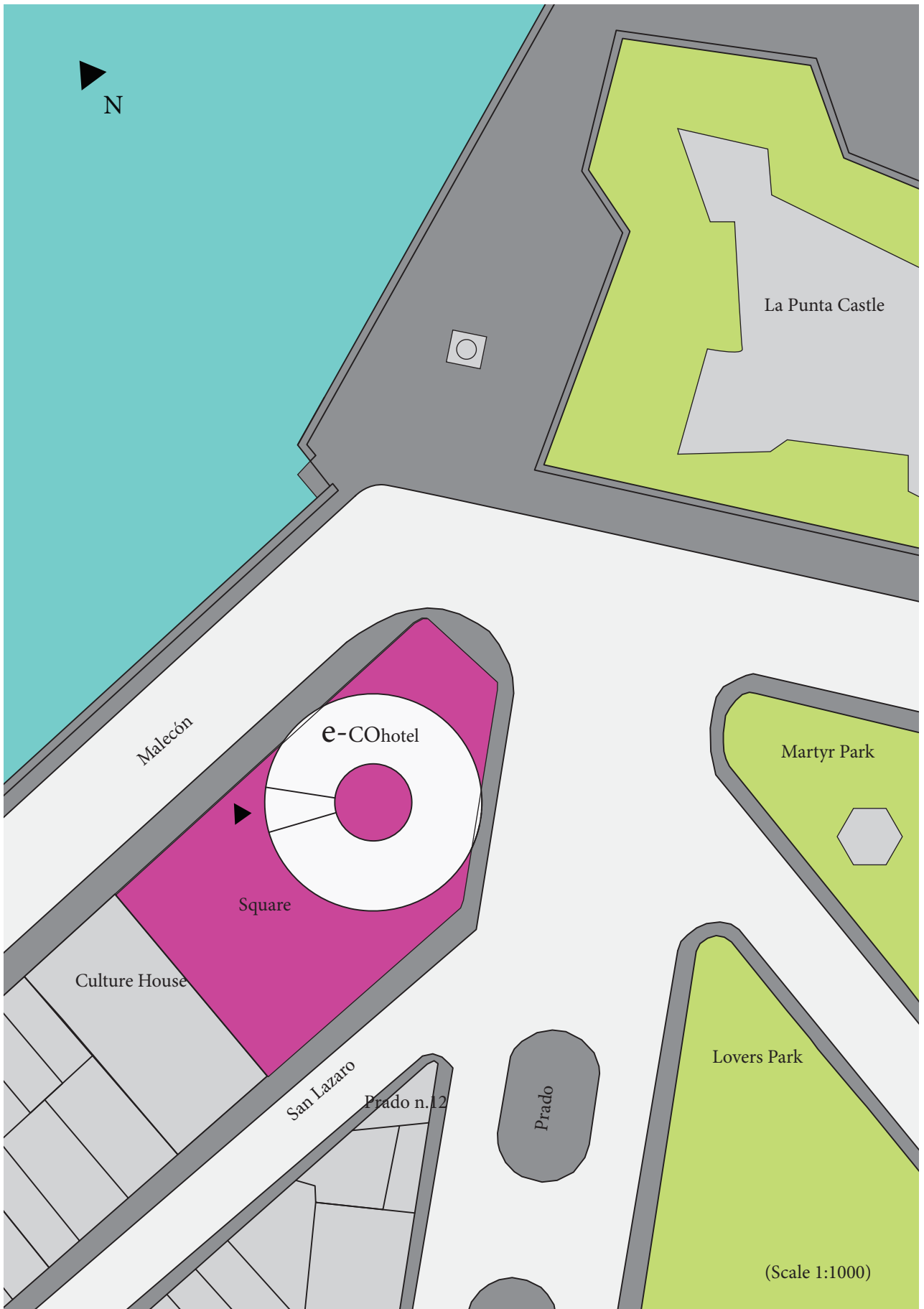
I see my proposal of a cooperative housing hotel as a new twist to an existing phenomenon - renting out rooms to tourists. The vast majority of new constructions in Havana today are hotels, yet there is a big housing shortage, why I figured that a joint business combining the hotel concept with apartments with rooms for rent, would be a good idea.

My E-CO-hotel not only provide business opportunities and housing for the Cubans, it also offers a local experience of everyday life of the Cubans, for the tourist. Co-living brings about an intercultural exchange, and understanding, creating a socially sustainable tourism. Combined with a public ground floor educating on sustainability, the idea is that the hotel will also spread ecological awareness to the hotel guests, as well as the Cuban public.



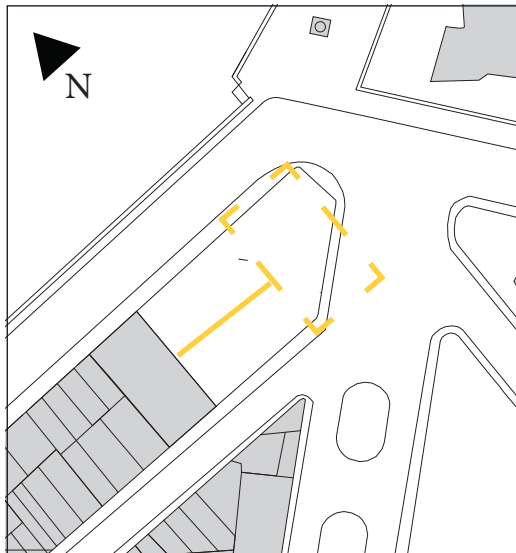
Picture of a physical model of the site, where you see the square surrounded by Prado n.12 in the back, the E-CO-hotel to the left and the Culture House to the right.

The proposal consists of the hotel, but also a square connecting the hotel to the Culture House. Culture activities are highly prioritized in Cuba and among the Cubans, and cultural experiences, are also the number one attraction to ecotourists (see table 2.2, page 17). My hotel will hence attract both groups, and promote interaction, offering benefits for Cubans as well as tourists, in my interpretation of “all-inclusiveness”.

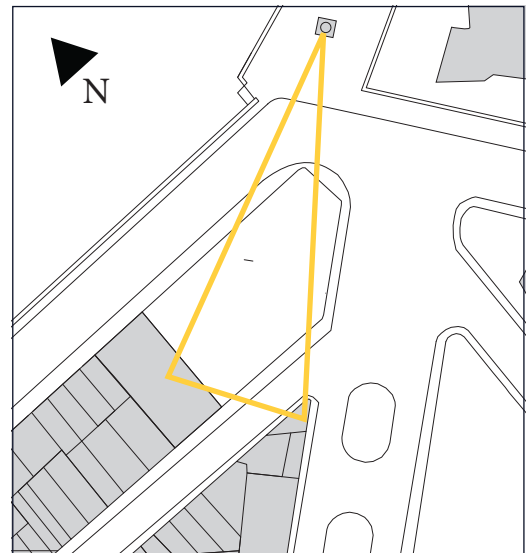


# 3.3 Spatial Organization

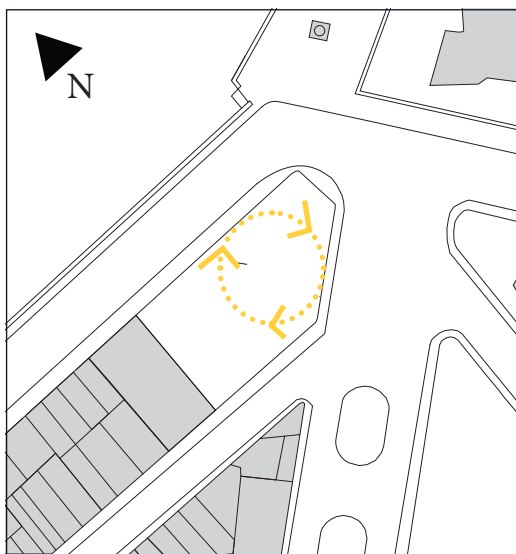
1 - The hotel should connect to the Culture House



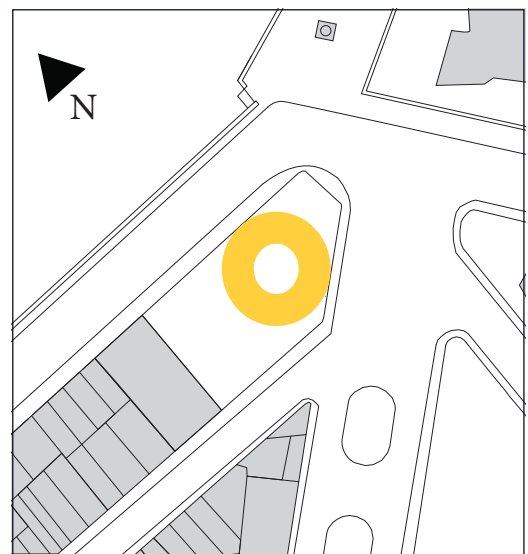
2 - It should also connect meeting places such as La Punta, Prado n.12 and the Culture House



3 - And facilitate a flow between them

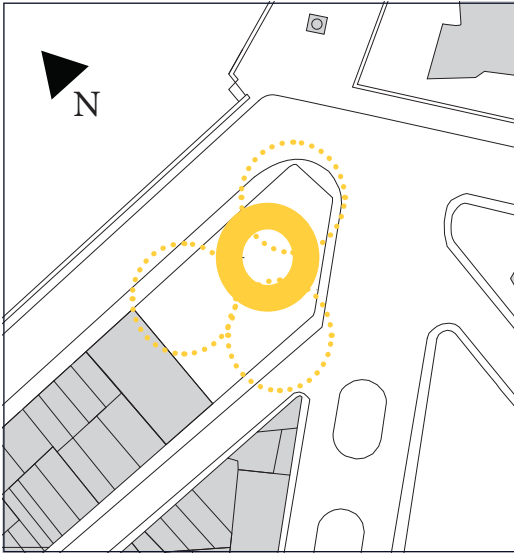


4 - With a round building a public outside and a private inside is created

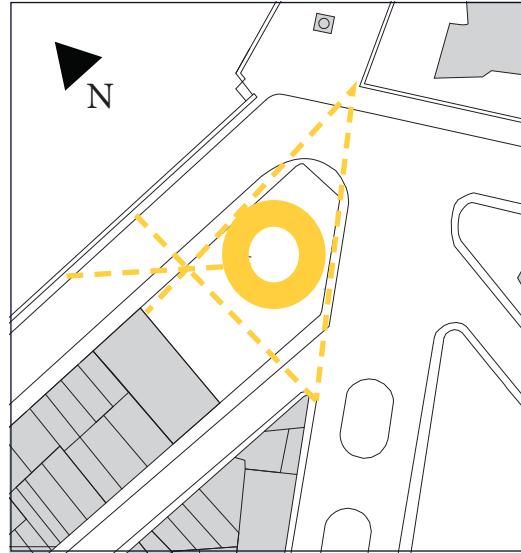




5 - Around the the hotel a sequence of meeting places are created, corresponding to each function



6 - Visual connections are enabled for the edges of Prado n.12 and the Culture House, and for the hotel entrance.



## 3.4 Public Space

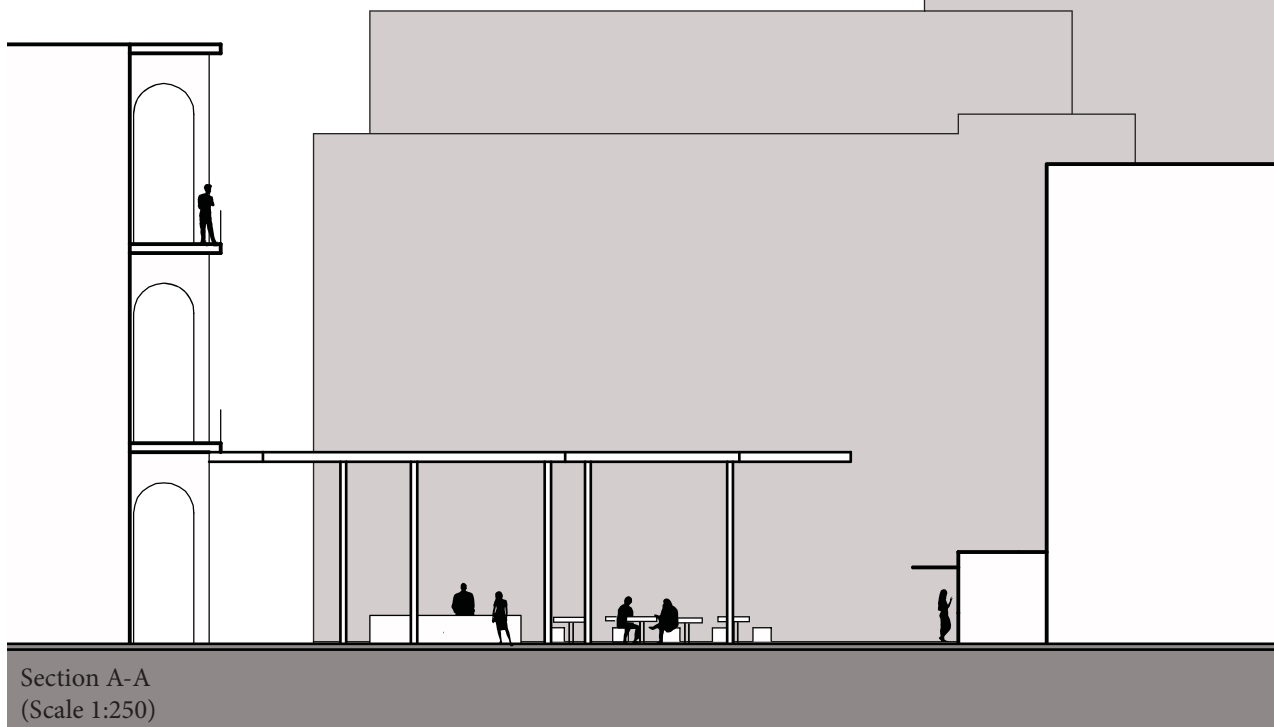
As stated in strategy number six I want to boost the existing functions by supplementing them. I also want to connect the hotel the surrounding functions; the Culture House, the cafeteria Prado n.12 and the public space of La Punta. In my proposal the Hotel and the Culture House are connected by a public square. The square has two parts; one permanent pavilion structure, and one flexible part that can be used by the Culture House for events of different kinds, for example. The pavilion is situated at the sunniest part of the square and provides for outdoor seating in the shadow. Customers of Prado n.12 could also benefit from the outdoor seating at the square, and Prado n.12 could have a bar at the square, as an extension of their services. Along the shaded Culture House wall small private business wagons could be parked, selling snacks or food, supporting the ongoing growth of small local businesses. The wall could also be used for market stands and there could be a stage for events or outdoor cinemas to take place, for example. At the corner of the site a park character is kept; here you can sit down to enjoy the excellent views of the surroundings, or read a book while waiting for your laundry to finish in the laundry service situated in front. There is also a bicycle taxi stand at the corner, which is located at the corner of the site today. It is included in my proposal to promote sustainable transportation, and to preserve existing local businesses.



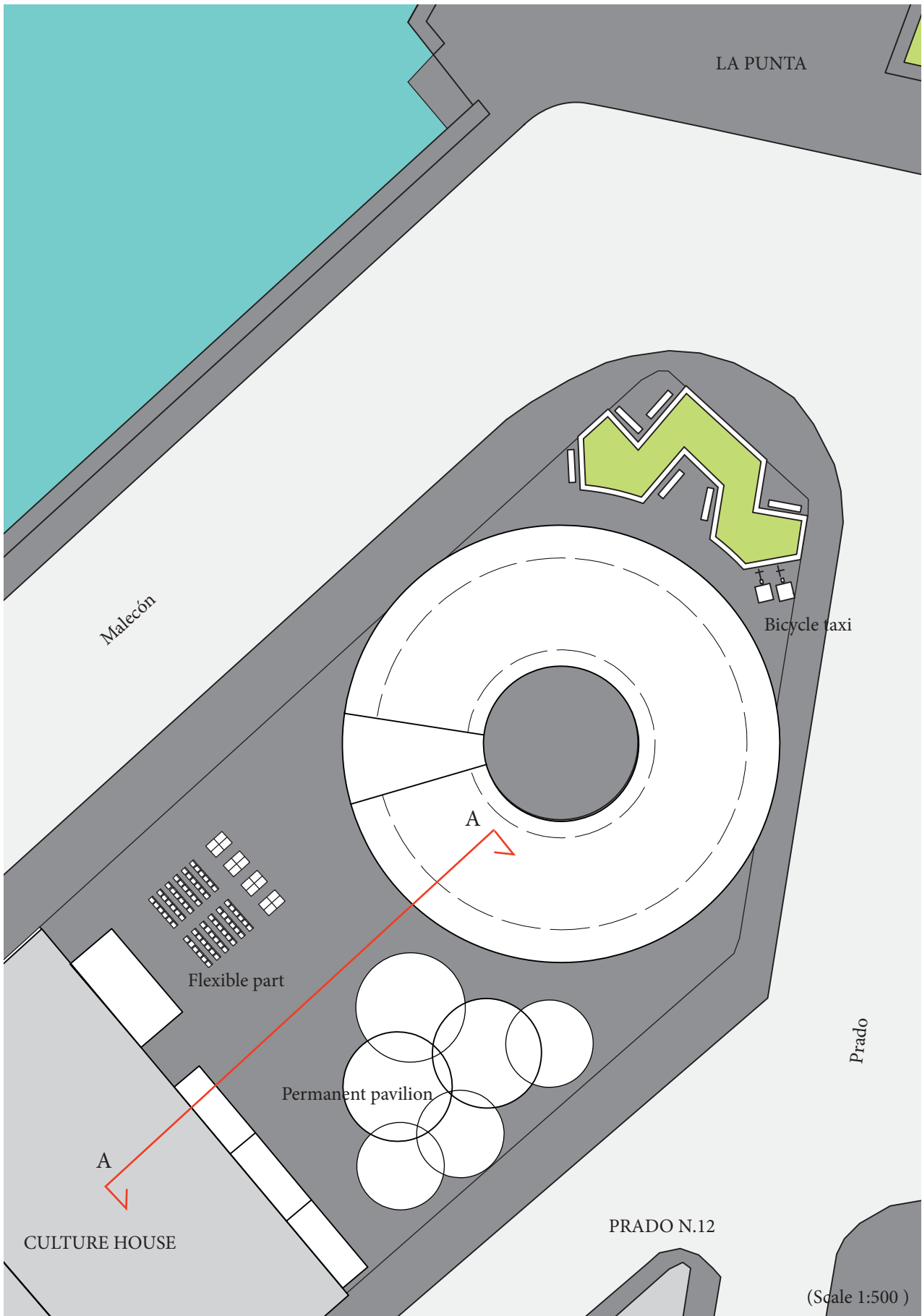
Parasol structure of rusted steel, at Castel d'Emporda, in Girona, Spain. A reference for the parasol roof I propose at the square.



The Hammer neighborhood in Havana. I imagine the new square of La Punta, to allow for this kind of artistic expressions to take place.



Section A-A  
(Scale 1:250)



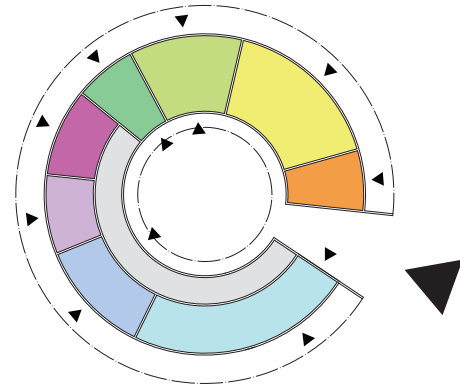
# 3.5 Program & Volume

## PROGRAM

In my hotel the Cubans living there have access to use public services offered at the ground floor, for free, such as laundry service, internet, and of course the joint car pool, which belongs to the members of the cooperative. In return they work there.

The program is put together as follows; exhibition space, book store, car pool, shared laundry place, and second hand store, are included in the program to exhibit and promote sustainability. Food store and beverage shop ,are functions that contribute to the neighborhood and that also bring life and activity to the square as a meeting place. Internet place is a hotel amenity, as well as a tourist attraction, not only for the tourists staying in the hotel.

## PUBLIC GROUND FLOOR



(Scale 1:800)

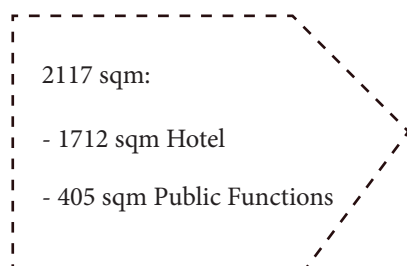


Reference picture for a circular housing solution with an inner yard - the Chinese Hakka House.

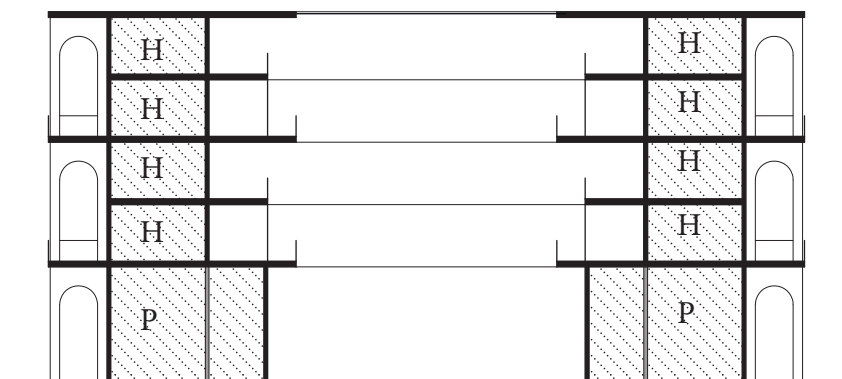
- Second Hand Store: ~40 sqm
- Laundry Service/ Shared Laundry Space: ~40 sqm
- Food Store: ~100 sqm
- Beverage Shop: ~40 sqm
- Internet Place: ~35 sqm
- Library/Bookstore: ~50 sqm
- Front Desk/ Tourism Information & Interface / Exhibition Space: ~100 sqm
- Storage space for tenants: ~90 sqm
- Car Pool Garage: ~70 sqm

Ground Floor Building Area, total: 600 sqm

Site Area: 3067 sqm



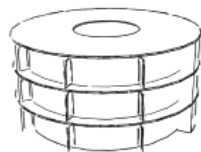
## PRINCIPLE SECTION



# VOLUME

## Entrance Slice

frames the beautiful view of Malecón seawalk, enables natural ventilation and accentuates the hotel entrance.



## Perpendicular Vaulting

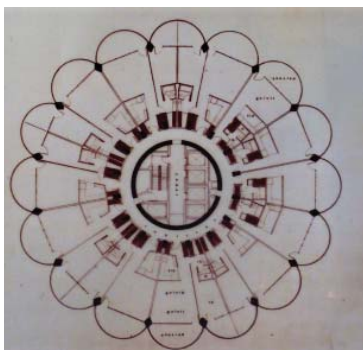
is a twist, playing with the vaulted double facades of Malecón and Prado. Twisted perpendicularly they encourage movement around the building on the ground floor and support the balcony slabs of the apartments above.

## Balconies /

Exterior Corridors gives shading from the sun to the facade. Exterior corridors on every second story (2-story apartments), responds to the regulations stating a 3-part division of the facade facing Malecón.

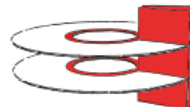
## Cylinder

is a solid geometrical shape, low in energy consumption and hurricane resistant. The circle also symbolizes unity, as the hotel unifies the different parts of the site and its surroundings, and the round building shape also relates to the pavilion that was once situated at the site.



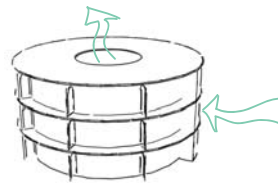
Marina Towers, in Chicago, my reference project for round building logistics.

# LOGISTICS



In my reference project for a logistical solution for a round building - Marina Towers, there is an inner staircase surrounded by a corridor. In my project the inner staircase has been moved to an entrance/logistical slice that feeds the exterior corridors facing a courtyard where Marina Towers has its staircase. To have exterior corridors lowers the number of staircases needed and saves money. In this case there is only need for two exterior corridors since I propose a duplex apartment solution, hence being even more economically beneficial. In a warm climate like in Cuba, an exterior corridor can function even more as a meeting point with neighbors, something that I have highlighted in my proposal.

# NATURAL VENTILATION



In a warm and humid climate like in Havana, natural ventilation of the building is recommended. Spanish colonial architectural with inner courtyards are a common feature across the city. An inner courtyard with an opening in the facade allows for the wind to circulate and cool the building facade, and the people dwelling on the yard. It also lowers dependency on mechanical ventilation solutions like air conditioning in the apartments. In my proposal air conditioning is still provided in the bedrooms as a complementary solution for extra hot summer nights.



An inner courtyard in the neighborhood of Old Havana, Havana, Cuba.

## 3.6 E-CO Concept

### HOTEL CONCEPT

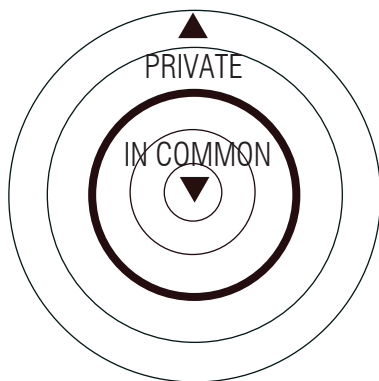
The project title “E-COhotel” comes from CO-living with Cubans, and from the CO-operative ecotourism business model that I am proposing for the hotel.

It is an interpretation of urban ecotourism, in the way that it is offering socially sustainable tourism with focus on interaction between Cubans and tourists, a tourism that generates benefits for the local community, through work opportunities and inclusion instead of exclusion. Ecotourists as well as tourists are attracted to cultural activities, and in my hotel you can both benefit from close access to cultural activities in the Culture House situated next to the hotel, as well as learn about ecotourism and responsible behaviour in the exhibition and bookstore on the ground floor. The hotel enhances the meeting place qualities of the site, and combines it with sustainable tourism, so that both tourists and Cubans can learn about sustainability and learn from each other through interaction.

### FLOOR PLAN

I am proposing an apartment module that could be multiplied throughout the floor plan. If doing so you get eight apartments every two stories, bringing a total of sixteen apartments.

The apartments outer wall separates the inner private spaces - bedrooms and living room, from the outer common spaces, like kitchen, exterior corridor and yard. See principle diagram below.



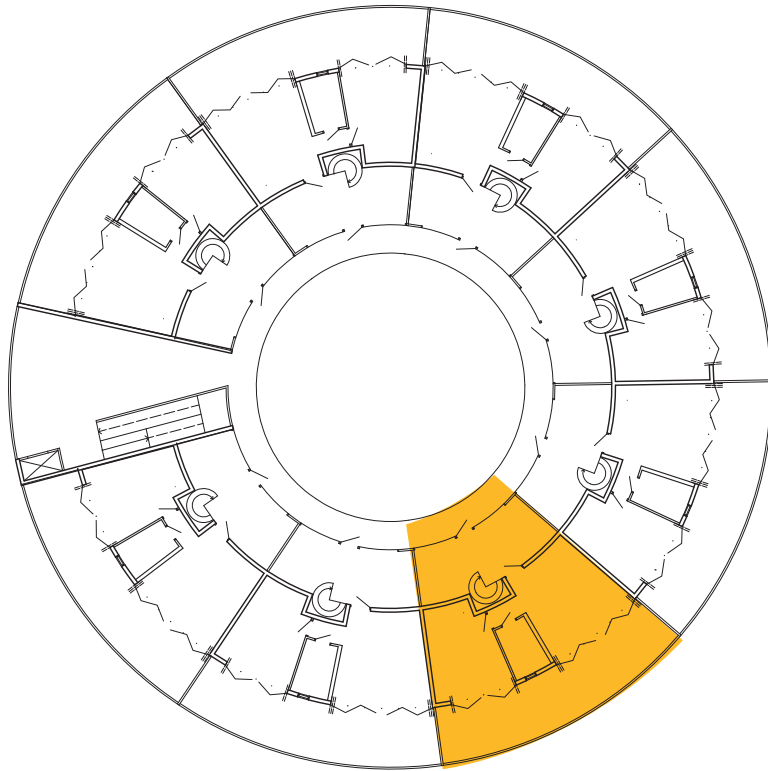
Principle diagram for the floor plan

### APARTMENT MODULE

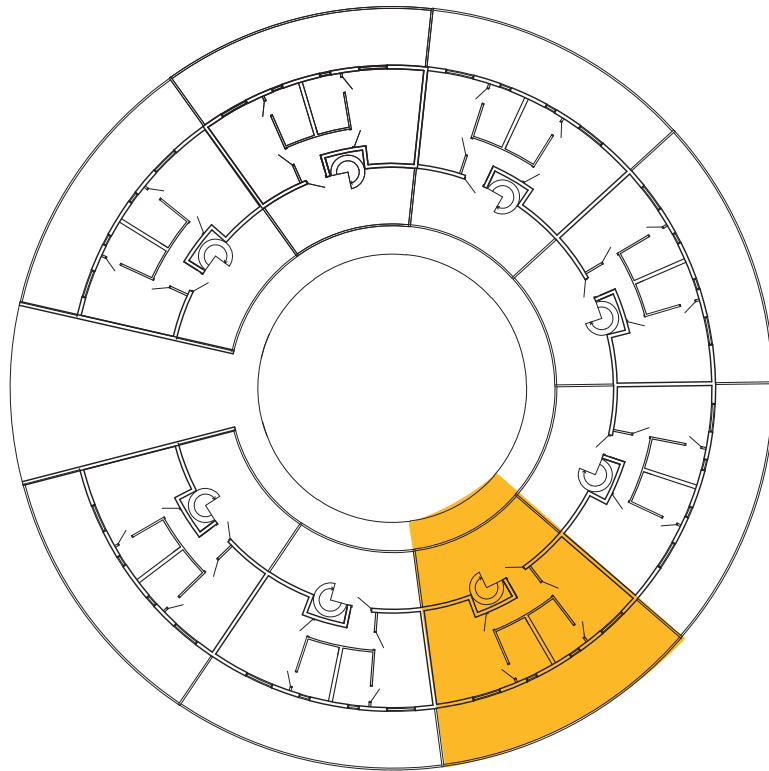
I propose an apartment solution with a lot of outdoor space in relation to indoor space, suitable for the warm Cuban climate and outdoor lifestyle. You enter the apartment through an outdoor kitchen, located towards an exterior corridor. The outdoor kitchen is the meeting point of the household. This is where you as a tourist access your room on the upper floor by an exterior staircase, but it is also where you can share a meal with the Cuban family you are staying with. Cubans are very social and friendly, and I believe that an exterior corridor solution is a viable solution in Cuba. By proposing an outdoor kitchen located towards the exterior corridor I enhance the interaction qualities of the exterior corridor, making the outdoor kitchen a meeting point not only for the family and the tourists staying in the household, it is also easy for the Cuban family to invite the neighbor passing by for a chat, a meal or why not for a game of Dominoes.

The apartments also offer a flexibility over time as they allow for the family size to alter. The family could hence choose to rent out one, or several rooms, of the apartment, depending on their family status. If the family would like to host a disabled tourist, they could rent out the bedroom on the entrance floor.

If the hotel cooperative would be dissolved in the future the spatial design still works as for a normal apartment building, making the design sustainable over time.



1st floor  
Scale 1:400



2nd floor  
Scale 1:400

# 3.7 Apartment Module

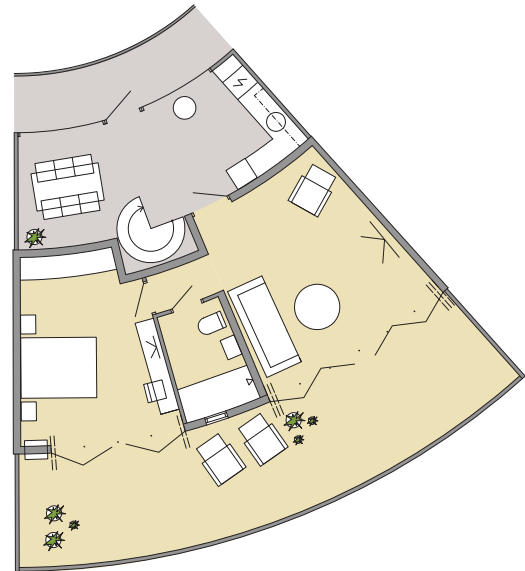
4 room, duplex apartment

97 sqm indoor & 87 sqm outdoor space

14 % Private space

39 % Rentable space

47% Shared Space



1st floor  
Scale 1:200

53% INDOOR

47% OUTDOOR

An outdoor kitchen with a see-through iron fencing towards the exterior corridor makes it easy to invite both neighbors passing by or the tourists staying on the upper floor, for dinner, thus facilitating interaction and creating a natural meeting place. A spiral staircase located on the outside gives a private entrance to the second floor. The vertical communication between the floor plans is enhanced in my illustration (on the following page) by letting the ceramic tiles on the floor continue on the wall behind the staircase.



2nd floor  
Scale 1:200



“Vertical Communication”

*Mmmm....smells delicious! What are you cooking?*



*Beans Sweetie. Are you joining us for dinner tonight?*



# **CONCLUSIONS**

# 4.1 My Thesis Experience

My thesis experience has been a journey, a long journey, filled with delights, as well as challenges along the way. I have learned a lot about myself, and about the challenges related to working in a foreign context. I value my experience and it will always be a sweet memory. Most of all I value all the fantastic people I met along the way, who left an everlasting impression and touched my heart in so many ways.

Did I manage to reach my goals with the project? Did it end up like I had imagined it?

I believe that my proposal corresponds to the outcome of my research in the sense that I have presented a proposal put together by pieces collected along the journey. It is a result of my design process. It is not a predetermined universal design, but rather a interpretation of local conditions. To arrive in a new context, one must be humble, and I tried to keep my mind open to the local context and impressions, and not to make up a too clear picture of the outcome before getting to know the context. I feel that I managed to do so. I believe that my proposal is presenting a sustainable tourism that is beneficial for the local community and all-inclusive in a new meaning.

Still there are things I could have done better of course. Looking back I would have liked to have chosen a site earlier, and maybe narrowed down my initial scope to make this possible. I think it is a good idea to narrow down the number of crucial decisions at site as much as possible, by deciding on some clear frames before departure. I will look into....and I will not study....

In my case it would have been good to have decided on what kind of context I wanted to work in - urban, rural or coastal. But at the same time I did not know what kind of possibilities that were offered within the Cuban context for ecotourism, and I could not find out on beforehand. If you are working in a more developed field, maybe it would be possible to study and learn more about it before going on the study trip. Cuban ecotourism is not a very developed field, and it was not easy to read about it on beforehand. Nor did I know about all the study visits that I would do. My process and project was incremental so to say. On contact led to an other contact, and an other recommendation and so on and so forth. Cuba is perhaps a greater challenge than many other countries in the sense that it is hard to find good information about Cuba abroad, and on top of that I also chose to work within a field that is not very developed in Cuba. Another challenge was that the information when in Cuba was dispersed and not very accessible in that sense. If I would have chosen a field that Cubans are known for, like urban agriculture, for example, it would have been easier to find information, and also to get support by my contacts in Cuba. Further did I not have any contact person in the field of

ecotourism in Cuba on arrival.

Sustainability approach is something else I could have defined clearer from start.

Is it going to be site dependent/ contextual or conceptual/ flexible? Since I had a bit of problems finding a site for my project, it could have been easier to have arrived from start with the intention to do an adaptable site-independent proposal. If you choose a sustainability approach from the start it would also be possible to prepare an appropriate method for the approach.

I believe that I did not make it easy for myself in a number of ways; by choosing a context like Cuba, a field that is not developed in Cuba (ecotourism), and a tutor that did not know much about ecotourism (not the Swedish nor the Cuban). Scope-wise I could have chosen one out of two theoretical fields - ecotourism or Cuban sustainability work, but I wanted to include both.

My advice to others who are thinking about doing field studies abroad as a part of their thesis experience would still be to narrow down as much as possible before departure, be aware of that you can not make the same kind of project in the same period of time, that is reaching as far as you would have if you would have done the project in a familiar context. I would also recommend to travel in company of someone, so that you can take care of each other if something happens, and also to have a feedback partner on the journey. My advice is also to make the most out of your trip, by including margins in your work plan, just in case something unpredictable would happen, because it might.

In the end I finish my journey feeling proud of myself. Maybe I was crazy to take on such a project and scope, but I did it. I created my very own project, from the beginning til the end, and it has been a fantastic adventure and experience. I feel inspired by my experience, and by Cuba -always in my heart.





# **APPENDIX**

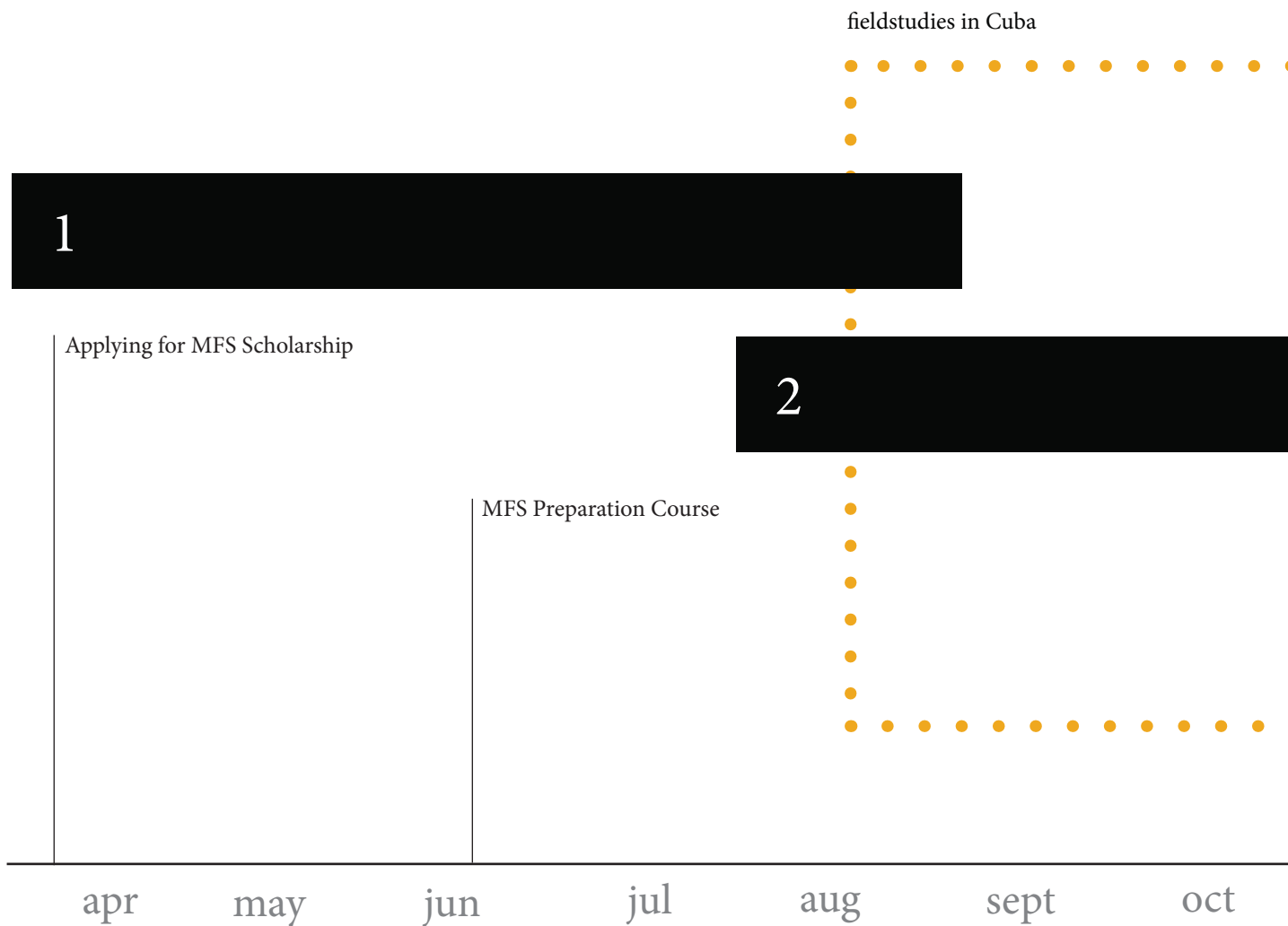
# 5.1 Workplan

## 1- prepare

*Write a project description and a time plan*  
*Apply for scholarship*  
*Contact stakeholders*  
*Read*

## 2- define

*What is ecotourism? What are the trends - nationally and globally?*  
*What could ecotourism be about in a Cuban context?*  
*What Cuban projects could work as an inspiration for my project?*  
*Is my end result a sustainable hotel or could it be something else?*  
*Sustainability definition for my project? Flexible, ephemeral, site independent and conceptual, or site related and locally adapted?*  
*Choose a site!*



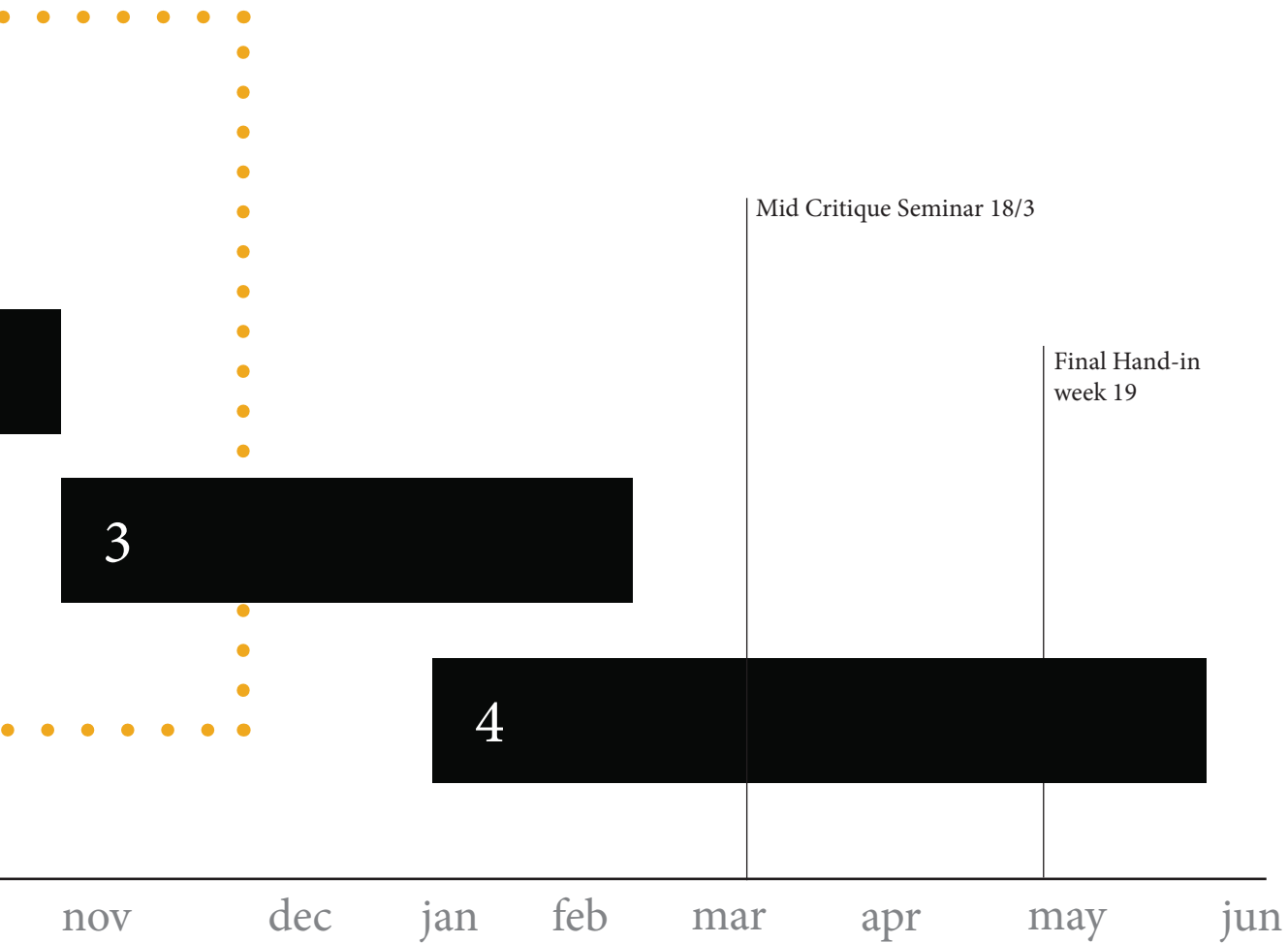


### 3- describe

*What are the site conditions?  
What is the sustainability approach for this particular site and project?  
What are the learnings from research?  
What are the delimitations of my design proposal?*

### 4- design

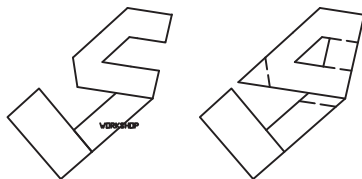
*What are the design criteria?  
What are the applications?  
Sketching  
Concluding  
Proposing*



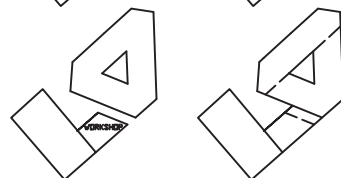
# 5.2 Sketching Process

PLANS

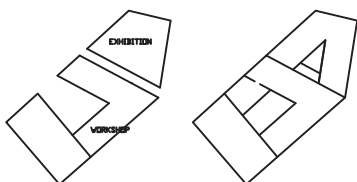
'THE C' - A C-SHAPED HOTEL/HOUSING UNIT CONNECTED TO THE CULTURE HOUSE VIA A CULTURE COUSE ADDITION.



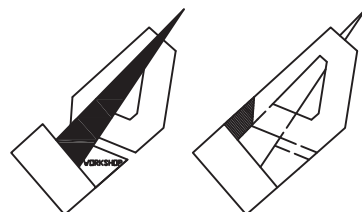
'THE TRIANGLE' WITH A C-FACADE?



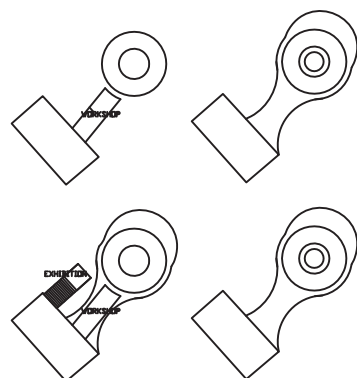
A LA 23/L - TWO YARDS AND A PASSAGE ACROSS THE CORNER



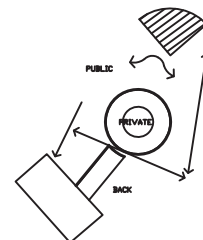
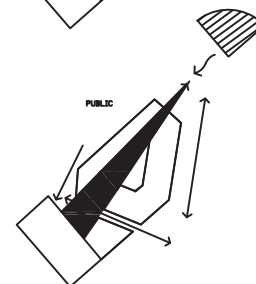
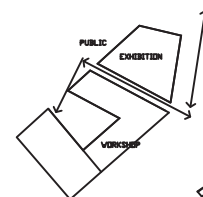
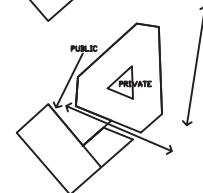
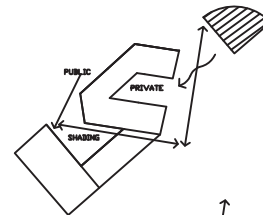
'LA PUNTA'



'THE AMDEBA'



MATCHING WITH DESIGN CRITERIA CONNECTIONS, PUBLIC/PRIVATE, WIND, SHADING, SUN, ETC)

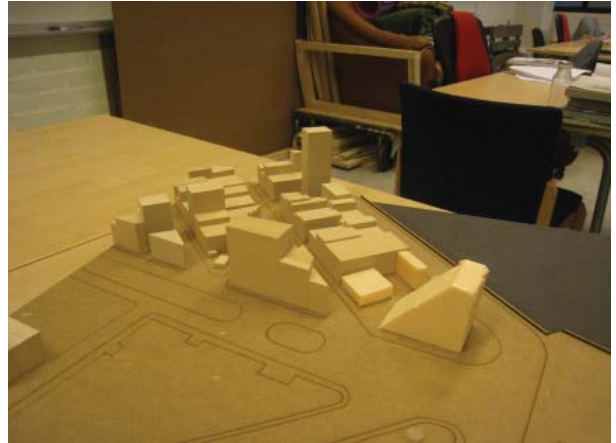


Throughout the process I have sketched using different medias - 2D-sketching by hand and in CAD, as well as 3D-sketching in Sketch-up and in physical model. I tried many different variants, first playing with adding volumes, then extracting from volume. At a point I decided to make a comparison of my different ideas (see picture above) and what I realized was that a flow around the corner of the site was repeated in various shapes, so I decided to make the circulation as circular as possible - a circle, and it instantly felt like the best choice since it did not turn the back on any side, giving equal importance to all the important functions surrounding the hotel. After that I continued sketching

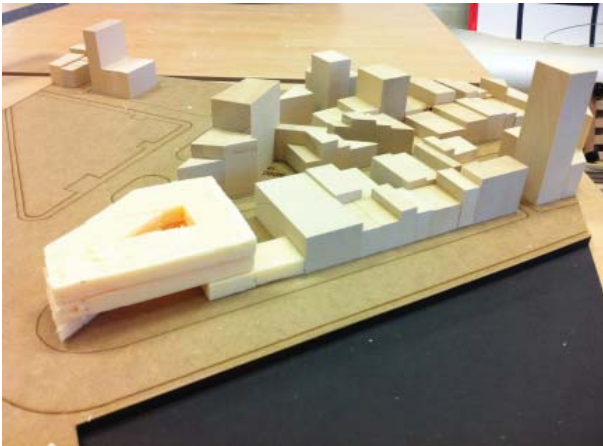
on the relation to the Culture House addition, where I first had an idea of two building volumes - a hotel and a culture house addition, with a joint staircase in between the two building volumes. I decided for separate logistical solutions and to declare the Culture House a "Black Box" I tried to get hold of drawings for the Culture House, but with no result, which was one of the reasons for my delimitation. At my final presentation the jury did not approve a culture house addition at the site, and I had to rethink with short notice, the space in between the hotel and the Culture House, which resulted in a public square.



Conceptual model on maximum volume with yard "sliced" out.



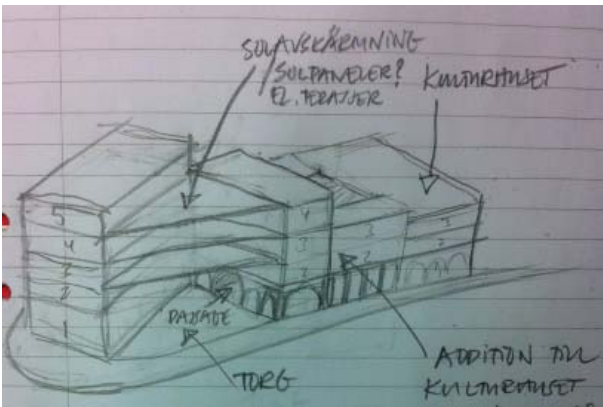
Conceptual model on solar energy facade.



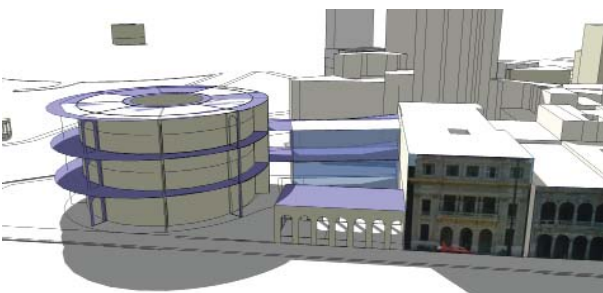
"Square" yard volume connected to culture house yard.



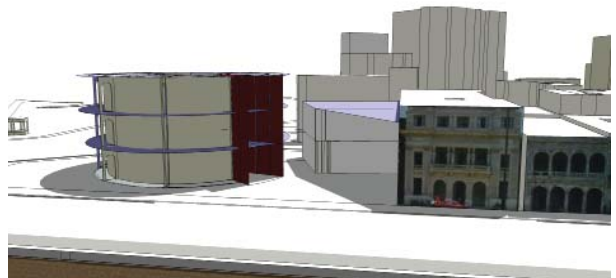
L-modules creating two yards - one for the Culture House and one for the Hotel, facing different directions.



Hotel volume and Culture House addition connected by a joint staircase volume (transparent) and organic solar shading. Exhibition volume in front connecting to Malecón pillar facade, and creating a Culture House yard behind.



Hotel volume connected to Culture House through a Culture House addition.

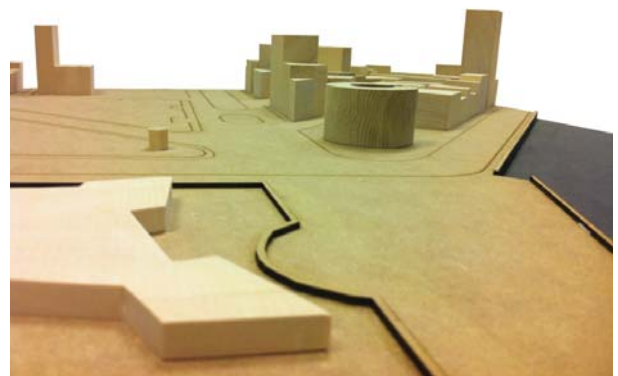
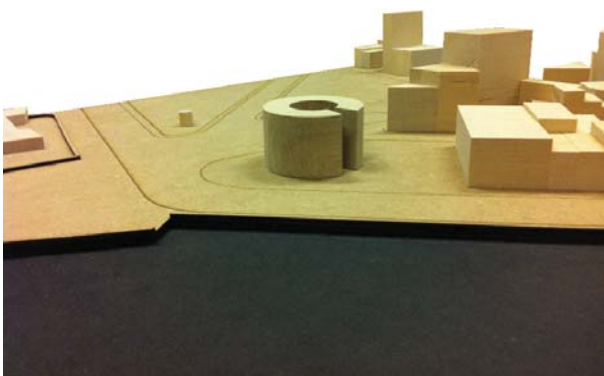
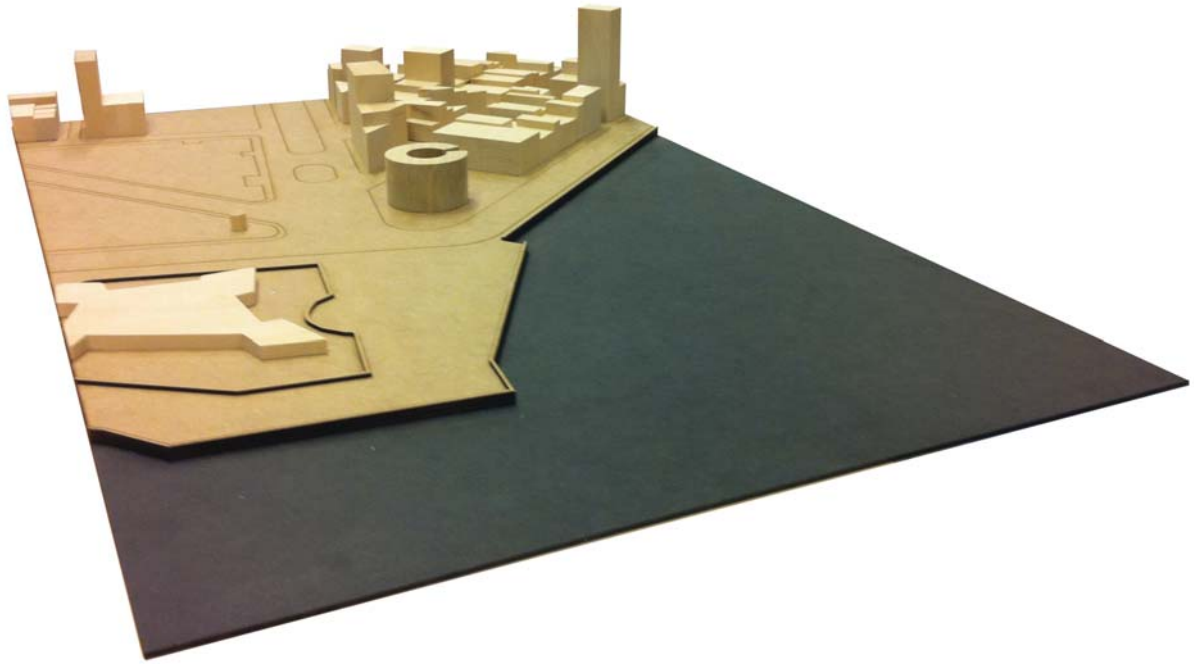


Independent hotel volume and culture house addition, sharing a shaded square

# 5.3 Physical Models

## MODEL OF SITE

Format: A1  
Scale: 1:500



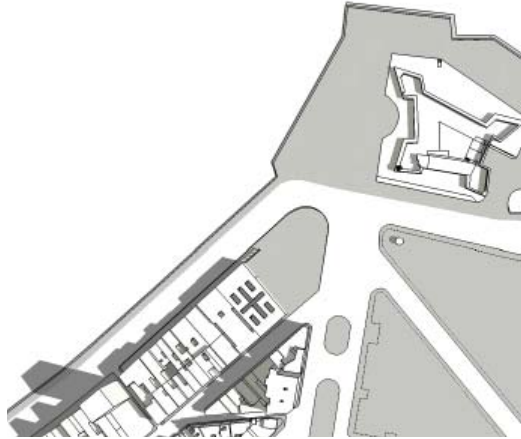
# MODEL OF APARTMENT MODULE

Scale: 1:50

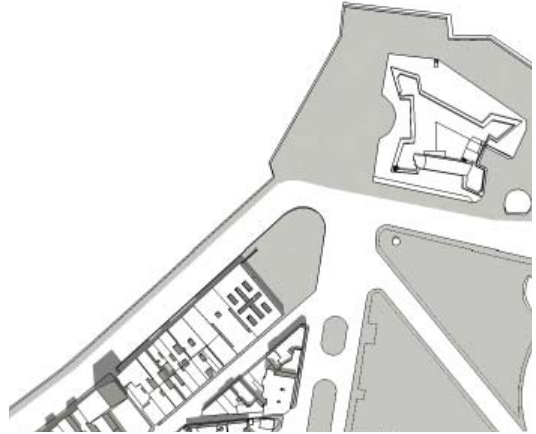


# 5.4 Sun Study of the Site

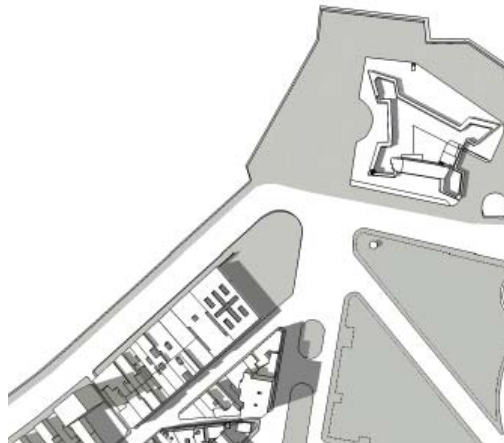
31 ST OF JULY



9 am

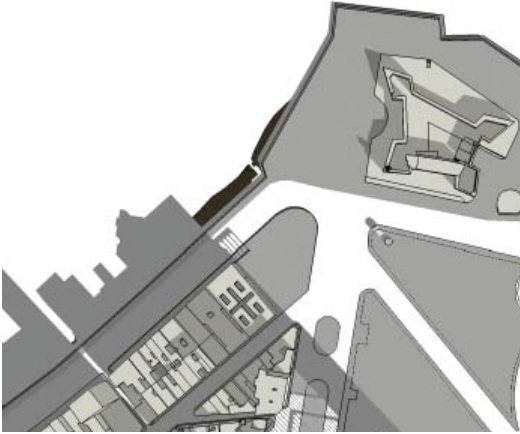


12 am

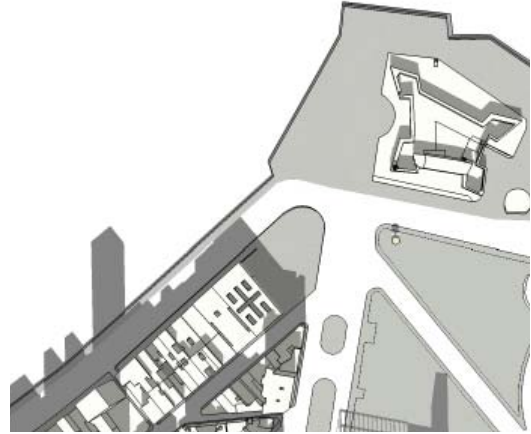


3 pm

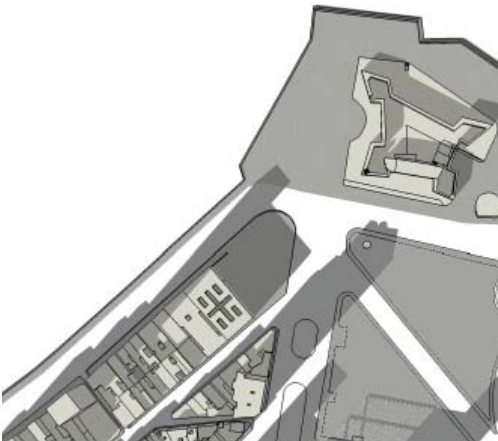
# 31 ST OF DECEMBER



9 am



12 am



3 pm

# 5.5 Journal

15/8:

Arrival in Havana, Cuba. My ex boyfriend's family pick me up at the airport and bring me to their home in Guanabo, Habana del Este, a community located by the beach, 45 min by bus outside Havana. In the night me, Mayra and her boyfriend Jesus go to a local Paladar (a private small-scale restaurant, located in a Cuban home) to have the best Cuban food there is to find – pork, Congris (rice mixed with beans), fried bananas and avocado salad. It tastes fantastic and I can not stop eating even though my stomach hurts.

16/8:

Trying to arrange with a Cuban SIM-card but gets sent around and finally decides to go to the beach instead. Olney says that we will go for the SIM-card tomorrow. It is steaming hot outside and my project time has not started yet after all. We hang out at the beach, me on a lended sun bed in the sun and the Cubans under a Parasol in the shade. We chat, drink mini-tetras with Rum and eat pork crisps (typical Cuban snacks). The water is perfect, so is the sun. Arriving back home I realize I have missed to pass sun screen on some small spots and they are now shining red. Too bad I did not bring covered shoes...

Apparently there is an ongoing carnival in Havana, and Mayra brings me and her granddaughter Yennie, to see it, and Mayra's boyfriend too. It was not the best experience – once we arrive there you do not see that much, but Yennie is a sweetheart. The carnival is similar to the Rio carnival, in Brazil, where you watch a carnival "train" passing by, seated, and we do not get any seats. We have some Rum, walk a lot, and arrive home late, or early (in the morning).

17/8:

Olney tells me that the place that sell SIM cards opens again on Monday. Cuban tempo is a sweet contrast to Swedish stress and the paralyzing heat keeps me calm as a dead fish. I decide to discover Guanabo by foot and I take a stroll downtown in mid-day heat. Surprisingly few hustlers – must be because of my many screamingly red mosquito bites on my legs, I think. I find the internet place – good, and turns out to be super slow – bad, really bad; I am worried Skype will not work here in Cuba... I call (from a public phone) my friend Liv's friend Roger who works as a tour guide in Cuba and we make an appointment for tomorrow, in Havana. Feels good. The communication thing is not always the easiest thing here, so getting hold of a person on your first try is very satisfactory. Red and soaked as a newly boiled cancer I stumble home. Mayra leaves for night work in Havana and I am home alone. Good time for studying, but I am so exhausted by the heat that my brain just is not working. I take a shower (another) and lay down to rest some. The pigs in the garden next door are screaming loudly and I wonder if they will serve chicharrones (Pork snack) tomorrow...

Outside the heat has brought along thunder and a very welcome cooling tropical rain.

19/8: Hanging out with Roger all day in Havana. He tells me about different tourism agents, the tourism profiles of different cities, tourism development plans for the northern peninsulas, and also for some serene beaches in the very west of Cuba, the sustainability profile of the Australian company that he is working for – Cuban Adventures, and much more. He calls the profile "responsible tourism", and explains that they inform the tourists about sustainable behaviour – the dos and don'ts when in Cuba, something that conventional tourism agents do not. Roger talks a lot about natural reserves, protected zones and conservation programs, when I ask him about sites with potential for ecotourism. The exploitation of the northern peninsulas is an example of a delicate nature zone, where sea biodiversity and water streams must be considered. He also passes on some valuable institution names and in the end we end up discussing Cuban Architecture – another of his interests. Could not have been given a better recommendation; thanks Liv!

20/8: Decides to hook up with Roger for another day in Havana. He gives me a guided tour on Cuban Architecture in Old Havana and shows me some of the latest restorations of Eusebio Leal – historian in Havana. Another great day.

21/8: Reading at home. In the evening me and Olney, Enmanuel's brother, goes to a local discoteca, "Guanimar". I have some strong rum drinks and dance a lot; my first salsa dancing in Cuba for this time. \*Happy\*

22/8: I visit ICAP in Havana, to see my old friend Gladys. She passes me a contact that seems very promising – a woman that is engaged in a ecological project in Cojímar, situated between Guanabo - where I stay in the house of my ex-boyfriend's family, and Havana. The project is called Pro-Naturaleza, it is within a nature reserve, and they are interested in building cabañas or some hotel there, with a sustainable profile. It is located by the beach, and it has an interesting history – it was the place where Hemingway wrote the book "The Old Man And The Sea". I can not wait to meet this woman, see the site and here more about the project!

23/8: Me and Mayra finally buy me a Cuban cellular number (SIM-card) – only took us some five hours of Cuban "cola" - queuing.

Guanabo is out of toilet paper and the electricity goes off in the afternoon, caused by the thunder, just when I was supposed to read. "No es fácil", as the Cubans say (meaning "It's not easy").

24/8: Saturday – day off. Me and Mayra go to the beach and in the evening I say good bye to the family and move to a Casa Particular in Havana (I rent a room in a private house).



25-27/8: Visit to Las Terrazas and the ecohotel La Moka – a community created as a reforestation project in the 60/70s and re-marketed as an ecotourism destination in the 90's when the Soviet Union had collapsed and Cuba was going through its "Special Period". The hotel itself and the tourist attractions are hence from the 90's. Las Terrazas is a project with a social sustainability profile, as well as a strong ecological consciousness, but the hotel La Moka as such is not an ecological hotel, in other aspects than that it is respectfully built in a way that it blends with the surrounding nature.

28/8: Reading at home and in the evening I join Dania, my landlord, a Norwegian-Cuban couple, and a Cuban young doctor – my by Dania hand picked date for the night, to go out to dance. 1830 – the restaurant we were planning to visit is closed and we end up in a really shitty discoteca at Calle 23.

29/8: I meet with Maritza Fortún in Cojímar, a seaside community about half an hour outside Havana. Maritza is engaged in an association called PROA, a sub-group to the national group Pro-Naturaleza. PROA is a local community group in Cojímar, with a wide field of interest groups within. There used to be a number of smaller interest groups, but she realized that these different projects all were interconnected and that they would benefit from collaborating and joining in one solely group. PROA also runs a cooperative, which gives them economic power to run the projects. PROA consists of professionals from at least ten different fields, all with focus on sustainability issues. One of the challenges they are working with is the pollution of the bay, river and forest area of Cojímar. They are interested in using ecotourism to fund investments needed for the cleaning of the area, and eventually to invest in the green area along the river, which is soon to be declared as a natural reserve. The area contains many endangered species and plants and PROA is more interested in saving and preserving the nature, while letting tourists visit at the most – they are not interested in exploiting the area with ecotourism constructions, as their neighboring community Alamar – known for its Organopónico – urban farming field, wants to. Declaring the area a natural reserve, together with law changes that allow local communities to benefit from their own tourism projects, has led to a situation where both Cojímar and Alamar are interested in developing ecotourism in this very same soon-to-be-nature-reserve. Alamar has already achieved a reputation as a tourism attraction because of its urban farming, while Cojímar rests on the Hemingway history "The Old Man and the Sea". Cojímar is the place where the story takes place, and also the place where Hemingway had his boat. During high season buses of tourists, most of them seniors, visit Cojímar over the day. There is no stay-overnight tourism in Cojímar today and even though Maritza says that that is something they would like to change, she also says that the residents of Cojímar does not want any night life tourism, just quiet tourism, like the ones they have today. I leave Cojímar filled with inspiration from the meeting with Maritza – her work

and engagement is impressive, but I can still not stop thinking about what would make a tourist want to stay overnight in Cojímar the way it is today with all the pollution and the city center being seriously run down? It would be a step-by-step process to restore the bay and to develop ecotourism in the area, I think. Not much left of the former seaside resort as it used to be in the early 20th century, before competing areas like Miramar took over. But Maritza's energy is impressive. She has lots of plans on how to do it, and I am convinced that she will manage.

30/8: Time to register as a student at the University. Once I arrive the woman who asked me to come at this date, is not there. A great confusion takes place – something that started a long time ago, long before my arrival, and which I had solved with the lady who was not there now (the confusion is about my level of study – a Master Thesis in Cuba and Sweden is not the same thing). Senor Pardo helps me as much as he can, but after five hours I am still asked to come back on Monday to finish the registration and student visa process. Evidently Dania – my Cuban tutor, is needed, and she will be back on Monday.

31/8: Saturday - day off. Lazy day in Havana. I follow Xavier to Habana Vieja to buy rum and in the evening me and René go to Casa de la Música in Galeano to see Pupy and los Son Son – a popular Cuban salsa band. Casa de la Musica is where you go to see live performances, and to dance salsa/casino.

1/9: Studying at home, preparing for my first tutoring with Dania – my Cuban tutor.

2/9: First tutoring with Dania and second round of matriculation bureaucracy at the University. More documents needed and I am asked to return on Wednesday.

3/9: Rainy day. Lack of energy. Laziness.

4/9: Third and final registration visit to the University. Calling and e-mailing a bunch of contacts, trying to arrange for study visits and interviews. I manage to get hold of one – the president of "La Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez" – an association working in the field of urban agriculture, situated in Havana. We make an appointment for Friday morning. He also provides me with two other important contacts – the Urban Agriculture group of Alamar and the ecovillage in the Escambray mountains called "El Jobero". I feel happy and satisfied.

5/9: I call the urban agriculture group of Alamar, but the president is not there and I am asked to call again on Monday. I talk to the president of El Jobero and he seems very friendly and interested in my thesis. He tells me that they are just about to get a tourist package approved, "Jobero Verde", which he recommends me to try. He says that it will be settled around the 15-16th of September and I tell him that I need to visit them as soon as possible. I am asked to call again this weekend. I am starting to feel a bit stressed. Need to decide for a

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site and project. Time is running out for study visits.... Dania also wanted me to contact a Cuban architect in Pinar del Rio, who is working with some eco-bungalow project in Viñales, and I have one more urgent study visit I would like to do – a ecolodge built by a Cuban architect, in the mountains next to Trinidad – a picturesque and touristic UNESCO town situated at the south coast, some hours east of Havana.

I would also like to visit CIDEM in Santa Clara – who are experts on locally produced and ecological materials, an eco-certified hotel in Varadero, and another ecolodge outside Santiago de Cuba. Have to prioritize.

6/9: Visiting Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez in Miramar. Roberto Sanchez, welcomes me and gives me a short guided tour and introduction to the place and its history. Antonio Núñez Jiménez was one of the most important persons of the Cuban revolution – a famous intellectual and geographer who published numerous works on a wide range of topics; from subjects like his years with Fidel, to all kind of nature scientific and culture related topics. He was sort of a Cuban Thor Heyerdal. FANJ:s philosophy was to create a nature based culture, where society and nature co-exists in harmony. The foundation has five different programs: geo-historical investigations, environmental education and biodiversity conservation, local sustainable development, nature and consumption, and program for conservation of the heritage. As a part of the third program – Local Sustainable Development, the centre of FANJ promotes permaculture and there is a public library situated at site with loads of interesting literature on permaculture and Cuban ecotourism. I stay for a couple of hours, reading, taking notes and photographing books (analogue option when scanning, loaning or buying a book is not an option).

Roberto also provides me with a new contact person – a woman called Marilyn Fernandez, working for the association ONU-HABITAT. Apparently she is engaged in some kind of zero emission building project. Sounds interesting. My list of people to contact is growing, once again. I need to start making system charts to decide for my "black boxes".

6/9: Saturday – day off. In the evening I go to Casa de la Musica to see the salsa band Azúcar Negra. It is cool that you can go out in Havana and listen to big bands like this on a weekly basis, paying almost nothing, when in Gothenburg you have one or two concerts like this in a year and then it is very pricy.

7/9: Copying and sorting photos from camera to memory sticks.

8/9: Trying to get hold of the organopónico of Alamar, but nobody answers, then somebody answers and says it is the wrong number and I feel confused. I try to call my contact who gave me the number in the first place, but then his number does not work either. Then I try

to text some people, and they do not answer. I figure it is not a day for making phone calls. I check my email instead and find that Fernando Martireña from CIDEM – a Cuban institute working with material research, and sustainable housing solutions, located in Santa Clara, has answered. He says he will be in Havana on Tuesday and that we can meet up.

9/9: Spending the whole day and a lot of CUC (Cuban money) on internet costs trying to recharge my Cuban cellphone, with no result.

10/9: I finally manage to charge my phone. Yeah! Then I have a marvelous meeting with Fernando Martireña from CIDEM. He is one of the most important persons in Cuba when it comes to housing and architecture, and he is invited worldwide to lecture. Fernando himself is humble and down-to-earth, super helpful and engaged. No signs of arrogance, or prestige. When I leave the meeting I feel inspired and blessed, with three words in my mind: "only in Cuba".

11/9: Contacting and making appointments. Fernandito Martireña – Fernando Martireñas son (Fernando introduced us yesterday)– an architect student at CUJAE (the same university as I am studying at), the organopónico of Alamar – finally (after more than a week of trying to get hold of them), and Ecotur – the Cuban travelling agency for ecotourism. I am going to Alamar tomorrow morning and in the afternoon I will see Fernandito; he will pass me on some more contacts and also show me where to find architecture/ecotourism books/magazines. Fernando (let us call him Fernandito to avoid confusion – same name father and son) also tells me that there is an ecotourism event coming up in the end of September: TURNAR – 24-29/9 in Granma, in the east of Cuba! It is a yearly event, so I have perfect timing, he says.

I also talk to Cubasolar, and to Marilyn Fernandez at ONU-Habitat and I am asked to call again next week, I make a new appointment in Cojímar for Friday, and I visit the Casa Particular (Cuban word for a Cuban home which rents rooms to tourists) where my french friend Xavier stayed, to receive a contact from its owner Gustavo. Gustavo knows an architect in Trinidad who is currently building himself an ecolodge, and he says that this contact will fit me like a glove.

It is raining in Havana and I am on my fourth day of constipation blues.

12/9: Study visit to the organopónico of Alamar in the morning. I am guided around the site by Medardo, an agronomist working full time (as everybody do) at the organopónico. They provide me with plastic bags to put on my feet - yes, I arrived in white flip-flops, and we walk, talk and taste for hours.

Permaculture as well as the auto-construction housing philosophy are products of the Special Period years in the beginning of the 90s, and represent two examples of Cuban achievements within the field of sustainable

development and self-sufficiency in times of resource deficiency and crisis. It is becoming more and more clear to me that the Cuban example is not in a certain model project or a site that would function as a role model, but rather a number of smaller initiatives, developed individually, even though the permaculture experience is something that has been introduced all over Cuba. Cuba seems to constantly change and experiment along the way, in search for ways of survival. And in the 90s when the country faced the consequences of the Soviet collapse, the biggest problem was the lack of fuel and hence food, out of which a number of sustainable solutions emerged as a response to the urgent need, being sustainable at the same time, saying that the sustainability was not the goal itself, rather a bi-product of a program of survival. When the economy started to recover again in the end of the 90's some of the sustainable measurements adopted during the years of crisis were abandoned, but since a couple of years (the economical changes of Cuba, started in 2009) the country has started to analyze the experience, to see what to learn from it, and interest is once again shown in for example sustainable housing solutions brought about in the mid 90's.

In the afternoon I meet up with Fernandito Martireña. We take a "Maquina" - old car from the 50's in function as a peso taxi (not CUC/tourist taxi), to a really nice coffee bar decorated in a burlesque style, with seats in for example a bath tub or in piece of a car. It is clearly a meeting place for youth, some guys are playing the guitar and singing, and others are chilling. The coffee drinks are delicious and the company is great. Fernando tells me about everything from Cuban art to architecture.

In the evening Dania has a birthday party at our house (her house) with loads of food, drinks and dancing.  
13/9: I visit Cojímar and Maritza Fortún for the second time to take photos of the potential attractions.  
14-15/9: Study visit to "El Jobero" in the Escambray mountains. El Jobero is a small cultural community consisting of a theatre group called Los Elementos - the Elements, with a close to nature philosophy and a number of ecological features in the community, like a wind mill to pump water, separating dry toilet(s) and bio-gas kitchen. When I visit the community they are just about to receive an important visit that will tell them whether or not they will be approved as a tour- and nature tourism attraction and hence be promoted by different tourism agencies. Unfortunately the group is not presenting any play at their amphitheatre at this moment. The amphitheatre is a beautiful piece, integrated in the nature, and I have been told it is an unforgettable spectacle to see the group perform a play here.

They are working on a new play, with a social theme, the theater is a medium to expose different conflict in society, and the new play will be about farmer immigration in the mountains. It is getting clearer to me that their are

no conceptual ecotourism sites in Cuba, meaning that they present the whole package of ecological solutions. Their seem to be a number of factors that limit the completion of such an example. In the case of El Jobero, having dry toilets in all houses is also something that needs to be accepted by new members of the group, as well as it needs to meet tourist standards. Eventually the plan is to have dry toilets in all houses, but it is a process, like many other things here in Cuba. A project, on its way towards sustainability.

16/9: Exhausted after the study visit, and with a sore throat. I try to contact the Trinidad architect, but his phone is turned off. I hope he is not travelling yet. Gustavo told me he would go to India to do Yoga soon.

17/9: Meeting at Ecotour - the Cuban Ecotourism interface, distributing and designing nature tourism packages. Ecotour is located in the Kohly district, bordering Playa. The person I have made an appointment with arrives half an hour late, and when she finally shows up, as so do the formigation (insect combating) team... which means waiting outside, while the building is filled with thick white smoke smelling like petroleum. About 45 minutes later (1 h and 15 minutes later than appointed) the formigation is over and we can start the interview. She gives me Ecotours digital catalog, and we also talk about the TURNAT event coming up next week. Ecotur organizes a tour to the event and I am interested in going.

Gustavo calls to confirm that his architect friend (the one building an ecolodge in Trinidad) indeed is in India, and will be back in a month, which means that I will not be able to include it in my project. Unfortunately.

18/9: I visit Bosque, also called Parque Almendares. Bosque is on its way to be declared a natural reserve; its a park situated in a district of Havana called Playa. The vegetation in the park is rare and fairytale-like, with huge trees overgrown by parasite plants creating a green veil, and in the middle, a highly polluted river. It is a popular place for religious activities, and I run in to not less than four different families/groups making offerings to the Afro-Cuban gods; there are candles, chicken feathers and music. It is a magical place, I understand why it is used for this purpose. Unfortunately these activities contribute to a downgrading of the park with a lot of garbage and pollution as a result. I visited Bosque in search of a urban context site in Havana, and my experience from research so far has shown me that ecotourism in Cuba is equal to Nature tourism, why an urban park/natural reserve with pollution problems, and a great cultural value, would be an interesting urban context and nature tourism site candidate.

19/9: Study trip to Pinar del Rio and Viñales. I meet up with Francis - an community architect of Viñales, and she let me attend a presentation at the office for urban planning in Pinar del Rio on the plans for the community, around tourism development, among other

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things. After that we go to Viñales to look at potential sites for ecohotels; there are four different places with existing plans for such accommodation, and we visit three of them, or at least glance at them from afar, since they are situated in a distant valley. Long day. I leave Havana 7 am and return at 10 pm. Local taxis (where you pay with Cuban pesos) may be cheap, but are not always the fastest solution...

20/9: Trying to find out where to find the plan for development of Malecón. I finally get hold of the person in charge of the plans and we make an appointment for Monday morning. I have my next tutoring with Dania on Monday afternoon and the idea is to present the different project options site-wise- Coast/urban context: Alamar/Cojímar, rural context: Viñales, and urban context: Malecón in Havana. I contact Ecosur to discuss the TURNAT (event on nature tourism taking place next week in Granma) deal, but it is too pricy, unfortunately, and it is too many days - I do not have time for it.

21/9: Saturday - day off, at the beach of Santa Maria.

22/9: Preparing for next days tutoring with Dania.

23/9: Tutoring with Dania at CUJAE. I present my different context options - coast/urban, rural and urban, and I tell her that I lean towards an urban context because I want to project to attract both Cubans and tourists, and designing an ecohotel in Viñales for example would be pure design project isolated from its social context. By choosing an urban site and project directed to both Cubans and tourists the project contributes to social/cultural sustainability and gives back to local community, an important parameter of ecotourism. Dania finds it interesting and we talk about the complexity of Cuban - tourism interaction in Cuba today. We also talk about the urban options I have already looked into, and she recommends me to visit the green belt of Havana, in search for an urban green context. We agree that this week I really need to decide on a project site, and I tell her about my plans to postpone my flight home some weeks, which will be necessary to compensate for the slow progress so far.

24/9: More than a week of raining combined with air conditioning has resulted in a really stubborn cold.

Internet frustration, no connection....trying to e-mail from a friend's school mail instead. Shitty day.

25/9: Mission: shop hygiene necessities. Big task.

26/9: Study visit to the green belt of Havana. Wanted to visit Expo Cuba - a pavilion park showing the achievements of the revolution, situated next to the Botanical Garden of Havana, but I was told they both were closed until an upcoming exhibition in November, so we decided to go to "Parque Lenin" - an amusement park from the 60's, also located in Havana's green park belt. Had a blast with the few open activities and a great company, but did not really see any project value in the visit (I was recommended to go there by Dania, my Cuban tutor).

27/9: Laundry day. Studying at home.

28/9: Visiting my friend Fernando - the architect student. I tell him that I incline towards an urban site for my project, and luckily he is doing a school project at a centric area of Havana. He gives me feed-back on my project ideas and passes me some files he has found on ecotourism, - Cuban theses, as well as some digital maps he has received from the Office of Urban Planning in Havana for his project. I am so lucky to have met this guy! He is worth gold, in every sense! I leave his house feeling relieved, and hopeful.

In the afternoon I visit ISA (the institute for higher studies within art) of Havana - the one piece of work that Fernando says resembles Cuban architecture best, through all times. It turns out to be a spectacular experience, and building - unique in expression, but my thoughts still wander to Gaudí and Barcelona. Lots of vaults, round shapes, lanterns, and light architecture, as well as inner- and outer corridors, with columns (of course). Havana is called "The City of Columns" for a reason.

29/9: Sunday - day off, at the beach.

30/9: Looking at the "vacios", = vacant/deserted sites in Vedado and around Malecón, using a map from the Office of Urban Planning in Havana, in search for a project site. Taking pictures and notes. I also visit Pabellón Cuba - a Cuban pavilion from the 60's, located in the very heart of modern Havana - Vedado. It was built for an international event in 1963 and has been an important meeting place ever since. 1-6/10: Ill - stomach disease and fever, several visits to doctor. The doctor think I have Cholera, and I ask: "How many hours"? (left to live). There is a Cholera epidemic in Havana right now and therefore the hospitals are extra precautious; they wanted to send me to a special clinic, and keep me ther for days of testing.... In the end the doctor agreed on taking a decrement test, before sending me to isolation, and it was negative. Thank you God!

7/10: Still ill. I manage, though my severe stomach status, to go to CUJAE for tutoring and to renew my visa, and return back home without fainting or having any other kind of undesirable accident...

I present my pavilion idea (a pavilion on sustainability located on a vacant/deserted site in central Havana) to Dania and we talk about sustainability in an urban context, material traditions and accessibility as well as the cultural and historical value of working on a centric site like La Rampa (a site I had chosen as an option for my project. La Rampa is the nickname of the street). We agree on that temporarity could be a a good project approach to centrally located vacant sites. So, I am working on a temporare pavilion structure that can be adapted to a series of different sites and functions over time, an ephemeral architecture, socially and culturally sustainable through being a meeting place for both Cubans and tourists, and also by its flexibility - filling

the void of the site were its being placed, and ecologically sustainable in choice of material and (un) durability over time – for example Cuban short lived, but environmentally friendly bamboo. I need to specify the site(s) (not being on La Rampa (too sacred place for the Habaneros, and the site I had chosen happened to have a very important historical value of being the place where the first high rise building in Havana was built back in the 50's. Today there is just the foundation left of the building and a parking space on top) and after that define the possible programs of the chosen site(s), and after that start sketching on the structure. I leave the tutoring once again with a feeling of that my mission in Cuba has grown out of proportion, or rather that I could not imagine how complex it would be to work in such a context, nor how much the slow pace of daily procedures like buying necessities and food, or inefficient transportation or laundry, or finding information. It is a step-by-step process, and it is so slow... And my illness is not really helping either. OK. I still have time. Inhale.

8/10: My stomach continues bad, but I feel a little bit better, enough to be able to leave the house to arrange with my ticket back home at the travelling agency. I change the return date for my flight to the 11th of November (arrival in Sweden the 12th), which means prolonging my stay with another four weeks. Feels good to check another point in the list of to-dos. Tomorrow I will collect my visa at CUJAE and I will also look for a cheap apartment to rent the last month of my stay here. The prolonged stay has its costs...

9/10: I return to CUJAE to pay the registration fee, and to collect my visa. The visa is not ready and I am asked to return in a week. At least I manage to finish the payment procedure. I make a lot of phone calls in search for an apartment. It is all about contacts, and patience.

10/10: Cuba's independence day. Day off. And my stomach is completely recovered. Hallelujah! Nine days of stomach illness is much.

11/10: Internet day - slower than slowest. I spend several hours trying to e-mail the insurance company to prolong my travel insurance, and also CSN to find out if it would be possible for me to receive student loan one additional semester; my examiner proposes that I do the thesis in two semesters since the process has been so slow here in Cuba. I have already used all my student loan quota, but I hope that CSN will be merciful. I really would have liked to finish my thesis in January, but it is not realistic anymore, unfortunately. I also try to Skype for the first time here in Cuba, but the connection is so slow, it just does not work.

I also have another vacant spaces walk through Havana, looking at the last spaces pointed out at the map I got from the urban planning office. It seems like 99% of the spaces are already occupied by some kind of a function, or have plans – many are restoration sites and quite a few hotels are planned it seems (in process). Seems like the deserted sites are not that deserted after all.

12/10: Laundry day. Lots of laundry.

13-16/10: Looking at accommodation solutions. In urgent need to find a cheap alternative by now. Running

out of money... Also trying to contact CSN to find out whether or not it is possible for me to receive an additional semester of loan, to finish the thesis in two semesters, as IngerLise – my examiner, proposed. I also text my mother to ask her to call CSN too, to speed things up a little. I need to present an updated project plan to IngerLise and Björn – my Swedish tutor, and to do so I need to know if it is possible or not for me (financially) to prolong the thesis, as requested. I also arrange with insurance renewal for my prolonged stay, successfully.

17/10: Studying at home. Reflecting over my situation.

18/10: Moving in to my new apartment. Cleaning and organizing. In the night I visit the fair for young Cuban artists at Pabellón Cuba, and it is really nice to see the pavilion in function (last time I visited it it was not hosting anything at that moment).

19-20/10: Saturday- Sunday: Buying utilities and food for the apartment. From now on I will cook at home; no more restaurants. Rice, eggs and pasta – here we go! Finally I receive an answer from CSN (e-mail) regarding loaning money one extra semester. CSN answers that they approve additional loan very restrictively, and that one need extremely good reasons...

21/10: Studying at home. What will I present to IngerLise and Björn for the mid critique? And to Dania on my next tutoring on Wednesday?

22/10: Studying at home.

23/10: I go to CUJAE for tutoring and to collect my visa.

24/10: Doing laundry and studying at home.

25/10: Studying at home.

26/10: Saturday – day off.

27/10: Studying at home – preparing and sending in a pre-mid critique document to IngerLise and Björn.

28/10: Spending the whole day trying to charge my cell phone over the internet (great offer on-line...). I receive an alarming e-mail from IngerLise about some missed out correspondence with Maja – the head of charge of the Master theses; apparently she has been trying to get hold of me for quite some time and the messages has not reached me. I am told that I was planned to do my mid critique presentation this Thursday over Skype... I tell her about my Skype situation (not possible here), cancel the Skype date on Thursday and ask for an e-mail based mid critique instead.

29/10: Studying at home, and sending in the mid critique presentation. While preparing the mid critique presentation I finally realized how much that remained, and how little time I have left here in Cuba, and I decided to give up on the idea to hand-in the project this semester, to prolong it another semester, and to focus on what information I need to collect during my last days in Cuba. I have decided on a site, which means that the next step is to revisit the office of Eusebio Leal in Old Havana to look for information on the specific site.

# 5.5 Journal

31/10: I call the urban planning office of Havana to make an appointment, and I am asked to come by tomorrow, Friday. I also call Maria Theresa, an architect that works at the Malecón office (located inside the office of Eusebio Leal) - Dania gave me her number, and we decide that I will come by her office on Monday. I hope that Maria Theresa can provide me with information about my chosen site, about its history, and its present plans, the area regulations, and maybe even give me digital plans of the area. But I will pop by the urban planning office first to see if they can help me as well. Björn, my Swedish tutor has responded to my mid critique hand-in e-mail. He is positive about my decision to prolong the thesis for another semester and gives me some feed-back on what he believes I need to do before departing.

1/11: Tutoring with Dania, in her house in Nuevo Vedado. I tell her about my site choice and she gives me some digital files on Cuban norms on architectural practice for buildings and urbanism. She also recommends me to go to the norm office to ask for the Cuban norms on tourism practice. Dania tells me that Choy - Cubas most famous architect has made a hotel proposal for exactly this site, and that she believes that Maria Theresa can find it for me. Dania says that she is convinced that Maria Theresa can provide me with basically all the information I need on the site, and if Maria Theresa can not give me a digital map of Havana then Dania will find one for me next week. First she thought that she had a 3D-plan for me in DWG, but unfortunately my little corner was missing out. What a pity! It also turns out that they are actually planning to build a hotel at the site, though not Choy's proposal, but a foreign one (funding problems is probably the reason). We decide that I will give her a call on Monday, after talking to Maria Theresa, to make a new (and final) appointment. After the tutoring I go to the office of urban planning in Havana, but once there they tell me that they can not help me, and that I need to talk to the Malecón office (which is the office where Maria Theresa works), so I will have to wait until Monday.

Next week is my final week. Time has flown by so quickly - it is unbelievable! I wish I had another three months in Cuba. Really. Though all the difficulties in the process and all my struggles and anguish, I have had a great time here, and I have met so many amazing people. I do not want it to end. I feel sad when thinking about it. This is like a home to me by now. I wish it would be easier to live here, that it would have been an option. The Cuban culture is so allowing, there is a quiet understanding or a joke for almost anything, at least that is how I perceive it. It undresses, and unarms you and makes you feel alive.



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# IMAGES

Page 12: My photo.

Page 17: 2.2: Fennell, David. 2008. *Ecotourism: third edition*. 3. ed. Oxon: Routledge

Page 19: <http://cdn.media.kiwicollection.com/media/property/PR001687/xl/001687-02-bungalow-hut-double-bed-daytime.jpg>

Page 20: My photo.

Page 22: CIDEM-photo: from Fernando Martireña, at CIDEM.

Remaining images: My photos

Page 23-35: My photos.

Page 36-37: Photos from Oficina de Plan Maestro de Malecón.

Page 38-39: My photos

Page 46-47: My photos.

Page 50: Castel d-Emporda: [http://static.dezeen.com/uploads/2011/07/dezeen\\_Castell-D%E2%80%99emporda-by-Concrete\\_01.jpg](http://static.dezeen.com/uploads/2011/07/dezeen_Castell-D%E2%80%99emporda-by-Concrete_01.jpg)

Hammer neighborhood: a photo I received from a friend.

Page 52: <http://www.wallsforpc.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Hakka-housesLongyan-Yongding%E2%80%99Fujian%E2%80%99ChinaWorld-Heritage.jpg>

Page 53: Marina Towers: [http://www.blueprintchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/marina\\_towers\\_plan\\_film.jpg](http://www.blueprintchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/marina_towers_plan_film.jpg)

Photo of inner courtyard: my photo.

Page 67-69: My Photos