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Modernity

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The juxtaposing urban environments between Guayana City and Monrovia are distinctive yet display how there are multiple modernities that define a city. Guayana City's "planners" and "people" all had different visions of the city they desired because they lacked communication, background, context, and humanity. In "Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana", Lisa Peattie, the anthropologist in Guayana City, admits that she was so caught up in a thousand other pieces of the puzzle that not only she, personally, but also the design team in Cuidad Guayana lost sight of what was most important - the community. Conversely, Monrovia Modern, explores four landmark buildings in early 2012 – all laying in ruins, where community is the focus of the environment. Danny Hoffman engages with the idea that architecture can be experimental, where there is no specific purpose for a piece of infrastructure. In a cite of debris, Hoffman explains that militarization of space can be a new opportunity for a radical and different future. Guayana City's modernity in the 1960s was utopic - resulting in an adverse effect. Monrovia's modernity, in 2012, was a repurposing of existing architecture – creating heterotopic areas with great potential for radical change for the future. Therefore, modernity is a unique urban environment that responds to the social, political, and environmental inadequacies of the pre-modern one.

Guayana City, in Venezuela, was made with a visible utopic vision. Venezuela is a petro-state. A petro-state is where government income is deeply reliant on exports of oil and natural gas (Gamble, Venezuela). Therefore, economic and political power are highly concentrated in an elite minority. This elite minority plus outside planners from America caused a huge rift between the inhabitants of Guayana City and the people in power. As a result, political institutions locally were weak and unaccountable with widespread corruption (Gamble, Venezuela). Overall, the planning was too rigid. There was no way to predict how people would function because there was no space for them to try. Zoning by physical barriers, like the two rivers and a waterfall, created unintentional segregation. From America, people from Harvard and MIT, tasked with planning a city, did not know how Venezuela was going to react. Finally, homogeneity was created. Guayana City's modernity was crafted as a reaction to the petro-state that already existed in Venezuela, determined by the planning group that was mostly off-site when they made their projections.

The planning group in Ciudad Guayana was primarily made up of the CVG, located in Caracas, economists, designers, transportation experts, and engineers – all with a utopic vision. Peattie was the only anthropologist on site. She lived in that evolving city for two and a half years and reported her observations to the planners. However, her opinions and reflections had very little impact in the city's final outcome. The "CVG was physically distant and intentionally inaccessible. . . .The agency was not required to respond to wishes of the local citizens. Nor did the planners think of their plans as embodying the needs of local citizens of the present, for it was the future city which was the focus of planning" (Peattie 146). The obvious lack of care for humanization of the environment by the planners created a city that the inhabitants did not want to call their own. Guayana City's modernity was resented by the majority of the community.

With the human aspect taken out of the landscape, politics drove planning in Guayana City, creating a layer of invisible biased intention behind the task of the design team. With only a small group that had the power to make the decisions, their vision was to attract corporate investors – a plan for the future that does not solve any current inequity in Venezuela. The design

team had a superior and imperialistic mentality. The "struggle between local and national, present and future, also constituted a present version of a potentially far-reaching struggle between big business and small and between the state and the corporations on the one hand and the rest of civil society on the other" (Peattie 150). This was the CVG's city. Where the mission and vision were not adaptable to the built environment, did not consider the actual people, culture, programs, access, etc., and was a narrow point of view. The type of modernity created in Guayana City from the 1960 design team only benefitted the people in power, most of all the CVG.

In stark contrast, Monrovia's modernity is a militarization of space. With the four architectural pieces examined, specific gaps, or heterotopias, in Monrovia become apparent. Heterotopias are lawlessness and a repurposing of space (Gamble, Defining). The inhabitants of these visual heterotopic infrastructures do not look for a radical change or revolution – even though these buildings hold the potential for a completely different future. Monrovia got stuck in modernization. The inhabitants are constantly living in and with ruination, placed by an imperial power struggle. As a result of the built environment, the modernist plan that is revealed includes: liquid spaces, or spaces that have shifting boundaries and purposes; circulation of commodities, or consumption and production that enables opportunities; imperial debris, or "foreclosed possibilities" that result from living among ruins; society of control, or a space in which power and profit are derived from not knowing or caring who occupies the space, only through knowing where bodies can be found for manual and menial labor tasks; politics of the governed, or citizens enacting their own politics in a non-traditional relationship to the government; and finally, rational urbanism, or a means of organizing and arranging urban life and space through relationships (Gamble, Defining). These results lend itself to the architectural plan of modernization present in Monrovia.

The architecture in Monrovia enables planning, engineering, and the ability to transform the urban site and its public spaces. The breakdown of infrastructure around the city adds a level of invisibility that shapes the city. This façade that the buildings are portraying is fragmented. Inverting and transforming space leads to possibilities in which new areas of social interaction and different realms of knowledge and power can become beneficial to the city. Where colonial and utopic visions have failed, as in the case of Guayana City, architecture can still play an integral role in shaping the city's future. As Hoffman states, his book is "intended, rather, to probe the limits of what a city's residents can think and do with the form of the city in which they live" (Hoffman 32). Remaining architecture in a city can be manipulated in a creative way in order to connect and engage its inhabitants, making for a progressive and radically different result. Experimenting and pushing the limits of the surrounding environment is the contemporary modernization that is undertaking Monrovia.

Today, modernity in Cuidad Guayana takes form in a rapidly growing city that is becoming a metropolitan region. As a premier example of a city shaped by centralized planning in Latin America, the utopic vision is not the current form of modernity. The city was projected to be an industrial "growth pole" in the 1960s in an isolated part of Venezuela. Guayana City unveiled "the unbridgeable gap between the 'platonic city' designed by the planners based on the development paradigm, and the 'aristotelian city' that unfolded in reality" (Irazábal 22). A platonic city is one that envisions the utopia – glossing over all the inequalities that are present and focusing on the future through growth and aesthetics. The aristotelian city is a realistic vision of the present while planning for the future. It is a process that relies on heterogeneity, density, and size, in order for more urbanization (Wirth). The 1960s modernization design process failed

because the platonic design would not work in the built environment in Venezuela. However, in the 1990s, the "model of planning shifted from centralized to decentralized as a result of the election victories of a radical political party and neoliberal reconstructing that weakened central government" (Angotti 329). The first local election, in 1989, was a critical response to widespread criticism of government corruption and inadequate service delivery due to over centralization. This was the first of many important local political steps to rethinking planning for Guayana City.

The focus is now on environment and quality-of-life concerns, social solidarity, and equity – the humanistic qualities that was not present in the 1960s master blueprint. Still relying heavily on the global market, Venezuela's leaders aligned their policies with the debt and inflation help offered by the IMF/World Bank approach of reducing government involvement in the economy (Angotti 335). Some of the factors that also contribute to the current dynamics of urban transformation in Guayana City are land squatting in Puerto Ordaz, the creation of a new city close in proximity meant for the relocation of displaced populations, and finally a huge urban renewal plan projected for Puerto Ordaz (Irazábal 34). It is also important to consider that the switch in planning from 1960s to 1990s had to be looked at through the context relative to planning in other Venezuelan and Latin American cities. This is one of the reasons why the outside planners in 1960s had a utopic vision and imperialistic and colonial values in mind – the context of the new environment was lost. Ciudad Guayana, transforming into a more successful metropolitan city with a new master plan, was an important case on how local efforts could help redirect national policies and shift the balance of political power.

As for Monrovia, through a recount of Lookman Oshodi, working in international development with a focus on urban infrastructure and governance, provides a commentary from his (an observer's) perspective that gives a scope and context of the housing and urban development in Monrovia. This account takes place in 2011, a few months before Hoffman did his research trip. With regards to the living conditions within the city, "this interplay of weak income capacity and housing affordability explains the larger concentration of people in the slums and proliferation of slums across the city" (Oshodi 8). Paired with politics of the governed in Monrovia, where people have political agency and citizens enact their own politics, Hoffman shows the lack of a mechanism in place by policy makers to make positive changes. This is an observation on the inhabitants of the city being indifferent to utilizing their environment to make possible radical change. That is why Hoffman was so surprised with how quickly the former fighters living in the buildings he was researching complied when they were told to vacate the abandoned buildings (Hoffman 2). However, despite the low economic capacity, the city's development plans continued to guide growth and expansion, whether or not the citizens wanted to take advantage of the political opportunity the ruined environment provided them.

The built environment after the end of the combat in Liberia is its current modernity. In 2005, Africa's first democratically elected woman, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, became head of state. However, the years following faced unemployment, economic hardships, and uncertainty (Hiskes 4). This uncertainty and instability were prevalent when Hoffman did his research trip in the spring of 2012. The height of growth was in the mid-20th century, when the influence of architectural modernism - made possible through innovative design. Since Monrovia Modern's publication in 2017, "Liberia has completed its first peaceful transfer of power in more than 70 years, with Sirleaf succeeded by the soccer star George Weah. The nation's pathway to a better livelihood will not look exactly like developmental pathways elsewhere. It may involve recognizing mobile lifestyles as just as legitimate as static home ownership" (Hiskes 10). Just

like Guayana City's shift in planning in the 1990s, the context relative to understanding the planning and modernity is with post-war ruin for Monrovia.

Both Guayana City and Monrovia's original modernity was a unique urban environment that responded to the social, political, and environmental inadequacies of their pre-modern one. In the case of Guayana City, beautification and aesthetics were manipulated and incorporated into the planning; failing to represent the voice of the people. Monrovia, conversely, was all about inhabitants – politics of the governed. Their modernization utilized the built environment to repurpose infrastructure. Through layers of invisibility, the planning of both shaped the city for worse or better. Currently, Guayana City is being re-planned and rethought, looking towards a better future than what the 1960s modernization would have resulted. Monrovia, today, is expanding on their "ruined" surrounding environment in order to establish a contemporary city that is progressive and innovative in its own context. Through the juxtaposition between the urban environments in Guayana City and Monrovia, unique yet different modernities were created that identified their respective city, defining its visible and invisible environments.

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