Basic Definitions

**Affordances:** (Gibson, 1979), which could be material or nonmaterial, is the extent to which the landscape appears to offer (afford) opportunities for use. The concept of "affordances", links the built environment with human behavior, values and needs for fulfillment. What a place affords will be perceived and interpreted differently by each person, so it is culturally based. Affordances add meanings to spaces, and provide environmental conditions that can be beneficial or detrimental for people. This can encourage or constrain people’s action and behavior. Therefore, an affordance represents the set of environmental patterns, which provide meaning (symbolic or basic), information, and certain properties that enhance human activities and behavior. Environments that are well configured and work properly support and shelter human activities communicate meanings and provide information.

*The built environment can be adapted-its Affordances change-to allows for desired behaviors, or else the people concerned may adapt their behavior to cope with the environment as it is.* (Lang, 1994)

**Amenities:** features, elements or furnishings of plazas or other public spaces that provide physical and material comfort for people, which increases the attractiveness and value of those spaces.

**Bioclimatic:** the study of the effects of climatic conditions of a certain area over the living organism.

**Climate:** broad meteorological conditions, which include temperature, humidity, precipitation and wind that prevail in a particular region.

**Crime** is defined as:

*Act of commission of an act that is forbidden or the omission of a duty that is commanded by a public law and that makes the offender liable to punishment by that law. This definition is related to behaviors that are prohibited and behaviors or acts that are required by law.* (Crowe, 2000 p. 15)

**Livability:** similar to the concept of vitality. It infers the force or capacity of a public space or plaza to shelter and support people’s lives, sociability and its development.
**Needs:** a condition or situation in which something is required or wanted in order to achieve its satisfaction or fulfillment.

**Place:** a space or location with an identifiable character which can material or nonmaterial, indoor or outdoor, which become an ambit for an events or activities to occur. In this case place is seen as an urban plaza. Places have great influence over people’s experience, feelings and behavior by shaping and arranging the natural and built environments. A place can be understood through different scales, place could be a landscape, a region, could enclose a local environment such as a plaza. Generally the notion of place is determined by people meanings, feelings and attachment to spaces or locations. So, place cannot be separated from its human component.

**Public Life:** According to Stephen Carr and Mark Francis, public life is the vitality and dynamic that occurs in public spaces in which people have the chance to interact with others and the context; therefore, it is highly desirable for a community. If there is no public life in a certain location, it means there is minimal livability and sociability in a public space.

**Security:** the set of physical and functional conditions or ability of a place to provide freedom from fear, risk, danger and anxiety in people. When security exists people are able to use freely public spaces without the feeling of threat from criminals. Security is also related to design and management strategies that can be incorporated in public spaces in order to prevent crime, burglary and assault from occurring.

**Sense of place:** according to J. B. Jackson, sense of place cannot be separated from the notion of time, in this context, he states:

> “Sense of place, a sense of being at home in a town or city, grows as we become accustomed to it and learn to know its peculiarities.... It is something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit and custom.” (Jackson, 1994 p. 151)

J. B. Jackson also associates the sense of place to a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on a shared experienced.

**Sociability:** the physical and functional qualities of a plaza that influence people in being sociable, that support human contact, social interaction and information exchange.
**Vitality:** this term in relation to public spaces refers to the vigor and the capacity of sheltering human life and activities. It is related to the capacity a place has to allow social life and enjoyment to exist and develop. This concept is related to livability.

**Social-cultural terms used in this research:**

**Huele Pegas:** indigent or homeless youth and children of Maracaibo who under the influence of drug (specifically by the inhalation of chemicals from paste products) commit various criminal acts are a threat to society.

**Malandros:** rascals or antisocial youngsters (generally uneducated and from city ghettos), whose business is focused on robbery, assault, selling of stolen items, drug dealing and rape. There are many classes of “malandros”, some appear to be inoffensive and camouflage themselves as good and helping people. They can appear anywhere and at any public place in the city. Malandros specialize in surprising their victims in places with poor surveillance, deficient lighting, in bank establishments or places were people move money around. Malandros behave and act aggressively, and the degree of violence varies depending on the public setting.

**Marabinos:** name for the inhabitants of the Maracaibo city. Marabinos are colloquially known also as Maracuchos.