

A CARIBBEAN PROGRAMME IN PLANNING

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This September 1995, a new MSc programme in Planning and Development will be initiated within the Faculty of Engineering, culminating seven years of preparatory activity. This article gives a brief overview of the process that led to the establishment of the programme, its structure and inputs into its research agenda.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

This professionally-oriented programme has its roots in three related sets of initiatives. While the idea had been around for years, the first formal initiative was at the 1988 Barbados Convocation of the Caribbean Conference for Town and Country Planning (CCTCP). At this meeting, it was decided to pursue the establishment of a training programme for Town and Country Planning within The University of the West Indies (UWI) system. The second initiative was an attempt by the Trinidad and Tobago Society of Planners (TTSP) to pursue this broad mandate by approaching both the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the St. Augustine Campus of UWI in 1989. The third initiative was the joint approach by TTSP/McGill University, Canada, and the Land Surveying Department, UWI for CIDA funding to help establish the programme. As a result, a five-year programme was funded by CIDA with the following main objectives:

- (i) Prepare course materials,
- (ii) Hold Caribbean workshops to discuss and document issues relevant to planning in the region,
- (iii) Provide for documentation and collection of teaching materials,
- (iv) Provide both short and long-term training for professional upgrading in Canada to support the proposed programme, and
- (v) Acquisition of equipment for the programme.

The CIDA-funded programme was guided by a steering committee comprising members from the UWI Faculty, McGill and Queen's Universities and CIDA, as well as representatives of the professional associations of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and the CCTCP representing the rest of the Caribbean professional planning community.

At the initiation of the MSc programme, most of the objectives of the CIDA-funded programme have been completed. Joint steering committee papers have dealt with course structure and required resources. Library and teaching materials have been acquired, two PhD students are near completion and five workshops have been held. In addition, a series of professional visits to Canada have been undertaken. Collaboration on research topics have already led to a body of Canadian, Caribbean and joint Caribbean/Canadian papers and publications relevant to the professions involved with planning in the Caribbean.

THE COURSE STRUCTURE

The programme is a professionally-oriented two-year Master's programme structured to equip its graduates to perform a range of planning functions in both the public and private sectors. A core objective of the course design is to allow graduates to undertake the requirements of statutorily-based Town and Country Planning in which there has been a shortage of professionals in the region. While the primary target of the programme is the English-speaking Caribbean, the programme is designed to deliver an education that will allow students to function in other similar environments and to pursue further graduate training.

The programme runs over two years, including three semesters of coursework and an MSc thesis or project. There are eight (8) core courses in the following semester sequence:

Semester I

1. History and Philosophy of Planning
2. Institutional Environment

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Semester II

- 3. Planning Analysis
 - I. Analytic
 - II. Studio
- 4. Principles of Planning
- 5. Land Use and Natural Resource Management

Semester III

- 6. Design for Development
- 7. Development Planning

Semester IV

- 8. MSc Thesis/Project

Apart from the core courses, students will be required to undertake 4 - 5 electives from selected listings. Enough breadth has been added to the programme to allow graduates to obtain a range of specialisations in the field through electives and their MSc projects. Such specialisations may include new digital analytic techniques such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), classic areas such as Housing and Human Settlements, as well as the growth area of environmental planning and evaluation. Finally, the curriculum is designed to expose graduates to the broader area of development planning, including the social and economic aspects of planning to which physical planning is intimately interrelated.

AGENDA FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

As part of the CIDA-funded programme, five (5) workshops were run on various topics in planning of current interest in the region. These workshops were attended by academics, practitioners and public officials, both in the field of planning and in related disciplines throughout the region. The concerns and output of these workshops provide a preliminary guide for a research and training agenda for the new programme. The following are brief synopses of the concerns/output of the workshops as related to the programme:

WORKSHOPS

(1) Implementing GIS In the Public Service.
(Trinidad 1990)

The first workshop on Planning and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was held in Trinidad in

conjunction with the Department of Land Surveying, which has a specialisation in the technique. The following are some of the key outputs of the workshop:

- i) There is a need to survey the levels of awareness and advancement in the use of GIS in planning at the country level, as there is much variability in capability within the region.
- ii) Policy-makers need to be exposed to the implications of implementing GIS, in terms of potential uses as well as the need for rethinking and reorganisation of the nature of data collection and handling nationally.
- iii) Formal and informal methods of collaboration need to be developed between the various generators and users of data for planning.

(2) Incorporating Environmental Concerns In the Planning Process. (Trinidad 1991)

This roundtable was held in Trinidad and was co-sponsored by the TTSP. One of its main topics of discussions was on the use and administration of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in the approval process. The following are some of the concerns of the workshop relevant to the programme:

- i) There is need for institutional review and rationalisation within governments with respect to the regulation of environmental monitoring and assessment.
- ii) What are the cost implications of additional environmental assessments; what standards will inform them; who is eligible to undertake them; what are the additional human resource requirements and what is the role of planners in this process?
- iii) Additional issues raised were on the experiences with EIAs of the countries in the region and internationally; was the incentive or penalty system better for achieving environmental compliance and how did the above impact upon planning education.

(3) Designing Indigenous Planning Laws
(Jamaica, 1993)

The focus of this workshop was on areas where existing planning laws based upon the British tradition were inappropriate to our contexts. It was co-sponsored by the Town and Country Planning Association of Jamaica.

Relevant observations were:

- i) Planning training must be relevant to public as well as private activities and it must include appreciations of its technical, social, physical and certainly political bases. Training must move beyond the strictly legalistic view of planning to include the lessons of practice.
- ii) Areas of specific interests in Caribbean environmental law are marine pollution and its impact upon tourism, sand-mining and hazardous wastes not just domestically, but external dumping in the region.
- iii) There is need to deal with the fragmentation in legislation and issues of institutional jurisdiction. Environmental laws need to be brought up-to-date, clarifying issues of standards, penalties, implementation and administration, the use of command and control vs. incentives and market forces, and the applicability of these laws to government action, often overridden by political considerations.
- iv) There is need to demystify the role of law in planning as many laws have lost relevance to the issues at hand or may never have been suited to the context in the first place. Politics and public participation are positive rather than negative as they include the end-user of the society into what is otherwise a rather technocratic process.

(4) Planning for Sustainable Development.
Implications for Research and Training. 1994

This workshop was co-sponsored by the UWI Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED). Its findings of relevance to the programme are much too extensive to be usefully summarised here and only a few selective findings are provided.

- i) There is need for the programme in Planning and Development to collaborate and coordinate its research and training within a broader University

effort on Sustainable development. Specific programmes would include the Consortium School in Mona, Jamaica, the MAREMP programme in Cave Hill, Barbados and the coordination possibilities of the UWICED.

- ii) The impact of lead and other toxic wastes, as well as industrial hazards upon settlements need to be studied and remedial plans and programmes developed.
- iii) There is need for an understanding of the nature of Caribbean patterns and rhythms of urbanisations and settlements around which appropriate intervention and planning training can be developed.
- iv) Issues of poverty and social development must remain central in our vision of sustainable development and thus help fashion our research and training agendas.

(5) Planning and Development of Coastal
Urban Areas (Barbados, 1994)

The workshop which was co-sponsored by the Barbados Planning Society covered a range of general planning issues with some focus on the theme.

- i) The coastal zone was seen as the interface of the marine and terrestrial environments and a dominant area of planning and environmental concern, especially in societies with important tourism industries. Specific coordination mechanisms needed to be developed that covered the concerns of both planning areas.
- ii) Special physical areas of concern included land reclamation, solid and liquid waste-disposal, surface water runoff, irrigation and agricultural waste runoff and sand-mining.
- iii) Social issues included access to and views to the sea by the society at large, and the maintenance of the economic viability of the predominantly coastal-based tourism industry.
- iv) Waste disposal issues of concern included general water quality and the impact of pollutants on fishing and offshore reefs, disposal of waste by cruise ships and the planning of appropriate facilities at harbours.

- v) Illustrations of models of integrated coastal zone management were discussed as models for Caribbean planning.

CONCLUSIONS

The Programme is an attempt to fashion a teaching and research programme relevant to the needs of the region. The value of the teaching programme can only be sustained, if appropriate research and student work enrich the course with relevant materials as has already been initiated by the workshops.

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