

# **The Caribbean Urban Phenomenon: Trinidad's Development and Climate Change**

By:

Breanna Leona Syne

Supervised by:

Dr. Liette Gilbert

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York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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## **Abstract**

In the age of urbanization, the Global South has begun to experience rapid urban development. Trinidad is a small Anglo-Caribbean nation whose previous success with fossil fuel has allowed them to become a global business leader among other Caribbean nations. This success has led to Trinidad becoming highly urbanized and developed compared to other Global South nations due to its economic and land-use potential. Since the late 1800s, Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad, has been formally developed through street patterns and land uses and these planning decisions are still seen throughout the City today. The global threat of Climate change has imposed sudden changes for Trinidad and the government is now seeking new ways to diversify its economy and attract new business interests. Trinidad's planning policy documents are anchored on the concept of sustainable development, which follows the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Trinidad's national East Port of Spain (POS) revitalization project is a series of site-specific redevelopments of private and public spaces. The project's goal is to shift the global narrative of East POS being a crime-ridden and impoverished area to becoming a booming economic center full of opportunities.

This research paper explores the effects of implementing sustainable development practices through the case study of Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP). New pressures to modernize and develop Port of Spain have created new tensions between the state and civil society, which highlights potential gentrification in the interest of sustainability. PSURP is a classic example of a marginalized community who has been historically neglected by the government and is now on the verge of being displaced for new developments catered for a specific group of people. This research problematizes Trinidad's approach to urban development as a solution to poverty alleviation and climate change by examining national planning policy documents: National Spatial Development Strategy (2013), Vision 2030: National Development Strategy (2016), and National Environmental Policy (2018).

## Foreword

As a first-generation Canadian woman, I have always been intrigued by my family's heritage and Indo-Caribbean roots. Growing up, I did not appreciate the culture nor understand certain customs when visiting Trinidad as I would complain about majority of the trips. However, in 2010, I had the opportunity to spend the entire summer in Trinidad with my grandma and extended family. During this time, I grew an appreciation for the local community as everyone was so welcoming and kind. However, I could not help but notice how slow life felt. Compared to Canada, Trinidad is considered underdeveloped and having realized my own biases about the "Third World," my curiosity grew. During my undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to explore my interest in Caribbean urban development in my final year through a Global Cities course (ENVS 4223) at York University. This course inspired me to further pursue this interest and critically examine Trinidad's urban planning.

This major paper is a culmination of my two years in the Master in Environmental Studies program, specializing in urban planning. My learning objectives and components fulfill the requirements of the MES planning degree.

My three learning components are:

1. Land-Use Planning Policy
2. Post-Colonial Development
3. Environmental Planning

Through extensive coursework and research, I have gained an understanding of how Trinidad's planning regime and policies intersect post-colonial development practices. The goal of this research is to bring awareness to the lack of academia on Caribbean urban development as well as bridge the gap between development discourse and climate change.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Next, I would like to thank all the professors from my various courses who have expanded my planning knowledge as well as challenged the normative, which inspired my approach towards this research. Your wisdom and teachings have forever changed my outlook as an urban planner. Also, thank you to the Policy Planning team at the City of Cambridge for their overall support and understanding as I completed the MES program. Thank you for introducing me to policy planning and giving me the opportunity to expand my critical thinking skills, which helped with the policy analysis of this research.

Lastly but most importantly, I would like to thank family, fiancé, and friends for all their support during my time in the MES program. The last two years have been long, but your patience, love and encouragement has helped get me to where I am today. To my extended family in Trinidad, thank you for supporting my research and taking me around Trinidad. To my fiancé, thank you for being the most supportive life partner one could ever ask for. To my friends, thank you for always cheering me on.

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# 1. Introduction

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Urban planning is an ambiguous profession that silently influences the design, development, and function of cities. As a profession that first emerged in the Global North, its architecture and organization of spaces (through zoning) have determined the way of life for many nations in the Global South. Planning is a colonial tool that was historically used to organize and divide space, which furthered the political power gap between the state and civic society. This gap has resulted in inequitable planning practices that have harmed certain groups within civil society as well as the natural environment due to unregulated urban sprawl. Urban development has been marketed as the only determinant of a successful global city, which is a city that endorses capitalist processes of consumption and yields global socio-economic and political power. This ideology of unlimited growth is historically embedded into Caribbean Global South nations as they continue to strive for global city status. However, the consequences of this thinking and continuous unregulated practices of development have led to the exacerbated rate of climate change.

This research focuses on the impacts of urban planning and development on climate change policies in the Caribbean context. In the Global North, urban planning silently determines the organization of space and results in only a small group of professionals determining the way of the life. The Global South is more susceptible to this political gap between the state and civil society because there is simply a lack of awareness as well inaccessibility to the government. To break systematic barriers and make planning more

inclusive, research and accessibility need to foreground inclusive principles. The following sections explore the case study of Trinidad and Tobago (hereafter Trinidad) and how urban development has impacted their ability to respond to climate change. Section 2 examines Trinidad's government structure and current planning regime. Section 3 reviews global climate change policies/initiatives and Trinidad's implementation of these policies. Section 4 analyzes the case study of Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP), and section 5 critically assesses the overarching urban processes in relation to climate change that are occurring in Trinidad.

## **Methodologies**

This research uses a mixture of both scholarly and non-scholarly sources ranging from peer-reviewed academic papers and books, national policy, and planning documents to local online news articles (between 2018 and 2022), and posts/discussion boards from Facebook. This range of data and information collection provides a well-rounded analysis of the current tension between urban development and climate change action in Trinidad. Three key policy documents are critically reviewed in this research: (i) Trinidad's National Spatial Development Strategy (2013-2023), (ii) Vision 2030: National Development Strategy (2016-2030), and (iii) National Environmental Policy (2018). These documents provide foundational information into Trinidad's current planning regime as well as their climate change policies. The National Spatial Development Strategy provides an overarching framework on how national space will be used over the next decade and beyond. Similarly, Vision 2030: National Development Strategy establishes several goals ranging in timeline that incorporates the United Nations'

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The National Environmental Policy provides guidance on how to improve and maintain a high level of environmental quality for current and future generations while ensuring health, interests, and development are not compromised. Collectively, these policies allowed me to better situate my research as I assess ongoing development projects like Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP) in Port-of-Spain. As a case study, PSURP examines its potential socio-economic impact on surrounding communities and overall nation. More specifically, this research explicitly examines how PSURP conforms to planning policy set in the National Spatial Development Strategy, Vision 2030, and National Environmental Policy and how it may support climate adaptive/resilient goals set by the United Nations.

Besides academic sources, this research uses various forms of non-scholarly media, such as local news sources like *Trinidad Express*, *Trinidad and Tobago NewsDay*, and *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*. These new outlets are the main source of information regarding development issues and public opinion. This research analyzes the levels of public engagement through social media posts and comments on Facebook to help map public opinions on planning matters and specific development projects. This approach provides a good understanding of Trinidad's urban development by analyzing civil society and their role within these projects.

The other main method of research was conducting a site visit during a recent trip to Trinidad. From December 25, 2022, to January 9, 2023, I spent two weeks collecting various forms of data regarding Trinidad's current socio-economic situation. This

included taking notes about anything related to climate change, development, and Port of Spain's (POS) history. On the day of the site visit to PSURP, I took notes and photos about the current streetscapes, businesses, people, and construction site. This research method allowed me to visually analyze my initial findings and make the connections needed to understand the current circumstances regarding urban development and climate change.

This research uses a theoretical framework of development and climate change discourses to situate this research. Escobar's (2011) work on 'development' and Dawson's (2017) on extreme weather conditions and urban impacts are two main contributors, and their work is examined through this analysis of Trinidad and PSURP.

### **Development Discourse**

Development discourse first emerged in the mid-1900s after the destruction caused by World War II (WWII). The physical rebuilt of Global North nations led to political figures discovering that development led to power and wealth, which allowed nations like the United States of America (U.S.) to become global leaders. Underdevelopment was perceived as a sign of failure and nations that exemplified this were predominately Global South nations who were already restricted in their limited resources. The problem of underdevelopment was then addressed in 1949 through the Harry Truman Fair Deal, which posed to help solve this issue through a U.S. policy and economic foreign aid program called 'The Four Points Program'. This program was in collaboration and funded by many U.S. state agencies and international corporations, such as the UN International Finance Corporation (IFC). Overall, these agencies all endorse

development as a solution to socio-economic, political, and health issues. This ideology has now influenced the entire world and has been endorsed by major stakeholders and governments.

Escobar's (2011) work, *"Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World"* explores the production and deployment of post-WW II development discourse in the construction of Global South nations. Escobar (2011) defines development as more than a historically singular experience, but rather a production of knowledge that has expanded beyond a physical experience. Given Escobar's definition, the Global South was therefore created to produce capital through free labour to further support the world economy. This production of development discourse was under unequal conditions of power, this is known as the 'Colonialist Move' (Escobar, 2011). It recognizes the imbalance between nations and their capabilities to produce their own discourses. This imbalance allows dominant state powers like Europe and North America to control the knowledge and production of space in the Caribbean -- a space that is already perceived as underdeveloped and problematic as these nations were viewed as uncivilized and their people as the "othered".

For Trinidad, development has become the premise of all future endeavours and their capital city, Port of Spain (POS), has the potential to become a role model for the rest of the Caribbean. Following normative development discourse, Trinidad's planning policy reinforces former U.S. President Truman's idea of development as the solution. Western development and its standards have become the benchmark for all nations despite

geographical differences as it is their only apparent point of reference for success and economic growth. It has contributed further to the problem of underdevelopment and poverty within Caribbean nations. International development tools such as specialized UN agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) (e.g., IMF, the World Bank) are forms of foreign aid that are allegedly used to fund new developments. Typically, there are conditions linked to these loans, which inevitably end up harming these nations in the long run, it is an endless cycle.

To address the exclusivity of development and its detrimental effects, Escobar (2011) recommends forging a new discourse and finding an alternative approach. Engaging in anti-development movements and processes are ways Global South nations can begin the process of dissecting and unlearning normative development, which is rooted in capitalism. Given its social and geographic environment, Trinidad's government and supportive agencies could explore the production of their own space, which can include residents and communities in the process to better preserve and protect Trinidad's cultural heritage.

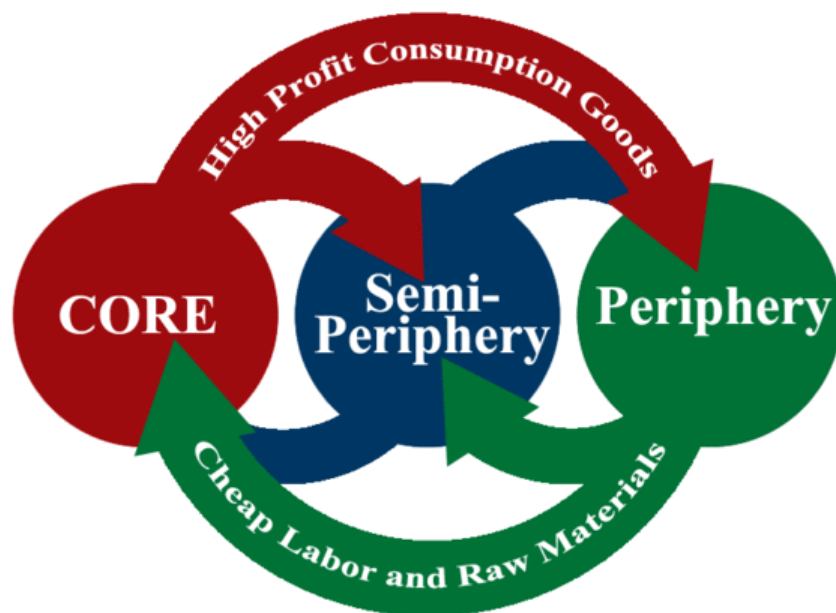
### **Climate Change Discourse**

Ashley Dawson's (2017) book *"Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change"* examines the role cities have played in the status of climate change. Through the case study of Hurricane Sandy in New York City, Dawson outlines the aftermath of the hurricane and federal disaster relief response from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA's response was severely delayed, which left many affected communities stranded for days after the initial disaster. This led

to various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens stepping up to provide immediate disaster relief through food donations and shelter. Thanks to their due diligence and success, these groups ended up influencing and helping FEMA and other federal programs when they eventually responded. Briefly, this case study of Hurricane Sandy demonstrated the resilience of communities and processes of placemaking despite the disaster.

Dawson (2017) highlights that climate change unequally affects the Global South due to colonialism and historic restraints placed on these countries who are already geographically susceptible and vulnerable to climate change. Processes of capitalism like extractivism has largely influenced development patterns. To provide context Wallerstein's (1974) world systems theory, which places countries into different economic classes (core, semi-periphery, and periphery) to explain their interconnected relationships with one another. The Global South is considered the periphery (Figure 1). Periphery countries provide cheap labour and raw materials in the production of capital life cycle. High levels of extractivism are historically found in the Global South due to high levels of natural resources. This process has then accelerated the rate of climate change, which has now become a global threat. However, it is important to note that it is fossil fuel and other big corporations responsible for the distribution of this free labour within the Global South, which has contributed to climate change. As Dawson (2017) highlights, these types of historic restraints have impacted the Global South's ability to respond to their own climate risks. Still, much of the responsibility to tackle climate change is often put on an individual level. While sustainable and free trade capitalist

practices are encouraged, Dawson (2017) reiterates the importance of holding fossil fuel corporations accountable for their contribution to climate change with high levels of greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions. While raising concerns about the lack of actual global climate action policies, Dawson (2017) states that fossil fuel companies benefit from global subsidies of \$5.3 trillion dollars per year (Dawson, A., 2017, p. 294). To make a real impact on the current state of climate action, all subsidies would need to be seized immediately. Otherwise, it is impossible to keep corporations accountable.



### **Wallerstein's World System Theory Model**

Figure 1: Wallerstein's 1974 World Systems Theory Model (Source: Kendall Moyer, 2016)

In the Caribbean context, Trinidad has historically been a site of extractivism with a fossil fuel dependent economy. With recent industrial shutdowns and dried oil sands, Trinidad's current economic state is in danger. As part of a greater (fossil) capitalist

process, extractivism has resulted in socio-economic inequities and poor management of resources within civil society. In conjunction with the broader development discourse, urban development has become the solution to Trinidad's failing economy. This research brings awareness to the Caribbean urban phenomenon and further explores how Trinidad navigates climate change.

## **2. Trinidad's Planning Policy Framework and Regime**

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### **Political and Governance Regime**

To understand how planning operates in the Caribbean, it is important to consider how colonialism impacts their political and governance systems. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ('Trinidad') is a unitary state, meaning it is a sovereign state governed by a single entity (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Previously a colonial state, Trinidad gained independence from Britain in 1962 and became a republic state in 1972. Currently, Trinidad consists of two levels of government (national and local) and has a bicameral parliamentary system, meaning it has two branches of government: (1) Head of State (President), and (2) Head of Government (Prime Minister). On the national level, the Head of State is a non-executive president who is elected by members of Trinidad's parliament for a 5-year term. The Head of Government is appointed by the President, who is usually the leader of the majority party in the house of representatives which is voted in by the community (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Christine Kangaloo is Trinidad's current president and Keith Rowley is the current prime minister.

The last national election was 2020 with a 58 percent voter turnout (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2023). The election resulted in an overall 28 percent of women representatives and 29 percent of women senators currently in parliament (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2023). People's National Movement (PNM) party led by Prime Minister Rowley won with 22 parliamentary seats to the opposition United National Congress (UNC) with 19 seats. Many citizens alleged that the election was corrupted due to a lack of auditing and assurance of the ballots to ensure accuracy and fairness during the peak of the Coronavirus pandemic. There was a lack of international observers, like Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Commonwealth to oversee the election, which may have resulted in the allegedly poor handling of ballots. The legal challenges posed by the opposition (UNC) was never proven and has since been dismissed. The next national election is set for 2025.

There is no specific constitutional provision for local government. However, the *Municipal Corporations Act 1990* and *Tobago House of Assembly Act 1996* comprise the principal legislation that governs local government. In Trinidad, local government is single-tiered and divided into 14 municipalities/regional corporations (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). In Tobago, local government is single tiered with only Tobago's House of Assembly (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Figure 2 demonstrates the distribution of councils and population. Trinidad's 14 municipal corporations are broken down into three types: 2 city corporations, 3 borough corporations, and 9 regional corporations (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Each municipal corporation has the same powers and responsibilities to make

policies and by-laws for their local area. Each municipality must set up four committees for finance, personnel, public health, and infrastructure. There must also be a minimum membership of 51 percent from council plus an appointed chairperson who oversees service delivery. There are monthly statutory meetings held to evaluate and review the committees and any ongoing/new projects (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018). Program and policy recommendations are also formally received by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at these statutory and council meetings. This governance process is like other municipal governance systems found in the Global North, in which council is authorized in implementing by-laws and other policies.

| Trinidad and Tobago      | Municipal corporation/<br>parish/House of Assembly | Local areas<br>(electoral wards) | Population<br>(2011 Census) | Population<br>(2017 estimate) | % rural<br>(2010) |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Trinidad                 | Arima                                              | 7                                | 33,606                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Chaguanas                                          | 8                                | 83,516                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo                            | 13                               | 178,410                     | na                            | na                |
|                          | Diego Martin                                       | 10                               | 102,957                     | na                            | na                |
|                          | Penal-Debe                                         | 9                                | 89,392                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Point Fortin                                       | 6                                | 20,235                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Port of Spain City                                 | 12                               | 37,074                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Princes Town                                       | 9                                | 102,375                     | na                            | na                |
|                          | Mayaro/Rio Claro                                   | 6                                | 35,650                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | San Fernando City                                  | 9                                | 48,838                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | San Juan-Laventille                                | 13                               | 157,258                     | na                            | na                |
|                          | Sangre Grande                                      | 8                                | 75,766                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Siparia                                            | 9                                | 86,949                      | na                            | na                |
|                          | Tunapuna-Piarco                                    | 15                               | 215,119                     | na                            | na                |
|                          | <b>Total Trinidad</b>                              | <b>14</b>                        | <b>1,267,145</b>            | <b>na</b>                     | <b>na</b>         |
| Tobago House of Assembly | 1                                                  | 12                               | 60,874                      | na                            | na                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>15</b>                                          | <b>146</b>                       | <b>1,328,019</b>            | <b>1,353,895</b>              | <b>19.9</b>       |

Source: TTALGA communication with CLGF and the 2011 census<sup>47,5a</sup>

Figure 2: Distribution of Councils and Population in Trinidad and Tobago (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018)

Local elections are held separately in Trinidad and Tobago and use the first-past-the-post system. This is where voters cast a vote for a single candidate and the candidate with the most votes wins. This election is held every three years in Trinidad and every four years in Tobago. This is then followed up with a second election where councillors elect aldermen from a pool of highly skilled and qualified candidates (CLGF, 2018). The number of aldermen is dependent on the size of council. The next local elections will be held in late 2023 and 2025.

Overall, Trinidad's governance system continues to follow colonial systems of British rule by using a bicameral parliamentary system, which determines how Trinidad politically organizes their civil society. Urban development and governance is dictated by the National Spatial Development Strategy ('NSDS'), which is Trinidad's national urban policy tool.

### **National Spatial Development Strategy (2013-2033)**

The National Spatial Development Strategy ('NSDS') is a long-range planning tool that provides an overarching framework of Trinidad's socio-cultural, economic, and environmental development priorities for the next two decades. Established in 2013 under former Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the NSDS is the first revision of physical planning policy in Trinidad since 1984 (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 4). This policy planning document provides guidance and direction towards land use planning and how Trinidad will approach sustainable development and communities. The NSDS is also the only policy document that the Tobago House of Assembly and

Trinidad Municipal Corporations must follow and consult with when making final decisions regarding urban development.

The NSDS is structured around three themes supported by twelve objectives that support other relative legislation (Table 1).

| Theme                            | Objective                                                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strong and Resilient Communities | Building strong, diverse regions                                     |
|                                  | Building places for people                                           |
|                                  | Delivering the homes needed                                          |
|                                  | Valuing cultural heritage                                            |
| Sustainable Prosperity           | Building a competitive, innovation-driven economy                    |
|                                  | Achieving food security                                              |
|                                  | Using our natural resources sustainably                              |
|                                  | Meeting the challenge of climate change                              |
| Sustainable Infrastructure       | Moving towards sustainable transport                                 |
|                                  | Making the most of information and communication technologies (ICTs) |
|                                  | Generating and using energy sustainably                              |
|                                  | Manage waste safely and effectively                                  |

Table 1: Trinidad's National Spatial Development Strategy Themes (Source: Government of Trinidad, 2013)

The NSDS themes all focus on ideas of resiliency and sustainability, which addresses Trinidad's largest obstacle: climate change. Due to being an island, heavy rainfall and rising temperatures already impact livelihoods and the way communities' function. For example, in November 2022, the Carolina Bridge in Carolina Village in Couva (44km south of Port of Spain) collapsed due to heavy rainfall (Trinidad Express, 2022). The bridge was a main transport link between the village, Couva, and other main community

spots. While the bridge was already deteriorating, this process is said to be accelerated due to persistent rainfalls (Trinidad Express, 2022). This has resulted in hundreds of residents and commuters negatively impacted by climate-induced events. In July 2021, the water supply in East Trinidad was knocked out due to heavy rainfall over the duration of 12 hours (Trinidad Express, 2021). Water treatment plants were interrupted in their operations due to turbid river conditions and clogged intakes from persistent rainfall (Trinidad Express, 2021). This resulted in an advisory notice being sent to affected communities to monitor their water use. These disruptions to life have become more frequent. The NSDS provides a vision for sustainable development and tackles how Trinidad can holistically achieve their objectives through three different spatial development options: dispersed development; concentrated development; and harmonized regional development (Government of Trinidad, 2013).

Dispersed development (option 1), as the name suggests, focuses on empowering communities throughout Trinidad by developing outwards and equitably distributing services and employment opportunities. Ultimately this model can lead to the promotion of sustainable transportation options like cycling and walking becoming attractive due to proximity to amenities, which all contributes to healthier communities (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 20). However, this option may weaken the capital Port of Spain as a major economic powerhouse in the Caribbean and further contribute to social and crime-related issues in certain communities due to unstable local migration. New settlements and expansion may also continue urban sprawl and natural resource degradation.

Concentrated development (option 2) focuses on advancing existing urban centres and key corridors (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 20). Although this model promotes sustainable infrastructure by retrofitting major urban centres who are primarily responsible for Trinidad's economy, it does not address the current gap between urban and rural communities and their reliance on major urban centres for employment. Also, this option does not promote sustainable transportation because the reliance on private vehicles remains intact due to far commutes and the lack of an efficient public transportation system. Both option 1 and 2 exemplify two extremes of development that only provide partial benefits towards NSDS' overall vision and objectives.

Harmonized regional development (option 3) offers a blend of both option 1 and 2 and is the preferred method of spatial development (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 21). This model achieves significant compliance with the economic-themed sustainability objectives and focuses on responding to regional strengths and socio-economic needs as highlighted in Table 1 (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 20). This option also proposes to delineate urban settlement limits to safeguard valuable agricultural lands and ecosystem services. This approach coupled with other national and sub-national policies and interventions helps facilitate an overall improvement to quality of life, more employment opportunities, economic prosperity, as well as closing the gap between the rich and poor (Government of Trinidad, 2013, p. 21). Through zone mapping, this option highlights existing urban centres, economic growth zones, transportation and water networks, and tourism growth, which illustrates Trinidad's current spatial strengths and weaknesses.

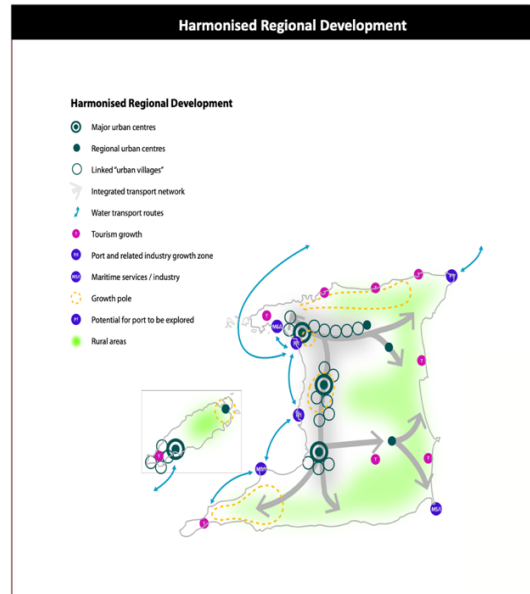


Figure 3: Harmonised Regional Development Map (Source: Government of Trinidad, 2013)



Figure 4: NSDS Vision, Objectives and Policies (Source: Government of Trinidad, 2013)

To achieve sustainable development and harmonized regional development, the NSDS sets out 24 core policies that further support the objectives in Figure 4. Figure 4

illustrates the NSDS' hierarchy regarding its vision, themes, and objectives. It is mandated that policymakers and planners use these policies when creating Spatial Development Plans (SDPs), which are like master plans and secondary plans found in the Global North. These policies go into further depth about what should be included and considered when creating SDPs.

Overall, as the sole national urban policy tool, the NSDS provides a broad sense of Trinidad's position and allows for a surface level understanding of Trinidad's plans to achieve resilient communities, sustainable prosperity, and sustainable infrastructure. The NSDS exemplifies Trinidad's commitment to formalizing land use planning and its spatial development in accordance with climate change. However, it does not provide the direct and specific guidance needed at local level. This is supplemented by Trinidad's National Development Strategy.

### **Vision 2030: National Development Strategy (2016-2030)**

Vision 2030: National Development Strategy (hereafter Vision 2030) is Trinidad's principal strategic planning document that guides the development process by considering the immediate and future needs of its citizens. Established in 2016 under current Prime Minister Rowley, Vision 2030 is an extension of the NSDS policies and framework for achieving sustainable development. It is drafted using principles and values of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has set a total of 56 national goals to meet by 2030 (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2016). The goals are broken down into three different timeframes: 24 that were set to be met between 2016 and 2020, 16 short-term goals over the medium term between 2016 and

2025, and 16 short-term goals over the long term between 2016-2030. These goals are categorized into five themes:

1. Putting people first: nurturing our greatest asset,
2. Delivering good governance and service excellence,
3. Improving productivity through quality infrastructure and transportation,
4. Building globally competitive businesses, and
5. Placing the environment at the centre of social and economic development.

For this research, themes 1, 3, and 5 are the most relevant to sustainable and urban development.

Putting people first (theme 1) focuses on providing the necessities to ensure everyone's needs are met. These basic necessities include housing, education, food security, and healthcare services. It also acknowledges that citizens are capable of self-actualizing and contributing to society if they are valued and all their needs are met (Government of Trinidad, 2016, p. 61). Improving productivity through quality infrastructure and transportation (theme 3) focuses on unlocking economic potential through equitable distribution of growth and opportunities (Government of Trinidad, 2016, p. 64). This means advancements to Trinidad's outdated information and communication technologies (ICTs) and embracing modernization, which will catalyze productivity and Trinidad's global competitiveness. Placing the environment at the centre of social and economic development (theme 5) focuses on shifting behaviours and attitudes that negatively impact Trinidad's natural environments. Currently, there is a lack of

environmental stewardship among youth and young adults who do not understand the value of ecosystem services due to the lack of education/awareness. This theme wants to create an environmental conscious culture that will support Trinidad's natural environment, which will help support sustainable development practices by ensuring proper measures are taken to alleviate environmental risks. To assess Vision 2030's progress, the Government of Trinidad and Ministry of Planning and Development published the National Performance Framework (2017-2020).

The National Performance Framework (NPF) is a tool developed to provide a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating the progress of Vision 2030. It attempts to interpret the five themes and their associated goals into meaningful results. As previously mentioned, Vision 2030 established 56 goals and categorized them into three different achievement timelines. To date, 40 short term goals were set to be accomplished by 2025. The NPF established national outcomes, outputs, and indicators to measure, monitor, and track performance against these set targets and goals (Government of Trinidad, 2020, p. 3). Trinidadians have been demanding transparency and improved accountability from the government as instability and corruption has caused a sense of mistrust over the decades. The NPF document addresses these concerns and lays out a monitoring and evaluation approach. All ministries and departments will be responsible for tracking their own progress and providing regular updates to the national government. Reporting is done at two levels: (1) Individual ministries/agencies and departments will provide a bi-annually report to the Ministry of

Planning and Development, and (2) the Ministry of Planning and Development will report to the public sector and public through an Annual Performance Report.

The Annual Performance Report (2015-2018) highlights a few achievements the Government of Trinidad accomplished during this timeframe. Achievements are broken down into their respective theme and Table 2 exemplifies three of them.

| Theme                                                                    | Key Achievements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Putting People First: Nurturing our greatest asset                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2,347 home and 72 home improvement subsidies distributed</li> <li>- 129 emergency shelter relief grants disbursed</li> <li>- 13,544 low-income households received financial support under National Social Development Programme (NSDP)</li> </ul>                                      |
| Improving productivity through quality infrastructure and transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 70 new buses purchased for Public Transport Corporation (PTC)</li> <li>- 261,000 people provided reliable water source</li> <li>- 14,395 people accessed services from community-based ICT Access Centres</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| Placing the environment in the centre of social and economic development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduction in national consumption of ozone depleting substances reduced from 49.02 ODP tonnes (2015) to 17.9 ODP tonnes (2018)</li> <li>- Completion of national environmental literacy in 2017</li> <li>- Completion of inventory of waste generated in T&amp;T (2013-2015)</li> </ul> |

Table 2: 2015-2018 Annual Performance Report Accomplishment (Source: Government of Trinidad, 2018)

Based on these achievements, Vision 2030 has been relatively successful in meeting short-term goals and will continue to be assessed until 2030.

## **National Environmental Policy (2018)**

The National Environmental Policy (NEP) is the overarching framework for environmental management and is the main policy used to ensure environmental priorities and sustainable development practices. Established in 2018 under Prime Minister Rowley's government, the NEP addresses Trinidad's position on environmental issues such as climate change. There are six national priorities: (1) pollution control, (2) managing natural assets, (3) improving local environment, (4) green economy, (5) environmentally responsible society, and (6) climate change. For this research, priorities 3, 4, and 6 are the most applicable regarding urban development and will further be discussed in section 3. The Government of Trinidad recognizes the importance of a healthy environment for future generations and highlights its, "responsibility to judiciously manage the interactions between its citizens and the environment with aims of safeguarding human health, peace, prosperity and social justice, while yielding optimum sustainable benefits for present and future generations," (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 2). In conclusion, the NEP grounds Trinidad's planning policy by providing an environmental framework that supplements all goals and objectives set in Vision 2030 and the National Spatial Development Strategy.

## **3. National Climate Change Goals**

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Understanding how climate change intersects Trinidad's urban development trajectory is important. Trinidad is a state member of the United Nations (UN), which requires all state members to follow and implement frameworks and global agreements into their

own governance systems. Climate change has been identified as a global threat and the United Nations has established guidelines on how nations can respond.

### **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Framework**

As the leading force behind addressing global issues, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight 17 goals that countries worldwide have committed to achieving within their states by 2030. As part of the *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*, all UN member states adopted these goals in 2015 (United Nations, 2023c). As a member state since 1962, Trinidad has adopted all 17 goals into their environmental policy by using their objectives to frame Trinidad's goals and priorities, which are addressed in section 4. The 17 SDGs are as follows:

|                                             |                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1. No poverty                               | 10. Reduced inequalities                    |
| 2. No Hunger                                | 11. Sustainable cities and communities      |
| 3. Good health and well-being               | 12. Responsible consumption and production  |
| 4. Quality education                        | 13. Climate action                          |
| 5. Gender equality                          | 14. Life below water                        |
| 6. Clean water and sanitation               | 15. Life on land                            |
| 7. Affordable and clean energy              | 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions |
| 8. Decent work and economic growth          | 17. Partnerships for the goals              |
| 9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure |                                             |

For this research, sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) and climate action (SDG 13) are two main SDGs that guide Trinidad's environmental goals and priorities regarding sustainable development. Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) focus on "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (United Nations, 2023a). It is estimated by the UN that 7 out of 10 people will likely live in urban areas by 2050 and cities are drivers of economic growth. However, cities also

contribute to more than 70 per cent of current GHGs emissions. Also, the importance of sustainable urban development has become crucial as the Covid-19 pandemic exposed deep inequalities within cities regarding emergency preparedness and resilience. For instance, many Small Developing Nations (e.g., Trinidad) experience high levels of inequities within their states due to the lack of resources and during the Covid-19 pandemic, these inequities grew.

Climate action (SDG 13) focuses on reducing global GHGs emissions by 43 percent by 2030 and net zero by 2050 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius as set out in the Paris Agreement. Current commitments are not sufficient to meet this target and call for stricter more rigorous measures. One of SDG 13's targets "promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states" (United Nations, 2023b). These mechanisms are embedded within Trinidad's National Environmental Policy.

### **Trinidad and Tobago's Goals and Priorities**

Trinidad acknowledges its socio-economic and physical vulnerabilities against climate change as a small developing nation and island surrounded by ocean. Since 2006, there have been significant changes to environmental issues and responses. There was a dire need for a modern environmental policy that considered Trinidad's current environment and its issues related to climate change. In 2018, Trinidad released their National Environmental Policy (NEP), which highlights the country's six national priorities:

1. Protecting Environmental and Human Health through Pollution Control,
2. Sustainably Managing Natural Assets,
3. Improving the Local Environment,
4. Evolving a Greener Economy,
5. Fostering an Environmentally Responsible Society, and
6. Addressing Climate Change and Environmental and Natural Hazards.

These priorities align and adhere to the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) by addressing the different actions Trinidad will take to address climate change and other environmental issues. For this research, Improving the local environment (Priority 3) and addressing climate change and environmental and natural hazards (Priority 6) both highlight the importance of moving towards an equitable planning approach that accounts for Trinidad's numerous communities and environments. These priorities guide Trinidad's environmental trajectory in the face of urban development as well as situate this research within environmental policy.

Priority 3 'Improving the Local Environment' addresses urban planning, green infrastructure, heritage, national festival and events management, and mass transit solutions (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 30). These topics all address how Trinidad can improve and ensure safe local environments. It is believed that modern and sustainably planned settlements are essential to achieving environmental sustainability. In section 2.13.f of their NEP, the Government of Trinidad states all newly planned human settlements are to include greenspaces, community spaces as well as minimize

urban fragmentation and alleviate impacts of natural disasters and climate change (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 31). Such development should not be built within floodplains, hills, environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), and other vulnerable lands (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 32). These guidelines seek to ensure that Trinidad is building safe, inclusive, and resilient communities. There is also a need to address the lack of public transportation options as Trinidad is a vehicle-centric nation that is predominately accessed through driving. There are currently no mass public transit systems, which has led to a high dependency on private vehicles. Transit services like Uber and Lyft do not operate in Trinidad, which has allowed taxis and maxis to capitalize on becoming one of the main transit systems. Like transit buses, maxis are large SUVs that follow fixed routes and pick up/drop off passengers for a price. This transit system is small in scale and only services limited geographic areas like main community hubs. To improve Trinidad's transit systems, NEP's Section 2.17.a states that the government will collaborate with private and non-governmental institutions at multi-scales to advance mass transit systems (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 33).

Priority 6 'Addressing Climate Change and Environmental and Natural Hazards' focuses on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and environmental and natural disaster management planning (Government of Trinidad, 2018, p. 43). The NEP's Section 2.23 highlights mitigation, adaptation, energy conservation and renewable energy goals intended to guide Trinidad into resiliency. Although it is not defined in this policy document, resiliency can refer to Trinidad's socio-economic and physical ability to evolve and adapt to climate change. For instance, the Government of Trinidad proposes

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) from industrial, power generation and transport sectors by 15% as well as reduce cumulative emissions from the public transportation sector by 30% by the end of 2030. That is a total GHG reduction of 45%. Regular inventories of GHGs are also conducted as well as establishing, monitoring, and reporting systems. These initiatives are intended to be supported by all levels of government as well as partnerships between multi-scale agencies.

### **Climate Change Analysis**

The experience of climate change in the Caribbean is far more prominent due to its geographic location. As small islands, Trinidad is highly susceptible and vulnerable to rising sea levels, global warming, flooding, and tropical diseases such as malaria. These geographic challenges coupled with existing colonial and postcolonial systems of exploitation have potential to detrimentally affect Trinidad. Climate change literature and analysis highlight the socio-economic and physical burden marginalized communities face and express how the risks are disproportionately unequal. Ashley Dawson's (2017) book *"Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change"* examines the role cities have played in the status of climate change. In the last few years, severe storms and abnormal weather patterns have become more frequent – and Dawson (2017) argues that cities are 'ground zero' for climate change. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) by the U.S Department of Commerce, July 2021 was recorded as the world's hottest month with a combined land and ocean-surface temperature of 0.93 degrees Celsius above the 20th-century average of 15.8 degrees Celsius (NOAA, 2021). Record breaking temperatures have continued to become prevalent and highly alarming. Many nations have signed onto

international climate change treaties (e.g., The Paris Agreement) declaring that their nation will do their part to reach net-zero by the year 2050. Although these international treaties sound promising, Dawson (2017) raises question about the intentions and willingness of fossil fuel corporations and global cities to make the necessary changes needed to reach this goal. These corporations currently benefit from global subsidies of \$5.3 trillion dollars per year (Dawson, 2017, p. 294). As fossil capitalism is one of the largest contributors to GHG emissions, Dawson (2017) suggests all subsidies must be seized immediately to catalyze meaningful action against climate change. Restructuring global economies is also necessary to address the racialized and systemic barriers that caused unequal distribution of climate change risks to marginalize communities in the Global South. The political and economic systems that have been in power since colonialism continue to determine future growth and development of the Global South. Many of the international organizations and institutions (e.g., United Nations) follow Western ideologies that reinforce new forms of colonialism through urban development. Decolonialization of the entire process is necessary but is easier said than done. For Dawson (2017, p. 300-301), “[u]rban development must shift from unsustainable forms inherited from colonial and postcolonial era as well as extreme sprawl and resource consumption.” Dawson’s (2017) argument is that technological solutions are not sufficient by themselves and climate change solutions, to be viable, will need to address equity issues. The supporting economic and socio-political systems must also shift their ideologies towards being resilient, equitable and inclusive. Dawson’s argument should be taken into account as Trinidad reforms their political organization and processes.

Trinidad's current climate goals formally align with the United Nations' SDGs. While international treaties and forums provide hope and guidance, methods of decarbonization and moving towards alternative energy resources such as renewable energy is not explicit. Dawson (2017) expresses how this is the result of unequal power dynamics between governments and the people. We operate in a capitalist system that is fuelled by the ideology of unlimited growth and anything that would threaten the system is forgotten and silenced. However, as Trinidad begins diversifying its economy and moving away from fossil capitalism, NEP Priority 6 focuses on this shift within the energy sector. The country is actively promoting compressed natural gas (CNG) and other forms of renewable energy through marketing campaigns. Although this is good for climate change, fossil fuel is one of Trinidad's main exports. Since the early 2000s, over 80 percent of Trinidad's overall exports has been mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products (Trading Economics, 2023). In 2008, Trinidad hit its peak with over \$12 billion USD in fossil fuel exports, which was then followed by steep decline following the 2008 financial crisis. Since then, the exportation of fossil fuels has relatively declined over the last few years. In 2021, only 27 percent (value of \$2.35 billion USD) of Trinidad's overall exports was mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products (Trading Economics, 2023). This is the result of major fossil fuel plant shutdowns coupled with Covid-19. In 2019, the government began major cuts and shutdowns to fossil fuel companies, which is further explored in section 5. These cuts have also negatively impacted employment. In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic that began in March 2020, Trinidad's economy was heavily impacted by strict lockdowns and travel restrictions. Like Canada, many non-essential workers were not able to work, and many businesses closed. However, prior

to travel restrictions, Trinidad held their annual Carnival in February 2020. This national event brought lots of tourism into the country, which economically helped Trinidad in the beginning phase of Covid-19. But from 2018 to 2022, Trinidad's unemployment rate increased and was at its peak in 2021 at 4.5 percent (World Bank Data, 2023). Since the fossil fuel plant shutdowns in 2016, the unemployment rate has continued trending upwards when its unemployment rate had originally decreased since 2000 (World Bank Data, 2023). The sudden increase after 2016 suggests an upwards trend for the future. This is the implication with seizing global subsidies and operations immediately; there is drastic unemployment and disruption to daily life.

As highlighted in Priority 3 seeking to improve the natural environment, Trinidad is working on restructuring their administrative and overall governance systems to better respond to current environmental issues. The NEP follows global guidelines and forums to better inform their approach. Currently, the natural environment is polluted by decades of extractive activities and self-negligence by citizens. Due to Trinidad's tropical climate, bush fires and burning of waste is common. Although scheduled burnings of forests have benefits such as recycling nutrients in the soil and regenerating new growth, many of Trinidad's soils are severely degraded and would require immense work to restore. As Dawson (2017) highlights, developing nations need to shift their future urban development from colonial and Westernized practices that produce unsustainable outcomes. However, Trinidad is flipping this notion on its head with a new partnership that is bringing hope in the climate crisis.

In 2021, The Ministry of Planning and Development partnered with IAMovement, a local non-profit organization empowering environmental and social change. The partnership provides national support for a green infrastructure solutions project called, “ME-WE-GREEN: An Education and Empowerment Programme for Climate Change Adaptation” (TTT News, 2021). The project primarily focuses on educating communities about climate change adaptation strategies and how to implement existing solutions. One prominent solution is the use of vetiver grass and the Vetiver System (VS) on a national scale (TTT News, 2021). Vetiver grass is a “perennial grass that can withstand a wide range of temperatures ranging from 0 to 50 degrees Celsius...it has a deep and high fibrous root system which can extend to three meters deep in two years” (See figure 5; Vetiver TT, 2023).

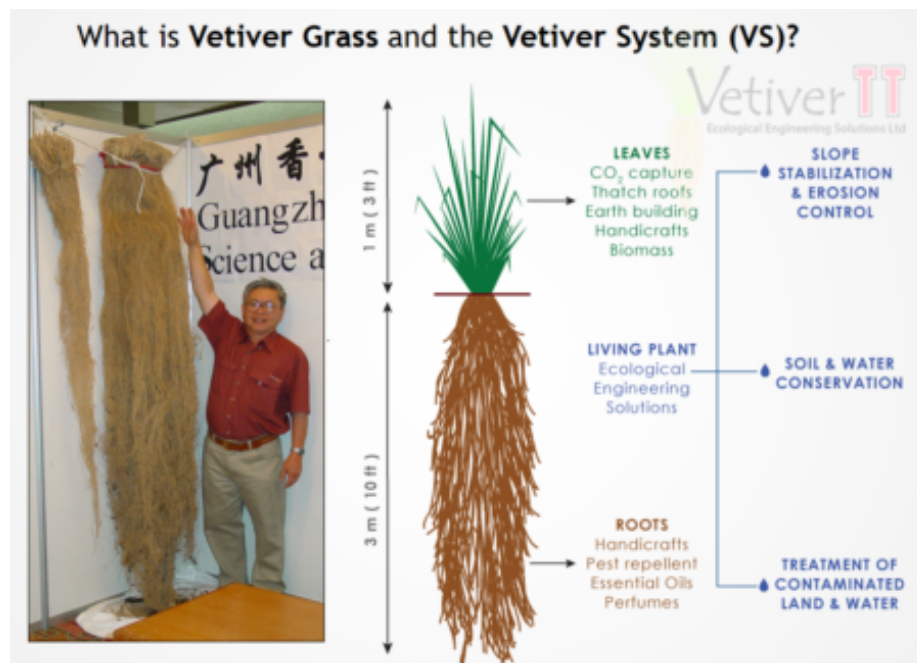


Figure 5: Vetiver Grass and Vetiver System (Vetiver TT, 2023)

The Vetiver System (VS) refers to best practices for the use of vetiver grass as a bio-engineered tool to solve water and land related challenges (Vetiver TT, 2023). Prior to this partnership, IAMovement worked on a project called ‘Vetiver Education and Empowerment Project’ (VEEP). This project offered an economic opportunity for community members to get involved in rehabilitation projects and become leaders in their communities. For instance, there are multiple uses of vetiver grass, as it durable and it can be used to make furniture and other commodities. This project resulted in many community members becoming leaders in environmental rehabilitation and many degraded quarries successfully beginning the restoration process. As a follow-up to the VEEP project and the VS system, the new national project (ME-WE-GREEN) is set to be implemented in eight diverse communities across Trinidad. These communities include East Port of Spain, the prime community of the case study presented in this research discussed in section 4. Overall, this national project in partnership with IAMovement provides hope and exemplifies Trinidad’s commitment to improving its natural environments.

## **4. Trinidad’s Urban Development – A Case Study**

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In November 2020, Trinidad’s Prime Minister Keith Rowley publicly announced the government’s national revitalization project. The project aims to address issues of urban decay and socio-economic downfalls Port of Spain (POS) is experiencing due to crime, unemployment, abandoned infrastructures, and depopulation (Rowley, 2020). Prime Minister Rowley announced a series of specific revitalization projects of public spaces in

East POS including Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP), the case study of this research.

### **Port of Spain's Urban Development History**

To understand Trinidad's urban development trajectory, it is important to understand how colonialism shaped Port of Spain. After Christopher Columbus' accidental discovery of Trinidad in 1498, the Spaniards established their first settlement in San Josef, an area east of POS (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Until late 1700s, the Spaniards developed mostly using Indigenous forms of construction for their buildings. This type of architecture is known as Ajoupa (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Ajoupa is a structure built out of wood, palm leaves, water, grass, and clay that is easy and quick to create and demolish. As John Newel Lewis quotes, "Indigenous architecture of this kind hardly interrupts nature at all," (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). In 1777, Phillipe Roume de Saint-Laurent from Grenada visited Trinidad and was impressed by its potential for economic growth due to the richness of the land (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). This visit led to the Cedula of Population of 1783, which was a mass invitation to nearby colonists to settle in Trinidad after being promised land and swearing loyalty to the Spanish Crown (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). This population growth of French Caribbean settlers led to Port of Spain becoming the new centre of commerce and shipping (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). The City's expansion by Governor Don José Maria Chacón first started with the diversion of St. Ann's River, which was prone to flooding. The river's course was diverted to run east of the city, which is still present to this day. During this

time, the Spaniards continued to develop POS northwards and implemented Spanish law into Trinidad.

In 1798, the British conquered the Spaniards and, “Trinidad became a British colony with a French population, governed by Spanish law,” (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). The 19th century was the beginning of this multi-colonial city’s major urban developments, which can still be seen today. One of Trinidad’s most celebrated governors was Governor Sir Ralph Woodford who served between 1813 to 1829 (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Governor Woodford is famously known for his concerns with urban development as he carefully planned out POS’ street patterns, which is still seen today (Figure 6). He is also known for purchasing Paradise Estate for Queen’s Park Savannah, the City’s largest open greenspace which is referred to as the “lungs” of Port of Spain (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). There are monuments (e.g., Woodford Square) throughout POS that acknowledge Governor Woodford’s contributions. His era was followed by new waves of urban development and communities throughout East POS.

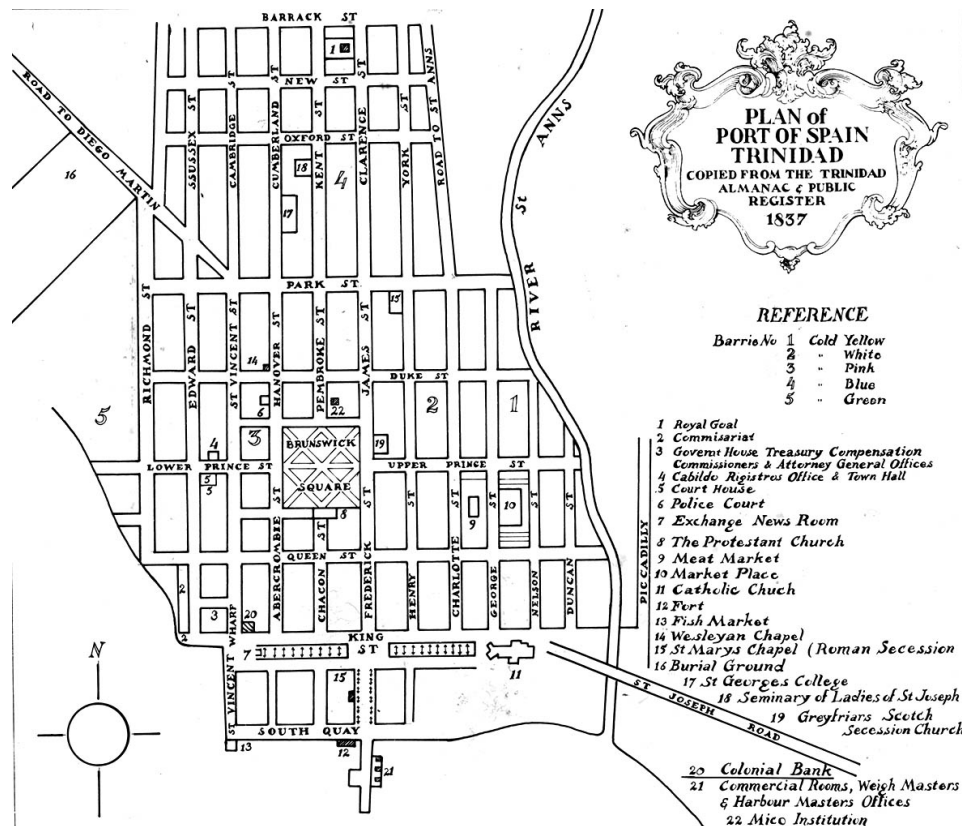


Figure 6: 1837 Map of Port of Spain, Trinidad (Source: The Caribbean History Archives)

After the Great Fire of 1895, which destroyed large parts of POS, Scottish Architect George Brown redesigned main commercial areas like Marine Square and Fredrick Street (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). During this time, new suburban development was encouraged due to population growth and new neighbourhoods like Westbrook, Belmont, and St. Clair formed. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, smaller communities within these neighbourhoods informally formed like Gonzales and Laventille (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). These communities were made up of freed Africans after the abolition of slavery in 1834. Their architecture was like Indigenous Ajoupa, in which many of the homes were built from similar materials like mud and clay. One of the main features in these communities was their network of African yards,

which were often used as mourning grounds and religious rituals (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). For years, these communities prospered and changed Trinidad's overall culture from highly colonial to emancipated.

By 1940s, neighbourhoods like Gonzales were becoming overcrowded. The government under British rule attempted to formalize housing by providing 232 m<sup>2</sup> individual lots (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). While slightly successful, planning an efficient road system in East POS was extremely difficult because of existing structures: "To this day, much of Belmont is serviced by narrow winding roads radiating from Belmont Circular Road and Queens Park East, following the original paths and traces," (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). Figure 7 exemplifies the stark difference between the planned road systems in central POS and East POS. West of Queens Park East has homogenous streets and lots, whereas east of Queens Park East is heterogenous due to the historical development of the Gonzales and Laventille communities.

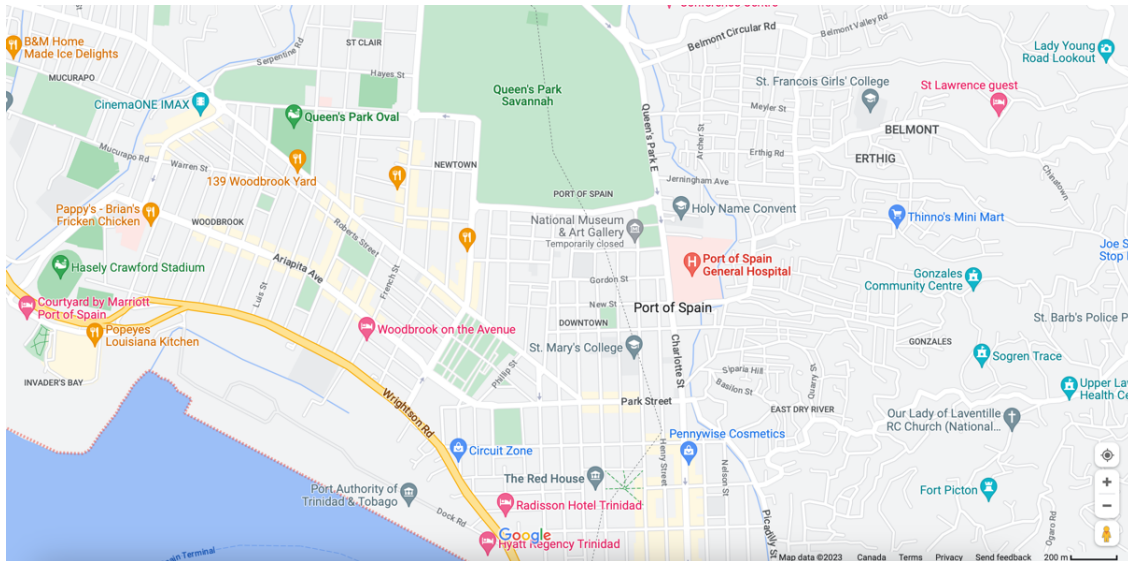


Figure 7: 2023 Map of Port of Spain, Trinidad (Source: Google Maps)

## Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP)

Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP) is one of the site-specific projects part of a larger series of revitalization projects happening throughout East POS, which is an agglomeration of communities situated in Belmont like Gonzales and Laventille. In Figure 7, East POS is considered all the lands east of Queens Park E. and it is one of Trinidad's oldest remaining communities. PSURP is a collaborative development project among the state and private corporations that will be revitalizing a portion of Piccadilly Street. Housing Development Corporation (HDC) and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) are the main stakeholders in this project.

The specific site location targeted for redevelopment is northeast of Piccadilly Street and Besson Street, which was previously the former site of Besson Street Police Station

(Figure 8). The current surrounding land uses are mixed-use with low to medium-density residential and commercial activities like local general stores and restaurants. To further enhance these land uses, the project will be carried out in multiple phases and is set to be complete within 24 to 30 months– approximately two and a half years (Housing Development Corporation, 2021). Starting in 2022, phase one consists of developing a multi-storey residential complex that will include commercial activity on the ground floor. As seen in Figure 8, the proposed renderings of PSURP include three types of residential buildings. Phase one consists of developing the southern portion of the site with the mixed-use commercial-residential building (Type 3a and 3b). The remaining residential buildings will be built around the United Brothers Lodge 251 SC, which is the oldest restored building in POS (National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012). This building was established in 1804 and was a masonic lodge (now a masonic centre), as these lands were previously a limestone quarry (National Trust of Trinidad & Tobago, 2012). Prior to establishing in Trinidad, the United Brothers Lodge 251 SC was in St. Lucia after granted charter by the Grand Orient of France (Lodge United Brothers 251 SC, 2023). After the lodge was burnt to the ground during the French Revolution, the owners moved to Trinidad, which historically started the country's masonry industry. It was granted recognition by the Grand Lodge of Scotland and remains the second oldest lodge outside of Scotland that is protected under Scotland's masonic jurisdiction (Lodge United Brothers 251 SC, 2023). Since it was recognized as a historic site, PSURP was designed around the masonic centre to support its cultural significance. To date, HDC and UDeCOTT submitted a request of proposals for builder's work, external work, plumbing, electrical and elevator works, and the deadline to submit a proposal is May

24, 2023. UDeCOTT and HDC are also reviewing applicants for local contracting opportunities to perform the construction work from their first request of proposal back in 2019, prior to Prime Minister Rowley's official public announcement. Currently, the site is bordered up, extracted, and presumably appears ready for construction.

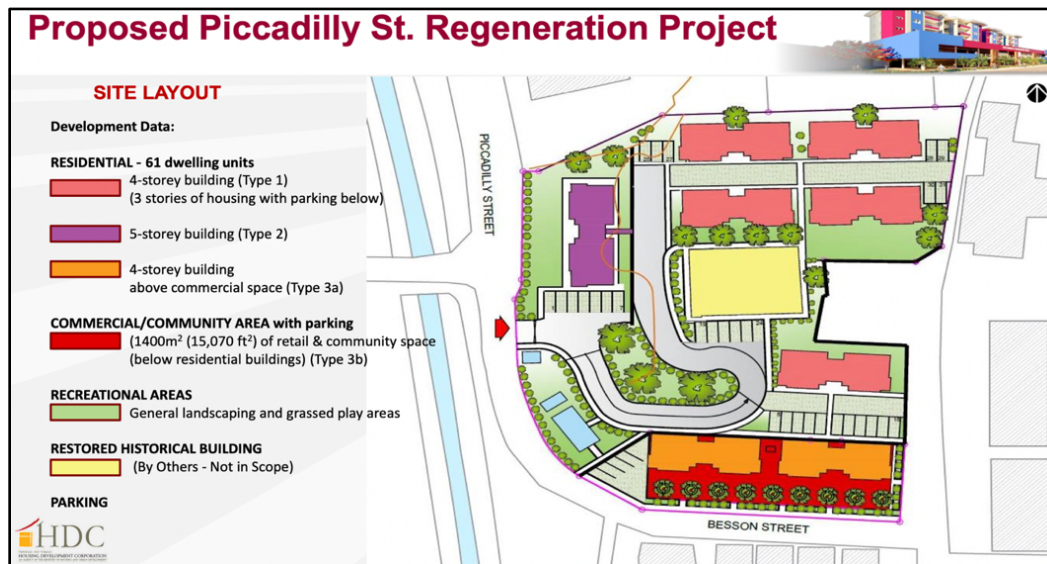


Figure 8: Piccadilly Street Project Proposal Site Layout (Source: Housing Development TT)

In July 2021, a virtual public consultation meeting was held by HDC and UDeCOTT. Residents of the community and other Trinidadians engaged in the development conversation by raising concerns and asking important questions regarding their space. Questions about practicality, community awareness and education, environmental impacts, and homelessness were all raised by concerned residents. These questions were vaguely addressed by the panel but did not provide further details as the questions were about broader issues not specific to PSURP. The panel consisted of five main actors who have an impact in PSURP:

- Joel Martinez, *Mayor of City Port of Spain*,

- Hon. Penelope Beckles, *MP Minister of Housing and Urban Development*,
- Keith Scotland, *MP Member of Parliament, Port of Spain South*,
- Jayselle McFarlane, *Managing Director of Housing Development Corporation*,  
and
- Nigel Barrow, *Senior Manager of Urban Planning, Housing Development Corporation*.

The panel provided their expertise and were able to successfully present their positions during the public consultation. However, their lack of detail regarding community impact suggests that this public consultation was a statute that needed to be completed before moving forward in the development process. Based on the video, the panel's answers felt rehearsed as they reiterated the same points about the proper agencies and whom will be responsible for certain tasks throughout the entire development process. Like public consultations in the Global North, their answers mimic similar media training tactics as they did not confirm nor deny project details. Therefore, it is unknown whether the contributions of residents will be taken into consideration moving forward with PSURP.

As issues of homelessness and pragmatism were made aware of by residents, there are also cultural and socio-economic implications of PSURP that will greatly impact East POS residents and their surrounding communities. The main objective of PSURP is to revitalize Trinidad's economy and there is the possibility of a loss of local culture and livelihood due to Western development discourse that endorse modernist ideas of space. Figure 8 exemplifies this discourse through their rough renderings of PSURP, which imitate similar designs seen in the Global North. High-rise residential buildings

and condominiums are not common structures seen throughout Trinidad and can impose gentrifying (i.e., cost of living and relocation) impacts on existing communities and residents. New business interests such as restaurants and entertainment facilities may also stimulate the economy, but at what cost? Although HDC and UDeCOTT express the importance of cultural heritage preservation, there is no set plan on how they will achieve PSURP without disrupting livelihoods and the culture of East POS. As previously mentioned, East POS has historically represented new freedoms and African culture. Examples of Trinidad's culture are important national symbols like steelpan and carnival, which originated from East POS. These symbols have put Trinidad on the map and the culture is vibrant and remains the heart of Trinidad. To preserve East POS, the core of carnival, it is important that these new developments do not drastically change the landscape.

Supporting Trinidad's culture while stimulating new economic growth is one of the government's main objectives with PSURP. The ME-WE-GREEN project supported by the Ministry of Planning and Development in partnership with IAMovement, is set to work with the East POS community. Through the implementation of the Vetiver System (VS) and Vetiver Education and Empowerment Program (VEEP), this unique initiative may aid Trinidad's economic diversification by teaching the community new skillsets, which provides new business opportunities and allows for local economic activity. This may stimulate and enhance East POS's culture by modernizing their skillsets and capabilities, but also risks the loss of historic practices.

## **January 2023 Site Visit**

As part of this research, I visited Trinidad for two weeks in December 2022 to January 2023. Before this, my last visit in Port of Spain was 2017. I noticed drastic changes and progress in urban development in the Western side of the country. For instance, there are lots of new commercial plazas throughout the main urban centres like San Fernando, Freeport, Couva, and Chaguanas along with new townhouse complexes nearby. Also, two new shopping centres were built filled with new foreign multi-million dollar known brands like Aeropostale, Popeyes, Starbucks, Little Caesars, and Aldo. Prior to my 2017 visit, these brands did not exist, and the local commercial economy was more prevalent. In 2017, there was only one Starbucks in the entire country, and during my visit this time, I counted 7 new locations. From my understanding, Western culture is heavily influential in the Caribbean due to the diaspora and Starbucks represents a westernized and “American” luxury that many Trinidadians have dreamed about trying. Ritual Coffee, a Caribbean coffee franchise, was the local Starbucks of the Caribbean and now it has been replaced.

Clearly, gentrification and the closing of local businesses have become more prevalent and evident. Other observations I noticed included local businesses being closed and numerous abandoned lots and structures, which have the potential to be refurbished. In addition to new foreign businesses, Canadian financial institutions have become more prominent in Trinidad. Canadian financial institutions like Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) and Scotiabank have already operated in the Caribbean for years but Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is the latest with its more recent launch of CIBC: First

Caribbean International Bank (FCIB). This bank operates in 16 Caribbean countries and there is currently one location in Chaguanas, Trinidad. Lastly, I noticed public internet and cellular services have remarkably improved since 2017 as I was able to connect from anywhere in major urban centers. This trend in urban development and modernity has rapidly increased throughout the country and will continue this trajectory with PSURP and the rest of the revitalization project series.

On January 7, 2023, I attempted to visit East POS and the PSURP site. Prior to my visit, I was mildly aware of the socio-political and economic situation in this community related to safety as there is limited information available online. However, when discussing my plans to visit East POS, many family members questioned my reasoning and expressed concern. I was advised to first speak with the local police station before conducting my site visit. It was this point in which my research took a turn. Once I explained the purpose of my visit, the police officers strongly advised against visiting the PSURP site. The officers explained that the level of gang activity and crime is extremely high and that it is not even safe for local Trinidadians to walk through the area. However, the police chief offered to escort me to the end of the street where PSURP is located for only 10 minutes or less. I was instructed to stay close, to not speak loudly or hold my phone in my hand until we reached the site. Figures 9 and 10 are two of the photos I managed to take during my PSURP site. The site is currently blocked off by a large, galvanized fence and appears to have begun construction and the UDeCOTT label is seen on the fence along with safety signs for construction workers.



Figure 9: Southwest view of Piccadilly Street Project Site (Source: Breanna Syne)



Figure 10: South view of Piccadilly Street Project Site (Source: Breanna Syne)

The overall site visit was less than 10 minutes as I only had time to observe my initial surroundings and the community members. The area was relatively quiet and empty, but a few community members did notice me and the police chief, which startled me. During the visit, the police officer told me about the current situation regarding PSURP.

Although the project is set to revitalize and modernize Piccadilly Street, there is an overall lack of awareness from local Trinidadians. As highlighted in the 2021 virtual public meeting, many people do not know the extent of PSURP and how the government will proceed to improving the quality of life of this community. The area is classified as extremely dangerous, and the police chief mentioned that the severity of the situation is not improving despite PSURP's intentions. It is rumoured that the funds provided for PSURP are being used to purchase more weapons in the community. Nevertheless, this is just an assumption, and these issues of violence and poverty are heavily rooted in historic prejudices against this predominately Black community. However, these issues of racialized violence and poverty inform how the Government of Trinidad is approaching these issues through urban development and gentrification.

## **Implications**

Aside from the national revitalization project, there are many ongoing urban development projects throughout the country. Mainstream news outlets, such as *The Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, *TTT News*, and *Trinidad and Tobago Express*, all cover an array of narratives and perspectives of local urban development. Young, working adults, which are the dominate age group in Trinidad, are in favour of the urban development trajectory and the revamping of Trinidad's global image. It is the belief that modernization will lead to positive outcomes and stimulate the economy. These ideas are echoed in Vision 2030 and the National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS) discussed previously. PSURP exemplifies principles of moving forward and sustainable development by creating mixed-use spaces that are adaptable. However, the project

negates mention of East POS's impoverishment and the current situation regarding gang violence. In this case, urban development appears to be used as a method of eradication of an entire community deemed problematic under the pretense of sustainable development.

For instance, there has been an increased in gang activity taking place in Clifton Towers, which is directly east of PSURP site and owned by the HDC. Residents living in these towers have complained of illegal occupancy of gangs and state that the situation is worsening (Dowlart-Rostant, R., 2019). Residents have called for immediate intervention from police authorities but have been unsuccessful as their concerns have not been taken seriously.

As local journalist Dowlart-Rostant (2019) writes:

To make matters worse they [tenants] claimed that there seems to be a given "gang the clearance to operate in Tower 3 due to the "gang boss" being given an apartment in that same tower, an apartment which he had illegally occupied prior. This is horrifying to the legal tenants who reside in that building and the other three towers."

Many ongoing development projects like PSURP do not acknowledge the current reality of East POS residents and how gang violence may impact the future. For instance, PSURP's public meeting presentation highlighted existing conditions of the site, which included unemployment, outdated infrastructure, high density (informal and unplanned development), and inadequate social and recreational amenities (UDeCOTT, 2021; HDC, 2021). While these conditions are deemed true, HDC and UDeCOTT intentionally

brush over the severity of the gang and crime situation by downplaying the actual situation in their proposal. Community members were the ones to address these issues as there is a high risk of residents being displaced and gentrification being ignored by HDC and UDeCOTT. The lack of concern by these government agencies reiterates their intention to modernize East POS through urban development regardless of whom it affects.

In regard to climate change, PSURP is branded on sustainable development and using best practices. More greenspaces and urban agriculture are two key objectives, which align with the NEP and Vision 2030. Also, all new and ongoing development projects must adhere to these guidelines and include climate change strategies as stated in Vision 2030. PSURP exemplifies how future urban development projects can include climate change strategies through mixed-use development that allows for future adaptability. Providing community/commercial space within type 3a residential (refer to Figure 8) allows for an array of services and events that can take place within the community. Also, the encouragement of community gardening and local agricultural practices all exemplify PSURP's capability towards sustainability as they align with the NEP and Vision 2030 objectives.

To summarize, PSUSP and the other projects part of the national revitalization series represents what all future development in Trinidad will look like: modern, efficient, and sustainable. For PSURP, although there is limited information available about the building process, it can be assumed that HDC and UDeCOTT are doing their due

diligence in choosing their contractors as the project site is cleared (presumably ready for construction) and there has not been any recent updates or delay notices issued. However, the lack of updates also raises concerns of whether PSURP will be delivered on time or whether this project will happen at all. As mentioned previously, HDC and UDeCOTT secured funding from a private-public partnership, but there is little to no public information about it. This instability in funding has always been a barrier towards East POS' revitalization, so it is fair to assume that funding maybe causing an internal delay.

While Trinidad is actively trying to respond to climate change through urban development and their guiding policies, actions speak louder than words and the inconsistent public engagement and awareness is alarming. To date, the government of Trinidad has not released any new information about how they will address climate change through overall urban development. This suggests that climate change is not an immediate priority for the government despite being the cause of consistent destruction and disruptions.

## **5. Urban Development Contestations**

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### **Development Discourse**

Over the years, development has become the indicator of a nation's overall socio-economic success. As highlighted previously, ideologies of development first emerged as a response to the destruction caused by World War II (WWII). Since then, there have

been numerous changes in the development discourses. Today, development is generally promoted as an ideology and practice that is progressive, and inclusive of all people. Though the term 'development' holds various connotations, it remains a relatively positively viewed process. In the Global North, development has historically signified wealth and power, which supports capitalism and its production. Once these global cities could no longer locally sustain particular capitalist operations at a great profit, they pushed the burden of labour onto the Global South, and its predominately racialized communities. Western development and its standards have also become the benchmark for all nations despite geographical differences. Despite the progressive development narrative, it is important to note that development continues to operate in an exclusive, colonial system that often hinders the ability of the Global South to participate as well as respond to global threats like climate change. Due to this inability, this standard contributes further to the problem of underdevelopment and poverty within Trinidad.

Arturo Escobar's (2011) work, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, explores the production and deployment of post-WW II development discourse in the construction of Global South nations. Escobar (2011) defines development as more than a historically singular experience, but rather a production of knowledge that has expanded beyond a physical experience. Global South nations were therefore created to feed neoliberal capitalism through cheap labour and extractive activities performed by Brown and Black bodies. Trinidad has historically been a site of labour-intensive economic activity and despite being rich in resources, the country

remains relatively poor and indebted despite its oil and natural gas economy. Trinidad continues to engage in normative development discourse as the result of their historical contribution to capitalism. Recent national policies, such as Vision 2030, National Spatial Development Strategy, and National Environmental Policy follow frameworks that centres around development as the solution to poverty. These policies support a pro-development/capitalist agenda that does not prioritize environmental issues nor propose any practical solutions to environmental crisis such as climate change.

### **Trinidad's National Position: Pro-development Agenda**

There are numerous ongoing projects that follow Trinidad's national urban development trajectory. Urban development as a solution has quickly manifested throughout the country with new housing structures, commercial plazas, and highway expansions. Prior to the 2020 public announcement about the national East Port of Spain (POS) revitalization project, the level of development and turnaround time of these projects were relatively slow. However, following the new guidelines set by planning policy has increased development interest by foreign investors and businesses.

Piccadilly Street Urban Regeneration Project (PSURP) focuses on new growth and beginnings for the East POS community. The proposed mixed-use building is designed to foster new economic opportunities while supporting faint ideas of the 15-minute city. An ideology that envisions necessities and services (e.g., healthcare, school, leisure, shopping, etc.) being within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from any point in the city. As highlighted previously, the project is part of a series of developments happening within a

highly crime ridden and violent area of East POS. The Government of Trinidad believes PSURP will foster a new narrative that will highlight Trinidad's capital city in a positive light. On a global scale, Trinidad wants to transform its appearance and remain a leader among other Caribbean nations since development equates wealth and power, the general goal of Global South nations. Evidently, as a post-colonial state still part of the Commonwealth, appearance will always matter and determine Trinidad's identity. Out of all the Anglo-Caribbean countries, Trinidad is considered the most advanced in its development and technology as well as a leader in the oil and gas industry. This is because of the connections Trinidad has made over the years with North America, Trinidad was able to further advance compared to other Caribbean countries.

However, disparities between the Global North and the Global South have become more noticeable as technology continues to advance. Although the Government of Trinidad fully embrace development, there are potential consequences to this approach such as increased vulnerability to climate change, continued loss of biodiversity and land degradation, and loss of cultural heritage. With focus on sustainable development and its key strategy implementing green architecture and infrastructure, the Government of Trinidad does not go into depth on specifications. PSURP does not provide any details regarding what green architecture will look like, what materials will be used, or how PSURP's carbon footprint will be reduced. This lack of information reiterates Trinidad's primary focus on urban revitalization as a source of economic recovery rather than truly achieving sustainability.

Moreover, despite its good intentions towards tackling climate change, Trinidad is still highly dependent on natural gas and oil as their main export. Extractivism is embedded into Trinidad's identity as part of the global economy and will remain Trinidad's primary focus as a Global South nation. Since 2016, Trinidad's economy has been extremely vulnerable from the shutdown of multiple industrial plants in Point Lisas, the country's industrial hub and second largest port. With an industrial-driven economy, approximately 30 percent of plants within the Point Lisas Industrial Estate have been closed or idled since 2016 (AZP News, 2020). Some plants were deemed non-profitable due to the high pricing of natural gas. Former energy minister, Kevin Ramnarine states, "This situation at Pt Lisas predates Covid 19. Prior to the Nutrien 02 closure, there were five plants closed at Point Lisas" (AZP News, 2020). Ramnarine (2020) also blames The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago (NGC) for the high pricing of natural gas and low pricing of ammonia. As a result, 600 people lost their job due directly to the recent plant closures. Evidently, the high levels of unemployment, a global pandemic, and a struggling economy has been the driving force of urban development in Trinidad. PSURP exemplifies an alternative to Trinidad's current situation but reinforces the same ideologies that has left the country poor and indebted.

Development as a phenomenon has produced knowledge under unequal conditions of power -- colonialism. Development identifies with Global North nations, the original beneficiaries of capital. This is known as the 'Colonialist Move,' which recognizes the imbalance between nations and their capabilities to produce their own discourses (Escobar, 2011, p. 9). This imbalance allows dominant state powers like Europe and

North America to control the knowledge and production of space in the Caribbean, which are spaces already perceived as underdeveloped and problematic. In the case of PSURP, the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT), and the Ministry of Development and Housing perceive the surrounding East POS community as problematic, and crime ridden but this is a community that has historically been Black and underserved for decades. These inequities have become unnoticed and/or ignored in the greater narrative surrounding urban development in this area. Following normative practices of development, it is the only solution deemed capable of transforming Trinidad's national identity in the global economy. Despite the current needs of the local community, PSURP does not mention the current East POS community in a positive light, but rather paints them as lazy, unemployed, and greedy citizens. This narrative seems to serve as both a rationale for development as well as an excuse for the lack of development progress, which complicates how Trinidad will move forward in their plans for PSURP. The project's proposal plan vaguely states that HDC and the ministry will do their best to not displace/relocate the existing community during the construction phase of the project. While the avoidance of physical displacement due to health and safety risks is obvious, the potential displacement over time appears inevitable and PSURP demonstrates a classic example of gentrifying aspirations.

### **Anti-development: Gentrification**

According to Oxford English Dictionary (2023), gentrification is generally defined as the process of a neighborhood's character changing over time by new investment interest,

which results in increased property value and the displacement of current inhabitants. New businesses and higher income residents move into areas that are typically resided by low income and working class. It is a multi-scalar process that can occur in different forms. For instance, green gentrification is the process where environmental greening (typically green development projects, sustainability programs, green investments, etc.) lead to higher property values and rent, which inevitably displace existing communities over time (University of Minnesota, 2023). For Trinidad, all future development projects must adhere to the guiding policies and principles set out in Vision 2030 and the National Spatial Development Strategy. Sustainability as the main principle reiterates normative development discourse and encourages environmental greening whenever possible, thus PSURP is no exception. Despite the lack of information on how PSURP will apply sustainable development practices, there is speculation that green gentrification is plausible. The growing tensions between development and gentrification are becoming apparent as community members are starting to experience the initial impacts of PSURP's development, which highlights the elusive nature of Trinidad's overall sustainable development trajectory.

Prior to the revitalization project announcement, many long-term residents expressed their inability to move out of the community for PSURP (Bahaw, D., 2020). Many of these residents have long ties to the community and have lived here their entire life despite increasing levels of gang members illegally occupying residential units in Clifton Towers. It is also speculated that the funding for PSURP has been corrupted by potential gangs earning some sort of financial gain. This is due to the lack of police

enforcement regarding the issue, and many residents believe nothing is being done. Once PSURP is completed, the permanent displacement of these residents may happen and the cultural landscape will inevitably change.

This process of gentrification is typical and can be found throughout the world. For instance, Isabelle Anguelovski and James J.T. Connolly's book, *"The Green City and Social Injustice: 21 Tales from North America and Europe,"* explore various examples of environmental greening projects, their trajectories, and social consequences in the Global North context. These stories all highlight themes of gentrification, social inequity, and sustainable development, which resonate with East POS. For example, Cully, Portland's most racially diverse neighbourhood has a high disproportionately concentration of low-income, working-class renters who have advocated against certain policies and urban projects but failed to equally represent the Black community and their interests (Triguero-Mas, Fontán-Vela, and Dommerholt, 2022). In East Boston, historically marginalized communities (predominately Latinx) that resided on the coast were being displaced by waterfront luxury real estate developments due to the gentrifying effect of increased cost of living (Anguelovski and Shokry, 2022). In Washington, DC, there was a distinct racialized difference between the east and west coast of the Anacostia River due to green gentrification urban projects like the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park (Anguelovski, Ranganathan, and Hyra, 2022). These three case studies all dealt with the effects of green gentrification as new greenspaces and sustainable communities were built for a specific group of people. For East POS, this trajectory of urban development will most likely lead to a gentrified neighbourhood that

no longer (unjustly) belongs to the longstanding residents. Like Cully, the concerns of East POS residents (predominately Black) are not represented nor cared for. The new mixed-use commercial residential buildings will likely displace marginalized groups even further as in the case of East Boston. Also, the pre-existing stark differences and landscape changes between the neighbouring communities and spaces throughout the city are evident like in Washington, DC. Regardless of geographic location, the impacts of plans like PSURP in Port of Spain have no boundaries and may produce the same outcomes found in these North American cities.

## **6. Concluding Remarks: What's next?**

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Given the plausible outcome of PSURP, two questions remain: how will PSURP contribute to the fight against climate change and is there an alternative to development? Continued land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate vulnerability remain the consequences of current development practices. Sustainable development as a solution towards climate change remains an ambiguous process that Trinidad is subconsciously accepting as their future. Trinidad's planning policies act more of a guideline that must be considered rather than the actual law or direct implementation. The National Spatial Development Strategy is the key policy informing development but does not hold full legislative power. As highlighted earlier, Trinidad's Municipal Corporations and Tobago's House of Assembly are the key policy makers regarding all aspects of government. Their agendas and priorities currently focus on economic recovery from Covid-19 and economic diversification. Climate change is a complex

global threat that increasingly inform many policies to some degrees. However, current global policies and treaties do not highlight the actual cause of climate change and its major contributors. For instance, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Accord highlights that countries must lower their carbon footprints by reducing their greenhouse emissions (GHGs) to carbon zero by 2050. However, how to get there often remains elusive. These covenants do not legally hold large corporations responsible for contribution as they are their own entities with their own governance systems. For governments as for local populations, it is extremely difficult to hold these players accountable in a capitalist society.

For Trinidad, it is a vicious cycle of building capital (i.e., rebooting the economy) for the betterment of their citizens, to capital greed, which inevitably leads to political instability due to corruption. While PSURP poses as a positive project for East POS residents, the project reiterates this capitalist cycle which only benefits a specific group of people. As development grows, Trinidad remains part of an unequal system that stifles its ability to create its own exclusive knowledges and systems. As Escobar (2011) recommends for a post-development era, decolonization and deconstruction of normative development practices must ensue before alternatives can be considered. Development is a core feature of capitalism (reproduction and accumulation) and has allowed this unjust system between the Global North and the Global South to operate. While the point might not be to fill the gap, it remains that the very few urban development projects in Port-of-Spain are not doing much to alleviate poverty but rather

are poised to increase inequalities through displacement – despite the good climate change policy intentions which have yet to make significant changes on the ground.

## **Lessons and Challenges**

Through the case study of PSURP, the project highlights how colonialism and development have contributed to Port of Spain's current functionality. The City's streetscape and land uses have minimally changed since the 1800s and 1900s and has remain relatively intact throughout the years. New pressures to modernize and develop Port of Spain have created new tensions between the state and civil society. The lack of public engagement and awareness about the development process has led to rising concerns about displacement from affected community members. This poses a challenge to HDC and UDeCOTT as the responsible government agencies for the national East POS revitalization project and PSURP.

Trinidad faces various challenges that have resulted in their past underdevelopment. Foreign aid programs and financial institutions with stringent conditions have resulted in loss of land/property ownership and high levels of debt, which have long-term effects regarding development. This limits Trinidad's ability to deliver the type of development that is proposed because of the instability in securing funding without giving up something in return. Future challenges Trinidad may face include the lack of time left to address climate change by actively adjusting their development practices and creating the necessary infrastructures to support these practices now. Although time is an inevitable and non-tangible challenge all nations face responding to climate change,

Trinidad is subjected to the disproportionated burden. As a result, the lack of time interferes with poverty alleviation and the resolution of other related socio-economic issues highlighted in the National Spatial Development Strategy.

When visiting East POS, it seemed obvious that small investments into community spaces and general maintenance would greatly improve the City's appearance and functionality. However, high levels of crime and illicit gang activity have encroached onto the community, which has resulted in a continued lack of servicing from the Government of Trinidad. The lack of social programs to support mental health and other related issues as well as the unwillingness/mistrust of the community to attend such programs have also resulted in generational cycles of poverty. While this goes beyond the scope of this research, PSURP highlights the complexity and multitude of socio-economic problems related to urban development. Moving forward, Trinidad must continue to develop strategies to secure the necessary resources and services needed to support community needs (healthcare, education, food security, its etc.). Also, the government should engage with placemaking forums that represent community interests (e.g., non-governmental organizations and grassroots movements) to inform these strategies and ensure they are meeting the needs of their people.

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