SPATIAL MANIFESTATIONS IN PLURALIST CULTURES:
The Case of the Isleta de San Juan

by

Heather Crichfield

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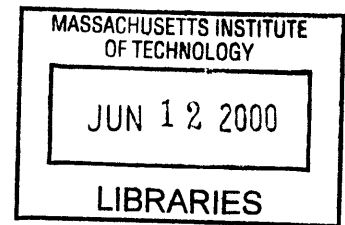Master of Science in Architecture Studies

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Signature of Author
Department of Architecture
May 18, 2000

Certified by
Willaim L. Porter
Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Certified by
Sibel Bozdoğan
Associate Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by
Roy Strickland
Principal Research Scientist in Architecture
Chairman, Department Committee on Graduate Students

Thesis Reader: Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks
Associate Professor of English, Boston College

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the complicity of architecture with structures of power and dominant ideological agendas in society, which implicates architecture in the political project. I look specifically at the Isleta de San Juan, Puerto Rico as the subject for this investigation. Primary to my discussion are the manifestations of cultural identity in space. I call particular attention to Puerto Rico's need to articulate cultural identity in the face of dominant economico-political ideologies and I discuss existing productive tensions that might help feed a design process of resistance. I re-examine notions of cultural identity currently attached to existing spaces within the isleta by challenging the latent socio-spatial assumptions made in architecture, in order to reveal alternative possibilities for the production of architecture. I have focused on two ways that power defines and impacts architecture: capitalism and historical rationality. I propose that more important than style is how we conceptualize space and how that conceptualization might affect our built environment through a reformed process of design. This thesis connects this inquiry to contemporary cultural and architectural critique as well as historical analysis.

Thesis Supervisor: William L. Porter
Title: Norman B. and Muriel Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning

Thesis Supervisor: Sibel Bozdoğan
Associate Professor of Architecture

Reader: Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks
Assistant Professor of English, Boston College

I N D E X

L I S T   O F   I L L U S T R A T I O N S

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

INTRODUCTION

While standing in the non-descript urban sprawl of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, this past summer I observed the struggle that the people of that city are undergoing to spatially define it. Bolivia, like many American countries, struggles with the question of cultural identity in material form. They have found no architectural response to this quandary and frequently call upon northern architectural styles. Many of the buildings are pale imitations of corporate middle-American shells; the type of building that has no significant original meaning. In Mexico, a client representing a US retail corporation that was about to unleash a slew of big box all-inclusive mega-stores on the Mexican landscape, asked me if I could design a façade that *represented* Mexico. I suppose as a way of *masking* the intent behind the façade, and *mediating* local sensibilities with global market endeavors. The client was thinking simple bold shapes and bright colors (read: Baragan) but without any reference to Baragan's notions of space, beauty, light, etc. I wondered a number of things but namely how could architecture *represent* Mexico; who and what in Mexico would it portend to reflect; and finally did Mexicans, or any of us, really relate simply to façade and fashion? Were they purely visual beings with no other senses? More importantly is it useful for architecture to respond in this manner?

The focus of investigation in this thesis is on the complicity of architecture with structures of power and dominant ideological agendas in society, which implicates architecture in the political project. This thesis looks specifically at the isleta of San Juan, Puerto Rico as the subject of investigation. Primary to my discussion are the manifestations of cultural identity in space. The need to articulate cultural identity in the face of dominant economico-political ideologies is very prevalent in Puerto Rico. The people on this island must deal with this question everyday and have a need to construct their identity as a form of resistance. It calls for radical thought that does not simply accept our current conceptualizations about space and its production and the assumptions we make within that.

My initial interest in this topic has evolved from my own meanderings through the Americas where the overlapping of cultures is most layered, woven, or contested. Similar questions arose for me in these varied terrains about the tensions created by overlapping cultural and economico-political realities. Politics and economics are bedfellows that are difficult to separate and even more so in the practice of creating architecture. The answer to these questions has to do with the relationship of power to the production of architecture. It seems to me then, that architecture needs to be examined in a way that questions its relationship to 'economico-political' constructs. The French philosopher

Figure 1 - Ariel Photograph of the Isleta

Michel Foucault uses the term 'economico-political' when talking about the 'new' role of architecture in society[1].

I focus this thesis on the Isleta de San Juan (see figure 1) because of its particular physical and social position in relation to the Americas. Due to its unique history and current status it is a rich place for reflection on the impact of architecture's complicity within ideological projects. More than anywhere in the Americas, Puerto Rico is a truly pluralist society where a variety of cultures have come together. Since its European founding, a separation among races has never been enforced so that today one does not find distinct subcultures along ethnic lines. In addition to this ethnic pluralism, Puerto Ricans have had to mediate between their local socio-cultural condition and their economico-political condition as a U.S. territory. However, as with all colonies, the culture and politics of one influences the other, as evidenced by Puerto Rico's growing cultural influence on the US. Less well known is the fact that Puerto Rico is the "number one source of profit in the world for U.S. companies"[2]. Yet, it has been 50 years since Puerto Ricans have proposed a spatiality that is derived from their world-view. The 1950's were an important time in recent Puerto Rican history. They gained some level of semi-autonomous rule[3] and the project to unearth and enliven their cultural identity was started, most notably under the guidance of Ricardo Alegría the then head of the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture. In the years since however, San Juan has developed at break-neck speed under the considerable influence of the United States, leaving the content of their built spaces – the body of these spaces – in tension with cultural and social realities. Architecture operates under a privileged lens (usually belonging to the predominant power) and therefore is less a reflection of society and more of a particular power. What happens when a number of cultures come together, as they do so frequently in the contemporary world? Puerto Rico for example, has not only the cultural pluralism of the people (Spanish, African, Indian, Latin American, etc.) but also the overlaying economico-political culture of the United States. In these overlapping cultures does one of them emerge as dominant and what is the material outcome? What are the implicit issues caught up in material expression in cities and architecture that have to do with power? I examine particular physical moments that are culturally/socially relevant within San Juan through their material reality,

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[1] "The point, it seems to me, is that architecture begins at the end of the eighteenth century to become involved in problems of population, health and the urban question. Previously, the art of building corresponded to the need to make power, divinity and might manifest. The palace and the church were the great architectural forms, along with the stronghold. Architecture manifested might, the Sovereign, God. Its development was for long centered on these requirements. Then, late in the eighteenth century, new problems emerge: it becomes a question of using the disposition of space for economico-political ends." Michel Foucault," The Eye of Power" in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, 1980, pg. 148
[2] "Net profits [for US companies]...ballooned to $14.3 billion in 1995, just ahead of the United Kingdom and nearly double that of any other country...That amount is breathtaking when you compare Puerto Rico's minuscule population of 3.8 million to the United Kingdom's 58 million, Germany's 81 million, or Brazil's 150 million." Gonzalez, Juan, *Harvest of Empire*, pg. 249
[3] See Carrión, Arturo Morales, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, (1983), Chapter 14

Figure 2 - Speer's proposal. "Things to take your breath away".

Figure 3 - Township

social identity, and the tensions between the two. As I discuss later in the chapters Grounding and Entries, the Isleta de San Juan is a uniquely manifest expression of these overlapping tensions in terms of power and the 'other'.

The question of power and the material effects of domination are therefore central to this thesis. I am talking about the 'power over' – domination of one person over another – and not 'power to'[4]. I am exposing the structures of power but more importantly I seek new arrangements that would empower the previously excluded or unseen. Ideally, we would seek the 'power to', the action of liberation, or enabling within the spatial constructs we build for ourselves, both material and mental. Typically, this has not been the case in the history of architecture. It is easier to observe more grotesque expressions of power within particular moments of history like Nazi Germany, apartheid South Africa, or the Spanish Conquest of the Americas[5]. I choose these three to illustrate my point about the 'power-over' but there are other examples that could be used as well. Albert Speer's material expression for Hitler's vision of buildings that would give you the "feeling" that you are in the presence of the "master of the world", and city spaces that would be "things to take your breath away", clearly articulates the desire to exhort 'power over' the populous and convey that power to a world at large (see figure 2). With Hitler and Speer we have direct statements of intent and not just physical expressions of it. There existed an overt political agenda where architecture was meant to awe, frighten, and locate those within and without their particular socio-cultural structure. In South Africa, the townships, like Soweto, Kwa Thema, etc., built by the apartheid government to house the majority black population, are examples of spatial engineering to control the 'Other' (see figure 3). The regularization of township layouts, the spacing between houses, lack of plantings (which would block surveillance), the organization of rooms within the houses, removal of all doors (which would delay police apprehension of a suspect), the use of outhouses, etc. are all clear examples of oppression, coercion, and control through architecture. Lastly and perhaps more subtly, are the colonial cities and specifically the churches built by the Spanish in the New World. The church façade was used to intimidate the local indigenous populations through its large, solid front that 'obscured' the power behind it. These are obvious examples where power over the 'other' was plainly part of the agenda. As we will see later on, Puerto Rico's capitol building – El Capitolio – is an overt example of the 'power over' within the Isleta de San Juan. However, architecture does not only embody and enable power through overt examples of form and style. It also embodies forms of power that are less visible.

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[4] Dovey, Kim, *Framing Places: Mediating power in built form*, (1999) p. 9
[5] For more detailed analysis of these three subjects refer to the following texts: Nazi Germany – see Dovey (1999); South Africa – Derek Japha in *blank___: Architecture, apartheid and after*, (1998).

Architecture often functions subtly within the socio-political project. While it is generally a social construct, its role of enforcing the agendas of power can often be *invisible*; both in the way it disciplines space and in the assumptions we make about it. In this first type of invisibility the ideological impetus behind architecture may not always be visible but it exists, whether it is in the scheme of a "democratizing" grid or the chaotic layout of spaces. Andrea Kahn clearly describes the invisible aspects of architecture's capacity to signify politics as follows:

> "[T]he political nature of architecture is rooted more deeply in architecture as enclosure and in the manner in which enclosure is perceived...By transforming part of a general spatial domain into a specific site for a particular use (public or private), architecture divides, organizes and manages...Architecture is the disciplinization of space, and, by virtue of its capacity to regulate action, exerts control and constitutes a form of power."[6]

So architecture can represent power and can also be an instrument of power through the 'disciplinization of space'. In our everyday life, we are not as focused on examining, looking at, or understanding the built spaces surrounding us. Architecture is, in this sense, more *invisible* than things we understand as objects or works that are meant to be pondered and gazed upon, such as the fine arts (painting, sculpture, etc.), monuments, and advertisements. Typically, these are objects or elements that we know are telling us something, conveying meaning, or expressing an opinion; we listen. The expressed purpose of these objects is to comment on the world around us. This was once part of architecture's agenda as well.[7] Architecture is not generally understood to be communicating knowledge, its overt role in conveying meaning has been diminished and therefore our understanding of its political implications are veiled, rendered invisible, or ignored. The type of meaning conveyed by many of today's structures generally do not speak to particular ideologies about culture or man's relationship to the world but increasingly its primary purpose appears to be the generation of economic capitol (I suppose it can be argued that this in itself is an ideology). The challenge in this work is to render visible the affects of these latent conditions by different subjects.

The second type of invisible 'power' within architecture is the suppositions that are made about space. I am interested in examining the under-interrogated ideological assumptions that we make in

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[6] Kahn, Andrea, "The Invisible Mask", in Kahn, ed. (1991)

[7] In the pre-modern world architecture was a form of communication between power structures (i.e. government, church, king, and landowner) that could afford to build and their populace; it was text. The advent of technologies that facilitated quicker and increasingly wide spread dissemination of information, namely the printing press, ended architecture's primacy in this realm. Victor Hugo dedicates and entire chapter, titled "One Shall Destroy the Other", in his classic work *Notre Dame*. He states:
> "In fact, from the very beginning of things up to the fifteenth century of the Christian Era, architecture has been the great book of humanity, man's chief means of expression at different stages of his development, whether physical or intellectual...But in the fifteenth century everything is changed... "The book shall overthrow the edifice." The invention of printing is the greatest event in history...In printed form thought is more imperishable than ever...from the sixteenth century [on] disease is visible: architecture is no longer the material expression of society; it attempts wretchedly to become a classical art".[7]

every day space when we view architecture as an objective figure within our constructed landscape. We assume that architecture represents all parts of society; we take for granted the underlying, latent, and invisible aspects of our built spaces. More important than a change in style, however, is how we conceptualize space and how that conceptualization might affect our built environment through a reformed process of architectural design. Architecture is one of the few places where resistance to homogenizing forces in society through physical space can be manifested. Because it is necessarily place-bound, it has the potential to forego homogenizing strategies and manifest plurality, which could be read, ironically, on both the local (in support of and interaction with the community) and global scale (through tourism, knowledge, and symbolism). In Puerto Rico these invisible aspects of architecture's complicity with ideologies of domination are manifested as frequently as the overt representations I mentioned earlier. The assumptions being made in Puerto Rico about space and power relationships go almost unchallenged, which has resulted in a strong material presence by predominant economico-political forces.

I am interested in re-examining notions of cultural identity currently attached to existing spaces within our cities and then challenging the latent socio-spatial assumptions made in architecture, in order to reveal alternative possibilities for the production of architecture. This act may result in a rethinking about space and its production in terms of cultural plurality within the Americas. In the term 'cultural plurality', I refer to the various and different cultures created throughout most of the contemporary world that result in a mixing between the modern and traditional and that typically defy adequate definition. The resultant tangles may help to reveal possible new techniques for spatial production.

In the first chapter, Grounding, I layout the methodological approaches that I am using to talk about these issues. I also lay the 'cultural' background for my site of inquiry, San Juan. I look to methodologies from a variety of disciplines to navigate this thesis. By looking at different moments, the relative details (a building for example) and simultaneously at the parts of the whole (neighborhoods), I hope to uncover ways of imagining spatial production that are latent within our society. These methodologies would consider "rationalities" (if we can call them that) based on numerous elements of society and would finally include creative voices from throughout our pluralist culture – not only those with the 'power over'. The second chapter, Entries, looks at specific examples, within the Isleta of San Juan, to reveal and illustrate the possible productive spatial tensions that exist and that could inform other methodologies for spatial production that deal with pluralism and cultural identity within a particular place. The final chapter is not so much a conclusion as a re-consideration of the material in this thesis through more general spatial and

aesthetic concepts and some propositions about how we might build within such pluralist environments. At the very least, I hope this study will yield a more nuanced understanding of architecture and it's material effects in terms of cultural identity within pluralist spaces and its consequences for practice.

GROUNDING

I am borrowing the term "thick description" from the anthropologist, Clifford Geertz's book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, where he talks about the need to not only talk about the subject at hand but to always, simultaneously, or firstly, talk about the "background information". The work of sorting out the structures of signification, according to him, are much more akin to the work of the literary critic, determining their social ground and import, rather than the 'cipher clerk' who interprets established codes.[8] I adopt a similar methodology for understanding the larger issues at play on the Isleta de San Juan. When looking at pluralist cultures it would be contradictory and impossible to work with a single representative moment. It is important to consider a multitude of moments and their background in order to begin to understand a place, in this case the Isleta de San Juan. They are critical to my investigation so that it yields not only as understanding of place but insight into alternate methodologies by which space could be produced. While the time involved does not allow for a true Geertzian reading, I am calling upon a variety of resources both local (buildings, historians, articles, interviews, personal experience, etc.) and more general theoretical resources (architectural and cultural theory). I first provide grounding information and narrative that connects each physical moment within the space of this thesis and then discusses each one.

I start this work by reading a number of physical elements within the city; abstractly they are objects/bodies, boundaries, and zones (see figure 5). Objectively they are building, wall, and neighborhoods. These abstracts as a methodology are meant to allow for a series of possible entries to these issues and to San Juan. Object/body: object/bodies in the city are "objects", in this case three buildings, la Fortaleza (Governor's Palace), El Capitolio, and El Tribunal (Supreme Court). Each one is representative of actual governmental power and the group of them embodies the shifting but specific ideological agendas of domination over the local through time. They are particular moments within the city that, when read together, demonstrate the use of architecture to convey meaning and that reading can expose a process of colonization and cultural subversion visa-vise material space. Boundaries: the stone wall surrounding Viejo San Juan is a physical boundary that has navigated and mediated the city since it's conception. I am ambulating along the wall looking at narratives that are created by it at particular moments throughout the city. Zones: neighborhoods, like Puerta Tierra, reveal urban politics through their construction and destruction. This zone exposes the processes involved in material production that are influenced by the overlapping of cultural ideologies and economico-political agendas. I look at the "incommensurable differences" between existing physical moments and the multiple societal perceptions contained in
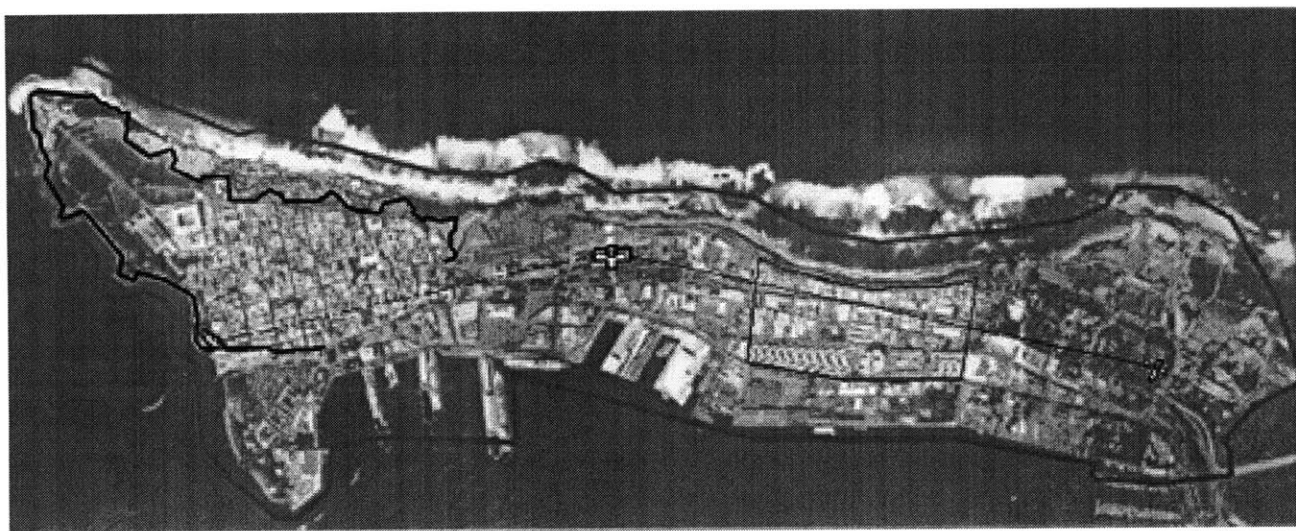
Figure 5

[8] Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (1973), p. 9

the Isleta de San Juan, and how these differences might inform a rethinking of spatial production for architecture and cities. These incommensurable differences between the spatial and the societal tend to be manifested in invisible or latent forms. Difference and not diversity is an important distinction within the site/sight [actual and perceived] of the Isleta.

The dialogue is not meant to be lineal, conclusive, nor exclusive. I am presenting some possible ways of understanding architecture's complicity within larger ideological projects, the inherent issues of power caught up in material production, and potential re-sensings of spatial production and ultimately, education. Like the city, one should be able to choose multiple points of entry that would allow for multiple readings. Calling upon a type of 'thick description', my thesis looks at specific moments, more general moments (the object/body, boundaries, and zones), and the *background* between them. I begin talking about the physical aspects and then, to varying extents, the social conditions surrounding them.

The Contact Zone and 20th Century Historical Background

For the study of cultural plurality and identity, Puerto Rico has an unusually rich geography and topography within the Americas. It is a culturally distinct country that has not had sovereignty since the Spanish arrived in 1508. Since the mid-1700s, at least, Puerto Ricans have had a strong sense of self-identity separate from their colonial rulers: Spain from 1493 to 1898 and the United States of America from 1898 through the present. But theirs has been a history unique from many other colonized nations and not simply because it was/is still an American[9] colony. It is the only country in the Americas that is colonized by another American country; in fact the United States is the only other nation in the Western Hemisphere with a colony. It does not share the same cultural heritage or the same language as its colonizer and by 1898 Puerto Rico was already older than the United States is today. From 1809 to 1898, the intellectuals in Puerto Rico made "a 'project' of the formation of a separate Puerto Rican identity."[10] Puerto Ricans considered themselves culturally and ethnically different from Spaniards. The first Puerto Rican uprising against Spain took place in 1868, roughly half a century after most of Latin America won independence. By the time of the US invasion in 1898, Spain was preparing to alter Puerto Rico's status to that of a Spanish state.[11]

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[9] I am referring to the continents of North and South America, not the country United States of America.

[10] Morris, Nancy, *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity*, p. 21

[11] On November 9, 1987 the Puerto Rican government was informed of three decrees, given by Spain, establishing an autonomous regime in Puerto Rico. After the difficult resolution between Puerto Rico's political parties an election was held, the Liberal Fusionists were elected and scheduled to take office in May of 1898. US intervention in the Spanish-Cuban war delayed it to July 17, eight days after the Americans had attacked and landed on Puerto Rico. The US government ignored Puerto Rico's status and simply took control. See Morales Carrión, Arturo, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, (1983), Chapter 7.
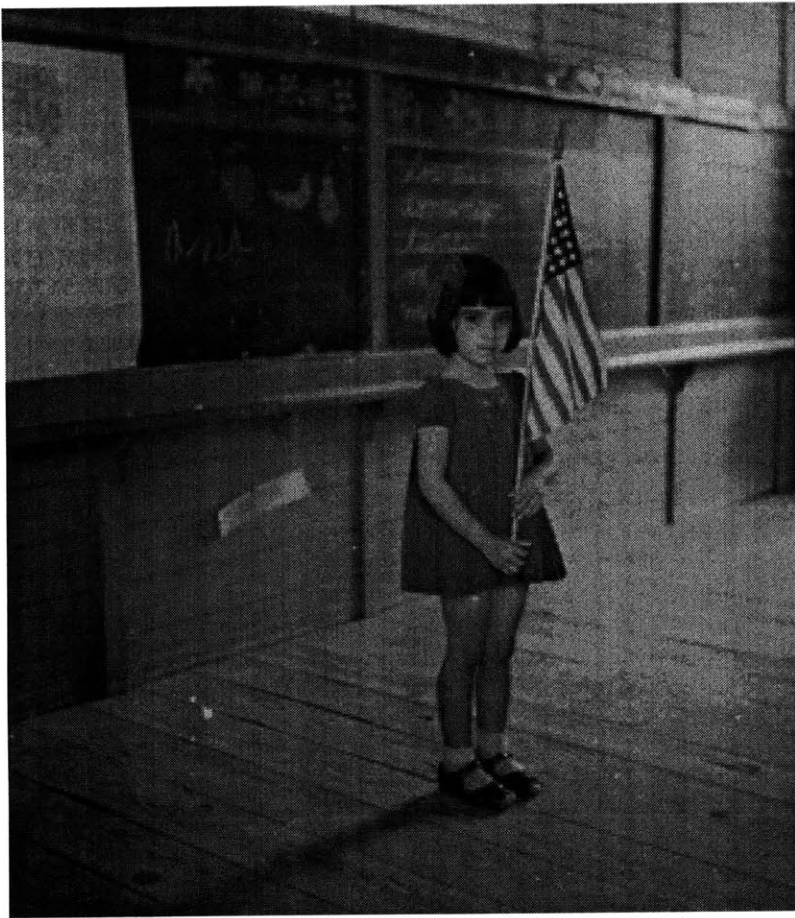
Figure 6 - Americanization project within the schools.

However, the US attack on Puerto Rico, which led to the end of the Spanish-American War and the subsequent ceding of Puerto Rico by the Spanish to the United States, changed that and plunged Puerto Rico into another battle for autonomy and independence from a colonizing force.

Important to our understanding of San Juan within this thesis are a number of moments throughout the 20th century history of the country and the city. Five moments that I want to highlight are *Americanization, Hispanidad, hispaniophilia,* modernist movement of the 40's and 50', and the urban development of the last fifteen years. *Americanization* and *Hispanidad* are political movements, which dealt with the organization and affects of American colonization in the first half of the 20th century. *Hispanophilia* and *modernism* deal with aesthetic movements in architecture and the arts up to the 1960's. Finally, urban development in the last fifteen years has been a complete conflation between the political and aesthetic within Puerto Rico but most dramatically within San Juan and the *isleta.*

Within the first few years of their arrival, the American government established a program known as *Americanization.* It was a campaign designed to make Puerto Rico "in its sympathies, views, and attitude toward life and toward government essentially American".[12] This effort was based on the belief in American supremacy over just about everything Puerto Rican. Puerto Rico was viewed as a poor and backward nation, incapable of self-rule. Puerto Rico did suffer from severe poverty and years of neglect by the Spanish government leaving much of the population without access to schools or health care. Like most of Latin America at the turn of the century, Puerto Rico's illiteracy rate was very high compared to industrial nations. In 1910, 80% of the population was still rural. A major component of the *Americanization* project was the renovation of the educational system, so rural schools were rapidly established[13] (see figure 6). However, this otherwise beneficial program 'ill-concealed' general American disdain for local social and cultural values. It insisted that all children become bi-lingual, often to the detriment of their vernacular Spanish, and forced teachers with almost no knowledge of English to teach it in their classrooms. *Americanization* often enforced methods unsuitable to the cultural environment in Puerto Rico (see Morales Carrión: 1983, Morris: 1995, and Davila: 1997). The *Americanization* project also renovated or developed administration, health,

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[12] Morris, Nancy, *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity,* p. 7. On page 11, Morris continues "Theodore Roosevelt Jr., who was Puerto Rico's appointed governor from 1929 to 1932, described this process: "[O]ur currency replaced that of Spain, our stamps the Spanish stamps, etc. We took at once certain actions that are *very characteristic of our people.* We established a Board of Health and a Department of Education, we did away with such punishments as chains, stocks, etc., and we organized an insular police force; then, *as a tribute to our underlying Puritanism,* we abolished the government lottery and outlawed cockfighting." (My emphasis)

[13] I am interested in how modernity was defined at the time by central countries like the United States. Why was education the principal focus of the Americanization project? Nestor García Canclini, in his article "Modernity after Postmodernism" (Mosquera : 1996), says that "if in the modern world to be cultured is to be well-read, this was something impossible for more than half the population of Latin America in 1920". García Canclini points out that in France the literacy rate was 90% by 1890, and in England it was 97% in the early twentieth century. In Latin America, however, by
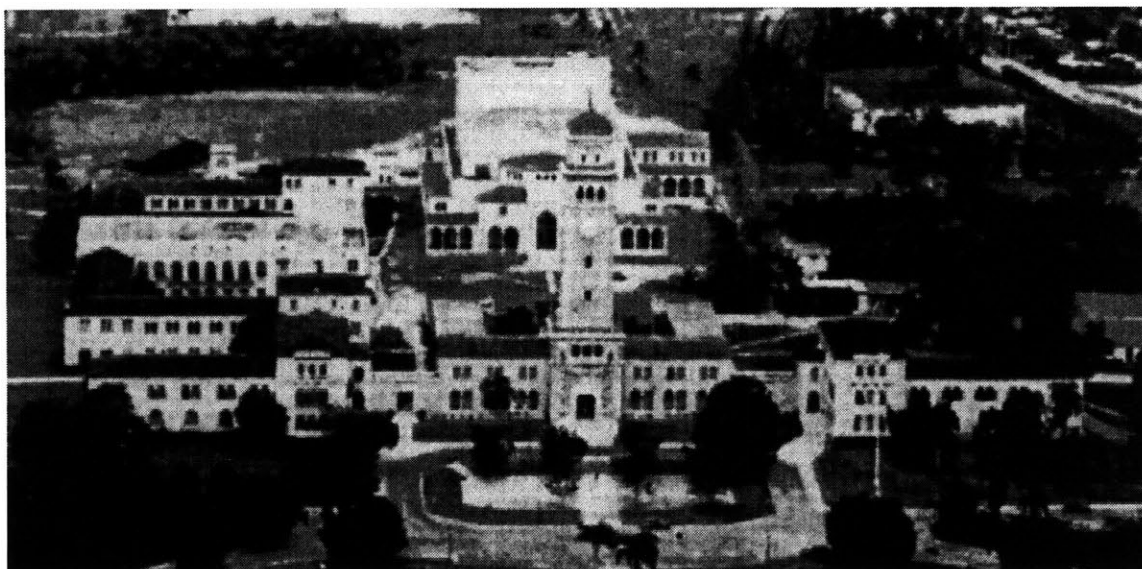
Figure 7 - Hispanidad - The University of Puerto Rico campus.

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by 1930 not even 10% of secondary school students went to university. In Brazil, for example, 84% of the population was illiterate in 1890, 75% in 1920, and 57% by 1940.

roadbuilding, and economic development. Until US involvement, Puerto Rico belonged wholly to Latin America in terms of its cultural identity and historical development. The US colonization of the country creates a tension between North American modernity and South American culture that is unique among the Americas.

The Puerto Rican response to the US *Americanization* project was *Hispanidad*. It was a project to combat the US attack on their society and create an identity separate from their new colonizers, paradoxically through the previous one. *Hispanidad* was believed by its proponents to be "the embodiment of civilization and contrasted it to the 'Nordic barbarism of the invader.' Puerto Rican culture was associated with the 'positive values' of strong kinship bonds, hospitality, respect for elder, and a strong sense of Christian religiosity, traits that were contrasted to the invading American culture rather than that of the previous Spanish colonizers."[14] Ironically, for Puerto Ricans to be included within American identity they first had to render themselves in Spanish 'values'. According to the American government, US presence on the island represented the 'bettering' of Puerto Rican society and culture. President Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (who was governor of Puerto Rico for a short time) explained: "[l]ike most countries, we were convinced that we had the best form of government ever devised in the world and that our customs and habits were also the most advisable."[15] For years the status of Puerto Rico remained unanswered while New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and later, Hawaii and Alaska became states.[16]

The counterpoint to the *Americanization* project in synthetic terms was a movement called *hispanophilia*. This movement spanned the first half of the 20th century and was defined by the use of 'Spanish' style architecture and master planning; the University of Puerto Rico is a classic example of this period (see figure 7). It was the material manifestation and counterpart to the political and cultural movement *Hispanidad*. Architecture (and the arts of the time) was created in a 'Spanish style' that was based on a romanticized vision of Spain. The Puerto Rican historian, Silvia Alvarez Curbelo has

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[14] Davila, Arlene M., *Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico*, p. 26

[15] Morris continues that it was "this unself-consious belief in the superiority of everything from the United States drove the extensive reforms implemented by U.S. military administrators." "They had a clear agenda of "Americanization" of the island, a requisite, in their view, for the eventual self-rule and integration into the United States of a population that they perceived as politically immature and unequipped for self-government." Morris, Nancy, *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity*, p. 24

[16] Again it is important to note US attitude towards Puerto Rico at the time of the Spanish-American war, which was supposedly to free Cuba from Spanish rule. Looking at Roosevelt's words again helps to provide insight to United State's ongoing dilemma of what to do with Puerto Rico. "In neither case [Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands – both ceded by Spain at the end of the war] had we announced our intention of liberating them when we declared war. The problem, therefore, was just what status they should assume. We had no definite ideas, for when we declared war we had not thought of them." Morris, Nancy, *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity*, p. 23
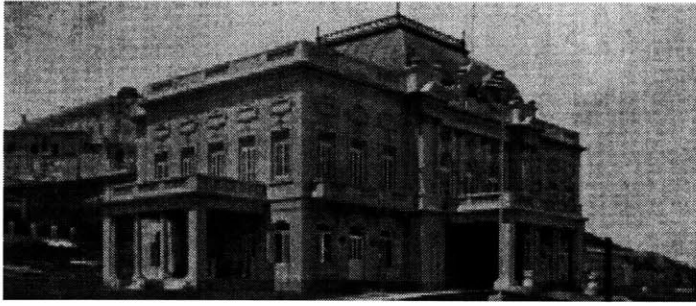
Figure 8 - Casino Puertoriqeno

Figure 9- University of Puerto Rico building by Henry Klumb
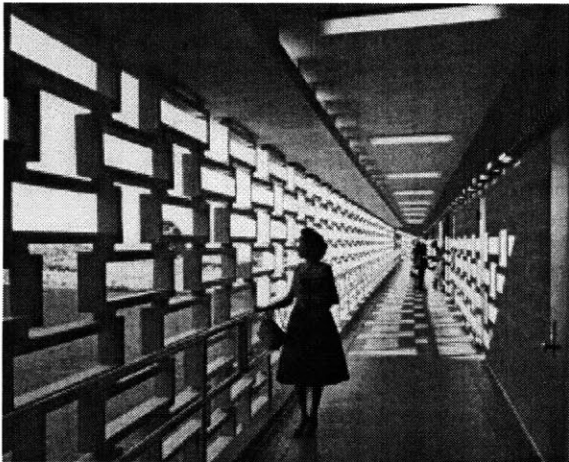
Figure 10 - University of Puerto Rico building by Henry Klumb

Figure 11 - El Tribunal by Toro y Ferrer
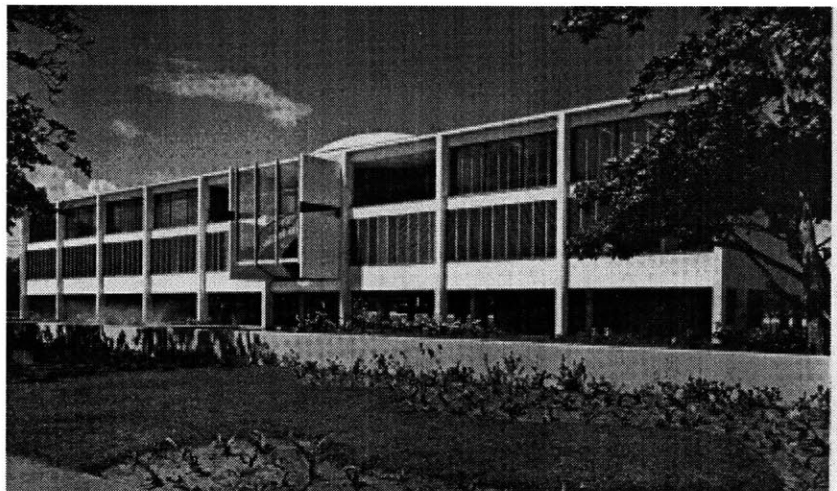
written extensively about Puerto Rican culture and identity, she notes:

"A key element in the adoption of hispanophilia by Puerto Rican architecture was the image of Spain, yet this image was a constructed image, and it had little relationship to the Spain of backwardness and reaction. As in Puerto Rican literature, historiography, and the political discourse of nationalism, architecture recaptured a mythical, transhistorical, and mannerist Spain."[17]

This movement was expressed in most forms of symbolic material representation, like architecture, art, etc. Many of the schools, homes, and a number of civic buildings built at this time were rendered in this "mythical and mannerist" Spanish style: the Casino Puertorriqueño (see figure 8), the Psychiatric Hospital in Rio Piedras (1924). The principal figure of this movement in architectural practice was Pedro de Castro. A Puerto Rican architect, trained in the US and at the Beaux Arts in Paris. De Castro belonged to a group of intellectuals who were convinced by the 'American way of life' but sought their cultural identity in Hispanic traditions[18]. Today, the word Hispanicizing (*Hispanidad*) would refer to a set of Hispanic-values and not necessarily back to Spain. In the first half of the 20th century, however, Hispanicizing referred to the desire to turn Puerto Rico into a 'little Spain'[19]. *Hispanidad* and *Hispaniophilia* come to a close with the change in Puerto Rico's status in 1949 and their first self-elected governor since the American occupation.

A new architectural movement associated with the new government took up the issue of cultural identification in the 1940's and50's with architects like Henry Klumb and Toro y Ferrer who were working in a tropicalized international style (see figure 9). This style of architecture was influenced by the work of architects like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, however these Puerto Rican architects integrated environmental influences which made these buildings distinctly tropical. Klumb designed the Caribe Hilton built in 1947, an iconic symbol of it's times. Klumb also designed a series of highly respected modernist buildings on the University of Puerto Rico campus (see figure 10). Toro y Ferrer designed a number of government buildings including El Tribunal (see figure 11).

At the turn of the century, the city of San Juan was contained entirely within the *isleta* (see figure 12). Today it occupies 48 square miles and has an average density of 1,000 people per square mile[20]. According to a planning report produced by the Municipal government this number is true for nearly every neighborhood within the city, including those contained within the *isleta*. The shift, engineered by the United States during the first half of this century, from an agricultural to an industrial society

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[17] Alvarez Curbelo, Silvia, "Fictional Alhambras: Hispaniophilia in Puerto Rican Architecture (1900-1950), in Alvarez Curbelo and Vivoni Farage, eds. (1998), pg. xii

[18] Vivoni Farage, Enrique, "The Architecture of Puerto Rican Identity", in Alvarez Curbelo and Vivoni Farage, eds. (1998) pg. 134

[19] Alvarez Curbelo, Silvia, "Fictional Alhambras: Hispanophilia in Puerto Rican Architecture (1900-1950), in Alvarez Curbelo and Vivoni Farage, eds. (1998), see translator's note #1 pg. xiii

[20] In 1900, the population of San Juan was at just over 32,000 and is currently at about one million: the total population of Puerto Rico at the turn of the century. Source: Plan de Ordenación Territorial de San Juan and Sepúlveda (1989)

Figure 12 - Figure Grounds from 1900 (top) and 1950 (bottom)

resulted in the transformation of Puerto Rico from a rural society to an urban one. After years of unchecked growth, San Juan has been the focus of master planning schemes over the past twenty years, developed by the various governments in power. The planning schemes are frequently developed to facilitate tourism in San Juan, which is the largest cruise ship port in the Caribbean. They have rarely been developed with local urban sensibilities in mind. These urban plans reflect the historic use of foreign styles or aesthetics to dictate spatial definition within San Juan. The use of acultural references, like money, technology, etc., also removed emphasis from cultural – in Puerto Rico that frequently means political – onto assumed universal or apolitical concerns, paving the way for mass produced architecture that elides the pluralistic local culture.
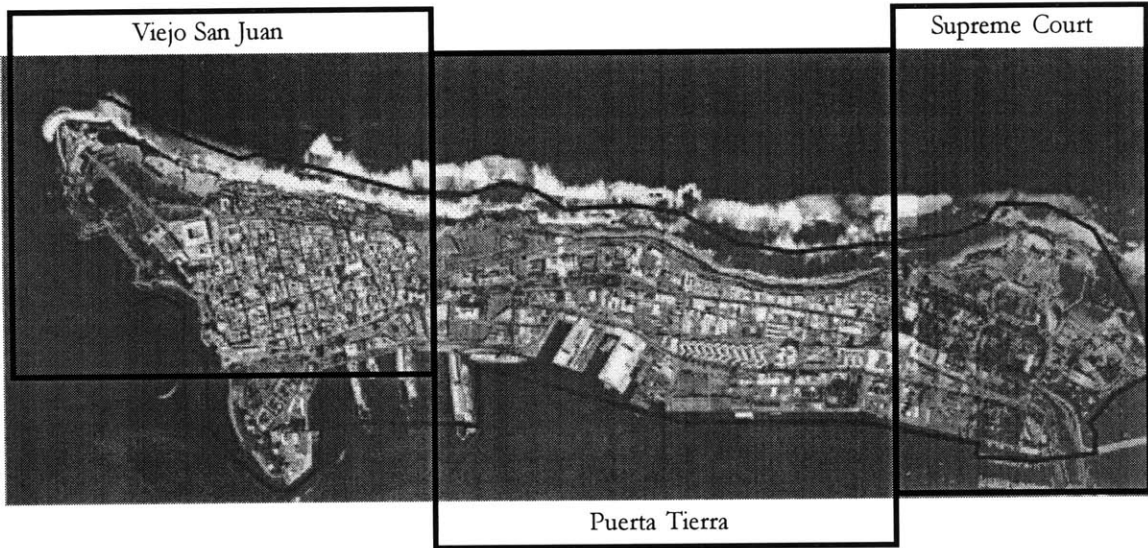
Figure13 - Major phases of the isleta's development
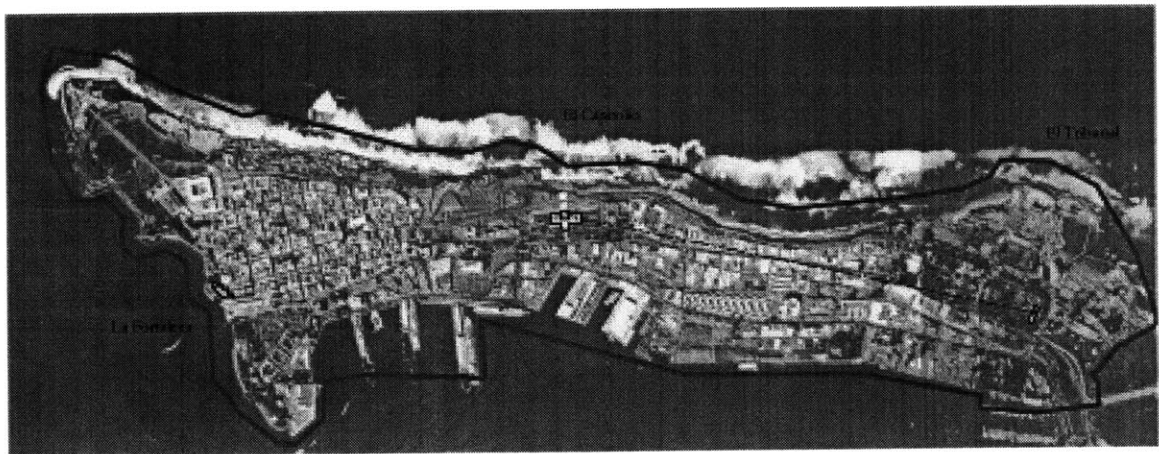
Figure 14 - "Governmental spine"

E N T R I E S

Historian and planner Aníbal Sepúlveda refers to the Isleta of San Juan as a place that contains 'the history of Puerto Rico'[21]. The architecture and urban planning within the isleta clearly manifests the major phases in Puerto Rico's political history starting with Spanish colonial rule and Viejo San Juan, American rule and the Monumental District, Puerta Tierra, La Puntilla, and finally the rule of semi-autonomous local government of Puerto Rico and the areas surrounding and including the Supreme Court Tribunal (see figure 13). Contained within this small piece of land are traces and evidence of the relationship between architecture and power. Reflecting upon them and rereading them may provide new insight on the invisible or latent agendas at work here and may help to expose some of the assumptions that we make about architecture and the design process.

FORTALEZA, EL CAPITOLIO, & EL TRIBUNAL:
Politics and Cultural Identity *or* an Argument Against Solution of Styles

These three buildings – La Fortaleza, El Capitolio, and El Tribunal (Supreme Court Building) – are located within the isleta in three discrete locations (see figure 14). La Fortaleza sits beside the wall at the west end of the city overlooking the harbor entry, El Capitolio is located in the geographical middle of the Isleta, and El Tribunal is located near the entry to the Isleta on the east end, inside the Parque Luis Munoz Marín. Together they create a symbolic 'governmental spine' through the isleta. All three are government buildings, which by their very nature do represent a power. The structures were built in three different *styles*. The first in a Spanish colonial style, the second in early 20th century American neo-classical style, and the third in a tropicalized international modernist style. Each one speaks to a different and specific ideological agenda of the time and yet each one makes a symbolic reference to the previous one. While the aesthetic expression differs, they each attempt through architecture to represent power and thereby locate and uphold certain constructions about colonization: Puerto Rico and the colonizing power (us/other), North American Protestantism and Latin American Catholicism (rationalism/passion), Northern climates versus tropical climates (cool/hot). These are overt examples. However, the way that these buildings mediate the debate and struggle for cultural identity within San Juan, the way they mediate the space of the isleta, and their evolution of expression, create a story about the tensions inherent in spatial expression within San Juan's environment.

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[21] In an interview I conducted with Aníbal Sepúlveda on March 23, 2000 in San Juan.
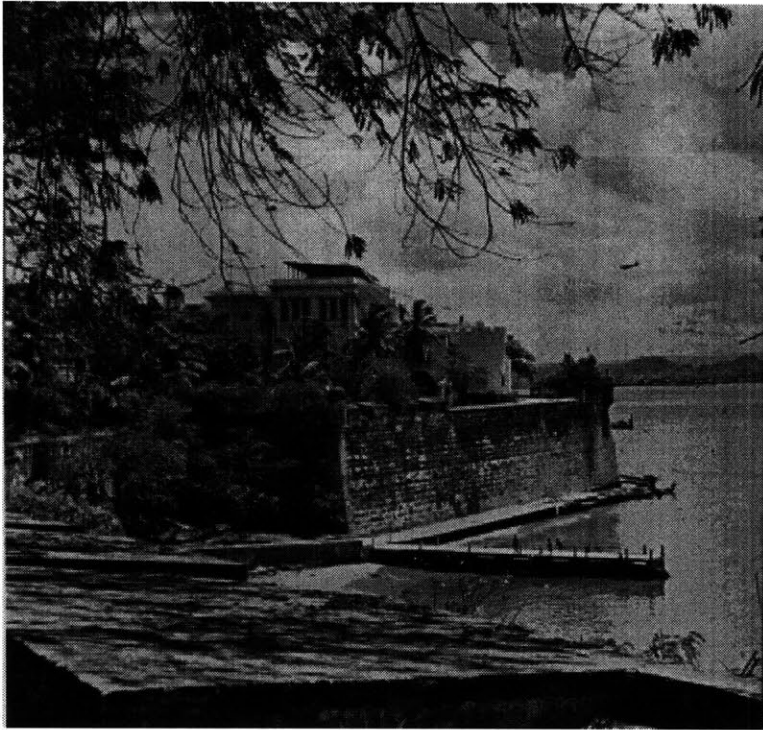
Figure 15 - La Fortaleza
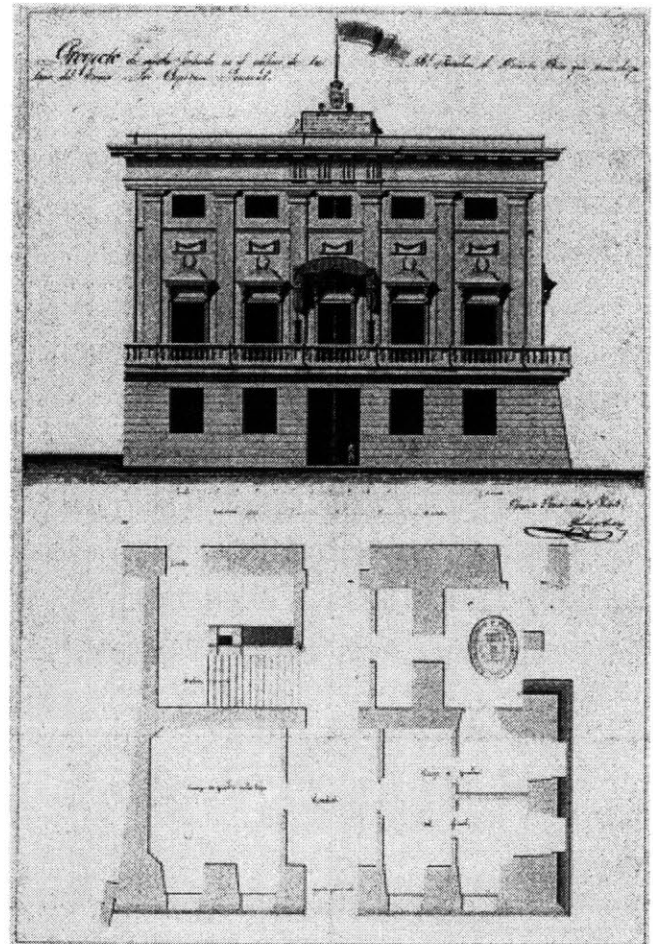
Figure 16 - 1847 Reconstruction

La Fortaleza (Governor's House)

La Fortaleza, built in 1533, was the first fort built to protect San Juan (see figure 15). Since then, as an architectural symbol of government and power, it has undergone numerous changes. In 1625 the Dutch set fire to it, in 1640 it was reconstructed, underwent numerous reconstructions and a final large-scale reconstruction was approved by the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid in 1847 (see figure 16). La Fortaleza is the official residence and office of the Governor of Puerto Rico. Because the governor is the highest elected official, it is akin to the US White House in terms of symbolic value. La Fortaleza is one of the oldest Spanish colonial buildings in Puerto Rico and as such has been an object of pride and one of the more popular symbols used in the promotion of the island. La Fortaleza therefore serves two functions; one, it is a source of pride presumably because it is evidence of the age of Puerto Rican society, proving the value of this culture; and second, it is/was a symbol of Spanish colonial rule as the seat of government since its construction and therefore a reminder of colonialism. This creates a strain between the desire for the building to contain symbols of identity, worth, and self-definition and what the building represents as the seat of colonial rule. Because buildings can have the tendency to maintain the signification of the power that built it, the inconsistencies within La Fortaleza lead to an uncomfortable tension between societal perception and physical form. Age tends to be an irresistible ingredient for most societies – the older the structures are the more valid the culture is (if we take Alois Reigel's description). Certainly across the Americas those countries whose border inscriptions *accidentally* encompass stationary Indian societies (the ruins of Mayan, Aztec, and Incan empires) are talked about as 'great cultures' while those on nomad Indian land are considered to be of a lesser cultural richness; they are too new. This makes it more difficult for these societies to provide evidence of their culture through traditions, which in post-industrial societies are largely invented[22]. La Fortaleza was built over numerous years and underwent various reconstructions but it did not house a Puerto Rican government until the 1950's. This structure is part of Puerto Rican culture; a culture which grew out of multiple cultures from the Caribbean, Africa, and Spain and continues to grow most recently with the American influence. Culture is constantly growing because it exists not in material form but in society. Even the oldest or largest cultures are constantly evolving.

Perceptually, the building is heavily embedded into the fabric of Viejo San Juan making it less an element of governance separate from yet accessible to the people and more of a weighted moment within the city. The fabric of San Juan is differentiated by open spaces or recesses, as is the case with La Fortaleza. The building sits along the city wall (as it originally had to serve as a military fortress as

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[22] See Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, (1999)

Figure 17 - La Fortaleza and the city wall.
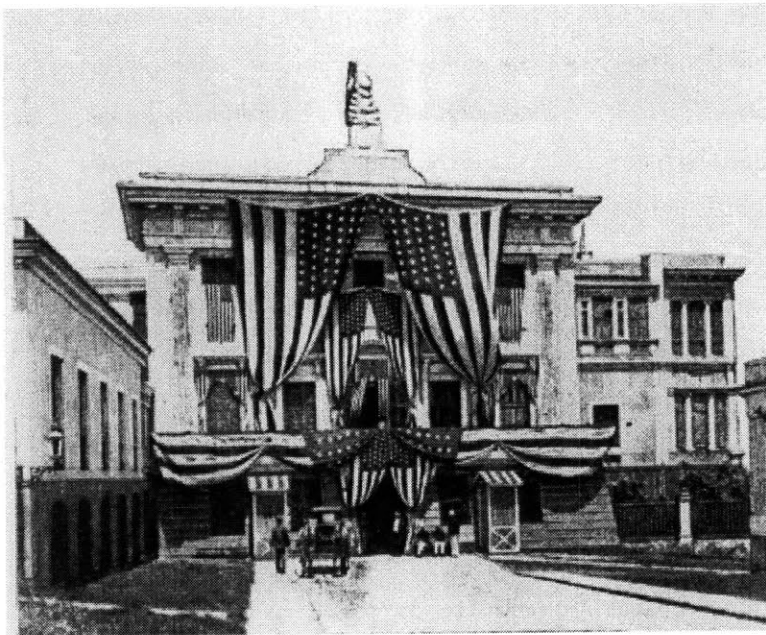
Figure 18 - La Fortaleza on the Fourth of July in 1899

well as the seat of government) allowing it to conceptually appropriate the wall as an extension of its political force in defining space (see figure 17). La Fortaleza is within the walls but allows for simultaneous observation of what is outside the walls as well. It speaks to a previous epoch of colonial conquest and the type of spaces needed to execute the colonial project. Once defender of the Caribbean, it is now considered along with the rest of the military architectural apparatus of the 16th and 17th century to be charming, comfortable, and part of the heritage of the Puerto Rican people, typically invoked as a source of pride. The assumption that we make between La Fortaleza's spatial and formal expression and Puerto Rican society are that one represents the other[23]. Spatially, this building occupies a very specific moment in the history of San Juan, contributing to the Puerto Rican conceptualization of space but not fully representing it. La Fortaleza does not currently inform local spatial production adequately, that is except as historical referent or validation. This meaning attached to this building does have the ability to be read differently over time. The assumptions made about its formal qualities could be deconstructed and rewritten to correspond to a ideology different from the Spanish colonialism. Not all buildings have this ability, as we will see later on the way that El Capitolio defines the space around it and contains the space within it disallows alternate readings of it.

Because La Fortaleza was so strongly associated with the Spanish colonial government that when the US took control of Puerto Rico in 1898, they felt the need to instantly start the process of dismantling and rewriting all existing symbols of power related to the building. To that end, one of the first acts was to raise the American flag. This was not sufficient so they covered La Fortaleza with American flags in an attempt to inscribe new meaning onto the centuries old structure that had always symbolized Spanish rule (see figure 18). This photograph was taken on July 4, 1899, a year after the Americans arrived. This gesture was made in celebration of a holiday that had no relevance to Puerto Rico or the US relationship with the island community. The flags afforded the US government the symbolic material presence that they initially lacked but was something that the Spanish had left behind in the form of architecture. The US needed to establish themselves quickly to combat the 400 years of Spanish rule that was entrenched in the minds of local people. They did

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[23] The history of architectural production and conceptualization has been embedded in particular assumptions about the way we see as architects both in design and practice. Jos Boys coined the term 'masculinist rationality' to describe phenomenon. Boys asserts that certain assumptions are made about the relationship between subject (viewer/architect) and object (building). She argues that the construction of a "neutral" Subject-gaze and Object-building contains it's own flaws because the two are linked by associative relationships where one is seen to stand for the other as truth. As Boys points out, by its very nature this associative connection is 'partial, variable, and contested' and cannot ever hope to stand for truth about space. She calls masculinist rationality "a way of seeing which assumes the architect as objective observer and the building as transparent expression of that gaze." Boys (1996) pg. 39. The relationship of La Fortaleza to the people who live around it was never questioned and has been understood to stand for Puerto Rican culture. It would be a difficult task for a building to ever fully represent the environment within which it is built.
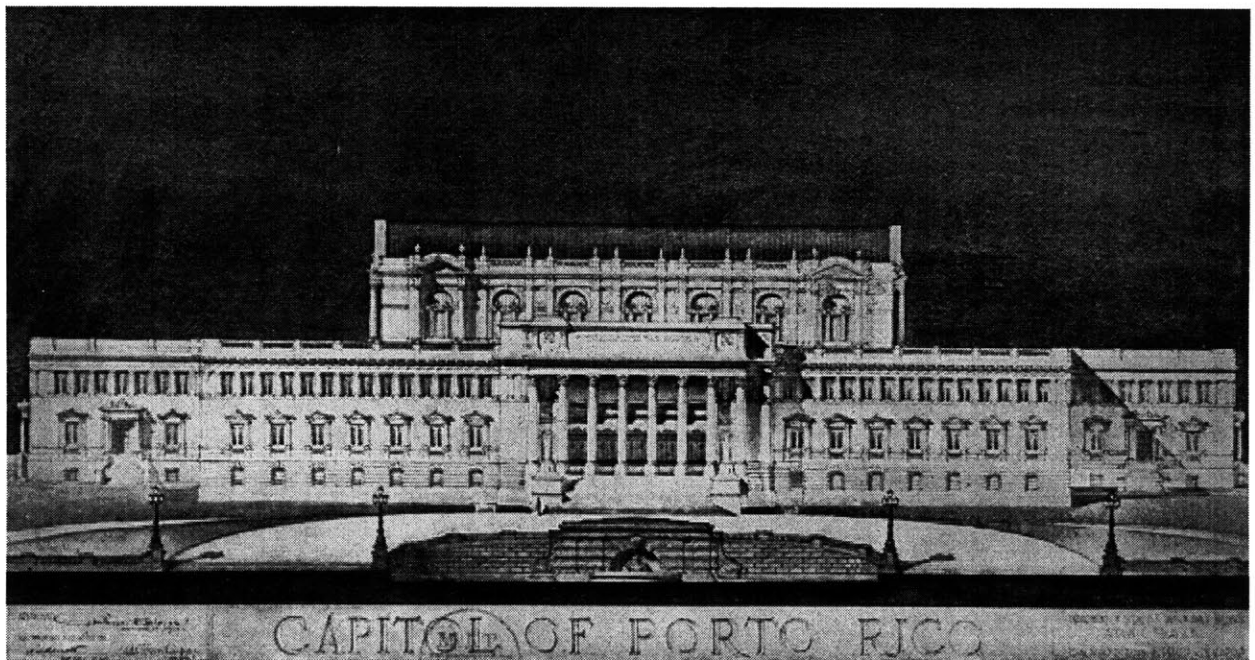
Figure 19 - Finlayson's proposal for El Capitolio with a monitor

not have the time to wait for architecture to be built so they wrote over existing institutions. La Fortaleza was symbolically one of the most important architectural representations of power in San Juan at that time. The act of covering La Fortaleza with Old Glory momentarily altered, in a dramatic way, the local understanding of signification that the building held. It is the 'out of sight, out of mind' technique. Precipitously for the United States, La Fortaleza's clean neo-classical style did not present any ideological challenges either. If it had been a style from Spain with strong Moorish influences, which are not uncommon in Latin America, it may have required more than red, white, and blue fabric to mediate this space. Ironically, both the Spanish government in the 1800's and the US government in the 1900's used neoclassical architecture to project the image of an ordered and efficient government; something they believed the Puerto Ricans were incapable of.

El Capitolio (The Capitol Building)

El Capitolio houses the legislative branch of the Puerto Rican government. At the turn of the century the offices of the local government were scattered among a variety of buildings until the Food Commission of Puerto Rico donated $600,000 to the construction of a new capitol building. The money came from Puerto Rico but the control over the buildings representation remained in Washington. A design competition for El Capitolio was held in 1907. The decision-makers were composed of two groups: the competition jury, made up of three American architects, and the Capitol commission, comprised of local politicians. The Capitol Commission favored a French Renaissance design (popular at the turn of the century) by a Puerto Rican architect, proposing that this style best-expressed Puerto Rican values. The jury, on the other hand, favored an American neo-classical design reminiscent of the capitol building in Washington. The difficulty in sorting out an appropriate 'style', as opposed to an appropriate design, lasted until 1919 when the Government of Puerto Rico finally commissioned a new design for the capitol from state architect, Adrian Finlayson (see figure 19). *Architectural Record* published an article on the project in 1921, which is interesting for a number of reasons but one in particular. The author, Sylvester Baxter, comments on the stylistic variations in this new proposal and their appropriateness for embodying Puerto Rican identity as opposed to a model based on the capitol building in Washington, which was apparently the preferred progenitor at that time[24].

> "A welcome departure from the conventional dome so much associated with our capitol buildings in the United States is the pavilion-like superstructure, or *"monitor"*, as it might be called, which with the quality of *conspicuousness* served by the dome combines that of *utility*, which the dome seldom possesses. The *dome*, moreover, in countries whose antecedents are Spanish, is commonly more associated with *ecclesiastical* than with secular architecture."[25] (My emphasis)

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[24] Vivoni Farage, Enrique, "The Architecture of Puerto Rican Identity", in Alvarez Curbelo and Vivoni Farage, eds. (1998) p. 122
[25] Baxter (1921) p. 179

Figure 20 - El Capitolio building today - the 'Washington model'.

Figure 21 - Inauguration of El Capitolio
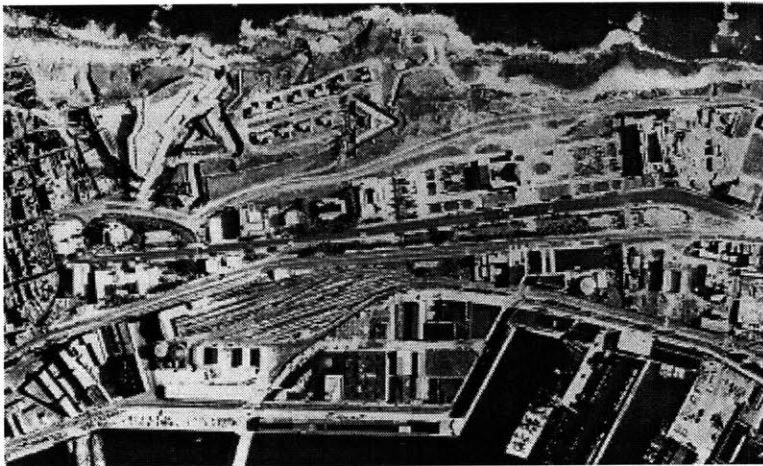
Figure 22 - Monumental district

Figure 23 - El Capitolio sits apart.

Finlayson refers to a number of formal and stylistic moves within the design that he felt exhibited a Puerto Rican identity. The reference to the dome as sacerdotal object rather than a secular one hints at the underlying identities that went into making the New World but was rarely considered. In this case the meaning attached to the dome comes from the influence of the Moors during their 900-year occupation of the Iberian Peninsula, which ended only shortly before Columbus' voyage. This is interesting because Finlayson's design never gets built and the 'Washington model' wins in the end (see figure 20). Construction on El Capitolio started in 1925 and the building was inaugurated in 1929 (see figure 21). El Capitolio was declared an historic monument in 1997, not for its architecture but for the events that have taken place inside it. The built capitol building has a dome, an object with a largely secular meaning within the United States. In the end, the government of Puerto Rico was symbolically and physically wrapped up in the iconography of the United States. The fact that the neoclassical style was used in both La Fortaleza and El Capitolio is not as incongruent as it might initially appear. "Neoclassicism from the mid-18th century onwards…serves as both a symbol of and an instrument for the propagation of universal civilization."[26] Neoclassicism may have been the first "international style" symbolizing the notion of civilization for a variety of different cultures. The ideologies behind both of these buildings, the Spanish government and the US government, would have wanted to anchor themselves in civilization. For the Spanish the notion of civilization was probably rooted more in the notion of aristocracy, where the connotation of civilization by the late nineteenth century had more to do with "modern technological society, in opposition to preindustrial human values."[27] Puerto Rico in the early part of the 20th century was seen as a preindustrial society that was poor and agricultural. The use of neoclassical style in the design of El Capitolio was a way of expressing the superiority of American culture through architecture.

El Capitolio's style, however, is only the most immediate evidence of how it affects its surroundings. The way the building disciplines the space around it has consequences that are more latent but also as powerful. Its sitting is distinct from previous governmental structures, like La Fortaleza, because it sits in a field of 'monuments' (see figure 22). During the first few decades of the 20th century, the area around El Capitolio was being developed as a civic center. The US government effectively established it's own civic center in contrast to those inside the city walls. This area included the Carnegie Library, the Casino de Puerto Rico (originally built as an elite social club), etc. The fact that it is referred to as the Monumental District is telling enough but even within that context El Capitolio is distinct (see figure 23). The building is located at the most 'pinched' moment on the isleta.

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[26] Frampton (1998) p. 18
[27] Colquhoun, Alan, "The Concept of Regionalism", in Nalbantoglu and Wong, eds. (1997) p. 15
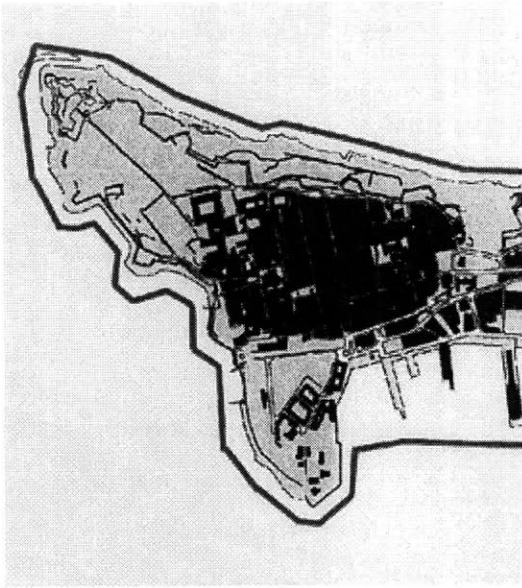
Figure 24 - Compact Spanish colonial urban fabric.
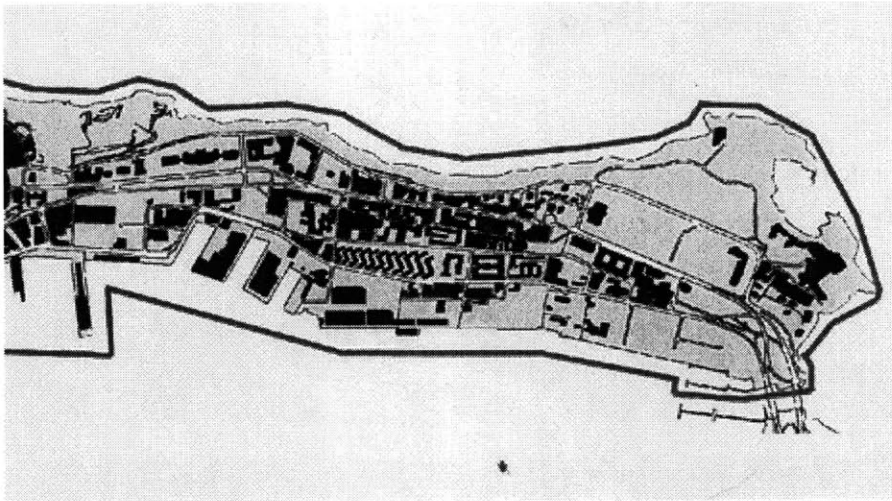
Figure 25 - Isolated American urban fabric.
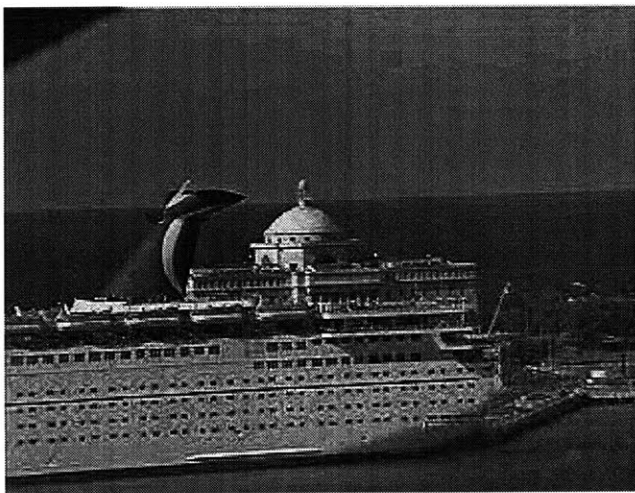
Figure 26 - El Capitolio and cruise ships.

It sits facing north overlooking the ocean towards North America. Even the urban edge that defines Viejo San Juan is eradicated in and around El Capitolio. An awesome structure sitting high above water level, El Capitolio anchors the hinge point on a spine of government buildings starting with La Fortaleza to the west in the old city, and ending with El Tribunal in the east. Spanish colonial architecture, as executed in San Juan, is more *compact* in terms of its spatial domain (see figure 24). The agglomeration of the city (urban fabric) and military structures (walls, forts) are the predominating forms while buildings are established on open squares within that. The American developments, however, tend to establish buildings in isolation (see figure 25). The buildings, like El Capitolio, are developed *away from* the fabric.

El Capitolio is strikingly out of place on the isleta, in San Juan, and Puerto Rico in general. While it clearly reads as an important and powerful space, it just as clearly reads as a foreign body in this place. Like the cruise ships that are docked in front of it, El Capitolio looks odd, out of scale, and as though it were not meant to stay for very long (see figure 26). El Capitolio works in Washington but what happens when "Mr. Smith" goes to Puerto Rico? In these ways, it points more stridently to some of the assumptions we make about architecture as a representation of 'man' and 'society'.

These works (two among a multitude of examples) illuminate the tendency to define architecture as a practice of representation. The "division between formal [style and form] and functional [building program] issues in architecture diminishes the engagement of architects with issues of power...It serves to sustain the illusion that architecture can be practiced in a realm of autonomy from social power."[28] The symbolic associations attributed to style tend to be more prominent than the spatial affects of marking, delineating, defining, enclosing, or excluding, making the practice seem removed from the tactics of power. The presumption that architecture is representation contributes to the invisibility, and therefore often latent qualities, of marking, enclosing, defining, etc. As we can see in El Capitolio the formal qualities of the building were not derived from 'functional issues'; like program, climate, location, and I would like to include culture. Culture could also be included in functional issues if we consider how the building functions culturally within the space of San Juan. It seems clear that local culture was not taken into consideration when it was designed. El Capitolio does not only exclude through overt means of representation like style, it is even more aggressive in terms of the way it disciplines the space around it: setting apart, maintaining distance, elevated position, etc. It visually dominates the landscape around it. Most striking is the way El Capitolio controls the space within the building. It is an entirely anti-tropical structure, closed off to the

Figure 27 - El Tribunal

outside and requiring artificial means to regulate the air inside. It is northern architecture imposed on a tropical space. Because of the stylistic and, more importantly, severe way this building physically isolates itself by shutting out the socio-spatial life around it, it cannot allow for other readings. It is a hermetic space: a one-liner totally caught-up within American colonial ideologies.

A persistent problem in the profession has been, even with the awareness of the 'other', the presumed supremacy of a particular world-view over another. Architecture as a practice and a material product, is deeply embedded in society and culture but all too frequently it 'represents' only a particular fraction of the place it is built. The architect is also largely separate from the political project because he is generally working within 'techniques' of 'style' – like neoclassicism, which simultaneously allows for a personal distancing and a claim to a 'rational (read: politically impartial) process'. In the words of historian Alan Colquhoun:

> "Modern society is polyvalent – that is to say, its codes are generated randomly from within a universal system of rationalization that, in itself, claims to be "value free"...architecture, whose codes have always been even less amenable to individual and random manipulation than the other "arts" and more dependant on impersonal and imperative topologies and techniques."[29]

The architect in fact is perceived to be even farther removed from these associations than built space is. A comment by Foucault when comparing architects to other professionals who exercise control within society (i.e. doctors, lawyers, etc.) is telling of this understanding.

> "After all, the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house he built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control."[30]

The architect, once again, is seen as an agent of style or representation in the inert practice of positioning objects (house, partition, chimney, etc.), the profession is detached from the social and economico-political forces. Foucault's comment presents some in congruencies because his work on architecture or more accurately space, deals primarily with institutions and heterotopias. Yet he chooses the one building type that architects have the least amount of input on as the vast majority of houses are built without an architect. If one were to multiply those houses, as we will see later on in the reading of Puerta Tierra, then it is not so easy for the individual to erase the defining elements of the surrounding domestic spaces.

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[29] Colquhoun, Alan, "The Concept of Regionalism", in Nalbantoglu and Wong, eds. (1997), p.23

[30] As quoted in McLeod (1996) p. 31 Mary McLeod's response to this statement: "Surely, few occupants of public housing projects or nursing homes could or would make the same statement." Lefebvre notes that Foucault is not always explicit about the type of space he is referring to, "between the space of philosophers or the space of people who deal with material things" for example. If one were dealing with the later type of space then it would be difficult to not consider its "designer" as being part of the larger mechanism of power. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (1991) p. 3

plan

Figures 28-30

interior

canopy
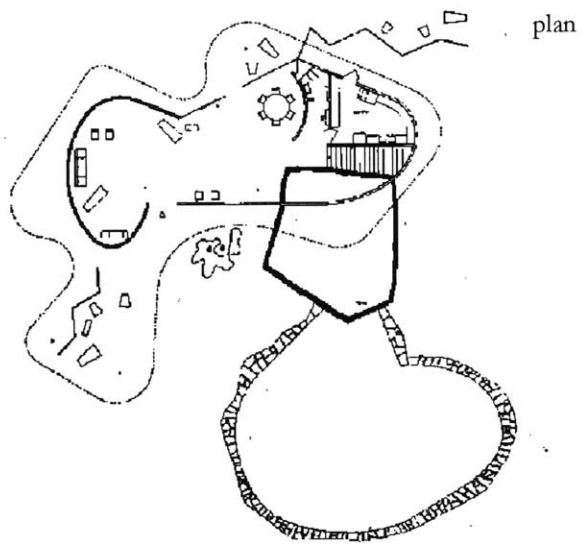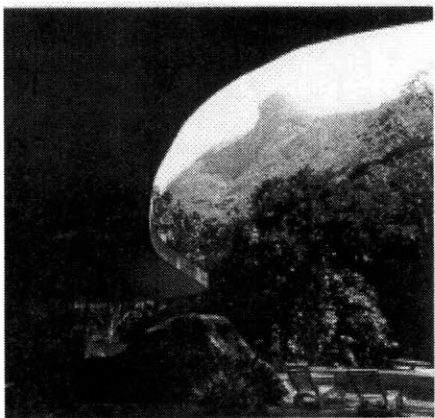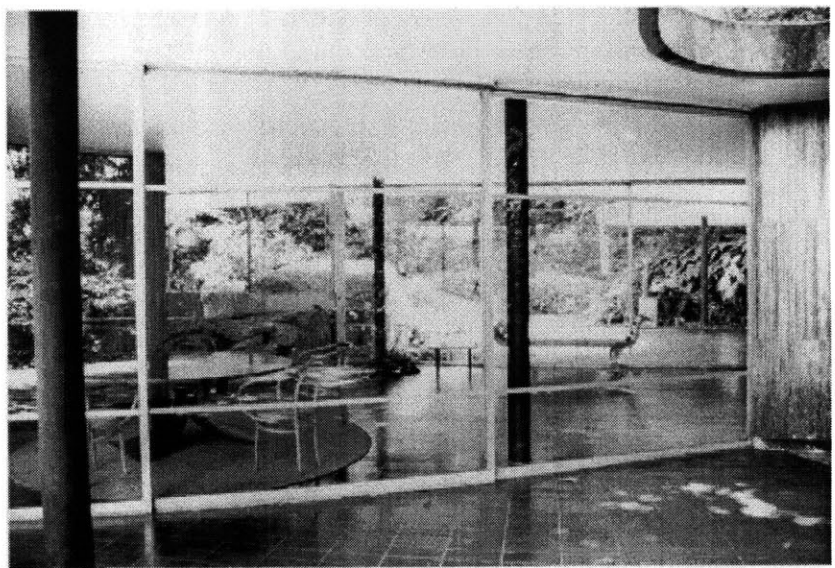
The Supreme Court (Tribunal)

The final point along the 'governmental spine' is the judicial branch of government, which is housed in El Tribunal (Supreme Court building) designed by the Puerto Rican firm Toro y Ferrer (see figure 27). This building is an example of tropicalized international style architecture. El Tribunal was the first major public structure commissioned by the Commonwealth government. Their choice of expression is clearly distinguished from both the Spanish and American colonial government structures, which were rendered in classical Western vocabularies in order to articulate their position of authority. The brand new Commonwealth government, on the other hand, chose to align with a modernist aesthetic. The outcome of this union – place (tropics) and form (modernist) – resulted in a new governmental expression in Puerto Rico.

The work of Toro y Ferrer including El Tribunal is part of a movement throughout Caribbean countries and Brazil, created by Latino architects (i.e. Niemeyer, da Costa) in the 50's who went abroad to study and then returned to reinvent and develop culturally significant architecture in their homelands. Particularly with Niemeyer, we see a strong integration of modernist aesthetics and local identity. Niemeyer's Canoas House built in 1953 is the quintessential example of free-form modernism (see figures 28-30). This project received much critical attention because of the way it references the local condition through a form that highlights the natural surroundings and minimizes the importance of European architectural language and materials. Niemeyer was challenging European, specifically Corbusien, notions about architecture. The following poem – "The Poem of the Curve" – is his response to Corbusier's "Poem of the Right Angle".

> "It is not the right angle that attracts me, nor the straight line – hard and inflexible –
> created by man. What attracts me is the free and sensual curve, the curve that I find in the
> mountains of my country, in the sinuous course of its rivers, in the body of the beloved
> woman. This entire universe is made of curves, the curved universe of Einstein."[31]

The simplicity or cliché of using the curve of the female body is not suprising in a practice dominated by men. However, this poem does point to the notion of body, which has a specific cultural presence in tropical Latin America that is different from other parts of the Americas[32]. The similarity between Brazil and Puerto Rico on this topic is not insignificant. Niemeyer's work is often referred to as radical and indeed in this earlier work he used architecture as a *critical cultural tool* in order to propose alternative spaces for his time. It is relevant to a time, especially in regards to Puerto Rico and the work of Toro y Ferrer and Klumb, when architecture was being used as a way to define local

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[31] Underwood, (1994) p. 41
[32] This topic has been discussed extensively by a variety of scholars. See Octavio Paz, *Convergences: Essays on Art and Literature* (1987), *An Erotic Beyond Sade* (1998); Renata Mautner Wasserman, *Exotic Nations: Literature and*

Figures 31

Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830-1930 (1994); Coco Fusco, *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas;*

cultural identity by adopting modernism as a strategy for overturning existing dominant architectural expressions. His desire to look at the current local condition, reflect upon it, and use it as the generator for the production of space makes his work active and propelling. Niemeyer however, was also very much aware of the complicity of the profession with larger dominant ideological agendas. In 1954, he writes:

> "Architecture must express the spirit of the technical and social forces that are predominate in a given epoch; but when such forces are balanced, the resulting conflict is prejudicial to the content of the work and to the work as a whole. I should very much have liked to be in a position to present a more realistic achievement: a kind of work that reflects not only refinements and comfort but also a positive collaboration between the architect and the whole society."[33]

Around the same time the firms of Toro y Ferrer and Henry Klumb were very active in building a series of important buildings in Puerto Rico: the Tribunal, Hotel Caribe, buildings for the University of Puerto Rico campus, houses, etc. These works did not achieve the level of radical thought that Niemeyer in Brazil, or Porras in Cuba did but they are important and beautiful structures within Puerto Rican geography. These buildings varying greatly from the governmental and university structures (like El Capitolio or the original University of Puerto Rico campus – fig. 7) built directly under American ideology.

This was the first time in Puerto Rico, apart form vernacular styles (i.e. *criollo* houses), that architecture was created in response to the local environmental conditions. This modernist expression was particularly suited for the tropics. The brise-soleil, open floor plans, screens, etcetera, all worked to only articulate a clean and efficient architecture but also responded climactically to the needs of the inhabitants. It was an architecture that used form, subordinating mechanics, to address the environmental conditions of site. These firms also adapted modernist architectural forms to their local conditions by inhabiting the ground plane, which was typically elevated, and the minimal use of glass in public spaces like lobbies and circulation spaces (see figure 31). The language used in this building therefore does not force a northern architecture, like El Capitolio, into a tropical condition, which would highlight the binary condition of us and them climactically through hot/cold. El Tribunal instead responds towards local climatic conditions in a way that allows the building to contain certain local understandings about place and identity. Architectural historian Kenneth Frampton writes about how the fenestration of a building speaks about cultural influences connected

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[33] Underwood, (1994) p. 93
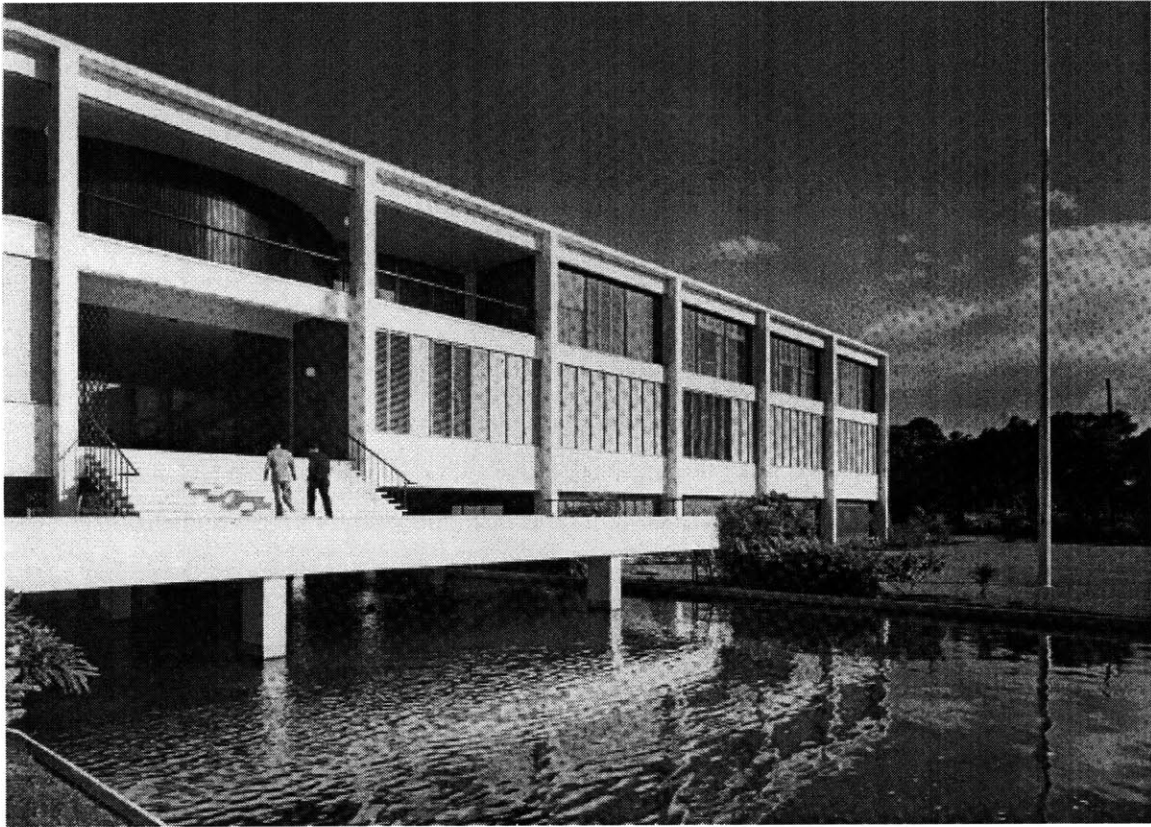
Figures 32 - Entry to El Tribunal

to place that counters the loss of place brought on by the process of mechanical reproduction.

> "A constant "regional inflection" of the form arises directly from the fact that in certain climates the glazed aperture is advanced, while in others it is recessed behind the masonry façade...The way in which such openings provide for appropriate ventilation also constitutes an unsentimental element reflecting the nature of local culture. Here, clearly, the main antagonist of rooted culture is the ubiquitous air-conditioner, applied in all times and in all places, irrespective of the local climatic conditions which have a capacity to express the specific place and the seasonal variations of it climate. Wherever they occur, the fixed window and the remote-controlled air-conditioning system are mutually indicative of domination by universal technique."[34]

So I must digress a moment to El Capitolio and underline the affect of locating the space of government within a large stone box that requires artificial climate control as an invisible, because it is not obvious, means of locating the local 'other' outside of the space of power. La Fortaleza, although rendered in the neoclassical style, is distinguished by the use of interior courtyards to allow for light and air.

El Tribunal's difference therefore, lies in the way space is delineated, how the outdoors is 'let in' through the main stair and vestibule space, the approach towards the building, and more metaphorically by rendering the exterior walls in glass plate. El Tribunal's approach can be contrasted to El Capitolio's intimidating, head on entry; an experience that sets up El Capitolio as a body that one must penetrate, the approach to El Tribunal is more a process of crossing thresholds where one is never wholly inside or outside (see figure 32). The literal transparency in the building alludes to a kind of political transparency that is very different from El Capitolio or La Fortaleza. El Capitolio for example is a dense, imposing structure meant to 'rule over', not to enable a people to participate in government. It does not necessarily follow however that the use of physical transparency results in political transparency. This is where the use of representation in architecture is rooted in a political schema. El Tribunal does not in fact represent a transparent, clean, and rational government, but rather the government's desire to be seen as such.

My interest in this building is the way it disciplines or defines space that allows for multiple readings. It is opened up to the landscape and climate allowing the space to embrace the outdoors and the indoors. This building could also be read in the opposite manner where it becomes a removed (elevated), cold, and intimidating structure but similarly this reading would be derived from the associative assumptions we make about the institution it *represents*. Again, for me this notion that the answer to our current spatial needs lies in a response to a crisis of style will always be a dead end because meaning can alter and shift. Looking again at Niemeyer, the early works have a lasting

[34] Frampton, (1998) p.27

significance because of the process involved in its making. It was a process that included a cultural reading and proposition about a spatial expression for that time. While his work falls clearly short of what this thesis aspires to question (hegemony of spatial assumptions) it may provide some informative strategies. The 1950's and early 60's also appears to be the last time that a truly radical spatial proposition came out of Latin America.

What is largely missing in El Tribunal is the influence of the socio-cultural condition to the extent that it is distinguished among other modern works. Adequate references that would shed light on the architects' objectives are not available. However, the building itself, while being an impressive departure from colonial architecture and a strong statement about modernity, is not a uniquely radical spatial statement. By the 1950's, the modernist international style was already widely used by governments and institutions across the globe. It was not a uniquely Puerto Rican architectural expression. Modernist architecture at this point refers to a specific static style[35]. Aesthetically, therefore these works in part aimed to show that Puerto Rico was the same or rather equal to central cultures. Not all architecture needs to act radically but in Puerto Rico's colonial condition, El Tribunal's relationship to identity must be questioned. This lack of radical proposition lessens the impact of the architecture in terms of its ability to act as a *critical cultural tool* but again the success of El Tribunal, particularly when read against the other two buildings, is it's ability to sustain multiple readings within the Puerto Rican context. As I have mentioned, this is something that El Capitolio is completely incapable of and La Fortaleza can only do partially. El Tribunal and particularly the work of Toro y Ferrer and Henry Klumb are very important examples of ways that Puerto Ricans have used architecture to mark out their own territory establish a ground of resistance, create their own spatial reality, relative to colonial structures.

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[35] Here, I would like to differentiate between the terms modern/modernism and modernist as they are used in architectural discourse. Modernism began as an act of liberation through a universalizing subject against predominant societal relationships and prejudices. To be modern then is to have the capacity to challenge our condition and recreate our values through our 'productive powers', as Marx would refer to it. Marshall Berman notes that it is not the end product but the process that makes things new:

"What makes all these changes distinctively modern is not the inventions themselves, but a process of incessant enquiry, discovery and innovation, and a shared determination to transform theory into practice, to use all we know to change the world." (Berman, 1996:35)

So if to be modern is to transform, if it is a "process of incessant enquiry, discovery and innovation", then we are all moderns, including post-modernists. Modernity in the above definition is not about style but about questioning and proposing. The term modern changes dramatically in architectural discourse: the *modernist style* for example. This is where architecture consistently attaches itself to superficial ideas of representation rather than to generative ideas in spatial logic. Modernist and post-modernist architecture refer to aesthetics that, as such, are continually trapped in their moment. Deconstrcutivist architecture is the same. Derrida himself says that "deconstructivism is a North American invention" and that he refers to the notion of deconstruction. While this may be arguable, my point is that the use of style as a representation of theory is a terminal act and not a generative one. [Second line] Aesthetics are very important in architecture and necessary to support the quality of space, the success of spatial production cannot be separated from it. However, to talk about aesthetics is one thing and style is another. According to the above description, modernism should have multiple readings in terms of form, even continuously evolving pluralist readings.
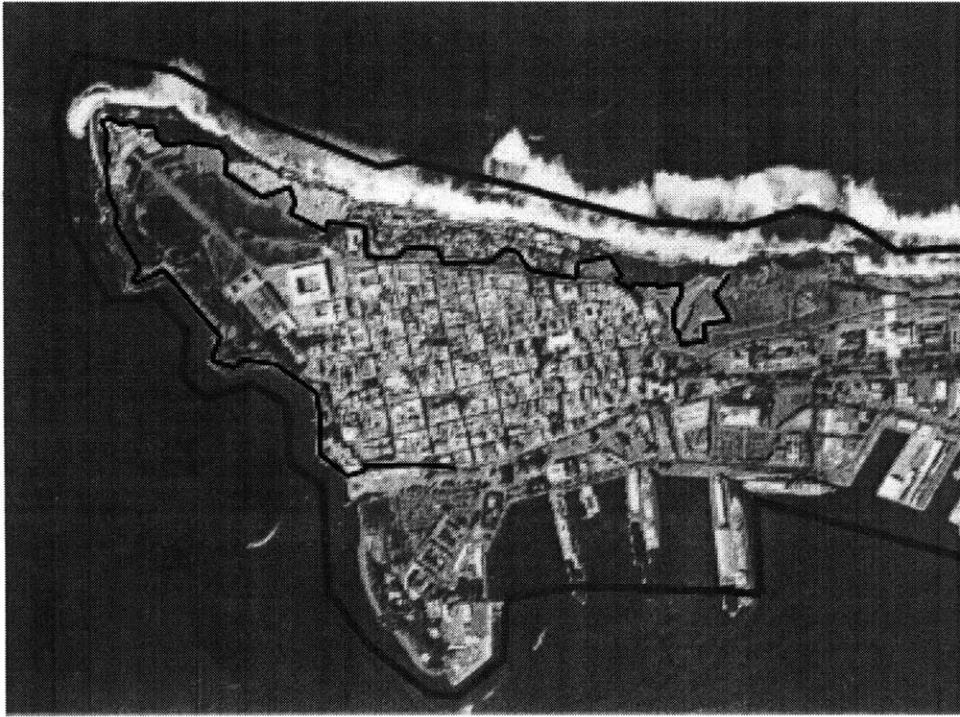
Figures 33- City wall
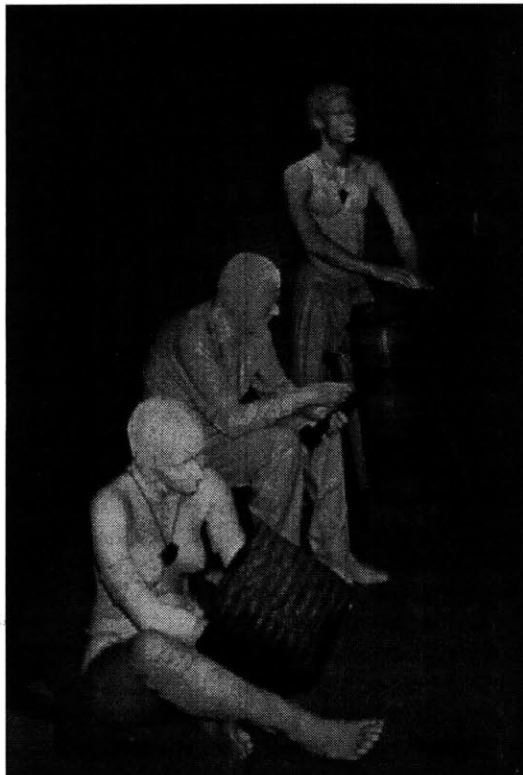
Figures 34 - "Our Heritage" sculpure

These three buildings express in physical form, through style and spatial definition, the aspirations of three different political agendas on the island over the course of its history. The Spanish built the original city, Viejo San Juan and some extramural settlements. The Americans built their own space adjacent to these Spanish efforts. Finally, with the creation of limited local rule in the 1950's, the new Puerto Rican government defined its own space in El Tribunal on the last remaining section of the isleta. This was also the last time that Puerto Ricans put forth a spatial agenda addressing the question of cultural identity. Until very recently, the use of spatial production has been innocuous and ignored as a way of extending themselves into the world.

THE WALL : Tensions Between Object and Social Perception

The city wall (see figure 33) that once completely surrounded Viejo San Juan was started by the Spanish in 1521 to protect the city from the constant threat of invasion. Spain was claiming it's stake in the New World, it's objective was gold and the extension of empire, and it's instrument to achieve these objectives was the military. The city wall of San Juan was an enormous edifice for military defense. It was first and foremost a device of war meant to include and control some and exclude others. The original intent behind the wall was to keep out and defend the city from invading forces. Additionally however, its physical reality greatly impacted the spatial culture of the city. To circumscribe a line in the ground is to mark, notate, or define area; the wall delineates 3-dimentional spaces: it is a boundary. This boundary *disciplines* the space on either side of it. Over time, the meaning of the wall morphed to become an element that acted on those it portended to protect and eventually evolved into an icon used to promote the city to tourists.

Geographically, Puerto Rico was strategically located within the New World and was very quickly enlisted to act as guardian to the whole of the Caribbean basin. It is important to understand why the wall was built but also *who* built it. Like many great structures in the Americas it is not a project that the Spanish took upon themselves to erect. The construction of the wall was a violent act that used menial and slave labor in order to complete the project in four years; it was begun in 1634 and nearly finished by 1638. [36] The wall was finished during the last third of the 18th century. It has an average height of 7.50 meters and width of 5.9 meters. The laborers were primarily enslaved Africans and Indians whose technical contribution has frequently been overlooked in the history of the building of this wall and in general throughout the Americas. The role of these people in the founding of the city is frequently elided and only called upon when defining Puerto Rican identity as

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[36] Castro, (1980)

Cemetery
La Perla
School
Prison
Fortaleza
Institutions

Figures 35

Edicion Especial del Ciclon de San Felipe

GRAFICO
DE PUERTO RICO

Septiembre 29 de 1928
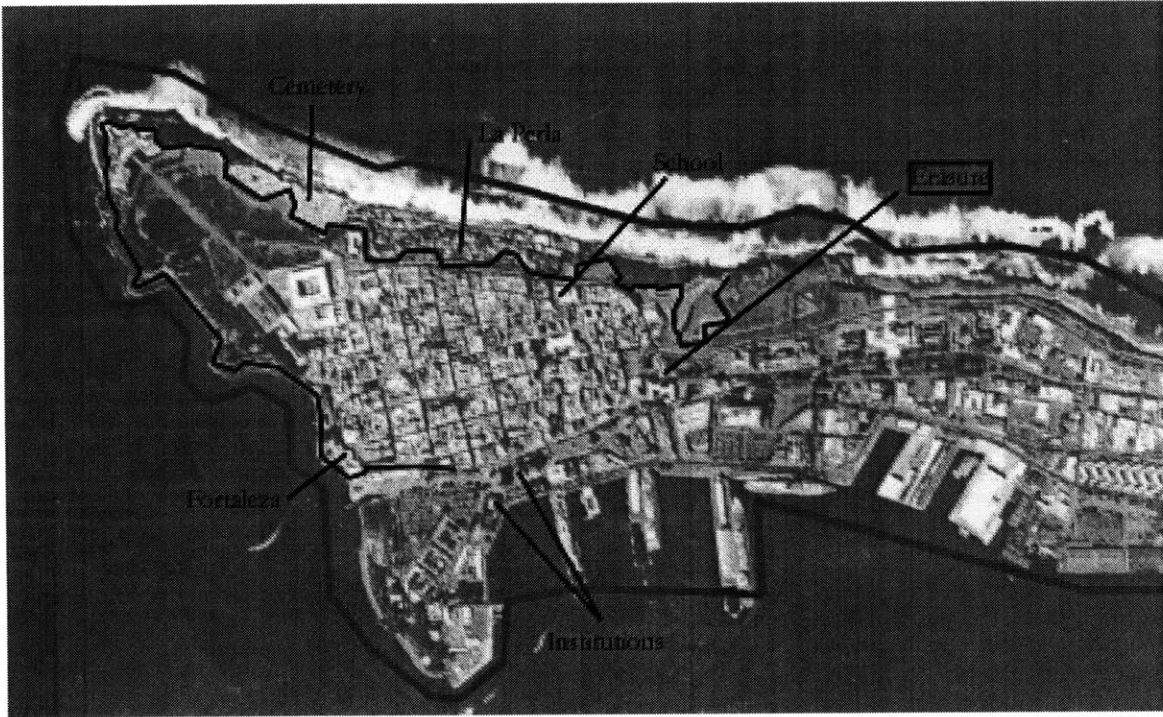
Figures 36 - La Perla
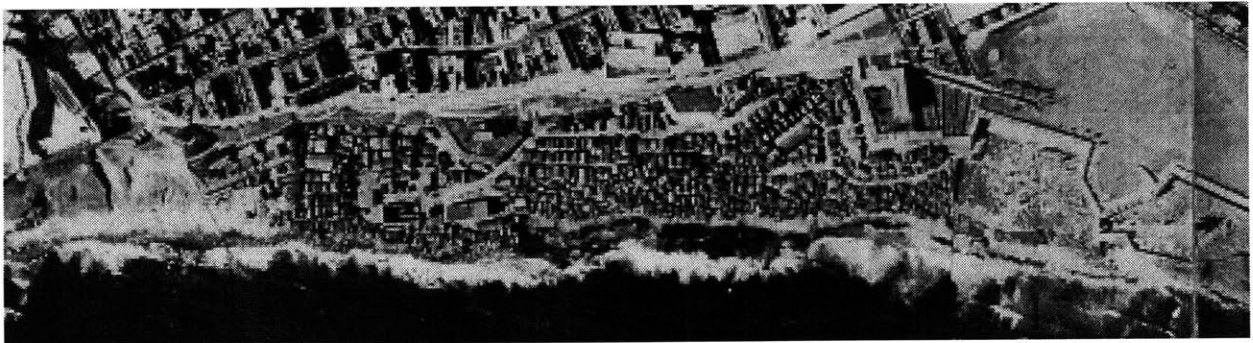
exemplified in the sculpture "Our Heritage" (see figure 34). Their work, construction knowledge, craftsmanship, lives, etc. are all ignored in the history and nationalist discussion of the Hispanic architectural tradition in Puerto Rico. To establish an understanding of space making in San Juan it would be necessary to look at that place and not principally to Hispanic, American, or any other exterior definitions of culture. Within the Americas, there needs to be a reflection on the built environment and its social relationships. Cultures across the Americas, and most acutely in Puerto Rico, have become so pluralist since the European invasion and more so since the pronouncedly rapid growth of capitalism that it is difficult to establish any 'pure' history, heritage, or understanding. If possible, an architecture of resistance that proposed to reestablish meaning through spatial relationships and provide a critical cultural position would need to look to and question the local in order to mediate global cultures, which inevitably touch all of us.

The wall mediates, defines, and supports numerous tensions along its path. It is a boundary that wraps around and through us, supporting past military and current political agendas but also functions as a source of pride (one of the few remaining fortifications of its kind in the Americas) and of beauty. Part of the charm of the old city is the sense of a physical bringing together within a confined space that the rest of San Juan and most modern cities do not have[37]. In the US, cities spread as people simultaneously staked out their own space and disconnected socially from those around them; San Juan is no different. Fundamentally, the issues surrounding the walls' production did not have to do with an overwhelming desire to be close but rather to locate people within space. These objectives were complimentary to later political objectives. The wall allows government (or any power) to be divisive without appearing to be so, largely because it is an historic element (unlike the highly visible motives behind the wall the US government is currently building along the Mexican/American boarder). While the city wall is clearly visible, it's association with the division of space is not attached to the civil government; it remains attached to the previous Spanish military regime. This is one possible understanding but a second is that the *meaning* of the wall to a certain extent is detached from its physical form. This is one of the more challenging issues surrounding the role of architecture within dominant ideologies: our ability to detach object (the spaces we build) from our social constructs and relationship when it serves us. There are a variety of productive tensions along the path of the wall, I will look at six of them: La Perla, the cemetery, the field (sea), La Fortaleza, American institutions, and erasure (see figure 35).

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[37] This notion of place in architectural discuourse has been widely discussed by critics promoting phenomenological theory, most notably by Christian Norberg-Schultz in his book *Genius Loci*.
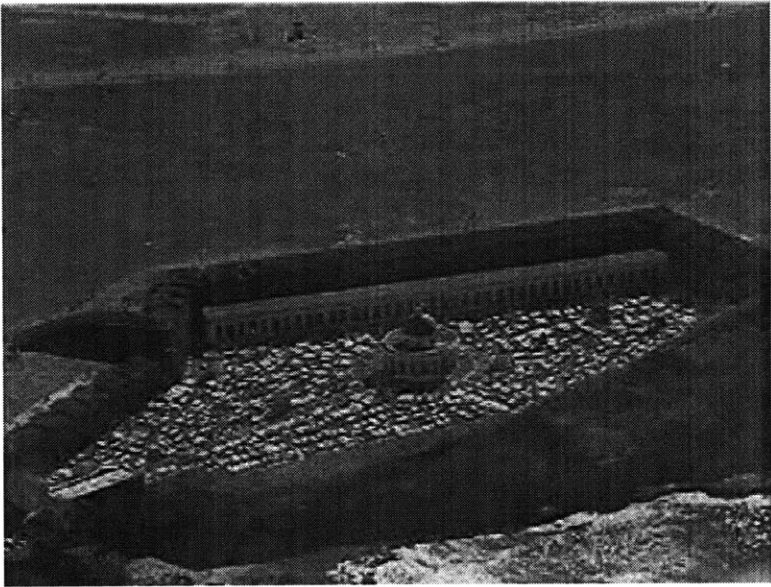
Figures 37 - Cemetery
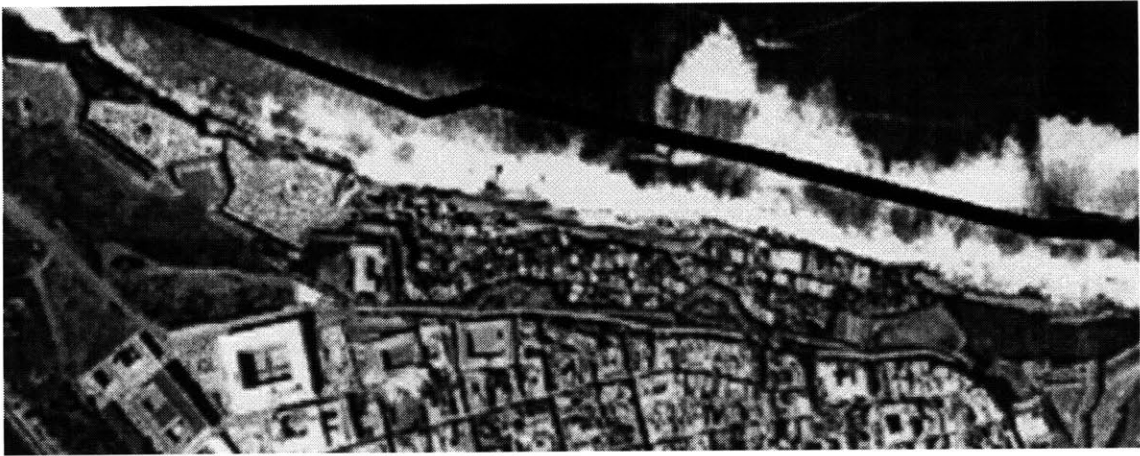
Figures 38 - La Perla and the cemetery - the abject poor and
the city of the dead.

La Perla

The neighborhood La Perla, physically and socio-politically, is the first one of these moments of productive tension (see figure 36). As the city grew from military stronghold to commercial port the role of the wall shifted to become an armature that provided a place for the working class to establish communities. At this point, the wall acts as a boundary between those that are included, the residents of Viejo San Juan, and those that are not, the working class neighborhood at the outside bottom of the wall. La Perla's economic status, infamously one of the poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods in Puerto Rico, is only made more dramatic by its physical location on a narrow strip of land between the wall and the Caribbean Sea. Here again, however, we have a shift between the physical reality of the wall and the perception of it. The inhabitants understand Viejo San Juan to be their downtown and not a completely separate community. What looks like the separation of the abject poor from the wealthy city is physically accurate but socially not so one-dimensional. The societal frame of the residents is very different from those who are not residents, so the meaning of these spaces is *imperceptible* to the visitor. Additionally, inside the walls exists a very diverse class structure, including all levels of society. The once overt readings of power have now become more complex and pluralistic, so that the disciplinization of space lies not only in the physical form of the wall itself but also in the content of the spaces along it. We can no longer make arguments through physical form alone now that the notion of a universal subject is inadequate and irrelevant for pluralist societies. The physical form does not solely account for the actuality of space or how it is occupied. The wall does shield La Perla from sight creating the double edged sword of omission from government improvement programs, and protection from commercial developers, although I should note that the exposure to the Atlantic Ocean probably acts as a deterrent for the later as well. I will examine later how these renovation projects have affected the far more visible residential community of Puerta Tierra.

Cemetery

Adjacent to La Perla but farther along the wall towards El Moro, is the cemetery, which is also caught between the sea and the wall (see figure 37). The cemetery was relocated outside of the city walls by order of the Spanish authorities to prevent disease at the end of the 18th century. This then allows for another degree of separation and dislocation from the city. Certain elements are physically distinguished from the whole. "From then on [the nineteenth century], they no longer constitute the sacred and immortal wind of the city, but the 'other city', where each family possessed its gloomy dwelling."[38]This "city of the dead" is the marble counterpoint to the city of San Juan inside the wall and an ironic neighbor to La Perla: the dead and the abject poor side by side (see figure 38). Because the

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[38] Ibid, p. 354

Figures 39 - La Fortaleza

La Perla
School
Erasure
Institutions
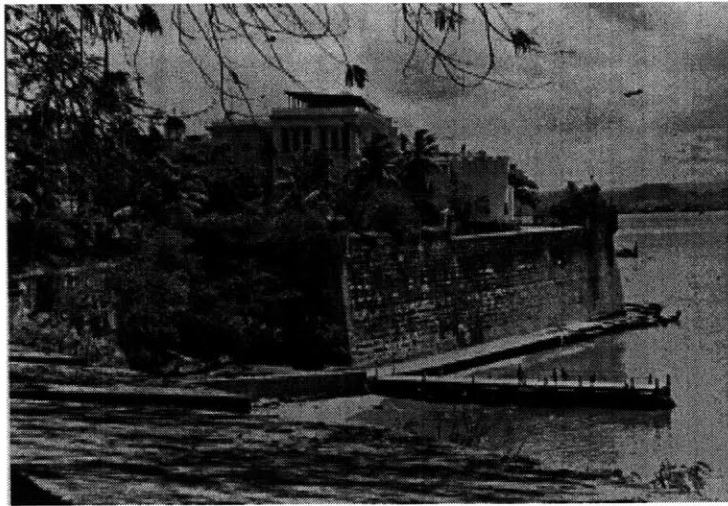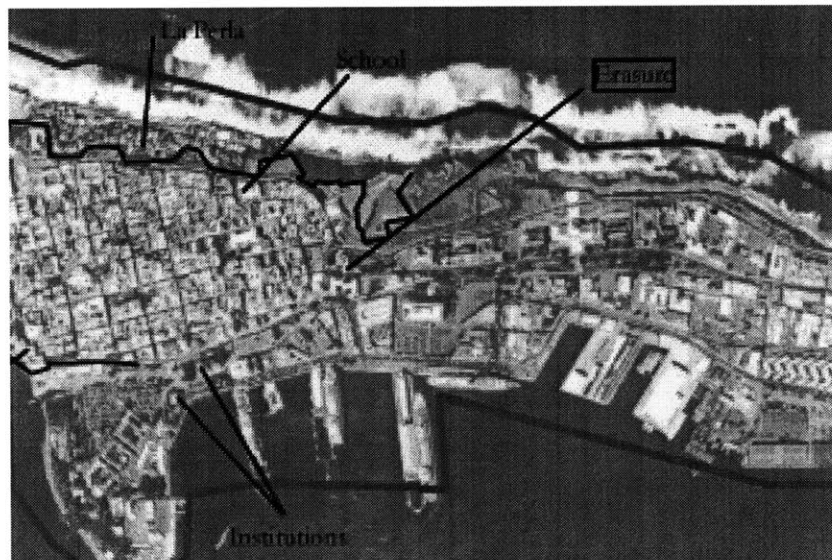
Figures 40

Figures 41 - Port Entry

wall was built as a completely enclosed structure it highlighted the difference between inside and outside. If it had been built only to one side it would have been less overt in its delineation of space at the local scale and would have been read only at a more global scale. So the wall is the element that defines the 'other' in relation to the center, the city inside. La Perla becomes an example of the 'other-class' and the cemetery is the 'other-dead' or 'other-body'. Spaces outside the wall become more focused moments of the whole of the city, isolated and unseen, as in the case of the dead and poor. Foucault in his work on heterotopias writes about the space of the cemetery in relationship to other social spaces, discussing the simultaneous separation and connection that the modern cemetery has with the rest of the city.

> "This [the cemetery] is certainly an 'other' place with respect to ordinary cultural spaces, and yet it is connected with all the locations of the city, the society, the village, and so on, since every family has some relative there."[39]

Here the cemetery achieves what La Perla does not, that is the reference to a lager whole. This could be understood in crueler fashion as a further isolation for the living outside the wall because it is a specific section of society.

La Fortaleza

At La Fortaleza, the wall mediates between the building and the sea (see figure 39). La Fortaleza, as we began to look at earlier, sits directly adjacent to the wall and was positioned there in part because of the visual advantage that it could maintain over San Juan Harbor, outside of the wall. Physically, La Fortaleza is nearly integral to the wall because it was originally part of the large military apparatus that San Juan embodied. This point along the walls path, therefore, was one of surveillance and visual control over the areas of land that could not be enclosed, for reasons of economy and practicality. The wall is a mediator as well as a definer of space. Spaces were built-up along the wall edge to support a visual advantage over the exterior of the city. The wall, in fact, controlled all development on either side of it. Any structures built outside of the wall had to comply with military regulations, which said that all structures had to be low enough so that they would not interfere with the trajectory of bombs from the fortifications[40]. The wall was not simply a divider between inside and outside but also a mediator of spatial development along it and immediately surrounding it.

Institutions

In a fifth condition, the wall helps to define important spatial markers such as entry and governing institutions. Under Spanish rule, the wall unified various military institutions (La Fortaleza, El Moro, etc.), which were symbolic of order and control within the city. These moments along the wall are

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[39] Foucault, in Leach ed. (1997) p. 353
[40] Sepúlveda Rivera, Aníbal, *San Juan: Historia ilustrada de su desarrollo urbano*, p.

Figures 42 - Demolition of the wall.
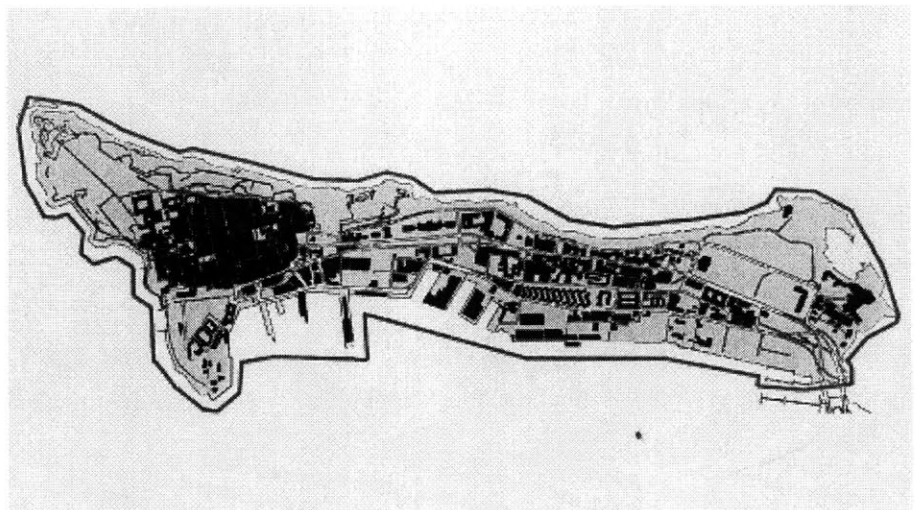
Figures 43

so important that when the American government arrived at the turn of the century they appropriated many of these spaces (see figure 40). The wall in front of the principal port entry, Puerta San Justo, was demolished at the turn of the century to allow for new construction. As we shall see later, this act is similar to the erasure of the wall near El Capitolio. The Americans then built the Federal court and Custom House on the main port entry (see figure 41). It is interesting that the Federal Court - representing the US Government - was built at a prominent spatial moment in the city and El Tribunal - the local Supreme Court - was built in the middle of a park, mostly hidden from view. The US Custom House was built on top of the old Mercantile Deposit. With the addition of other structures (US Post Office, US Coast Guard, etc.) the port entry was spatially rearranged according to US institutional norms. These institutions not only were housed there but spatially the port area was torn down to allow for the construction of U.S. institutional buildings.

In addition, the Americans cleverly built schools on top of military institutions within the city. Simultaneously eliminating any spatial or symbolic reminders of the past regime and creating their own positive image contrary to the Spanish government. Educational institutions were both symbols of re-education and the replacement of military structures with *democratic* structures. Naming the schools after people like Lincoln invoked strong widely known American icons and thereby re-inscribed meaning onto these spaces. The government was symbolically and physically appropriating these spaces (and the people) as American. If the schools were built, not as English speaking, presidentially named structures, but as open educational facilities, their current reading would be less aggressive.

Erasure

Eventually, the wall itself is undone to provide space for urban expansion. The wall was demolished in 1897 after long debates with the military whose resistance was less about defense and more because they were accustomed to controlling urban development in San Juan (see figure 42). One of the principal reasons that the city wall remains largely intact today is because of the lack of funds in the late 18th and early 19th century to demolish it; saving San Juan from the fate of other cities, like Havana, Cuba, who would have their city walls completely torn down to allow for modern urban expansion. In addition, the demolition work in San Juan was very slow because the work was done by hand and manned by a team of volunteers. In the early 1900's the U.S. government demolished the Puerta San Justo to make room for new structures and easier access to the city.

This erasure does not effect the growth of the existing city fabric but becomes the marker between the old city and the new monumental district in Puerta Tierra. In the figure ground of the isleta

Figures 44 - Spanish proposed layout for Puerta Tierra
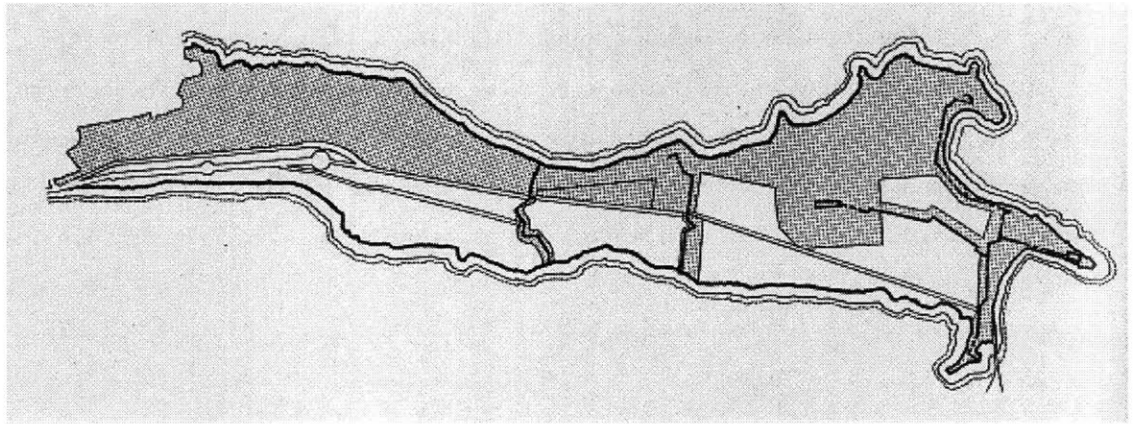
Figures 45 - The grey area indictates the military lands that were turned over directly to the US Government
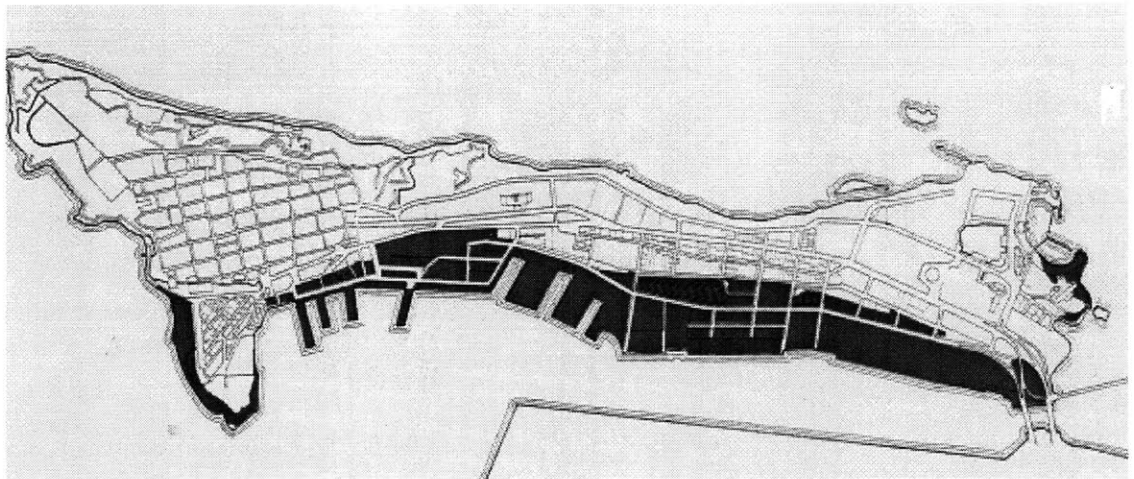
Figures 46 - Grey area indicates in-filled marshlands

(see figure 43) it is difficult to discern the difference between the remaining wall and the erasure because the city fabric holds the edge so clearly. The trace of the wall remains, as does the awareness of penetrating a distinct area within the city. There is also a visual disconnect from inside the old city towards Puerta Tierra. When standing inside the Plaza Colon you cannot clearly see beyond it because the edge has been built up. The shadow of the wall remains in the sense that the mass of the wall was removed but the outside edge was then built up, maintaining its presence. This type of dense urban spatial organization does not continue as the Spanish had imagined in their plans for Puerta Tierra (see figure 44). The arrival of the U.S. government and their urban principals shortly after the wall had been torn down meant that the two spatialities would remain distinct.

PUERTA TIERRA NEIGHBORHOOD - Spatiality and Subject Formation

The residential area just east of the walled city is known as Puerta Tierra. This section of the city has been home to a community of workers (largely low income) since its development at the end of the 19th century, when Puerto Rico's economy became involved with foreign capitol through the export of sugar and coffee. It is at this time that what Sepúlveda calls the "the morphological drainage of the urban fabric"[41] occurs. The city truly began to grow at a rapid rate and new urban development patterns began to develop. Various neighborhoods, largely for workers families, grew as an extension of the city outside of the walls. This new urban fabric was very different from that of the old walled city. For the first time San Juan experienced the development of residential spatial distribution among the social classes. Prior to the expansion of the port industry, the form of the city was dispersed with regard to class. The people that occupied Puerta Tierra worked principally in the industrial port and warehouses directly in front of Puerta Tierra and many of the families who live there today continue to fill service roles in the port and growing tourist industry located on the *isleta*. It is a relatively new section of the city developed largely within the 20th century because under Spanish rule large parts of it were either under military control (camps and parade grounds) or remained open marshland. When the United States took control of Puerto Rico in 1898, all military land went directly to the US Federal Government, which is the reason that so many of the buildings along the north side of Puerta Tierra are government or government related buildings, most notably El Capitolio (see figure 45). In addition, most of Puerta Tierra was redesigned and reorganized. The marshlands were in-filled in 1920's (see figure 46).

For these reasons, Puerta Tierra, is an interesting architectural and spatial contrast to Viejo San Juan. These two adjacent urban spaces represent the two major governing powers in Puerto Rico's history and are physical evidence of the tension between the two of them. The tension is created by the

Figures 47 - Casa de vecindad
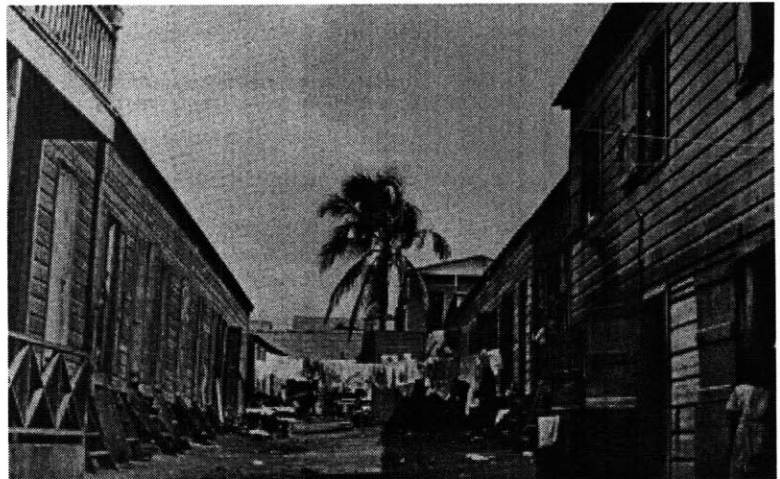
Figures 48 - Dwellings sometimes had only a front and back door with no windows.
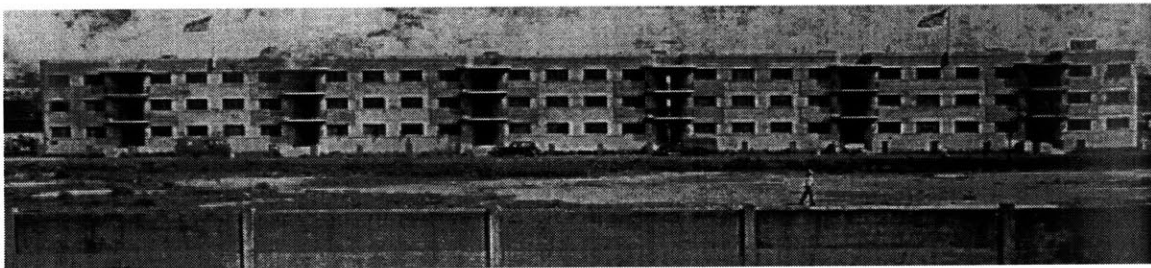
Figures 49 - El Falansterio

[41] Sepúlveda Rivera, Aníbal, *San Juan: Historia ilustrada de su desarrollo urbano*, p. 192

juxtaposition of Spanish colonial spatial ideologies about civilization and American colonial ideologies about civilization. Spanish civilization is rendered in organized, constrained space inscribing civil society within walls. The walls of the city reinforce the 'walls' of the sea. What is developed outside the walls are spaces that are classically 'other' in colonial conditions. American civilization is rendered in pompous, isolated structures displayed with a sprit of individualism throughout Puerta Tierra. The point where this reading falls apart is in the residential area of Puerta Tierra where the very opposite notion of individualism is used in large-scale public housing projects. So there is a clear separation between spaces that belong to the colonizer and the colonized.

At the turn of the century Puerta Tierra and La Perla were in similar economic and physical conditions. Poverty was extreme and housing in Puerta Tierra consisted primarily of wooden *casa de vecindad* or multifamily dwellings (see figures 47&49). These wooden structures were poorly built and typically contained one door in the front and one in the rear with no windows. With the arrival of the Americans, Puerta Tierra changed dramatically. The swamps were filled in and housing became the work of government agencies. The transition from *casa de vecindad* to mass housing took place over the first half of the 20th century. I want to highlight just two hosing projects that illustrate how spatial division was treated.

The first public housing project built on the isleta was El Falansterio completed in 1938 (see figure 50). The funding for this project came from the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration, the federally run program in charge of new construction in Puerto Rico. El Falansterio is an Art Deco, three-story walk-up. The sensitive design had meant that El Falansterio enjoyed success since it was built. This project needs to be studied in greater detail. It is sharply contrasted by nearly every single public housing project built on the island (see figures 51&52). This project was followed by a series of housing projects in Puerta Tierra all failing to live up to the promise in El Falanesterio: San Augutín (1940), San Antonio (1940), Puerta de Tierra (1949-50), and Las Acacias[42]. These changes in housing type and the use of more land for the port has caused a large population shift in this neighborhood. The population levels in 1980 (5,500) had returned to the population levels of 1899 (5,000). The population in 1920 was nearly 16,000[43].

One of the most striking aspects of San Juan's modern city formations is the sense that it is not developed from within. So even if we put politics aside for a moment ones understanding of San Juan is always tempered by the spatial influence of an external culture. After the Roosevelt Era,

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[42] Sepúlveda Rivera, Aníbal, *San Juan Extramuros*, p. 59
[43] Ibid, p. 59

Figures 47 - Casa de vecindad

Figures 48 - Dwellings sometimes had only a front and back door with no windows.
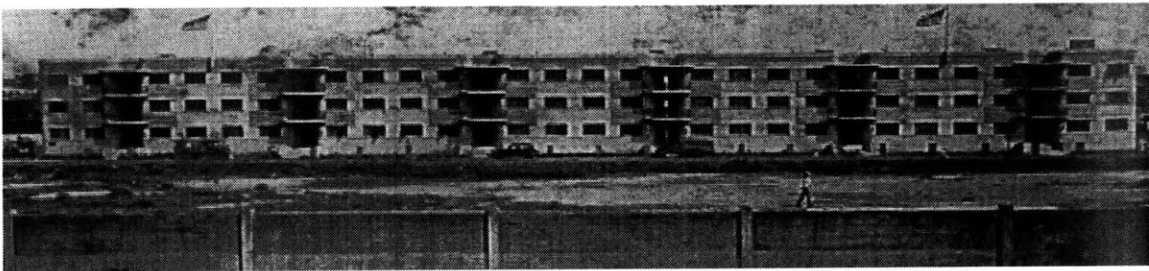
Figures 49 - El Falansterio

development within San Juan has directly to do with government money (see figure 52). The availability of Federal money dictates urban planning, tying the *form* of urban planning directly to US interests and influences. The location of the planning department during the Roosevelt Era was on the actual site of the current Tribunal building. A comprehensive urban plan for San Juan (or the rest of the island for that matter) was never develop while other US territories (Puerto Rico at this time did not have Commonwealth status) like the city of Manila in the Philippines were the objects of heavy US investment in urban development and planning. Sepúlveda and other historians[44] believe that the US lack of interest in Puerto Rico had to do with the fact that US interest in the island was solely military. The US's only interest in taking Puerto Rico was for the strategic military location (a recurring theme in this country's history) it provided in relation to the Panama Canal and the Caribbean.

The isleta is physical evidence of architecture's complicity with economico-political structures of power. It manifests the disciplinization of space over or around an elided local culture (meaning alive). Obviously, if architecture is inherently tied to structures of power (because of the economics needed to build it) then a local population or culture that has had their right to self-govern taken away and then seriously inhibited would have a difficult time of manifesting itself spatially.

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[44] In an interview I conducted with Aníbal Sepúlveda on March 23, 2000 in San Juan. See also Rodriguez Beruf.

RECONSIDERING THE ISLETA DE SAN JUAN

> A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers (both these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat. - Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power"

Invisibilities

In the previous chapter I pointed to overt examples where architecture had been used as a tool for expressing power and the invisible or latent aspects that are caught up in its production and physicality. Two examples that most clearly illustrate the use of architecture as an instrument of power through the disciplinization of space are the city wall and El Capitolio. The city wall acts as enclosure but it also organizes all of the spaces on either side of it. The city wall, unlike El Capitolio, mediates the space in and around it by enclosing, regulating, dividing, joining, etc. The wall at times is buried within the fabric of San Juan and at times takes on a more predominate role, as it does between La Perla and the city. More markedly, El Capitolio was designed as a hermetic space neatly inscribed and closed off from the 'othered' tropical space of the island. Through it's spatial definition, this building suggests the privileging of a particular group and the exclusion of several other groups. In contrast to this example, El Tribunal suggests ways of providing spaces for work and providing shelter for the body, while simultaneously blurring the distinctions between inside and outside and therefore dialoging with local spatialities rather than closing them off. The gradations in El Tribunal between inside and outside are *bodily* in experience and sequence. This building provides a for a variety of experiences along the entry path and public spaces: placing you close to the building, orienting you away from the building, projecting you out over water, and so on; again contrasting with El Capitolio's visually dominate experience of entry. The spatial definition of El Tribunal explores the more haptic rather than the predominately visual qualities of space. It is important to note the difference here between visually open buildings – like northern Miesien architectures, and physically open buildings – like El Tribunal. Architecture, in addition to allowing for security, comfort, and work, allows us to create inhabitable spaces in otherwise harsh climatic conditions. Built spaces in Puerto Rico are able to have a very different bodily relationship to nature because of geography. While the use of glass visually frees the northern interior spatial experience in climates like Puerto Rico's glass is only one way that the interior body of space can be liberated. This bodily experience is heightened in El Tribunal because the plate glass does not act as a complete sealant.[45] The idea that architecture is representation or style may allow it to claim impartiality within

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[45] The social critic Richard Sennett discusses how plate glass afforded the first truly modern sensation by separating the sense of vision from all others. Sennett looks at the work of Mies van der Rohe. "This division of the physiucal senses that began in the Victorian greenhouse has become absolute, sight now insulated in its operations from sound, smell, and touch." Richard Sennet, "Plate Glass", *Raritan*, 1986

the socio-political project, but the invisible tactics of enclosure and regulation of space contain the ignored "political nature of architecture".

Examining the ideological assumptions made about space may further elicit additional considerations for the design process. One of these assumptions is that *architecture does represent society*. As the three buildings – La Fortaleza, El Capitolio, and El Tribunal – show, a singular work of architecture does not in fact represent the whole of a particular culture. Each one represents a very specific element of that society. In Puerto Rico there are even more extreme examples, like El Capitolio. When it was first built it did not represent a part of that society but an external occupying power. The assumptions that are made about the signification of each one of these buildings at the time they were built belies its physicality and the context within which they are built. Some of these associative assumptions are La Fortaleza's neoclassicism = aristocratic civilization/order/rationality, El Capitolio's neoclassicism = democratic civilization/progress/order/rationality, El Tribunal's international style = progress/modernity/ social order[46]. A rational representation of society, or at least the claim to it, appears to be the overriding assumption in each of these buildings.

A second assumption is the perceptual break between repre*sentation and the disciplinization of space*. This assumption presumes that because a building was designed within a 'rational' style – like neoclassism – it is not connected to larger ideologies of power through its actual definition of space. Equating architecture to science – with attributes like rational, studied, impartial, etc. – in terms of its expression suggests that it is detached from social and cultural constructs. Additionally, this assumption implies a distancing of the architect from social-political issues and suggests that the architect is the sole skilled authority on space[47]. The focus on representation through style rather than on how a particular structure disciplines the space around it divorces the physical disciplinization of El Capitolio's form from architectural and social discourse about the building. It is seen as representing the U.S. government through the architectural language of style – American capitol building – but is less frequently questioned in terms of the spatial disciplinization that happens in and around it and the consequences, if any, of that disciplinization.

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[46] Looking again at the debate offered by architectural critic Jos Boys; she disputes this notion of architectural language as a 'true' reflection of society and refers to justifications provided under the banner of modernism and it's social values of the newly forming welfare state. "They were framed as both separate and ethically superior to the free market and the cash nexus (that is, to the context within which architecture was actually produced) and required specific expert aesthetic knowledge which was offered up as simultaneously socially and ethically appropriate, rationally objective and both progressive (the best) and the (unproblematic and obvious) *norm.*" Boys (1996) pg.40
[47] "Surely it is the supreme illusion to defer to architects, urbanists, or planners as being experts or ultimate authorities in matters relating to space." Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, (1998) pg. 95

The last "assumption" that I will point out here is the *distinction between architectural expression and capitalism*, or the idea that the creative architectural act is separate from the economic enterprise required to build it. The development of Puerta Tierra demonstrates more directly the economic influence on building. Even though Puerto Rican spatial sensibility had been heavily influenced by 400 years of Spanish building strategies – the portion of San Juan built since the turn of the century bears no resemblance to previous development due to the change in governing powers. This clear break demonstrates two things, one that economics are tied up with architectural and urban production and therefore expression, and two it makes more egregious the spatial impositions of assumed 'universal' or 'impartial' architectures, like El Capitolio, low-income housing structures, or the urban development of Puerta Tierra.

I am seeking analytical clarity about how social, political, and cultural issues are manifested materially, which can potentially inform the architectural design process and the question of the role of architecture as a *critical cultural practice*[48]. I have sought to do this by looking for particular moments within the Isleta de San Juan where existing productive tensions[49] - like the invisibilities I mention above - might help to feed a design process of *resistance*. Resistance that is not only political but physical as well. Productive tensions are moments where the physical, social, and cultural issues relevant to a particular space are not 'reconciled' or made all-inclusive. They are not intransigent tensions that illustrate or prove opposites, which would only serve to strengthen the argument that one has intrinsic value, superior to another. They are moments where difference is manifested and the underlying, concealed, or ignored plurality of our spatial and cultural condition emerges. This reading of the three governmental buildings – La Fortaleza, El Capitolio, and El Tribunal – makes simultaneously evident the spaces of cultural discord and the complicity of architecture within agendas of power. The city wall highlights different institutional (schools and government buildings) and every-day (neighborhoods and open areas) spaces and the tensions between physical space and societal perceptions of those spaces, pointing to the importance of how space is disciplined. The urban fabric of Puerta Tierra illustrates the more abstract influence of economics on space making and the resultant spatial impositions made upon local sensibilities and realities. These examples point to space making strategies that largely depend on a universalizing world-view and the use of architecture to represent these views. As read in the previous chapter, these various moments within the isleta (with the exception of La Perla), manifest, both intentionally and unintentionally, the

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[48] Jameson in his book The Seeds of XXXXXXX, looks at the work of Koolhaas as an exemplar of a critical cultural practice. In the book *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, The work of Diller + Scofidio could also be included in this group of architects who take up this challenge in practice.
[49] The term 'productive tensions' comes from G.B. Nalbantoglu and C.T. Wong's introduction to postcolonial space(s) (1997) p. 8. "Postcolonial positions, on the other hand, are interested in *productive tensions* arising from incommensurable differences rather than deceptive reconciliations." (my emphasis)

various ideological agendas of the powers that built them. Architectural theory and practice has tended to believe in generalizing ideologies, which have typically not allowed for the individual genius of various socio-cultural bodies (women, minorities, etc.).[50] There exist spatial expressions in Puerto Rico that have put forward spatial propositions different from either the U.S. or Spanish conceptualizations about space. The architectural modernist movement of the 1950's in Puerto Rico was an interesting time of spatial integration with the environment. Vernacular architecture had been doing this for a while but the tropicalized international style was the first large-scale movement to address the notion of local place within a dominant style. It was a time when people were concerned with local definitions about space, culture, politics, etc. Although the modernist architectural language that was used was not reflective of individual genius the ideas about how to discipline space was. As I have mentioned earlier, the work of this period did not provide new spatial knowldges within architectural discourse but it did within San Juan. The interesting lessons of this period are the informative ways that these architects explored the relationship of the body (person, nature, and space) to architecture. What probably caused this discussion to die was the focus on modernist architectural pedagogies.

Some have argued that modernist architectural pedagogy does not provide an adequate framework for the production of space within pluralist cultures; noting that this modernist pedagogy was created or born out of a particular milieu originating mostly in the previous century. Architectural theories, such as post-modernism and technologically based theories, have put forward new spatial conceptualizations. These recent ideologies stemming from the advent of new technologies, especially computer related ones, are proposing to replace modernist styles with fragmented or voided architectures, an act that ignores cultural plurality and methodologies other than historical rationality[51]. Basing architecture on network technologies coming from a particular place continues to exclude places outside "western" or "first world" regions, where these new technologies are

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[50] I am pointing to the exclusion of particular voices within architectural discourse and practice, and reinforcing the need to uncover them. This particular viewpoint, however, has been widely argued across a variety of field, namely by Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Foucault says that the discourse of particular fields (i.e. medicine) are very specific and do not allow for individual creativity. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, pg. 72-131. Similarly, Edward Said argues "that similar things take place when "other" cultures and peoples are discussed." Edward Said, The World, The Text, and the Critic", Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1983

[51] In his book, *The Rise of the Network Society,* Castells' identifies what he sees as the 'new logic underlying spatial forms and processes' as the 'space of flows'. 'Space of flows' is Manuel Castells' terminology for the new spatial logic created by the information network society that emerged in the later half of the 20th century. Castells' declares "the global city is not a place, but a process," He argues that the new nature of society is based on knowledge, organized around networks and made up of flows – not form, but process. For Castells, architecture is the "failed act of society", which has been the covert expression of the "deeper tendencies of society". The 'deeper tendencies of society' refer to the invisible tactics of power as they are manifested in architecture. He looks to post-modern architecture as a stylistic possibility for the 'space of flows': "in fact what most postmodernism does is to express, in almost direct terms, the new dominant ideology: the end of history and the suppression of places in the space of flows." "Either the new architecture builds the palaces of the new masters...or it roots itself into places, thus into culture, and into people...architecture [in both cases] may be digging the trenches of resistance for the preservation of meaning in the generation of knowledge."

consumed rather than produced. Technology is a valuable tool but is not *fundamental* to the relationship of *human beings* to space (architecture). It allows for new opportunities but is not adequate for all places, equally throughout geo-political space. These new theories may also heighten the gap between *First* and *Third* by focusing on our products rather than on our own physicality for creative inspiration; this speedy dematerialized world passes right by the proverbial 'other' at lightening pace.

A possible approach towards the design process in pluralist societies

However, the advent of post-colonialism[52] has provided alternatives, shifting our foundation for viewing the world by questioning Western primacy in creating a world-view. Post-colonialism looks at power as material and is concerned with issues of domination: looking at the dialectical other in terms of modernity[53]. For architecture this change has not come about and indeed both the profession and education have been slow to recognize or understand it. 'Otherness' is often rendered as fragmented or multiple Western styles, as in post-modernist architecture for example.

> "Yet despite this embrace of "otherness" in some of its theoretical sources, poststructuralist tendencies in architecture posit a notion of "other" that is solely a question of Western dismantling of Western conventions for a Western audience."[54]

Architecture's insular habits have allowed the profession to remain largely within its homogeneous shell of Western representation. I do not propose that we need to eliminate this particular viewpoint that would be contrary to the point of my study. I wonder however, why our professional images (i.e. magazines) and generally our educational practices (history being only the most obvious) tend not to include spatial knowledges from non-Western sources (Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, etc) and only the occasional image. If these sources are referred to it is either in reference to a

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[52] [The term "postcolonial space"] conveys both a negative moment that displays and displaces binary constructions and fixed categories and a positive one of a promise of becoming for new languages, new subject positions, and new modes of spatiality. .B. Nalbantoglu and C.T. Wong, *postcolonial space(s)*, p. 7

[53] Noted literary critic Edward Said, in his seminal text *Orientalism*, discusses the idea of cultural domination: "In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West." (In P. Williams and L. Crissman, eds., (1994) p. 134). The post-colonial discourse is particularly relevant then within the Puerto Rican context, questioning the *hegemony* of the US and Spanish governments. "One of the canonical topics of modern intellectual history has been the development of dominant discourses and disciplinary traditions in the main fields of scientific, social or cultural inquiry. Without any exceptions that I know of, the paradigms for this topic have been drawn from what is considered exclusively Western sources." Edward Said "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World"

[54] McLeod, Mary, in D. Colman, E. Danze, and C. Henderson, eds. (1996) p.11 Edward Said has also commented on this Western emphasis within predominate discourses: "One of the canonical topics of modern intellectual history has been the development of dominant discourses and disciplinary traditions in the main fields of scientific, social or cultural inquiry. Without any exceptions that I know of, the paradigms for this topic have been drawn from what is considered exclusively Western sources." Edward Said "Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World"

Western architect or in terms of regionalism – a problematic term that quickly sets up the work as the 'other'. Architectural production needs to be assessed in terms of this post-colonial ethic by looking at our plurality and its implications for the production of space. The ways that pluralist cultures can relate to and perceive architecture might suggest multiple ways that space can be organized in relation to the body within these societies.

Garcia Canclini, in his seminal book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, describes a methodology for discussing *hybrid* cultures[55]. Canclini's work may be used as a way of pointing out that we do not yet have an adequate methodology for interrogating of our present condition. His work could help us to reconceptualize other relationships between architecture and culture in light of these pluralist conditions. He proposes that a "pluralist perspective, which accepts fragmentation and multiple combinations among tradition, modernity, and post-modernity, is indispensable for considering the Latin American conjuncture at the end of the century."[56] This strategy could apply to the United States as well, even if it were deployed in a different manner. The traditional binary constructs for describing and categorizing the world do not apply to pluralist cultures, which require multiple strategies from various fields to begin to understand them. Garcia Canclini weaves together the "partial knowledges" of various "disciplines that are concerned with culture in order to see if it is possible to develop a more plausible interpretation of the contradictions and failures of modernization."[57] In this thesis, I have thought of these as the productive tensions. Garcia Canclini looks at what he calls "modernism after postmodernism", noting that postmodernism is not something that is separate from modernism but derived from it. Garcia Canclini observes that "there is no homogeneous architectural system" anymore and that "urban cultures" are increasingly using electronic technology, not public space, to express itself. Space has become so multiplitous that it is difficult to establish resistance.

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[55] Nestór García Canclini in the introduction to his book, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995) refers to hybrid cultures as those in which the 'modern and traditional are mixed' and which create 'uncertainty about the meaning and value of modernity'. Also of importance is his note on the choice of terms like *hybridization* over *mestizaje* and *syncretism*. *Mestizaje*, he says, refers to extreme examples of mixing and *syncretism* tends to refer to .religious fusion or traditional symbolic movements'. The term *hybrid*, however, is a problematic one. Robert Young, in his book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, 1995, notes: "Today, therefore, in reinvoking this concept [hybridity], we are utilizing the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right as much as the notion of an organic process of the grafting of diversity into singularity." The term *hybridity* is inherently tied up with racism ("the forcing together of unlike living things") and therefore inappropriate or at least a difficult way to refer to cultures. *Hybrid* also refers to *two* and therefore deceptive when speaking of most contemporary (and certainly American) cultures. I have chosen to use the term *pluralist* for these reasons.

[56] Garcia Canclini (1995) p. 263

[57] Garcia Canclini (1995) p. 3

POSTSCRIPT:
IMAGINING ALTERNATE SPATIALITIES

This thesis began with a series of questions I had about architectural production and its resultant expression. Initially, I started with a number of specific themes: relationship of architecture to power, under-interrogated ideological assumptions, and spatial expression within pluralist cultures. The objective of this thesis was not to provide a conclusion to these themes but to propose a direction, or even multiple directions, to head in. The readings of San Juan taken above suggests to a number of interesting topics. Within the space of this thesis is the notion of models. Within the isleta a number of different models were used, like Spanish town planning, capitol building, American urban planning and institutional models. Whenever a 'model' form is used there generally tend to be ways that it deforms to accommodate the local space it is built in. El Capitolio, for example, appears to be the exact image of library at Columbia University. The resemblance is uncanny. What are the differences however in El Capitolio and what happens to architectures modeled on a particular spatial sensibility that are then distributed "world-wide"?

A second topic that was revealed in this study was the question of open space within the city, what is its significance and what could be done with it that would address questions of power within the architectural project? In the isleta of San Juan, the question of open space is particularly interesting in Puerta Tierra and La Puntilla where overlapping building practices have created disjoints and misconnects within the city. What could a spatial design look like here that took up the notion of local spatial knowledge? Not in regionalist terms but as additional or alternate knowledges about the conceptualization of space.

It may be that we need to question again why and for whom architecture is built. This questioning could suggest the need to refocus on the cultural body as a source for spatial knowledges. Architecture, after all, is meant for us and should provide experiences that enhance and enable us. Notions about beauty (Greek concept of beauty), or sanitation, mechanization, and rationality (Industrial Revolution and Darwinism) deal with a particular idea about the world developed through a particular lens (Western). An understanding of the local, using the multitude of cultural understandings about the body and the physical world and their connection to notions of *pleasure*

could inform an additional creative process. This process would have to reconsider the body as an important element in the way we know the world around us.

The classification of the world that took place in the 1600's, through the work of Darwin and others, and the industrial revolution caused us to re-conceptualize the body as organic or mechanic, something that could be broken down into parts, paving the way for the current idea that the body is superfluous in the age of the "network society", cyberspace, the internet, etc. I would like to propose that it is precisely this body, the 'other' in the computer age, that needs to be re-examined and which could provide the basis for new knowledge about the design process.

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