



# CIUDAD MAMERA

## STUDIO BRIEF

In August 2012, President Hugo Chávez announced the construction of “Ciudad Mamera”, a new socialist city for 50,000 people on a 346 hectares site in the southwestern peripheries of Caracas, Venezuela. Chavez later declared, “I want every single family that lives in a slum or high-risk zone to live with more dignity and less fear...” The plan will provide 10,000 homes to the most in need sectors of Venezuela’s current demographic and distribution income map (28.5% live below the poverty line, it is estimated that 40% of the 5 million Caraqueños live in informal settlements). The project, adjacent to one of the most dense and problematic informal settlements of the city, will be connected by a new highway, a Metrocable (gondola lift system integrated with the city’s mass transportation network and intended to trigger social reform by connecting to new services such as daycares, libraries, police stations and markets), and supported by agricultural projects. Land ownership will be granted to the new settlers as well as 100% subsidies in order to make home ownership available.

This Studio will present alternatives to foster sustainable habitats for this challenging project, introducing cutting edge landscape urbanism proposals that have not been explored in this context.

## PROJECT STATEMENT

In most Latin American countries, a high percentage of the population is already urban, concentrated mainly in very large urban centers, and presenting very high growth rates if compared to those of industrialized nations. Venezuela has one of the highest urban population rates in the world, over 90%. The rapid urbanization process triggered by the discovery and exploitation of oil in the 20th century generated unprecedented migratory trends, attracting settlers from the country's rural areas and from other Latin-American nations, as well as post war Europe. Caracas, the capital city and administrative center of this wealth, experimented drastic urban changes from the 1940's on. The colonial fabric was almost completely destroyed; the city became a high-density, multi-center linear structure. Outstanding modern architecture was designed and developed during the 1950's. Large parks and public spaces, including Roberto Burle Marx's Parque del Este, were built in the 1960's. A high quality Metro coupled with a vast system of open spaces was initiated in the late 1980's. The modern city occupied the lower elevation of the narrow valley in which the city was originally founded and gradually expanded to higher elevations and more abrupt landforms. Areas urbanized in the mid 20th century were repeatedly transformed; some saw densities increase from 40 inhabitants/hectare to 2,800 inhabitants/hectare. The urban transformation was coupled with the emergence, growth and consolidation of informal settlements, located on steep topography on the outer fringe of the valley and along in inner city ravines, on land that was zoned as -unfit for urbanization- in the city's urban plans.

## PROCESS

The students will participate in the following activities:

- . Research the evolution and transformation of Latin American cities, as well as current case studies that have dealt with the improvement of formal and informal settlements, social housing and urban design for low-income communities.
- . Research the current state of the art of planning, public housing and improvement of informal settlements around the World and Venezuela.
- . Research the site, expectations and criteria that will guide the government's approach for the creation of "Ciudad Mamera".
- . Mapping, Programming and Projective exercises in order to identify the problems and opportunities for the site as well as thesis statements, prior to our trip to Caracas.
- . Field trip to Caracas, including city and site visits, workshop with local actors, as well as multiple Design Charrettes. The field trip will be planned and organized with the support of government officials and other cultural and educational institutions that will provide a very intensive ground for surveying, testing, learning and experiencing the city and the site with its multiple layers of complexity.
- . Additional support (both in Caracas and the US) will be offered by former Director, and from 1995 to 1996 the Adjunct Secretary of Urban Development of Venezuela. Cofounder and professor of the Urban Design program and Director of the Mayor's Institute in Urban Design at Universidad Metropolitana, created with the support of Harvard University, in Caracas, Venezuela (1996-2008). His current area of research focuses on the notion of Informal Armatures considered a powerful tool to foster the sustainable growth of informal settlements, as the dominant form of territorial occupation in the developing world.
- . Ongoing applied research and development of regional, metropolitan and site-specific scale design solutions that will constantly deal with the intersection of multiple systems of various scales.
- . Preparation of a conclusive studio report that will be presented as part of a final review, exhibit and book publication.

## FUNDING (one week of travel)

Air travel (12 students + 2 faculty)	\$ 14,000
Accommodations	\$ 3,000
Transportation	\$ 500
Exhibition + Publication	\$ 2,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 20,000</b>

## FACULTY BACKGROUND

The applicant is a native of Caracas, Venezuela where he earned his Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad Simon Bolívar. In 2002, he obtained a Master in Architecture (March II) with distinction from Harvard Graduate School of Design. The applicant has been both practicing as an architect and teaching for more than 12 years. He currently teaches Design Studio at an Undergraduate Architecture Program (5th year thesis) and at a Graduate Landscape Architecture level in the areas of architecture, urban design, planning and landscape architecture.

For three years (2007-10) the applicant conducted graduate level traveling-design studios to México City where students dealt with a context where complexity and diversity surpass any logical way of understanding a city and its problems. Among the difficulties that define most of Latin American cities and the issues the students dealt with were: economic recession and loss of hope among the city's inhabitants, the shrinking of industry and growth of informal and illegal economies, increase in violence, uncontrolled spread of informal settlements, poor or lack of infrastructure and environmental threats among many others constraints.

For the last two years, the applicant has taught design studios of various large-scale issues that introduced students to the fundamentals of regional, metropolitan and site-specific design via the intersection of urban design, planning, landscape architecture and architecture. Among the many areas of interest were: re-thinking waterfronts, dealing with post-industrial sites, retrofitting derelict upland fabrics, remediating polluted sites, improving existing infrastructure, peak oil and climate change projections, alternative energy sources, and "Resilience" as a new methodology and lens for designing environments that can better adapt and resist to unforeseen shocks and changes.

Before coming to the US, the applicant had his own practice in Caracas where he designed and built various projects. After graduating from Harvard in 2002 he worked at the offices of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in New York where he became an Associate. In 2007, he joined TEN Arquitectos as a Senior Associate. In 2010 he founded MAPA, a design-research office that works on projects at different scales, scopes and geographies with strong connections to Latin America. That same year he founded Planetary ONE, a partnership organized to provide services in the following areas; architecture, landscape, planning, urban design, transportation, and ecological research with the central goal to respond to the needs of human populations with respect to our planet. He is an Associate at the AIA and a registered architect in Venezuela.

## STUDIO GOALS

This will be is an interdisciplinary studio (landscape, architecture, city planning and urban design) that will use this project to address the following issues:

1. How to plan, design and implement urban armatures (infrastructural/political/social/services/cultural/economic/ecological) that will respond to regional, metropolitan and site specific constraints?
2. How to re-stitch formal and informal urban forms that have different morphological, cultural, political, social and economic conditions?
3. How to plan and design resilient urban armatures that can adapt and better respond to unforeseen internal-external variables (food deficits, violence and crime, market collapse, epidemics, natural disasters, energy shortage, food shortage and uncontrolled growth?
4. Under which criteria can we envision and design sustainable cities for the poor?