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Housing from the Perspective of Social Mobility and Equality:
The Evolution of Housing in Cuba

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I. Introduction

The linkages between socio-political, equality and social mobility constitute today one of the central analytical points in the analysis of social transformations and their effectiveness. In this study, we will concentrate on access to housing, given that it is an essential component for the well-being of each family and for the development of human capacities. Housing is also tied to the larger set of needs and satisfiers that are connected to the domestic sphere of a family.

Deficits in adequate housing are habitually found in poverty studies since they are usually associated with precarious living conditions and social disadvantage. For a number of reasons, housing represents in Cuba’s case an essential dimension of equality as well as a marker of inequality. As it will be seen, housing is not something that has been prioritized within social policy and its insufficiencies form part of poverty and social vulnerability in Cuba despite the efforts made in developing popular housing and the commitment by the state as public guarantor.

From the perspective of equality, having access to adequate housing constitutes a right, an element in the well-being of daily social life, and not having access is a symptom of social inequality or exclusion. The diversity in the quality of housing is a visible expression of the social inequalities. Moving to improved housing stock may signify displacement or changes in personal trajectories. Housing has been thoroughly broached from numerous viewpoints in the analysis of policies and social management, particularly those related to the legal basis, technologies, etc. Likewise, it is possible to find approaches which give considerable weight to the personal efforts in securing housing. However, other analytical perspectives emphasize the conditional role that social policies and their implementation have in the accession and possession of a house.

In the Cuban socialist project, housing has been considered a social good. Housing policies have aimed at giving each family access to adequate housing. The strategy for social development with equality has been posed in the housing sphere as follows: “to achieve a more adequate balance in urban development with priority towards the secondary cities, and to raise living and working conditions in rural and mountainous

areas, fomenting a greater degree of rural-urban integration” (Gomila, 1997: 3). This statement highlights the desire for equality as a social strategy.

In the case of Cuba “the crisis and reforms during the 1990s have generated new social mobility patterns and modified the possible range of actions that reinforce former disadvantages (associated with gender, race and territory), created new disadvantages by lowering formerly favored groups (certain groups of public servants and workers, primarily), and created new advantages by opening selective opportunities (mixed and foreign enterprises, segments related to the market, relevant sectors and activities)” (Espina, et al, 2005:4). No doubt, these changes have expressed themselves in the differentiated quality of habitat for different social groups belonging to Cuban society.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the housing situation existing in the most recent phase of the Cuban social project. It endeavors to answer whether housing policy in Cuba has favored or not the differentiated access by social groups to adequate housing. According to the results from prior institutional investigations on the topic of inequality, the diverse starting points of the different social groups and the conditions in which they have had to face the period of crisis and reforms suggest that:

- Access to housing has not been homogenous in all the phases of the social project, and differentiation has been intensified during the decade of the 1990s, favoring to a greater or lesser degree the different social groups; and,
- The delay in eliminating the housing deficit in quantitative or qualitative terms has deepened inequality in housing conditions.

The answers that we offer do not pretend to be unique, nor definitive. Rather, they represent advances from an all-encompassing study that will include more thorough case studies in selected zones of the country. Here, we merely sketch certain methodological questions related to the conceptualization of housing and habitat, and provide an analysis linking the social structure with the housing situation in Cuba. Finally, we also enunciate some of the main problem areas which should help us derive the final results of this research project.

II. Theoretical treatment of the subject and its relationship to housing management

In recent times, housing policy has been a fundamental object of attention in the field of social policy due particularly to its ties with human development and poverty. One of the most frequent questions has been the relationship between the state and market in the solution of such an important problem.¹ The most critical visions in this field have advocated the centrality of the state in the formulation, evaluation and implementation of policies in the housing sector. However, this state is one that is flexible and efficient, one

¹ An interesting analysis of the several positions taken in regards to this relationship may be found in Espina (2005). Authors like Gargantini and Ferrero (2003) establish a number of periods in the housing policies in Latin America. These periods correspond to the different types of state participation.

that combines the possibilities of the state with the rest of the social agents so as to find a dignified solution to the housing problem (Díaz, 2006 and Espina, 2005).

From a methodological perspective, this topic has been addressed on two planes. The first one uses a wider context taking into consideration the reach of social policies, while the second one adheres to a more particular vision of individuals, groups, localities and the concrete possibilities of gaining access to housing. This division is reflected in the tools and techniques employed to obtain and process the information for each plane of analysis. Another question often discussed is the manner in which the concept of housing is deemed, whether isolated or connected to habitat, that is, the material and social contexts.

One frequent manner in which the housing question is addressed lies in the transition towards a conception of habitat. The position of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), whose views were exposed in the Habitat Conferences I and II, in 1976 in Vancouver and in 1996 in Istanbul, respectively, has been important. From 1976 onwards, international organizations have defined a new perspective on housing by considering it as a “product”. The interpretation of habitat as a simple shelter has been replaced with the notion of it as a “process” (Pisoni, 2002) which includes physical access, adequate security, access to employment and basic services; in short, it is dignified housing, which varies across countries according to cultural, economic, social and environmental factors (Díaz, 2006). There has been a progression over time from a simple conception to an analytical panorama that is more diverse and interconnected: “knowledge about habitat carries implicitly in it a connection between the physical and the imaginary assumed to be irreducible and inseparable, from the environment of the home itself to its surroundings, in the unfolding of the near towards the far away, wrapped in the complex notion of habitat.”²

Some may think that much time has been spent clarifying this terminology, but it is not wasteful to insist on the concept of habitat as it is crucial for the implementation and management of housing policy. A strategy dedicated exclusively to housing as a simple built-up space, physically occupied at the micro scale, cannot be the same as one which includes more immediate and all-encompassing elements facilitating the construction of the urban network and the harnessing of a better quality of life and social integration (Rodríguez and Tabarda, 2001). It is precisely because of this fragmented and limited idea about housing that unifying policies, immersed in more complete human development processes, are not achieved. A new notion of housing implies its extension as an ideal place for people to be in, with possibilities for accessing services at a reasonable cost, where the inhabitants may isolate themselves if they so desire, a place where they can be recognized and may maintain their individual and collective identities. In other words, space “as a symbol of human existence where economic, political, social, aesthetic and cultural dimensions become involved” (UNDP Habitat Colombia: 41).

² This definition is from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Habitat Colombia (2004: 39) where we find a high degree of coincidence in their approach to housing and from which we have drawn in order to reach our own definition utilized in this study.

In sum, human habitat is the space occupied by an individual, a group or a community beyond the physical area where biological needs are satisfied. It is the context where the social organism unfolds all its natural and cultural potentialities and, for that reason, constitutes the basis and condition for the development of transforming activities carried out by the inhabitants. When housing is taken in an integral manner (home-surroundings) it includes the physical configuration in space, the external infrastructure which supports existence, the placement of fundamental services, the environmental quality and the access to participation spaces. To this definition one can add subjective elements such as the perception of satisfaction which could add arguments in the evaluation of housing policies. This subjective aspect is rarely explored by the decision makers but could act as a compass in the improvement of housing strategies.

III. Social composition and housing policies results in Cuba

The housing question in the Cuban revolutionary project has not been a recent concern , given that it was laid out in the Moncada program of 1953 and was addressed in the first measures implemented following the triumph of the revolution. The model for social policies in Cuba has been characterized by Espina (2005:87) who has highlighted its insertion in a logic that promotes the development of the country with a clear emphasis on the eradication of poverty. According to the author, given that these strategic assumptions have remained constant, they have ensured the stability of policies maintaining as a central core “the predominance of social over economic” considerations.

In the area of housing, the following characteristics comprise the policies that have been defined and implemented:

- *Elimination of private property in the means of production and of the conditions that generate exploitation;*
- *State-owned social property as the basis for popular sector hegemony over the social agenda;*
- *Centrality of equality and social justice in the formulation of policies, and of equality as a right;*
- *The state as an actor in the design and implementation of social policies and centralized planning as a mechanism for orderly evolution;*
- *A single and centralized social policy as a guarantee to furnish basic social services to the maximum extent possible;*
- *The centrality of distribution as an instrument of social justice based on a combination of individual and social consumption with a heavier weight given to the latter as part of distributive justice;*
- *Rationality of consumption and human needs as a model of social life in general, not only as a measure to resolve poverty;*
- *Orientation towards the satisfaction of basic, rational needs that encompass the educational and spiritual-cultural spheres;*
- *Maintenance of the responsibility of the state, something which cannot be delegated or ceded, as the central issuer of social policy regardless of the*

- availability of economic resources and the quantity of goods to be distributed; and,*
- *The state as the primary producer, distributor and assigner of goods, with the market in a secondary and subordinated role.*

Although these principles have regimented housing strategies from 1959 to the present, their implementation has sometimes been contradictory because of the varying socio-economic conditions at the national and international level which have affected the revolutionary project.

A quick glance at the results achieved by the housing policies during the early years reveals that the first housing policies and regulations were implemented between 1959 and 1970.³ The bulk of the analytical research consulted agrees⁴ that the main impacts of these early stage housing policies were directed towards the construction of housing by the state, the improvement of living conditions in the poorest sectors by the elimination of forcible ejections, the elimination of unhealthy neighborhoods, and the reduction of rental prices. The utilization of private property in the housing sector was also avoided which, in social justice terms, implied that all Cuban families gained access to a house.⁵

These years correspond to the phase of social transformations in Cuba which is denominated as “Period of fundamental changes in class structure” because of the de-stratification process that eliminated the old social class of exploiters and which permitted the formation and consolidation of the fundamental components of a socialist society (Espina, et al., 1999). An intense and ascending social mobility resulted from the movement of numerous groups of various classes towards another (from salaried workers in the private sector, small merchants, semi-proletarian and unemployed individuals towards the worker class employed in the state sector of the economy; and from the worker class, the peasants and other social sectors towards different types of intellectual work). A similar migration is seen from the differences in the positions achieved by individuals when compared with earlier generations of their family – parents and grandparents (Espina, et al, 1999).

Table 1 illustrates the changes that occurred within several groups according to their relationship to different forms of property.

³ We are referring to the Law of Real Estate Rentals of 1959, the Law of Urban Reforms of 1960, the Law of Vacant Lots of 1960, the Program of Individual Effort and Mutual Help of 1960, the second phase of the Law of Urban Reforms of 1960-1965, and the Movement of Microbrigadas of 1970 (Atienza, 2004 and Dammert, 1997).

⁴ A detailed analysis that succeeds in producing systematic knowledge about housing in Cuba until 2000 can be found in Atienza(2004a). The author also consulted Dammert (1997), Gomila (1997) and Mesa Lago (2003).

⁵ Important data appears in the Cuban report submitted to the World Habitat Conference II in 1996, which indicates that between 1959 and 1963 nearly 20,000 houses were built annually. Today, more than 85% of Cuban families do not pay rent and the remainder pays modest sums which do not sensibly affect the household budget.

Table 1. Composition of social class in Cuban society, 1953-1970

Workers according to type of property	1953	1970
	(%)	(%)
State property	9	88
Salaried workers in the private sector	63	1
Self-employed	24	1
Other non-state workers	4	10

Source: Censo de Población y Vivienda 1981. Cuadro II, pg.VI.

Subsequent to this first phase, a process of intense changes within the internal structure took place. Here, the transformations were essentially of a professional character: social mobility was relatively less intense in favor of socio-professional improvements within the fundamental social components of socialism (Espina et al, 1999).

However, starting in the 1990s, a new phase in the social composition of Cuba at local, territorial and national scales emerged. This phase is known as “Period of economic reform and social re-stratification” (Espina et al, 1999). This tense phase straddles continuity and rupture with some components remaining static, while others are transformed. New groups arise in correspondence to the economic strategy undertaken by the country. The re-stratification can be summarized as compromised of the following features:

- The appearance of new classes and social groups which generate new differences or expand the existing ones;
- The impoverishment of some sectors of the labor force;
- The emergence of a working elite in the several economic sectors;
- The diversification of the sources of income;
- The surge in income and lifestyles not necessarily being linked to the work performed; and,
- The exclusion of sectors of the population from access to certain markets or the reduction in access to very limited groups of products.

Table 2. Composition of social class in Cuban society, 1988-2003

Workers according to type of property of employment <i>(percentage)</i>	1988	2003
State enterprises	94	76
Joint ventures	-	1
Cooperatives	2	7
Private, rural	3	12
Private, urban	1	4
Source: ONE, Anuarios Estadísticos (various years)		

If the income dynamics of the Cuban population during the 1990s is reviewed, we can observe the diversity in opportunities to gain access to consumption and well-being among the different social groups, including the possibilities of gaining access to better living conditions. What is noteworthy is the considerable reduction in occupations linked to the state sector: from 79% in 1990 to 52% in 2000. Likewise, we can observe the increase in other non-state sources of income, including remittances from abroad and other sources of income not contingent upon work, something which will be addressed in more detail by other papers for this workshop.

The social re-stratification that occurred in those years created groups of extremes within Cuba's social structure. According to measurements collected by the Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas (INIE), the population in conditions of poverty have slowly increased from 6.3 % in 1988 to 14.7% in 1996 and 20% in 1999 (Ferriol, 2003). This process was accompanied by a new scheme of social mobility characterized by the augmentation of movements, the opening of new routes for social mobility, the introduction of descending tendencies associated with increased precariousness and de-professionalization. Although social mobility was intensified with visible signs of upward mobility, at least in terms of income levels, for those who experienced the descending pull, there was an undoubted deficit (Espina et al, 1999).

We could analyze the implications that this process had upon transformations of habitat quality among the different social groups. If we review the housing situation during the last twenty years, we should see the combined effects of the different programs derived from the Cuban social policy model. Let us review the information provided by the census reports of 1981 and 2002 presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Cuba. Summary of housing indicators, 1981-2002

Indicators	1981	2002
Housing Type	(%)	(%)
House	66.9	74.6
Apartment	14.8	17.9
Other types	18.3	7.5
Relative Space	Average # of people	
People per house	4.08	3.2
People per total number of rooms	1.03	0.8
People per total number of bedrooms	2.06	1.3
Access to water*	(%)	(%)
Inside the house by plumbing system	52.7	76.2
Outside of the house	47.3	23.8
Availability of shower		
Inside the house	49.2	87.5
Outside of the house	50.8	12.5
Availability of bathroom		
Inside the house (toilet)	45.1	59.7
Outside of the house (toilet and latrine)	45.8	31.7
Not existing	8.9	8.6
Availability of a kitchen		
Exclusive to a house	93.6	99.5
Communal	6.4	0.5
Lighting sources		
Electricity (all types including alternative energy)	82.9	95.5
Bright light	16.9	4.4
Other types	0.2	0.05
Coverage of sanitary services*		
Total coverage	94.7	94.2
Sewage	38.2	38.4
Septic tanks and latrines	56.5	55.8
Sources: CEE, Censo de Población y Viviendas, 1981 ONE, Censo de Población y Viviendas, 2002		

In relation to 1981, all indicators selected demonstrate tangible progress in the housing situation of the Cuban population. The number of houses has grown in absolute terms. More than 75% were built after 1959, and 21.6% after 1990. Between 1982 and 1989, the country had built more houses than during the period between 1990 and 2002 (Censo de Población y Viviendas, 2002: 163-171).

* In the census, the percentages refer to occupied private housing.

* Refers to the population, the statistical source belongs to the Instituto de Recursos Hidráulicos for the years 1999 and 2003.

In spatial terms there have been quantitative enlargements as the square footage per person has increased. This is related to the diminution of population density within a house with the repercussions that that has in the possibilities of individual development. There are improvements in the internal conditions of housing which have implicated a betterment in the quality of life found in neighborhoods across the entire country. The improvement of hygienic conditions in the population is important, particularly the percentage of the population reached by sewage, which was noteworthy in rural zones.

The impacts during the last four decades have been positive, especially when compared with other countries in Latin America. However, the effects of the economic disequilibrium during the decade of the 1990s have surfaced some of the accumulated problems which now must be resolved from a renewed social policy perspective. It has been recognized that “despite the investment of millions, the problems associated with the housing deficit and the improvement of houses in dilapidated state have not been resolved” (Mayoral, 2005:4). As an unresolved area, housing and its external surroundings represent one of the spheres where inequality trends have become expressed within Cuban society (Espina et. al., 2004).

In 1970, data in the Population and Housing Census already demonstrated the deficit found in housing and the priority that had been given to the construction of housing in the non-urban areas confirmed in its territorial distribution.⁶ This situation impelled the state to foment the construction of housing by individual effort, the *Microbrigada* movement and other state initiatives. However, their inefficiency and bad quality were unable to satisfy the accumulated demands which had increased from the growth of families and internal migrations that had occurred in the mounting decades (Coyula, 2006).

By the early 1990s, some changes in the housing strategy for the country were introduced in the hope of finding answers to the quantitative and qualitative deficits in the housing stock.⁷ In the real estate sector, legal participation in the construction of housing was extended to actors other than the state, including the private sector and foreign investments.⁸ They did not resolve the situation. On the contrary, lacking adequate regulation, the market mechanisms generated a certain level of speculation in the real estate sector. This caused the strategy to be changed once again during 1998, which sought to diminish once more the role of private actors in the production and distribution of housing.⁹

⁶ According to Atienza (2004a) in 1970 a drop in the relative weight of urban housing relative to total constructed housing is observed as these drop from a weight of 55%, in the period from 1946 to 1959 to 25% in the period from 1959 to 1970. Since 1959, the intense efforts to construct urban and rural housing gave way to a rise of new communities many of them in mountainous regions.

⁷ In 1992 a new housing strategy was implemented with the goals of employing techniques of low consumption, development and maximizing primary local inputs, prioritizing of emergency techniques to repair, maintain, and rehabilitate homes and increasing the participation of the population (Atienza, 2004b).

⁸ The General Law of Housing of 1984 included elements proper to the market such as the possibility of selling real estate and houses, and renting property.

⁹ “The period between 1986 and 1990 was decisive in the construction of housing with as many as 39 thousand houses finished each year. This achievement was the most relevant since 1959 and coincides with the process of error rectification and the reactivation of construction to fulfill the projected increases” (Atienza, 2004a: 19).

Table 4. Completed Housing, 1959-2002

Completed Housing	TOTAL (thousands)	Annual Average (thousands)	State %	Population %
1959-63	85.4	17	65	35
1964-70	43.9	6	100	-
1971-75	79.6	16	100	--
1976-80	87.3	17	94	6
1981-85	186	37	73	27
1986-90	196	39	75	25
1991-95	151.3	30	72	28
1996-99	198.8	50	68	32
2000-02	106.2	35.4	65	35
Sources: Series Estadísticas anuales del INV.				

The accumulated insufficiencies, the economic crisis of the 1990s which contracted the construction activity, and the process of social re-stratification in Cuban society were the factors that caused an acute disequilibrium between the supply of available housing stock and the demands for living quarters. This situation made the type of living quarters a great social differentiator, not only due to the type of ownership but also due to the great differences in residential quality. Thus, in parallel to changes responding to government policies, a redistribution of living space has occurred spontaneously.

A series of research studies carried out during these years illustrate some examples of this housing deficit. The results from the Programa de Investigación in regards to the impacts of the crisis and the economic reforms of the 1990s in Havana – whose effects are not independent from those in the rest of the country – demonstrates that there are spatial and territorial aspects of inequality. The relationship between space and inequality is related to the linkages between territory-housing and the quality of the environment.

Studies have also found stark contrasts in urban areas. On the one hand, we have high patrimonial and environmental values poised against visible signs of deterioration. The formulation of new plans to activate areas linked to tourism and foreign reserves is taking place; thereby avoiding the loss of traditional urban centers to closure, deterioration and sub-utilization.; As well, there is an increment of light vehicles associated with tourism and the reactivation of sectors in the economy facing acute deficiencies in public transportation. On the other hand, there is a strong push for economic development in the western reaches of the city that fights against the general housing deficit. In the intermediate zone, new areas of housing stock of poor design and bad quality are being implemented while the periphery loses quality with each passing day.

In particular, spatial inequality is manifested by a high population density in the central areas of the city, the polarization of employment and unemployment by municipalities, the differences in the municipal health, the incidence of residential zones upon the

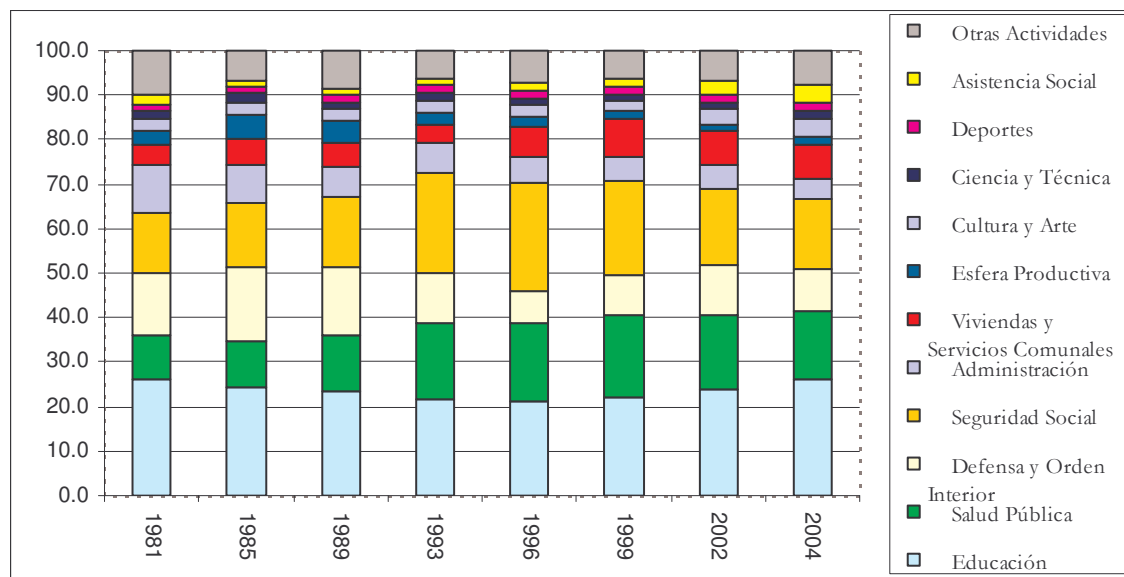
permanence within the school system, the formation of professional cadres, and the polarization towards the coastal areas as sources of employment, particularly in the revitalized sectors of the economy.¹⁰

Another aspect of inequality is related to the intra-municipal differences related to spatial disparities that are behind stark contrasts that explain socio-economic differences and differential access to opportunities to welfare. From the housing perspective, the worst conditions in hundreds of buildings are concentrated in the municipalities of Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Arroyo Naranjo, Diez de Octubre and San Miguel del Padrón. In the municipalities with the highest population density, such as Habana Vieja – with 330 inhabitants per acre, and Centro Habana – with 1,000 inhabitants per acre, is where we find the highest number of *ciudadelas* (slums) (Hamberg and Coyula, 2003).

During the first half of the 1990s, the amount of housing construction was reduced to 53% which meant that many projects were paralyzed or abandoned (Atienza, 2004). If we compare the structure of the state budget over time, we can see that during the last 24 years housing has been maintained as a priority. While it ranked the sixth or seventh place between 1981 and 1994, it advanced to the fifth place after 1997 (See Table G of the Appendix).

¹⁰ We refer here to the final integrated results of the research study “Programa Territorial de Ciudad de Heterogenización y desigualdades en la Ciudad: Diagnóstico y perspectivas” conducted by Espina et. al. in 2004. The research of Iñiguez, L. and others, (2001); Léstegas, and others (2000) were part of this program.

Graph 1. Cuba, Expenditure structure of the State budget



Source: ONE, Anuarios Estadísticos

As may be noted, although the resources dedicated to housing were incremented during the 1990s, they were insufficient to meet the demand. The quantitative deficit estimated by the Instituto Nacional de Viviendas for 2003 was approximately five hundred thirty thousand housing units when one considers the demographic change, the formation of new families, the deterioration of the housing stock, and the housing needs generated by the new strategic development programs for the country (Gomila, 2003).

The deterioration of the housing stock accentuated the contrast found in living quarters. Despite the efforts towards construction, Table 5 shows that another grave problem in Cuba has been the preservation of what has been built already. Insufficient maintenance of old housing stock, the impacts caused by meteorological phenomenon, and the illegal construction utilizing low quality materials and techniques have affected the characteristics of the housing stock. Between 2001 y 2002, there was little variation in the precarious or vulnerable housing stock (those of extremely low quality or uninhabitable) which remained at 5% of the total housing stock for the country and 32% of the total stock in bad conditions (INV 2002).

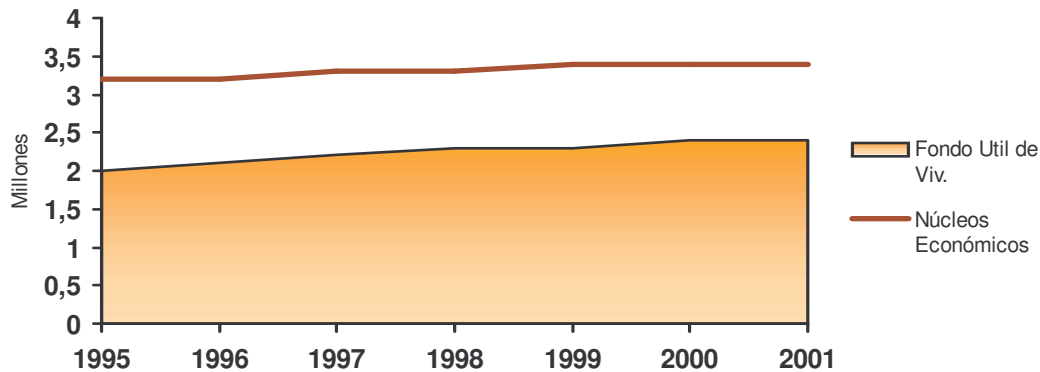
Table 5. Cuba. Main characteristics of the housing situation, 1999

Housing situation	Housing units	%
• Good	1,597,043	52.8
• Medium	897,569	29.7
• Bad	530,202	17.5
Uninhabitable	45,823	
Source: INV, 1999, Situación del fondo de viviendas		

The proliferation of neighborhoods with unhealthy characteristics has been an element that has called the attention of specialists and public servants seeking solutions to the problems. Only in the city of Havana there exist 22,170 nucleus while the number of inhabitants in the localities has grown from seventeen thousand in 1991 to twenty thousand in 2004 (INV 2004). Differences in the quality of habitat, health indicators and environmental conditions by housing type have been measured by the *Consejo Popular Colón* in the municipality of Centro Habana. The *ciudadelas* turned out to be the lowest quality habitat, at disadvantage with houses and apartments in housing projects (Barceló, et. al., 2004 and Loucks, Aldama, Ibarra, et al, 2004).

The housing situation at the level of families also represents a problem waiting to be resolved. A comparison between the growth of economic nuclei and the useful housing stock¹¹ depicted in Graph 2 demonstrates de permanence of a breach (Gazmuri, 2004).

Graph 2. Evolution of Economic Nucleous and Stock of useful Housing



Source: Gazmuri (2004)

The housing situation is also revealed as a problem among the population when considered from a subjective angle. In a study about the population living in risk of poverty in Havana, 16% of those interviewed identified the deterioration of housing as one of the main problems that affects their daily life (Ferriol, et al 2003). In the National Survey on Fertility carried out in 1987, 8% of the general female population indicated that housing was ranked fourth in the list of their problems; while for fertile women housing was the only factor that limited them in having children. From the feminine perspective, the housing situation affected their family life.

¹¹ According to Gazmuri, **useful stock** refers to the houses and apartments which, given the type of materials employed in the construction of walls and ceilings as well as their technical status, guarantee the security of their inhabitants. For the urban zones, this includes houses and apartments which are classified as types I to IV (according to the materials employed in the walls and ceilings); for the rural zones, this classification includes types I to V. In both cases, the housing units must be found in good or medium conditions. **Economic nuclei** includes an individual or a group of people with or without any familial relationship who maintain a common budget and live habitually together in a whole or partial housing unit. The relationship between these two indicators provides us with a picture of how housing demand as well as the degree of satisfaction in housing needs have behaved during a given timeframe.

Studies about families have demonstrated important findings in this area: the interactions among the members of extended families and the scarce access to housing or even the total lack of it are two factors which impinge upon the development of a couple's relationship as well as the fulfillment of other functions of the family (Díaz, et. al, 1989 and Alvarez, et. al, 1996). Likewise, the most frequent difficulties felt by the people participating in the interviews include the scarce access to housing as it affects the daily living of several generations, the lack of privacy and the need for independence in young couples, the need for space that children have, and the problems to provide maintenance in built-up spaces. Other studies posit the possibility that intra-family relations gain another layer of complexity when they are unable to satisfy their housing needs in the short term, a phenomenon which also affects the process of nuclearization in families as the number of young couples forced to live with their parents or other relative increases. From the three most important wishes that people have, the acquisition and maintenance of a house was the second most frequently mentioned (Díaz, et al, 2001).

The fourth National Workshop on Housing Policy concluded that, as consequence of material and financial limitations, the level of construction, conservation and rehabilitation of housing have been insufficient. The production and almost non-existent sale of construction materials to the general population to facilitate self-building has induced the proliferation of illegal and informal construction (INV 2004). As a result, income differentials among different social groups and their varying access to consumption end up reflected in housing disparities.

In this last phase, as we have tried to confirm in this study, there has been a marked differentiation in the access to housing or the quality of the habitat arising from situations of advantage or disadvantage which show that there is a disequilibrium between supply and unmet needs. This situation has brought about a spontaneous redistribution of the housing space as well as the emergence of an informal and illegal market in the real estate sector which runs in parallel to the government's housing policy and which occasionally enters in contradiction with it. Unless addressed adequately, housing could lead to the reemergence of processes leading to social fragmentation and residential segregation.

Government policy has maintained as a principle that the right to private property in housing cannot be turned into a mechanism of personal enrichment. Nonetheless, specialists have determined that the difficulty lies in the weaknesses during implementation due to the emphasis towards equality, the preference of homogeneity over diversity, the elections made by individuals and families, the exclusivity of the state, and the little practice in achieving synergy among the different actors in order to respond to unsatisfied needs, "(...) the more substantive comments on this model of social policy and its implementation could be tightly summarized in the absolutism of the state over social property which overloads the state, limiting its efficiency and underutilizing the innovative and productive capacity of other social actors and types of property; the excessive centralization in decision-making, the formalism in participation and the distributive homogeneity as elements which provoke low sensibility in capturing individual and local differences and particularities in the design of policies addressing the

satisfaction of needs; the low profile of local governments and social actors in the design of social policies at the local scale and the techno-bureaucratization of their strategic design” (García, 1991 and quote taken from Espina, 2005:100).

In response to the economic recovery that has begun in recent years, the state has assumed once again the responsibility of intervening with a prioritized program which has been described as “the largest housing plan ever approved in the history of Cuba” (Mayoral, 2005:4). In contrast to other action plans, this program raises explicitly the economic differences among the nuclear families and intends to favor those with the lowest income levels. Likewise, while sustaining the state’s responsibility as a fundamental part of the solution to the problem, it accepts the diversification of options to gain access to housing by assigning a more important role to self-construction activities and giving the intervention by the state a modality that is more participative.

Experiences in Latin America have pointed out the possibility of solving the housing problem with a new style of management: “Communal groups and cooperatives exercising self-management and self-production are resolving needs that society as a whole has left unsatisfied and, moreover, are gaining spaces in the management of the city where collective processes occur around the housing issue” (Díaz, 2006). This indicates that formulas that are fresh and creative are required to effectively address the housing problem.

In this sense, Cuba already has practical experiences such as the one that has taken place in the restoration of Havana’s historical center. This project represents a very noteworthy experience due to its originality, and economic, social and cultural importance. Through a model of decentralized public management, this project rescues the historical patrimony and develops the community. This model is tasked with sustaining the process of physical and social transformation.¹² The fact that it is a zone with important antecedents in marginality and social deterioration required transformation processes that would achieve a greater integration among certain social groups, such as children, adolescents, adults and women. Without a doubt, this demonstrates that with political will it is possible to find sustainable models of public management.

IV. Conclusions

The topic of housing continues to be a central axis in social policy. Investigating it helps to multiply the tools needed to evaluate its efficiency. Even though we cannot reach knowledge in this area from the perspective of complexity, the various approaches of the habitat problem are filling in the empty spaces. Along these lines, the study of social mobility makes its contribution to a wider scope of the problem. In this case, we show that there is a direct link between stratification, augmentation of social mobility and housing in Cuba.

¹² For more details on this experience, consult Leal, Eusebio et. al, 2002 *Desafío de una utopía. Una estrategia integral para la gestión de salvaguarda de La Habana Vieja*. Editorial Boloña. Oficina del Historiador. La Habana.

From early on in the revolution, housing policy in Cuba promoted as a right the equality of access to housing and to the rest of social services by all Cuban social groups. It had immediate positive effects on inclusion and social integration. The principles of equity which sustained housing policy have been maintained but, inasmuch as the resolution of the needs present in this sphere were delayed and the growing social demands were not addressed, a process of spontaneous satisfaction arose which then generated the reemergence of an inequality in housing conditions which corresponded to the levels of heterogeneity in society.

Several gaps in equitable housing conditions have opened up in terms of territory, gender and generational. Overcoming the fundamental limitations outlined in the plans for housing development is decisive for resolving the habitat question from a perspective that is multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary for all stakeholders. Even as gaps and difficulties to wholly satisfy the housing needs can be detected in a development model that bets on equality and social justice, the Cuban social policy model represents an alternative to the hegemonic visions which predominate in the majority of countries in the region.

It is difficult for this study to determine with precision which social groups have advanced and which have backtracked in terms of habitat, which ones have moved to more advantageous or disadvantageous positions. It will correspond to a second phase using proper methodologies for a more concrete analysis to complete the picture of the relation between equity, social mobility and habitat in Cuba. In this sense, other practical methodologies will be very useful in perfecting the study of housing policies as well as social policies in general.

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Appendix

Table A

CUBA. AVAILABILITY OF KITCHEN AREA IN HOUSES OCCUPIED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND ZONE OF RESIDENCE				
	KITCHEN AREA			
	TOTAL	EXCLUSIVE	COMMUNAL	UNAVAILABLE
CUBA 1981	2,290,176	2,144,636	12,728	132,812
CUBA 2002	3,333,818	3,317,187	16,631	26,540

Source: ONE, Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 y 2002

Table B

CUBA. LIGHTING TYPE IN INDIVIDUAL HOUSES OCCUPIED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND ZONE OF RESIDENCE					
	TOTAL	ELECTRICITY		BRIGHT LIGHT	Other
CUBA 1981	2,290,176	1,897,867		386,741 392,309	5,568
CUBA 2002	3,458,476	3,306,177		137,495 152,299	14,804

Source: ONE, Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002

Table C

CUBA. SANITARY SERVICE, USE AND LOCATION PER TYPE OF HOUSING, IN INDIVIDUAL HOUSES OCCUPIED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS

	TOTAL	WATER TOILET	OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE (TOILET OR LATRINE)	UNAVAILABLE
CUBA 1981	2,290,176	1,034,638	1,050,315	205,223
				1,255,538
CUBA 2002	3,458,476	2,066,282	1,093,958	298,236
				1,392,194

Source: ONE, Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002

Table D

CUBA. BATH OR SHOWER AVAILABILITY IN INDIVIDUAL HOUSES OCCUPIED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND ZONE OF RESIDENCE

	BATH OR SHOWER AVAILABLE			
	TOTAL	WITHIN THE HOUSE	OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE	UNAVAILABLE
CUBA 1981	2,290,176	1,127,106	73,936	1,089,134
CUBA 2002	2,399,331	2,101,444	297,887	1,163,070

Source: ONE, Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002

Table E

CUBA. WATER DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUAL HOUSES OCCUPIED BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND ZONE OF RESIDENCE
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	TOTAL	WITHIN THE HOUSE	OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE	ANOTHER METHOD
CUBA 1981	2,290,176	1,209,177	488,727	592,272 10,799
CUBA 2002	2,643,310	2,013,879	629,431	

Source: ONE, Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002

Table F

Structure of the State Budget for activities										
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Current Expenditures (TOTAL)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100,0	100
Education	26.2	25.8	25.1	24.5	24.4	25.5	24.4	23.9	23.3	23.1
Public Health	9.9	9.6	9.7	9.9	10.4	11.7	12.3	12.4	12.6	13.2
Defense and Interior	14.0	13.5	14.8	16.0	16.6	16.1	16.6	16.3	15.5	14.3
Social Security	13.4	13.7	13.1	13.3	14.3	13.9	14.7	15.0	15.5	16.6
Administration	11.1	10.3	9.4	9.5	8.4	8.2	7.6	7.2	6.9	6.5
Housing and	4.4	4.1	5.4	6.2	6.2	6.4	5.6	5.3	5.3	5.0

Communal Services										
Productive Sphere	3.1	4.6	4.2	5.2	5.2	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.8	4.0
Culture and Art	2.5	2.6	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.9
Science and Technology	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8
Sports	1.4	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7
Social Assistance	2.5	2.3	2.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Other Activities	9.7	9.9	9.8	7.4	6.7	6.3	6.8	8.1	8.4	9.6
Source: ONE. Anuarios Estadísticos										

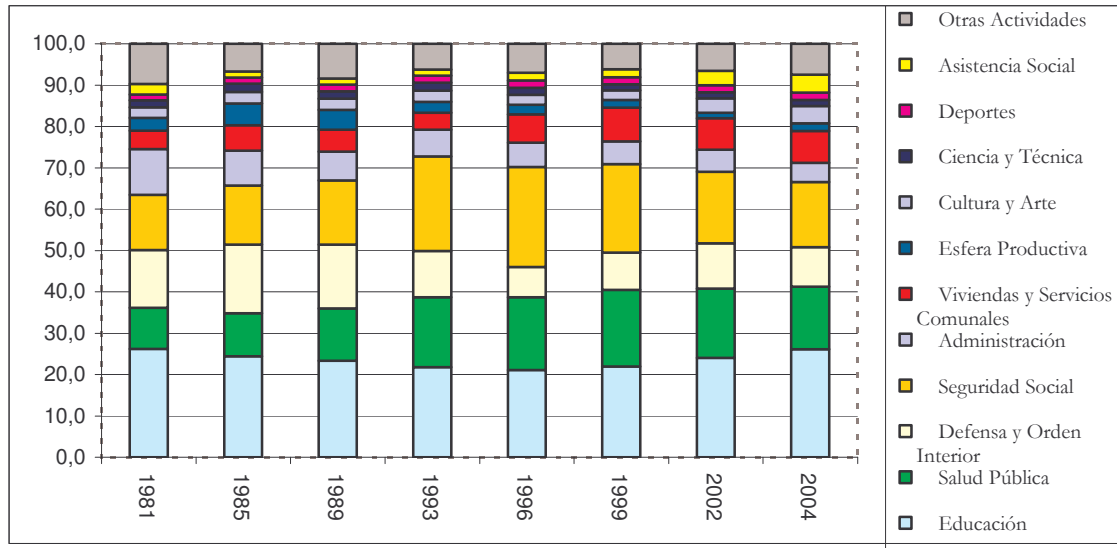
Structure of the State Budget –continued-										
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Current Expenditures (TOTAL)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Education	23.4	22.9	21.8	20.3	20.9	21.1	20.6	20.7	21.9	22.7
Public Health	14.4	15.1	16.9	16.2	17.0	17.6	17.9	18.5	18.6	18.2
Defense and Interior	13.7	11.8	11.2	9.9	9.4	7.4	9.0	7.4	9.0	9.5
Social Security	19.1	21.6	22.8	23.3	24.5	24.1	23.1	23.4	21.4	19.3
Administration	6.2	5.8	6.5	5.6	5.6	5.9	6.1	6.0	5.5	5.5
Housing and Communal Services	4.4	4.0	4.1	4.8	6.3	6.8	6.9	7.8	8.2	8.3
Productive Sphere	3.2	3.3	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.9
Culture and Art	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.5
Science and Technology	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7
Sports	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
Social Assistance	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.9	1.9
Other Activities	7.1	7.6	6.3	9.9	5.8	7.0	6.7	6.6	6.2	6.7
Source: ONE. Anuarios Estadísticos										

Budget Structure –continued-				
	2001	2002	2003	2004
Current Expenditures (TOTAL)	100	100	100	100
Education	22.8	24.0	26.1	26.1
Public Health	17.3	16.8	16.1	15.2
Defense and Interior	12.3	11.0	10.0	9.5
Social Security	17.9	17.3	16.3	15.8
Administration	5.4	5.3	4.8	4.6
Housing and Communal Services	8.0	7.6	7.6	7.7
Productive Sphere	1.6	1.3	1.5	1.9

Culture and Art	3.0	3.4	3.8	4.1
Science and Technology	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.5
Sports	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.8
Social Assistance	2.1	3.5	3.8	4.3
Other Activities	6.6	6.6	6.5	7.5
Source: ONE. Anuarios Estadísticos				

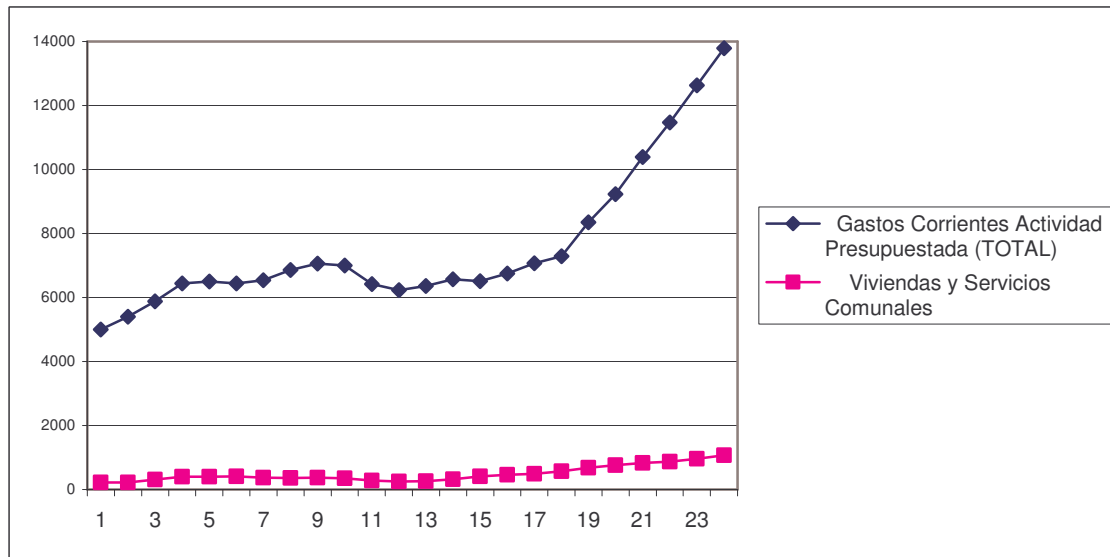
GRAPHS

Graph 1. Cuba. Structure of the State Budget



Source: ONE. Anuarios Estadísticos

Graph 2. Cuba. Total State Budget and Budget for Housing and Communal Services



Source: ONE. Anuarios Estadísticos