Guadalupe Garcia, *Beyond the Walled City: Colonial Exclusion in Havana*

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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/abe/6966
ISSN: 2275-6639

Publisher
InVisu

Electronic reference
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In *Beyond the Walled City* Guadalupe García offers an original and nuanced analysis of social inclusion/exclusion within the urban space of Havana from its settlement in the sixteenth century to the early twentieth century. García rightly brings to the fore a significant gap in scholarship regarding the African presence in the city and its impact on the historic urban morphology of Havana. Drawing on extensive research from a variety of repositories in Cuba, Spain and the United States, García examines the relationship between space and colonial power in arguably the most important Spanish port city in the Caribbean. Havana, as Cuba’s main port, is also crucial to our understanding of the Atlantic, as the Isle of Cuba was one of Spain’s most enduring colonies in the Americas. Importantly, García considers Havana from a *longue durée* perspective, which is one of the book’s key strengths, as it allows the author to underscore the significant continuities in social exclusion/inclusion practices in Havana.¹

In the book’s introduction García successfully condenses the urban, spatial and social relationships between Havana’s colonial past and its present.² The contours of *intramuros* (inside the walls) currently roughly correspond to the limits of the UNESCO-listed area, which the Oficina del Historiador de la Habana has made tremendous efforts to restore and conserve.³ Readers of *Beyond the Walled City* can take virtual walks through the spaces that once comprised the *intramuros* and *extramuros*¹

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(beyond or outside the walls), which form the core of García’s analysis. The book is organised in two parts and six chapters.

In the first part of the book García examines the spatial segregation of black and brown people vis-à-vis the interest of local elites, imperial design, and urban development from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The frequent attacks on Havana fostered the proliferation of fortifications, a defensive system that grew in size and sophistication over time. The remains of the Cabaña Fortress, El Morro, and the earlier structures are indeed a vivid reminder of the bellicose history of the city. Havana also had a wall that was built in the seventeenth century and that was demolished with the significant urban expansion the city experienced in the nineteenth century. The city walls also allowed social elites to differentiate their spaces from those of the free population of African descent and the gradually disappearing indigenous population, who chiefly inhabited the less prestigious spaces beyond the city wall. In addition, the indigenous population was also concentrated in Guanabacoa, Havana’s own “city of the Indians,” founded in 1554 under the umbrella of Spanish imperial legislation, that aimed to segregate the indigenous population to “protect” them from abuse from the encomenderos.4

In the particular case of Havana García clearly demonstrates how a body of urban legislation reinforced social exclusion which led the black and brown population to inhabit marginal spaces in the city. These spaces were subsequently silenced in the cartography and representations of the city. Thus García not only shows the marked spatial and social division of colonial Havana, but also how the areas where marginalized groups resided were also obliterated, silenced indeed, from the visual records of the locale.

García dissects the social divide through the lens of Havana’s urban development and shows how social segregation was a driving concern as the city began to expand beyond the city walls in the eighteenth century. The process of expansion modernized urban spaces beyond the walls that were incorporated into the privileged areas for the elites. Urban reform and regulatory practices in Havana, as García poses, implemented mechanisms that favoured racial exclusion.

The second part of the book examines imperial administration at the end of the Spanish colonial and neo-colonial period up to the first three decades of the republic. The two chapters here strikingly demonstrate how policies of reconcentration between 1895 and 1898, and substantial urban development between 1899 and 1902, also aimed to segregate the white elite from the rest of the population. During the reconcentration period the peasant population from the city’s black inland areas was forced to relocate to the outskirts of Havana. García demonstrates that social exclusion (and segregation) was not limited to the Spanish colonial period, and that the urban development and design of Havana did not significantly change during the United States’ rule in the Isle of Cuba and thereafter.

The impressive temporal scope of the book has allowed García to study ideas of change and continuity and to demonstrate how social exclusion was deliberately enshrined in urban law, design and social policy. This is an important book for students and scholars of several connecting fields of study, including urban history and design, social history, the African diaspora, and Atlantic studies among many others. This book will surely appeal to ABE Journal readers as García establishes a conversation between early modern and modern practices in relation to social inclusion/exclusion, thereby reminding us of the long pedigree of such practices in the history of European and colonial urbanism. García’s book also invites further reflection on several of the periods that it covers. For example, while García’s book chiefly focuses on San Cristóbal de la Habana, further study of Guanabacoa and its indigenous population in relationship to Havana will surely be welcome. Overall, Beyond the Walled City provides a sophisticated analysis of the development of the city of Havana and will serve as a model to reassess the way we engage with marginalized social groups in our understanding of space, architecture, and urbanism in cities and locales across the Iberian world and beyond.