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Problems in translating NGO successes into government settlement policy: illustrations from Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica

Asad Mohammed

SUMMARY: *This paper describes the case of Sou-Sou Land, a non-government programme that developed many new settlements for low-income households in Trinidad and Tobago based upon community mobilization, self-help, appropriate standards and incremental development within the context of comprehensive settlements. It considers the NGO's effectiveness and the later problems in implementing its philosophy when its approach was accepted as state policy. Finally, it reviews the current relevance of the approach in the region including its relevance for a similar programme in Jamaica called Operation PRIDE (Programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development Enterprises). By way of introduction, the paper reviews the conditions in Trinidad and Tobago and parts of the English Caribbean that gave rise to the Sou-Sou Land movement.*

Dr Asad Mohammed has been a director of Sou-Sou Land since its formation in 1983 and was an advisor to the government of Jamaica on Operation PRIDE. He is at present the coordinator of the Graduate Programme in Planning and Development, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, W.I.

Address: Department of Surveying and Land Information, Faculty of Engineering, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies; fax: (809) 662-4414.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN 1987, SOU-SOU Land was chosen by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) as one of the ten most innovative projects for International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, just four years after it had been initiated.⁽¹⁾ This UN endorsement became possible only because what had previously been a programme of illegal land development had had its approach endorsed as state policy the previous year when its political affiliates took control of the government. This endorsement was broadened at a meeting of CARICOM ministers of housing and settlements in 1988, when Sou-Sou Land was highlighted as a major Caribbean experience relevant to the region's shelter problems.⁽²⁾ This meeting also noted the international shift in public policy on housing away from providing housing units towards sites and services, and on land issues generally

1. UNCHS (1987), *The Directors Report for International Year of Shelter for the Homeless*, UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Nairobi, Kenya.

2. Government of Trinidad and Tobago (1988), *Report of the Meeting of CARICOM Ministers of Housing and Settlements*, Ministry of Housing and Settlements, Trinidad. CARICOM is the abbreviation for the Caribbean Economic Community which is a grouping of predominantly former British West Indian colonies but which has started to include non-English-speaking Caribbean countries.

with the proposed role for the state being more one of an enabler and facilitator rather than a provider of housing. The Sou-Sou Land approach was seen as an appropriate vehicle for achieving this international policy shift in the Caribbean context.

Almost ten years after this official endorsement, the Sou-Sou Land model has only been partially adopted by the Trinidad and Tobago government and to an even lesser extent by other governments in the region. Whilst there has been a shift in settlements policy away from direct provision of housing and towards land delivery, existing development standards and the methods of delivery have kept costs high and self-help and participation low. However, it appears that there is more than just technical difficulties involved in implementing NGO innovation as government policy, even when the technical difficulties are substantial. The different role of the state compared to that of NGOs or popular sector activists, as well as political considerations, appear to restrict certain innovations in settlements policy and programmes. Such innovation is further restricted by the conditions imposed by multilateral agencies, especially the Inter-American Development Bank which is the major development bank in the region.

II. CONTEXT OF THE SOU-SOU LAND INITIATIVE

SOU-SOU LAND WAS developed in a context that made it appear almost revolutionary. Yet its approach followed well-documented international experience and on-going and traditional settlement solutions by the peoples of the region.

a. Basic Characteristics

Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, where the Programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development Enterprises (PRIDE) is being implemented, are the largest English-speaking Caribbean islands. Both countries have relatively low densities of settlements with large state land holdings compared to most of their English-speaking neighbours. They share a common British colonial history with its statutory planning, housing and land policy background.

In both islands, the possibility of rational and sustainable settlements planning and implementation has been constrained by problems of small size, patterns of urbanization, settlements and infrastructure development derived from their colonial history and inadequate and inappropriately trained professional staff. The fragility of the ecosystem combined with a propensity for natural disasters is more of a problem in Jamaica than in Trinidad and Tobago, the former having diversified its dependency on agriculture and bauxite towards environmentally sensitive tourism. Trinidad and Tobago is dependent upon a petroleum economy and is relatively unaffected by natural disasters.

The levels of urbanization in these two countries, as in much of the Caribbean region, are comparable to those of Europe and

3. UNCHS (1996), *An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York.

North America although both the rate of urbanization and population growth have slowed down during the period being discussed in this paper.⁽³⁾ Table 1 illustrates some basic demographic and settlement characteristics of the two islands in the context of the English-speaking Caribbean. Whilst Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica are the most populated, they have close to the average population density. Though not shown in the table, the amount of state land is greater than in the smaller islands. The two islands have slightly higher than average population growth rates for the region but, overall, these are low. There is, however, a significant difference in the GNP per capita between Trinidad and Tobago (US\$ 3,189) and Jamaica (US\$ 1,205).

TABLE 1: Population, Land Area and Per Capita Income for Countries of the English-speaking Caribbean

Country	Population (thousands) 1990	Population growth 1960-1990	Area (sq.km)	Density per sq.km	GDP per capita (1988 US\$)
Barbados	257	0.4	430	597	3,226
Belize	184	2.3	22,965	8	1,276
Guyana	755	2	214,970	3.5	589
Jamaica	2,521	1.5	10,991	229.4	1,205
Suriname	395	1.1	163,820	2.5	1,679
Trinidad & Tobago	1,234	1.4	5,128	240.6	3,189
Antigua & Barbuda	86	1.5	442	194.6	1,924
Dominica	81	1	750	108	1,022
Grenada	120	1	344	348.8	940
St. Kitts & Nevis	50	-0.1	269	185.9	1,458
St. Lucia	139	1.5	617	225.3	1,016
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	111	1.1	389	285.3	761
Montserrat	12		103	115.5	
Total (or average)	6,277	1.2	497,265	204.1	1,523.8

SOURCE: Adapted from Kingsley, G. Thomas, Jeffrey P. Telgarsky, Ivor Jackson and Milagros Nanita-Kennett (1990), *Urbanization in the Caribbean, Prospects and Management Priorities*, The Urban Institute, Washington DC.

b. Institutional and Settlements Policy Context

The statutes and institutions dealing with human settlements in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and most of the English-speaking Caribbean were influenced by British traditions and developed in the post-World War II period. Yet, to date, these countries have not been able to develop, staff or sustain these institutions.

Many countries in the region, including Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, have instituted legislative and institutional reform over the last decade, first with support from the UN Centre for Human Settlements and now as part of sectoral reform programmes supported by the Inter-American Development Bank. However, the statutory and institutional framework remains fundamentally the same. Trinidad and Tobago, which was more advanced in rhetorical terms in the 1980s following the adop-

4. Government of Jamaica (1994), "Towards a land policy for Jamaica", Green Paper No.4/94, Office of the Prime Minister, Kingston.

5. Great Britain (1939), "Report on labour disturbances in Trinidad and Tobago (Chairman Forster)" in *Parliamentary Papers* Cmd 5641; also Great Britain (1940), "West Indian Royal Commission 1938-39: recommendations (Chairman Lord Moyne)" in *Parliamentary Papers* Cmd 6174.

6. Leflore, J. (1973), "An analysis of a Third World squatter settlement: a case of urbanism in Trinidad", unpublished PhD thesis, Syracuse University; also Mohammed, Asad (1990), "Low-income housing and the political process in Trinidad and Tobago: the case of Sou-Sou Land Limited", unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University.

7. APETT (1989), *Proceedings of the Caribbean Conference on Housing, Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago*, Trinidad, May 1983.

8. UNCHS (1990), *Overview Report on the Human Settlements Sector in the OECS, Programme Support to the Human Settlements Sector in the Caribbean*, UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Nairobi, Kenya.

9. UNCHS (1990), *Programme Support to the Human Settlements Sector in the Caribbean* (CAR/87/F02-RLA/88/029), UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Nairobi, Kenya.

tion of Sou-Sou Land, has lagged behind Jamaica which has recently developed a comprehensive land and settlements policy.⁽⁴⁾

The land, planning and housing policy of the independence era in the English-speaking Caribbean has its roots in the Royal Commissions which followed the 1937 regional labour unrest.⁽⁵⁾ This policy framework was also influenced by the later 1950 Caribbean Commission's Report on Land Tenure and the same Commission's 1951 Report on Housing. The resulting statutes and institutions were geared towards eliminating the widespread agricultural and urban barrack systems of housing remaining from the slave and indentured labour systems of plantation agriculture. The post-World War II statutory framework included planning, rent restrictions, slum clearance, restriction of ribbon development and sugar workers welfare. The policy was to promote and regulate the orderly development of the land and property markets and the physical environment while at the same time tempering the excesses of the market with social and welfare measures. Programmatic emphasis was on urban "slum" clearance, medium-density housing for the urban poor and rural sugar housing.

This settlements policy continued into the independence era of the 1960s with the dual policy objectives of market development and social welfare. In most countries of the region, new ministries or agencies were established to deal with low-income housing but the extent of their programmes was largely based upon the availability of subsidies for social welfare. It was also clear that the business of winning and maintaining political power influenced both the timing and distribution of housing programmes and the legislative agenda.⁽⁶⁾

By the early 1980s, the changing international experience and the recommendations from the first UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat) in 1976 were calling for a more comprehensive policy integrating the many elements of human settlements. There was also a change from previous policy which advocated the relocation and redevelopment of squatter areas towards *in-situ* regularization.⁽⁷⁾ It had also become evident that the housing policies, except where there were direct subsidies, mostly for party supporters, were benefitting primarily the middle-class.

The relationship between human settlements and general socio-economic development was clearly articulated at the 1988 CARICOM ministers meeting and housing was seen as a catalyst for economic growth. This changing understanding was not, however, matched by an enhanced capacity for analysis, planning or implementation of more appropriate settlements. Proper land management was virtually non-existent and spatial planning techniques were not related to their societies. Along with limited data for spatial planning, the institutional capacity for planning was seen by some as being inadequately staffed and implementation programmes deficient.⁽⁸⁾ Others suggested that attempts to develop, maintain and staff comprehensive planning institutions to implement existing policy were unrealistic and that policy should be developed that was cognizant of the human resource limitations within the region.⁽⁹⁾ The main hu-

10. Kingsley, G. Thomas, Jeffrey P. Telgarsky, Ivor Jackson and Milagros Nanita-Kennett (1990), *Urbanization in the Caribbean: Prospects and Management Priorities*, The Urban Institute, Washington DC.

11. PADCO and Laughlin and Associates Ltd.(1993), *Trinidad and Tobago Land and Housing Market Study*, Ministry of Housing and Settlements, Trinidad.

12. Pantin, Dennis and Asad Mohammed (1994), *The Prospects for Sustainable Economic Development in the Caribbean Illustrated by a Spontaneous Urban Community in Port of Spain, Trinidad*, Caribbean Conservation Association, Barbados.

13. See reference 10.

14. *Landmark* (1985), Vols.1,2,3, 1995, Vols.I and II, National Planning Commission, Port of Spain.

man settlements problems were providing services and adequate infrastructure to all the population and improving the environmental quality of low-income communities in the context of the more intractable problem of high unemployment.

c. Low Incomes and Housing Policy

Most Caribbean people cannot afford housing in the formal market. In Jamaica, it was estimated that only the wealthiest 15 per cent of the population could afford housing that met all development standards in metropolitan Kingston.⁽¹⁰⁾ In Trinidad and Tobago, only the top 20 per cent of the population could afford the median value of US\$ 21,500 for a housing unit.⁽¹¹⁾ Generally, there was a close relationship between the extent of poverty, those living below the poverty line and squatting in Trinidad and Tobago.⁽¹²⁾

Existing regulations and the incentives that structure the market had priced the low-income product out of the market, leaving low-income housing to welfare policy or the informal sector. Even public housing has been less than successful. The study of urbanization in the Caribbean by the US Agency for International Development had the following to say about public housing:

“Almost all Caribbean countries have agencies that build housing for low-income groups but none provide for more than a small fraction of total need. In addition, there is evidence that such programmes have entailed high cost and that middle-income groups have been the major beneficiaries of a large share of the units produced instead of the poor for whom they were intended.”⁽¹³⁾

It was in the context of that situation in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and the Caribbean in general that Sou-Sou Land was initiated.

III. THE SOU-SOU LAND MOVEMENT

SOU-SOU LAND WAS started almost inadvertently in March 1983 by John Humphrey, Opposition Member of Parliament. In trying to resettle a group of squatters who had been served with a court eviction notice, he arranged for them to purchase and settle an abandoned agricultural estate. The estate was larger than necessary for the 22 squatter families so it was decided to let them invite their friends and families to settle the estate also. Once word got out that land was available at a reasonable price, many people joined in. The process started in April and, subsequently, Humphrey was joined first by a lawyer, then by an Opposition economist (the author of this paper) as a town planner. Activity increased rapidly so that, by September, a formal non-profit company, Sou-Sou Land Limited, was formed to undertake the participants' transactions. An ex-journalist, who had been involved from the beginning, would become the first manager followed by the long-serving managing director – Allen Sammy.⁽¹⁴⁾

At this stage there was no full idea of what the Sou-Sou Land philosophy would be. This would evolve over time, the pace being dictated by the rising number of people seeking land. The Sou-Sou Land approach was initially similar to the approaches of the informal sector but tried to avoid many of the pitfalls of squatter settlements. It was based on simple but planned designs with adequate allowances for incremental development of infrastructure as future development of the area took place. The major differences between this approach and the regular squatter settlements were planning, community and financial mobilization, self-help and ownership of the land by the participants. They were in fact "squattling on their own land" in such a manner that the sub-divisions could be upgraded and legally regularized at a later date.

Whilst most Sou-Sou Land settlements were on greenfield sites, there were also village expansion projects regularizing squatters and community based land development projects where Sou-Sou Land was an advisor. By 1986, before it was endorsed by the state, the company had acquired just over 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) in 13 projects in various areas of the country including Tobago. The nature of the company's operations developed in response to participants' needs and demands. The most viable projects were those that paid close attention to these factors. The projects based upon the directors' utopian ideas ran into problems of participant acceptability and, later, of financial insolvency.

Table 2: Major Sou-Sou Land Projects by Location, Status and Size in 1986

Project	Location	Type (status)	Size acres/ hectares	Plots	Plots delivered
<u>North Trinidad</u>					
Stollmeyer	Morvant	Residential (part.)*	222 / 90	205	160
Gaston-Johnson	Toco	Agricultural (part.)	130 / 53	2	2
Sin Verguenza	Cumuto	Mixed (comp.)*	30 / 12	32	15
De Gannes	Cunaripo	Mixed (part.)	490 / 198	249	214
La Mariquita	Manzanilla	Agricultural (comp.)	147 / 60	120	45
Coryal	Coryal	Mixed (comp.)	38 / 15	70	70
<u>Central Trinidad</u>					
El Dorado	Chickland	Mixed (part.)	393 / 159	254	105
Carlsen Field	Carlsen Field	Residential (init.)*	80 / 32	-	-
Huggins	Las Lomas	Mixed (init.)	400 / 162	-	-
<u>South Trinidad</u>					
La Costena	Penal	Mixed (part.)	348 / 141	331	331
Tancoo	Barrackpore	Mixed (comp.)	25 / 10	43	30
Cinco Grande	Moruga	Mixed (init.)	40 / 16	-	-
<u>Tobago</u>					
New Grange	New Grange	Residential (comp.)	134 / 54	511	511
Totals			2,477 / 100	1,817	1,483

*part. - partially completed *comp. - completed *init. - development works initiated
 SOURCE: Compiled from *Landmark*, Vols.1,2 and 3, Sou-Sou Land Limited, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Table 2 shows the major projects developed by Sou Sou Land up to December 1986, at which time their strategy was adopted by the new National Alliance for Reconstruction government as its settlements strategy; thereafter, no more projects were initiated by the NGO. The projects were spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago but were all rural except for the Morvant project. The 1,000 hectares it had acquired made it the largest developer of land for low-income housing at the time, including the state which concentrated upon housing construction. By December 1987, Sou-Sou Land records show that the number of lots being developed had increased from 1,820 to 3,000 and the number of plots delivered from 1,489 to 2,500. This was more than the People's National Movement government's entire residential land distribution programme of 2,250 lots during the period 1956-1986.⁽¹⁵⁾

15. Government of Trinidad and Tobago (1988), *Draft Medium-term Macro-Planning Framework 1989-1995*, Vols. I and II, National Planning Commission, Port of Spain.

16. Pollard, H. J. (1985), "The erosion of agriculture in an oil economy: the case of export crop production in Trinidad" in *World Development* Vol. 13, No. 7, pages 819-835.

Methods of Operation

Land use and infrastructure standards. Location and services were considered in land purchases but cost was the major factor in the choice of rural tracts of land. Because of the 1970s boom in oil prices, there had been inflation in the price of all types of land and abandoned agricultural plantations were the only land within the price range of low-income participants. Many of these plantations were no longer economically viable because of the rising cost of agricultural labour and low domestic and world prices for tree crops.⁽¹⁶⁾ The large size of these estate parcels further reduced the price per unit area and Sou Sou Land was able to negotiate easy payment terms. This, in turn, allowed participant payments to be scheduled over a longer period. These factors resulted in raw land costs as little as one-seventh the cost of residentially zoned but undeveloped land in the formal market. Although Sou-Sou Land was started to serve residential needs, the large rural parcels purchased by the company were planned as comprehensive settlements. This allowed the retention of good agricultural land and the possibility of generating economic activity on the projects.

The second type of cost savings to participants was on the level of starting infrastructure standards and the incremental development approach. The level of infrastructure supplied was determined by the minimum habitable standards and the participants' income. It was proposed that incremental improvement of the initial infrastructure be continuously undertaken by the community after the land had been settled. Whilst this may not have reduced the long-term cost, it reduced the entry cost and thus extended access to a lower-income group than would have been possible in the formal market.

The minimum infrastructure normally included major earthworks including all-weather roads and drainage. Neither water supply nor road paving was included initially but later these became standard because of participant demand and their declining market cost. No centralized sewage collection and disposal systems were proposed as the projects were largely rural with environmental conditions and densities which allowed more

traditional methods of on-site disposal. As the land component was the cheapest element of the final development cost, the projects utilized land extensively so as to minimize expensive infrastructural work such as paved roads and drains.

Financial management and costs. On the initial project in Coryal, the selling price of TT\$ 0.50 per square foot for residential land included development costs (US\$ 1.00=TT\$ 3.60 in 1983). On other projects, because of cost overruns, higher standards and higher land prices, it was necessary to increase the price for residential plots. This ranged from TT\$0.90 - TT\$ 2.00 per square foot. Although Sou-Sou Land remained a non-profit company, losses on some projects and cash flow problems eventually required the enterprise to raise prices to generate an operating surplus in order to remain viable. Prices were still kept at approximately one-fifth of the prevailing market price for residential parcels.

The company experienced serious cash flow problems in 1987 when there were no more new projects. To stay in operation, it was forced to operate much more like a private real estate company. Land-pricing was largely based on what the informal market could carry. On the Carlsen Field project, for example, areas originally designated for various community uses such as recreation and open space were sold as commercial land at TT\$ 3-4 per square foot. However, the overall availability of land for non-economic and community uses remained relatively high compared to the existing land use standards.

IV. FROM NGO INNOVATION TO STATE POLICY

THE IN-COMING government in 1986 adopted Sou-Sou Land as its central settlements strategy but this was not easily translated into state policy. As an NGO, the company had engendered innovative financing, planning, administration and implementation. Because it had to be self-financing, its operations could not, however, target the lowest-income group and it was predominantly a rural programme that did not address the pressing urban problems. There were also very important political and economic problems that had to be faced by the government that could have been ignored while it supported the company when in political opposition.

“PROJECTS 100” in 1987

The new government's housing programme, based on the Sou-Sou Land concept, illustrated the technical, political and economic problems of translating an opposition programme into government policy. Despite the fact that the state programme was developed and run by John Humphrey and other Sou-Sou Land directors and consultants, the outcome was quite different. It was obvious that the concept had not been adequately worked out by the party before it was adopted as a national settlements strategy. However, the political necessity of starting

a national project as soon as possible resulted in a programme called PROJECTS 100, after the number of sites to be developed.

This programme was no more than a sites and services programme that lacked many of the positive elements of the Sou-Sou Land approach. A government-run programme created different expectations among participants and did not encourage the acceptance of lower or incremental standards, self-help and community based savings. The state regulatory agencies took part in the process of developing standards which turned out to be much higher than on the Sou-Sou Land projects. However, the sites were better located because of the possibility of utilizing state lands and finances.

The implementation of the projects was slowed down by the bureaucratic planning, tendering and financing procedures of the state agencies. In the first 18 months of PROJECTS 100, only 800 residential lots were developed out of a projected total of almost 10,000.⁽¹⁷⁾ This was restricted to residential sub-divisions and, because of problems of legal vesting, none of the lots were released until the 1990s.

The projects that developed were not the comprehensive type of settlement that had been envisaged under the Sou-Sou Land concept. Furthermore, neither the planning nor allocation of land was undertaken in consultation with the communities, nor their other land needs considered. Again, the squatter regularization components were not initiated until the 1990s within an Inter-American Development Bank funded programme.

The Sou-Sou Land projects were financed entirely by participants' contributions even though the lowest-income level could not be included. The National Housing Authority projects were dependent upon bridging finance from the state. This contributed to the virtual shutdown of the programme pending the negotiation of an Inter-American Development Bank loan. Despite state subsidies and financing, the lot prices still did not serve the lowest-income groups.

V. LIMITATIONS OF TRANSLATING NGO INNOVATION INTO STATE POLICY

WHEN THE SOU-SOU Land approach became state policy so soon after its inception, a range of problems emerged that Sou-Sou Land had not yet addressed. In any case, there had been inadequate time and analysis to evaluate the experiment and distil its lessons. Romanticized versions of the success such as *The Sou-Sou Land Story*⁽¹⁸⁾ did not reflect the reality of the projects. With hindsight, the real problems only emerged when the projects were translated from concept and plan into community settlements, which occurred in the original Sou-Sou Land settlements from 1986 to 1996, after the strategy's adoption as state policy. The key issues to be addressed included what was an acceptable minimum standard of infrastructure, how did one make incremental development work and how could one initiate community participation and self-help when there was no actual resident community?

17. See reference 6, Mohammed (1990).

18. Laughlin, Ivan (1987), *The Sou-Sou Land Story*, Sou-Sou Land Limited, Port of Spain, Trinidad

Defining Appropriate Standards

19. Charles, Victoria (1989) "The *fait accompli* syndrome - regularizing after the fact" in George, Vincent and Christian Wolffe (editors) (1989), *Development Standards for the Caribbean*, proceedings of a Caribbean Regional Workshop on Development Standards, Kingston, Jamaica, February 11-14, Town and Country Planning Association of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica.

20. Government of Trinidad and Tobago (1982), *National Physical Development Plan Vols. I and II*, Town and Country Planning Division, Ministry of Finance, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

21. See reference 19, Charles (1989). There has been a fair amount of debate and thinking on these two issues and there is a growing pool of Caribbean literature. Some works include George and Wolffe (editors) (1989), see reference 19.

22. See reference 19, George and Wolffe (1989); also Wolfe, Jeanne and Jane Glen (1993), *The Growth of the Informal Sector and the Regularization of Spontaneous Development: Implications for Conventional Planning Laws and Standards*, proceedings of a Caribbean Workshop on Taking Up the Challenge – Designing Indigenous Planning Law, Kingston, Jamaica.

23. Mohammed, Asad (1989) "The philosophy of standards: affordability vs economic realities" in George, Vincent and Christian Wolffe (editors) (1989), *Development Standards for the Caribbean*, proceedings of a Caribbean Regional Workshop on Development Standards, Kingston, Jamaica, February 11-14, Town and Country Planning Association of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica.

24. See reference 12.

Sou-Sou Land had sought to find an appropriate standard which was environmentally sound, could be upgraded over time and was related to the income of its participants but the NGO was criticized for utilizing lands not suited to settlement.⁽¹⁹⁾ The lands that were considered appropriate for conversion to housing by the regulatory agencies were normally those which already possessed a minimum level of trunk infrastructure.⁽²⁰⁾ This, however, was in very limited supply nationally and was biased towards the urban areas that were already well-served by trunk infrastructure. Many existing settlements would not have been allowed to convert to housing land designations or have their situation regularized if their present levels of trunk infrastructure had been considered.

As a result of the Sou-Sou Land experiment, two major issues have engaged practitioners and regulatory agencies alike with respect to development standards. First, the *fait accompli* syndrome,⁽²¹⁾ that is, the regularization and retro-fitting of informal or "inappropriate" settlements after the fact; and, secondly, the lowering of standards for new low-income settlements.⁽²²⁾

The economic reality of poverty and resource constraints for much of the population, that was openly addressed in the Sou-Sou Land programme and the growing Caribbean literature, should have directed the official position towards more appropriate approaches.⁽²³⁾ However, in Trinidad and Tobago, even the intermediate standards being used in official Inter-American Development Bank and National Housing Authority programmes supposedly based on Sou-Sou Land concepts were beyond the income capability of many beneficiaries and required high unit subsidies.⁽²⁴⁾ While both programmes claim to be suitable for low-income groups and for traditional building patterns, the sites and services projects are being developed with almost full infrastructure standards. Because of the high levels of unit subsidy, these programmes are not sustainable for long enough periods or on a large enough scale to ensure that the overall environmental and tenure problems of the large informal and low-income settlements are addressed, particularly as cost recovery may fare as badly as in previous government programmes.

Two factors have led to the unacceptably high cost of infrastructure for the majority of users throughout the region. First is the historically vague basis of the nature and performance standards of infrastructure which makes it difficult to judge what are appropriate or acceptable reductions in starter standards. To date, there is little documented experience on alternative standards acceptable to regional regulatory agencies.

The second problem is much more intractable. Regulatory agencies are, understandably, hesitant to approve lower standards if it is not clear how these will be upgraded or whether increased or unusual maintenance schedules required by the incremental approach will be undertaken. Both of these issues, maintenance and upgrading, are mostly unknown factors. There is little analysis of patterns and rhythms of upgrading at the street or community level even though this is a predominant

25. See reference 18.

pattern of urban development in the region. Whilst documentation such as *The Sou-Sou Land Story*⁽²⁵⁾ made it sound easy, the Sou-Sou Land experience has shown that plans and designs for incremental infrastructure development is easier than implementing the entire process. Incremental development of infrastructure is a long and tedious process that requires input such as community mobilization over a number of years for any maintenance and upgrading to be achieved.

The Sou-Sou Land experience is instructive but, after 13 years of operation, a proper evaluation and analysis of the overall experience is still needed. Although the minimum infrastructure was put in place, the initial designs done and the land sold to enthusiastic settlers, settlement has been very slow. The critical mass of settlers needed for community development and mobilization took ten years to develop and is still at a nascent stage in certain communities. In hindsight, some of these communities are only now ready for incremental maintenance and upgrading programmes. The task was much too onerous for the few initial settlers and this led to infrastructure decay and no maintenance. On other projects, where early on there were interested communities or where previous community bases existed, the projects flourished.

There is little analysis or documentation on the process whereby low-income communities and individuals upgrade infrastructure over time in the region. This leaves a number of questions unanswered. How is it financed? What are the levels of skills required? How can this process be systematized and improved? What are the differences between retro-fitting existing informal settlements and developing new low-income settlements with incremental infrastructure? How can an incremental implementation procedure and the resultant maintenance schedules be handled by professionals trained for one-off planning, design and construction? Only now is analysis emerging that deals with the attitudes and rhythms of informal settlements in the region.⁽²⁶⁾ As yet, there is no long-term monitoring nor any assessment projects on the informal sector, even though some comparative, historical studies on formal and informal sub-division development have been done.

It is essential that the rhythms of implementation by low-income households and communities generally, and Sou-Sou Land in particular, be understood because they represent important mechanisms by which capital formation takes place in these resource-poor societies where colonial patterns of economic development directed infrastructure implementation. Apart from the limits of savings among the poor, which finances the capital development in housing and infrastructure, the high levels of unemployment complicate the situation. As low-income settlements, especially informal settlements, are the most in need of infrastructure improvements, there is a need to find mechanisms which integrate employment creation with improvements in environmental conditions.⁽²⁷⁾

26. Brown, Jacob and Mooleedhar (1992), *Exploring the Morphology of Informal Settlements with a View to Regularization*, Montreal Inter-University Group on Urbanization and Development, Montreal, Canada.

27. See reference 12.

VI. IS THE SOU-SOU LAND APPROACH STILL RELEVANT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO?

IN TRINIDAD AND Tobago, we have had three administrations since Sou-Sou Land first became public policy. It is useful to compare the impact of various approaches that have borrowed from it with the original approach to evaluate its continued relevance.

Table 3: Comparison of Sou-Sou Land Settlement Costs with other National Settlement Programme Costs

(Figures quoted in Trinidad and Tobago dollars: TT\$ 6=US\$ 1)

Cost	Squatter upgrade	Squatter upgrade	Sites and services	Squatter upgrade
	Existing standard	IADB programme	Sou-Sou Land approach	Alternative performance approach
Total per household	28,750	32,105	11,500	16,800
x 25,000, statelands	718,750,000	802,625,000	287,500,000	420,000,000
x 50,000, national	1,437,500,000	1,605,250,000	575,000,000	840,000,000

SOURCES: Interplan (1992), *Dundonald Hill Regularization Study*, National Housing Authority, Trinidad and Tobago; also Pantin, Denis and Asad Mohammed (1994), *The Prospects for Sustainable Economic Development in the Caribbean Illustrated by a Spontaneous Urban Community in Port of Spain, Trinidad*, Caribbean Conservation Association, Barbados.

If we look at the costs of the different approaches to dealing with the national problem of squatting, the macro implications are obvious. A fourth category of alternative performance standard has been included which is an improvement on the Sou-Sou Land approach but which assumes that some transfer of income is possible. At present levels of national expenditure of TT\$ 100 million annually on the full public housing programme, of which squatter upgrading is one element, the Sou-Sou Land approach or the modified approach are the only viable solutions. When these costs are evaluated from an individual household capability point of view, the case for continuing this approach becomes even stronger.⁽²⁸⁾

28. See reference 12.

29. Mohammed, Asad and J. MaCrae-Goldsmith (1994), *Policy and Programme Framework for Operation PRIDE*, Office of the Prime Minister, Government of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica.

30. See reference 4.

VII. OPERATION PRIDE, JAMAICA

A RECENT EXAMPLE of an attempt to implement a philosophy similar to that of Sou-Sou Land as state settlements policy is Operation PRIDE in Jamaica. The Programme for Resettlement and Integrated Development Enterprises was initiated in 1994⁽²⁹⁾ as part of an overall rethinking of the government of Jamaica's land policy. Its purpose was, to quote the policy framework,⁽³⁰⁾

"...to make land accessible to a wide cross-section of persons using innovative techniques to ensure success." The programme was designed to be implemented through a range of organizations including the state, the private sector, NGOs, professional groups and CBOs.

The programme was to mobilize community level finances and, by using sweat equity or self-help, to initiate a process of incremental development of infrastructure. Infrastructure would be upgraded as community resources increased. The conceptualization of the project was based, as in the case of Sou-Sou Land, on mobilizing and adapting the coping capability of those disenfranchised from the formal land market. Appropriate planning, starter standards, community development and technical assistance were to be the hallmarks of the programme.

To facilitate the process of community financial mobilization, the state would use state lands through a land bank. The land bank would include lands from the public sector agencies, the private and quasi-state enterprises and the churches. Where private lands were placed in the land bank, there would be agreed payment terms.

Whilst it was not intended that the lands be given away, and that subsidies were envisaged, the level of subsidy was to be based on the economic conditions of the beneficiaries. The beneficiary groups were to include various civil servant groups, community groups, providence societies, cooperatives, vendors, small-scale manufacturers and light industrial operations. The standards to be applied and the cost of the raw land would be suited to the economic capability of the target groups. The intention was to have mixed income communities as well, even though this would complicate issues of income based starter standards and subsidies.

Whilst it is too early to evaluate the direction and outcome of the programme, the initial mistakes appear similar to those apparent in the translation of the Sou-Sou Land experience to state policy in Trinidad and Tobago in 1987. Project PRIDE, like Sou-Sou Land, was supposed to be based upon community mobilization, participation and incremental development. It had thus been recommended that the project be allowed to grow organically, based upon the rate of community and financial mobilization. A pilot phase of six projects had been recommended but, like PROJECTS 100 in Trinidad in 1986 which tried to make a "quantum leap", Operation PRIDE initiated almost 200 projects nationally in its first year of operation.

The initial process caused cash flow problems for the programme. Provident societies were formed to collect the savings of the beneficiary groups, as suggested by the policy framework. However, rather than provide matching funds to encourage saving and give technical assistance to community planning, the Operation PRIDE office produced technical planning reports prepared by consultants and initiated construction work using contractors. The early problems with this approach were low community participation, limited savings and little relationship between expenditure and the income capability of the communities. It also became obvious that, as with Trinidad and To-

bago and PROJECTS 100, Operation PRIDE was seen by some as a re-election tool for the party in power.

VIII. CONCLUSION

THIS PAPER HAS argued that the basic Sou-Sou Land philosophy continues to be relevant in the Caribbean. In both Trinidad and Tobago's case and Operation PRIDE in Jamaica, there is a wide gap between the rhetoric and the reality of implementing the Sou-Sou Land approaches. Sou-Sou Land Limited itself, the non-profit company in Trinidad and Tobago with 13 projects, remains what it has always been, an experiment. Some of the projects are successful and some fulfill all its detractors' criticisms, especially those of the regulatory agencies. Many of its component philosophies, techniques and experiments, which have been part of the coping mechanisms of those marginalized or disenfranchised from the formal shelter markets for a long time, are now becoming acceptable to official policy and to multilateral agencies although, initially, they were generally opposed.

The lessons from this experiment of over 13 years, with its mistakes and successes, show that it still has much to offer. The Trinidad and Tobago government of 1991, in rejecting the Sou-Sou Land philosophy, was right. This was not a panacea for all settlement problems, especially urban problems. But the relevance of Sou-Sou Land is beyond the actual 13 project experiment. The company's work galvanized a movement towards lower, more appropriate standards and towards community mobilization, land distribution and incremental development. However, certain programmes such as Operation PRIDE in Jamaica should learn from this experiment that community and financial mobilization is more important in the end than the actual standards and methods of construction.