

Integrated Planning Regions in Trinidad and Tobago

A Strategic Spatial Planning Experiment

Renelle Sarjeant, Public Space Global, Trinidad and Tobago

Sarah Mahadeo, University of Trieste (Italy), Trinidad and Tobago

Abstract

Moving away from traditional approaches to national level planning, Trinidad and Tobago's National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS) introduced Integrated Planning Regions (IPRs) in a rescaling experiment for regional spatial planning. This paper undertakes an assessment of the suitability of the IPR and the merits of the experiment utilising a documentary review and an analysis of a series of interviews with those involved in the plan making process. The investigation reveals that IPRs were a travelling planning idea imported into a Caribbean island context, ill-suited for its implementation. In the constant search for novel ways to address regional imbalances related to urban growth, infrastructure development and the environment, context-specific issues regarding governance, politics and culture must be acknowledged. If not, the promise of such planning experiments remains unfulfilled. This study provides valuable insights to guide the process of national and regional spatial planning in Trinidad and Tobago.

Keywords

Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, regional planning, strategic spatial planning, soft spaces

1. Introduction

Spatial planning communicates development directives and choreographs their delivery. Within the last three decades, greater emphasis on the region as a functional scale of planning evolved out of place-based attempts at addressing intractable regional development demands (Harrison et. al, 2021) and the move towards strategic spatial planning (Albrechts et. al 2003). Land use planning in Trinidad and Tobago reacted to this global trend, yet the reform and evolution of the system lagged behind. Regional planning in the country was initiated in the late 2000s, its progress spurred by the entwined global Millennium Development Goals and national Vision 2020 development policy (MLG, 2009b).

The National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS) of Trinidad and Tobago, completed in 2013, recognised this evolving scope of spatial planning. The strategy sought to improve the relationships between central and local government for planning and implementation, particularly at the regional level (MPSD, 2014). It introduced Integrated Planning Regions (IPRs), sub-national planning regions that traverse the boundaries of existing municipal planning, to mediate these linkages. Thus, the IPRs represent a regional rescaling experiment for improving the planning process and the implementation of plans.

1.1. Strategic Planning and Soft Planning Spaces

Borrowing from Hersperger et al (2019) we use the term strategic spatial planning to mean a multi-actor process, negotiated through multiple organisational and institutional arrangements producing various strategies for managing spatial change. Strategic spatial planning often operates complementary to

statutory planning tools and formal planning practices within soft spaces (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013). Soft spaces, crystallised conceptually in the late 2000s, have been described as a new governance arrangement for spatial planning and regional development (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2007) which operates alongside but not competing with the existing administration of planning (Walsh et. al, 2012).

Soft spaces emerged in the United Kingdom (UK) under the New Labour government as a mechanism to facilitate special infrastructure projects (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010); achieve area-based regeneration and economic development of city regions (Liddle, 2009); and escape the political and administrative confines of the statutory planning system (Backlund et. al, 2018). They may also be viewed as “a policy tool facilitating the cross-sectoral policy coordination ambitions of strategic spatial planning” (Walsh et. al, 2012, p.2).

The concept of soft spaces has also come to describe a range of institutional and territorial arrangements for planning either directly above or below the regional level of governance, (Allmendinger et. al, 2015). They are viewed as better suited for strategic action and capable of overcoming the inefficiencies of traditional planning processes (Purkarthofer and Granqvist, 2021; Walsh et. al, 2012). They may also be accompanied by new geographies and introduce new actors into the planning process (Walsh et. al, 2012).

The rearrangement of the spatial territory is achieved either through the softening (the breaking down and ‘fuzzing’) of boundaries, or the elimination of old boundaries and delimitation of new ones, or by overstepping administrative boundaries which confined the geographic scope of action (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Healey, 2013). This disarticulation reveals a belief by policy makers that getting the spatial unit right has the potential to enable the desired flexible policy responses (Purkarthofer and Granqvist, 2021). Two examples of this re-organisation of the space are the six sub regions created in the Wales Spatial Strategy (Healey, 2013) and the Thames Gateway city region (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009) which represent boundary ‘fuzzing’ and the carving out of new territories respectively.

As the concept of “soft spaces” travelled to Europe from the UK, it became clear that responsiveness to the local context and deep engagement with political processes are both essential to negotiating these new arenas (Purkarthofer and Granqvist, 2021). In fact, the processes of building relationships and networks and local engagement are the desired results of a soft space, acting as the precursors to better decision making and more sustainable outcomes (Adam and Green, 2016).

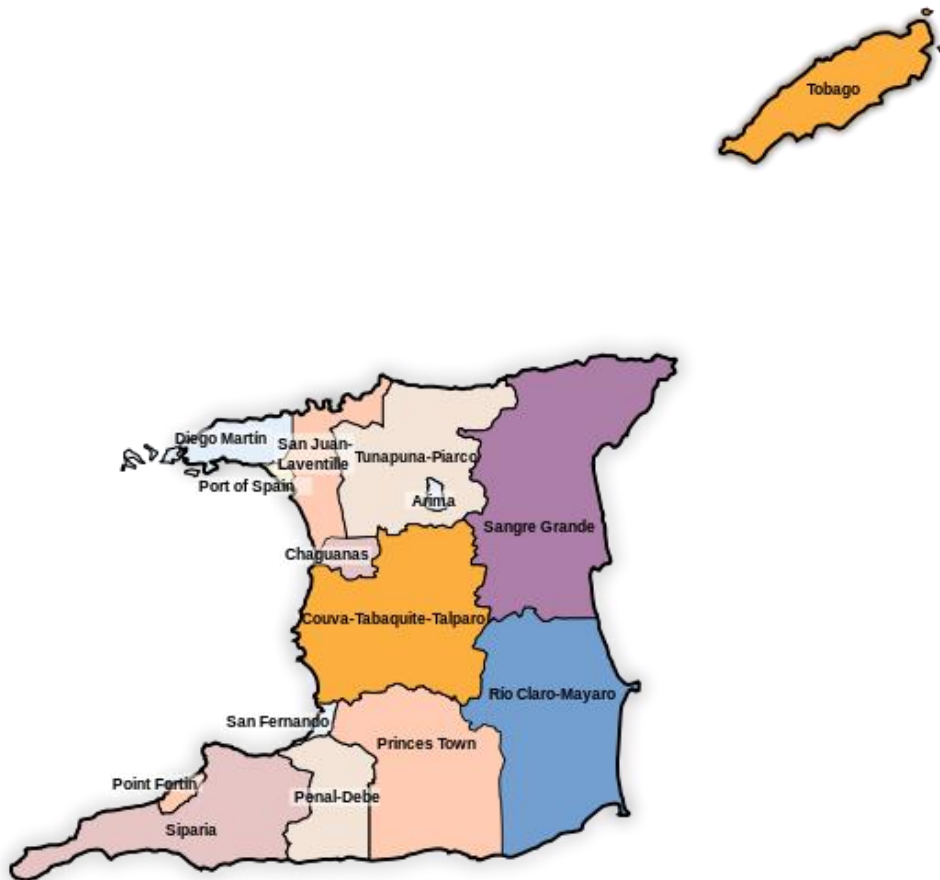
1.2 Aim, research questions and methodology

This paper will examine the relationships between the IPR, a soft planning space versus formal planning spaces, and the potential of IPRs to facilitate regional development. It will also examine the fitness and capability of the tool, assessing the merits of the IPR experiment.

After first setting out the context for spatial planning in Trinidad and Tobago, the paper will review the processes within which the IPRs were conceived, the multiple roles they were expected to play, and the ways in which they were expected to function. A case study of the San Fernando and the South IPR is also used to analyse the regional development strategy which accompanies the IPR.

This research draws on twelve (12) interviews undertaken over a two-month period, as well as the analysis of policy documents and background reports. The interviewees were policy makers involved in the development of the NSDS or planning reform initiatives, actors at the municipal level, as well as the consulting firm contracted to develop the strategy.

2. The Planning Context: The Trinidad and Tobago Land Use Planning System



Map 1: Municipal Development Corporation Boundaries, Trinidad.

Source: Wikipedia (2010)

Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary state, with one devolved autonomous government in Tobago, overseen by the Tobago House of Assembly. At the local government level in Trinidad, there are fourteen (14) municipalities, which comprise two (2) City Corporations, three (3) Borough Corporations and nine (9) Municipal Corporations (Map 1 refers). These municipal bodies are responsible for local infrastructure development, waste management, public space development and maintenance, and disaster management. In contrast, spatial planning is centralised under a national government Ministry, and administered by a non-statutory body, the Town and Country Planning Division (TCPD), which prepares national and local plans (Figure 1 refers).

Trinidad and Tobago has a weak history of policy and plan creation (Mycoo, 2017), characterised by a lack of stakeholder engagement with much focus on producing plan documents and very little on matching the pace of development trends, plan implementation or local development outcomes (Kopstein, 2000). The only statutory national plan for Trinidad and Tobago, the National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) was completed in the late 1970s and approved in 1984. The second and more recent national policy is the National Spatial Development Strategy (NSDS), completed in 2013 and yet to be formally approved. The NSDS represented a departure from previous national planning exercises by focusing on strategic priorities rather than attempting to prescribe local development activities from the national level (NSDS, 2014).

Prior to the development of the NSDS, a Regional Planning Unit (RPU) under the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) was established in 2007. One of its responsibilities was the development of Municipal Development Plans (MDPs), completed between 2010 and 2011, attempting to fill in a gap in spatial planning to better guide municipal development and management (Genivar, 2010). Other stated aims of this exercise were to encourage collaboration at the local level, build municipal capacity in local area planning and local ownership of the planning process as plans were implemented (Genivar, 2010; Genivar, 2012).

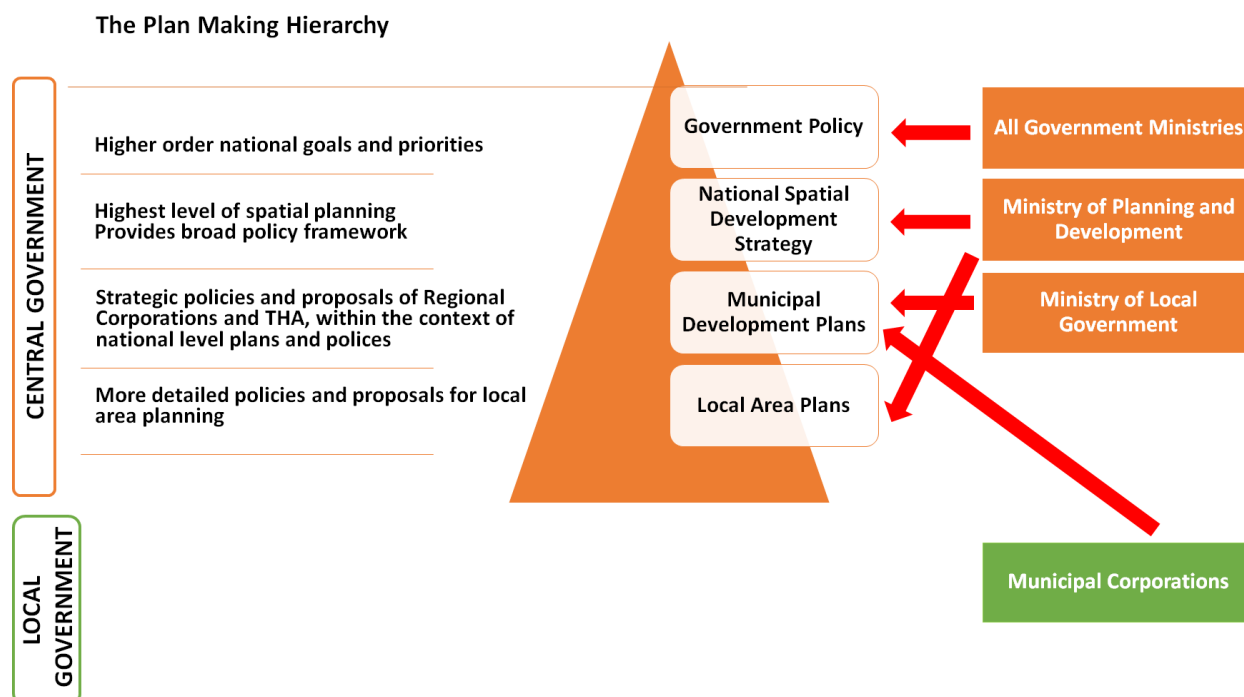


Figure 1: The Plan Making Hierarchy
Adapted from the National Spatial Development Strategy

Source: MPSP (2014)

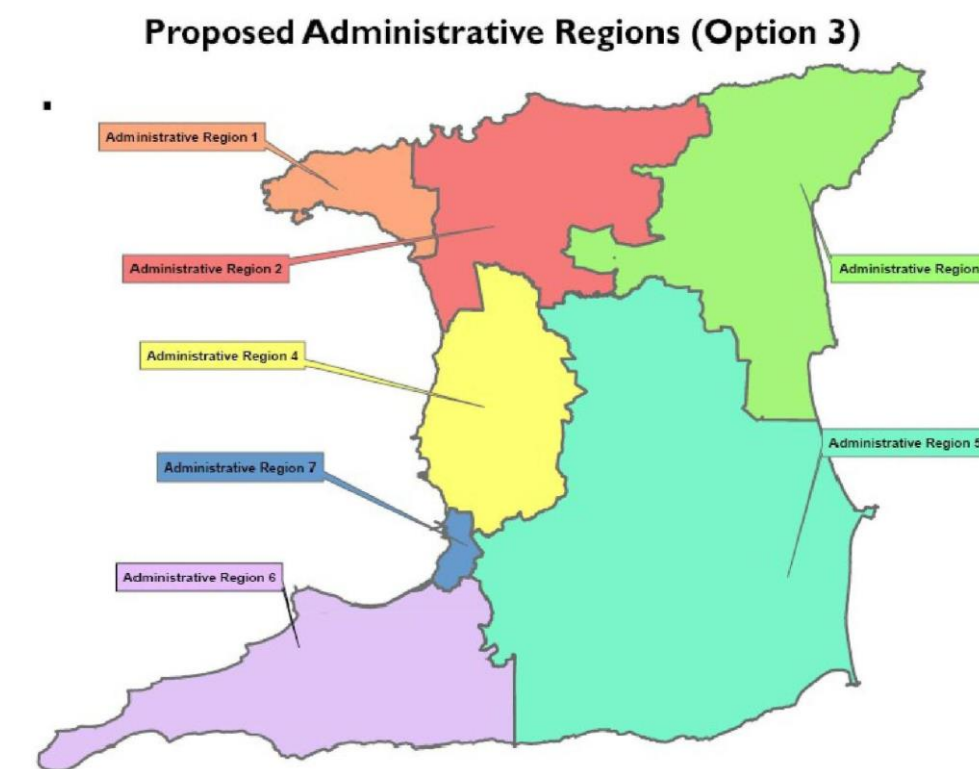
2.1. The evolution of planning legislation and local government reform

Since the inception of legislated planning in the country through the Town and Country Planning Act Chapter 35:01 in 1969, land use planning has been subject to changes in approaches, institutional reorganisation, and successive waves of reform. These culminated in the Planning and Facilitation of Development (PAFD) Act, which was partially proclaimed in 2014.

Closely linked to the changes in land-use planning over the years has been local government reform. The local government system dates back to colonial times, when a system of wards and counties was established to facilitate local administration and aid development. In 1990, the abolition of County Councils and the rearrangement of local government boundaries created eighteen (18) municipalities (later consolidated into fourteen (14) in 1992) under the Municipal Corporations Act 21 of 1990. This redefinition exercise sought to bring local government in line with global trends in promoting sustainable development with a focus on community participation and local development (MLG, 2009; MLG, 2016; Schoburg, 2007).

Later, a 2009 local government boundary review exercise (not implemented) outlined a preferred option for boundary redefinition (Map 2 refers) in which the fourteen (14) municipalities are amalgamated into

twelve (12), and then grouped into seven (7) Administrative Regions (MLG, 2009). Partially conceived to expand the boundaries of the existing cities and boroughs and provide greater land space for urban consolidation, it also aimed to create administrative regions which better match the functional relationships between settlements.



Map 2: 2009 Boundary realignment exercise preferred option showing the 7 proposed Administrative Regions
Source: MLG (2009 p.82)

3. The NSDS Development Process











In 2012, a multidisciplinary Development Planning Steering Committee (DPSC) of experienced professionals in the fields of the environment, housing, architecture, land management, and urban planning was convened to oversee the process of creating and reviewing a new national spatial plan. Interviewees indicated that the committee and planning community did not wholeheartedly embrace the strategic plan approach, preferring instead a prescriptive plan. The issues inherent in grouping the Municipal Corporations to create the IPRs did however resonate with them, drawing parallels with previous exercises that sought to find the right configuration of regions which captured the relationships between places.

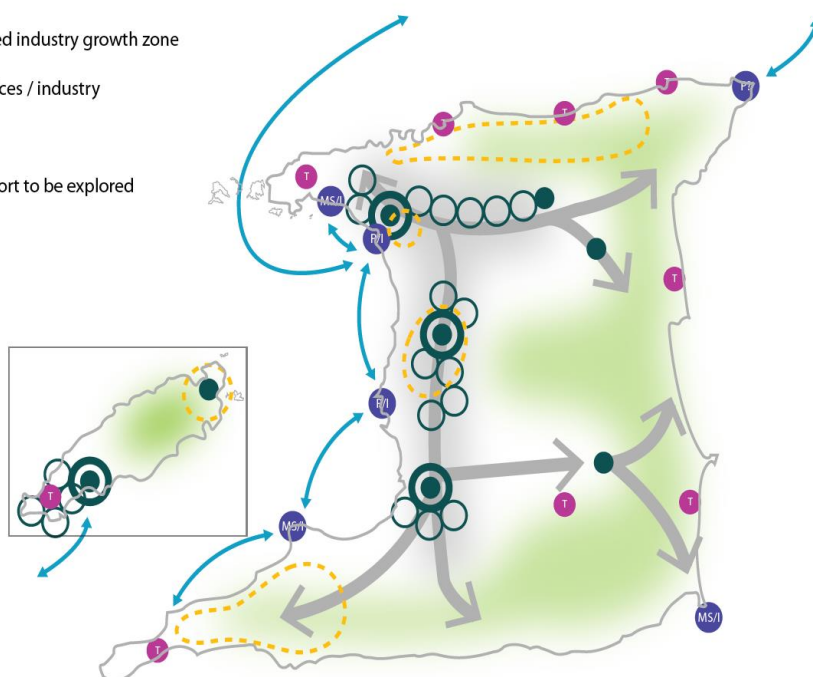
The NSDS was developed in two Phases, which were outsourced to planning consultants to overcome human resource capacity gaps. Phase one constituted a situational analysis of the country and an exercise to harmonise the fourteen (14) MDPs, and was executed by two local planning firms. This harmonisation was viewed as essential to facilitating alignment between the regional and national levels of planning. Phase 2, the strategy development stage, was executed by a foreign consulting firm, Globe Consultants International, that was tasked with producing the plan in ninety (90) days.

During the harmonisation process the consultants were specifically directed to make recommendations for the regional planning framework (Genivar 2012, and Hobday, 2012). In the study, cross border conflicts were identified, and the final report stressed the need for coordination and collaboration at the municipal level to resolve these (Genivar, 2012). It is therefore possible to draw a clear line between the identification of conflicts, the necessity of resolving these locally and the proposal of IPRs which traverse municipal boundaries. While there has been a long-standing recognition of the importance of sustainable regional development (MLG, 2009), the NSDS process was also used to solidify this newly emergent scale of planning.

4. The Integrated Planning Regions

Harmonised Regional Development

-  Major urban centres
-  Regional urban centres
-  Linked "urban villages"
-  Integrated transport network
-  Water transport routes
-  Tourism growth
-  Port and related industry growth zone
-  Maritime services / industry
-  Growth pole
-  Potential for port to be explored
-  Rural areas



Map 3: Harmonised Regional Development

Source: MPSD (2014 p. 21)

The Core Strategy of the NSDS put forward a Harmonised Regional Development spatial strategy (Map 3 refers), which set limits for the growth of urban settlements and dispersed non-hydrocarbon economic and infrastructural development across the country in industries such as tourism, maritime activities and agriculture. Additionally, key sectoral policies were outlined for transport, housing, economic development and coastal and marine resource management. Integrated Planning Regions (IPRs) were

also proposed, disaggregating the map of the country's harmonised regional development strategy into nine (9) sub-national planning units (Map 4 refers). These new 'regions' were intended to materialise the strategic ambitions of the plan at the regional level.

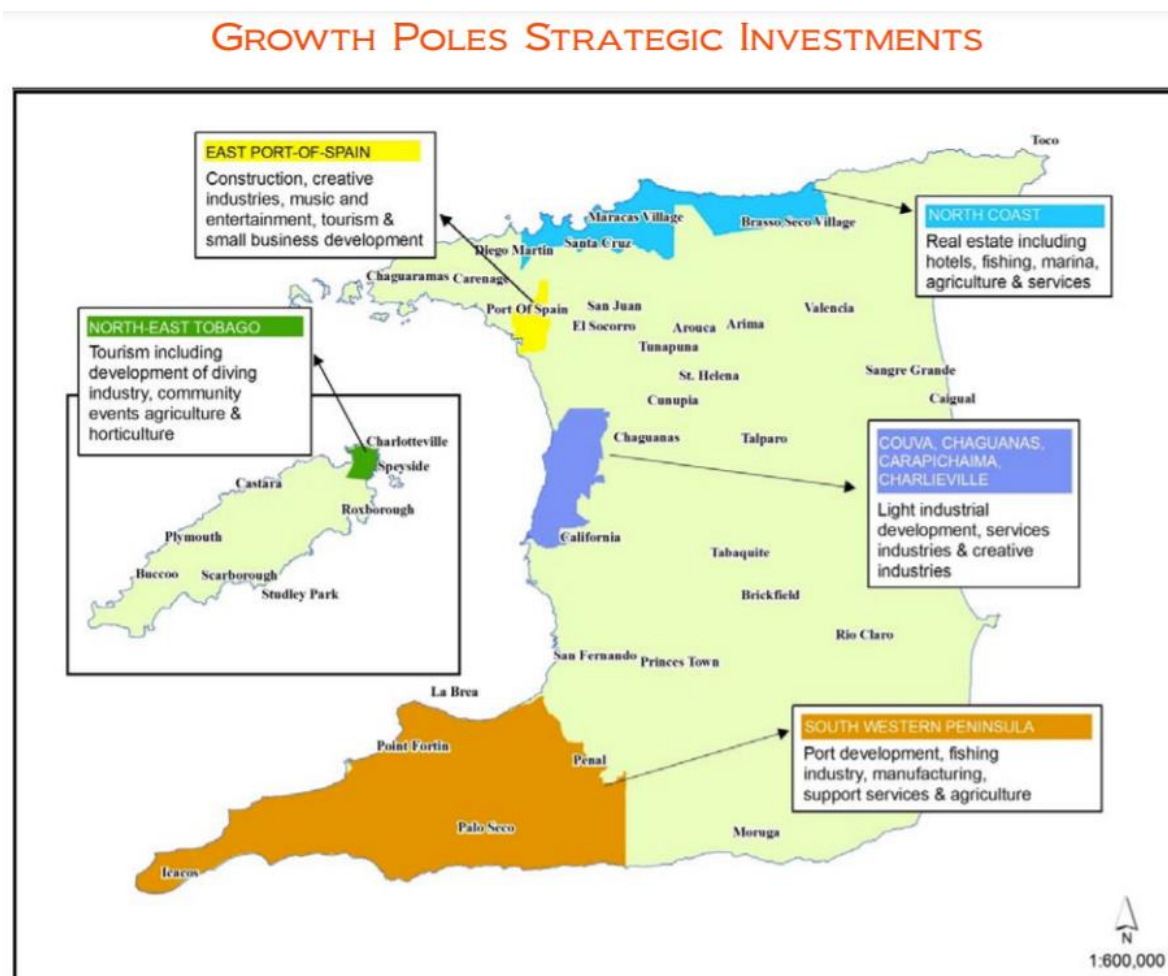


Map 4: Integrated Planning Regions

Source: NSDS (2014 p.61)

4.1 The role of IPRs

IPRs were devised as a tool to facilitate national economic policy, which at the time, focused on five growth poles (Map 5 refers) which would benefit from targeted incentives and infrastructure investments with a large sphere of influence (MPE, 2011). Critically, IPRs entail neither the realignment of existing administrative boundaries, nor were they intended to create another layer of service area boundaries. Rather, they were proposed as functional units of distinct geographic character for the purposes of planning and area-specific strategy formulation (MPSPD, 2014). Each IPR strategy set out multiple development priorities (Table 1 refers). IPRs could also be separated into sub regions where there were distinct differences in form and function.



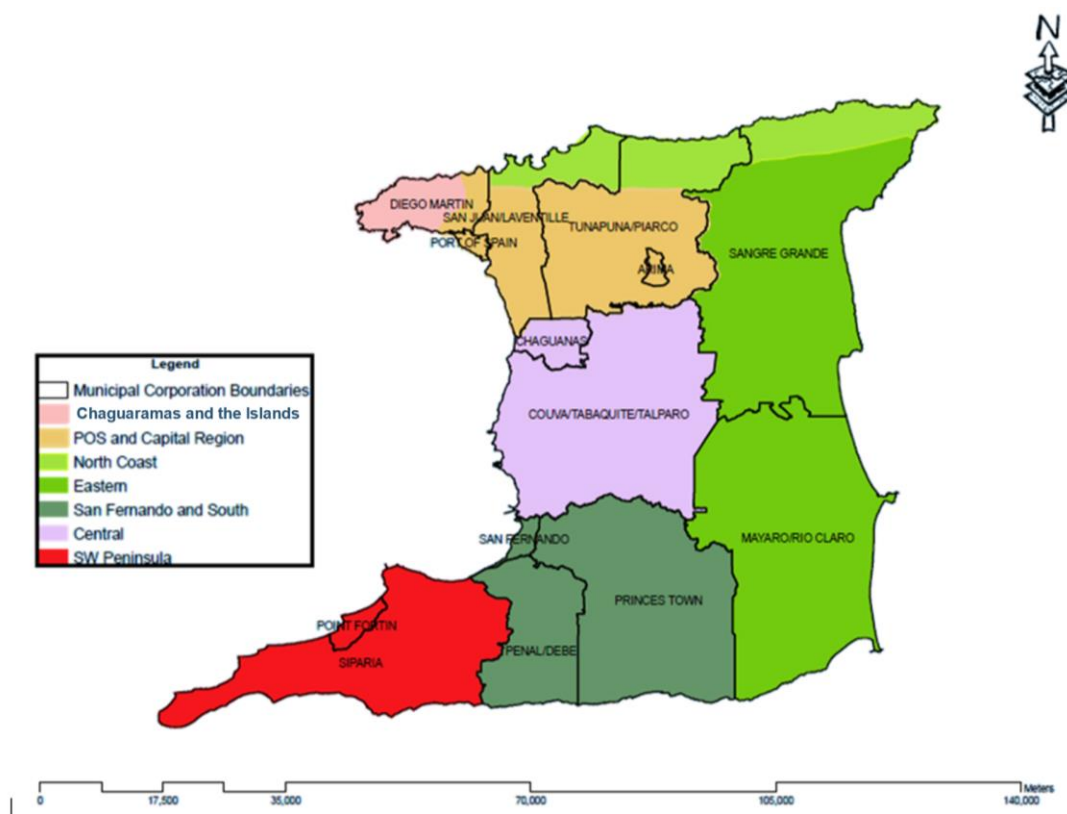
Map 5: Medium Term Policy Framework 2011- 2014 Growth Poles
p.67)

Source: MPE (2011

IPRs offered a framework which allowed neighbouring municipalities to collaborate on issues of shared interest. While not explicitly detailed in the plan, interviewees outlined the potential of IPRs to fill multiple gaps including:

- facilitating coordination between Municipal Corporation(s) for cross boundary initiatives
- facilitating coordination between national and local government on regional development
- aiding in the reviews of the MDPs
- removing misalignments across municipal boundaries

The ways in which IPRs were demarcated across the spatial territory illustrate the variance in the typology of spaces created, from city regions such as the Port of Spain and the Environs IPR; special development zones such as the Chaguaramas and the Islands IPR; and regional development spaces such as the Central Trinidad IPR (Table 1 refers). Though represented cartographically with solid boundary lines, these regions, layered on top of existing municipal boundaries, are spaces with indeterminate or 'fuzzy' external boundaries and which dissolved internal municipal boundaries for joined up planning (Map 6 refers).



Map 6: The IPRs against existing Municipal Corporation Boundaries

Source: TCPD (2014)

4.2 The formulation of the IPRs

The reasoning behind the grouping of Municipal Corporations within the IPRs recognised the functional relationships between areas, shared socio-spatial characteristics as well as proposed development objectives. The consultants' knowledge of and experience in the UK planning system was also influential. Environmental considerations were mainstreamed in the strategy through the Project for Ecosystem Services (PROECOSERV), with the hope that this would lend international credibility to the plan (Bann, 2013). At the same time, the consulting firm strategised to balance the impact of increasing built development on natural resources. The Municipal Corporations however were not involved in devising this strategy, nor were they consulted. Additionally, there was little consideration of the actual working relationships among the municipalities and existing administrative burdens. Yet still officials involved in steering the process suggested at a public consultation that the IPRs would be further refined at the municipal level (TCPD, 2013).

4.3 The administration of IPRs

The NSDS points to two approaches to executing the strategy, collaborative working and integrated planning. The IPRs were recognised to be a strategy in flux, to be revised and updated at a later date (TCPD, 2013), although no criteria and timeline for this was given. Additionally, they were conceived with the expectation of local government reform and the passage of the new planning legislation. The PAFD Act outlines one possible institutional arrangement to facilitate the IPRs, Joint Planning Authorities (JPAs). The legislation however only indicates that JPAs are to be used for joint plan making or joint development control decisions by Municipal Corporations. To date, local government reform is a pending process and

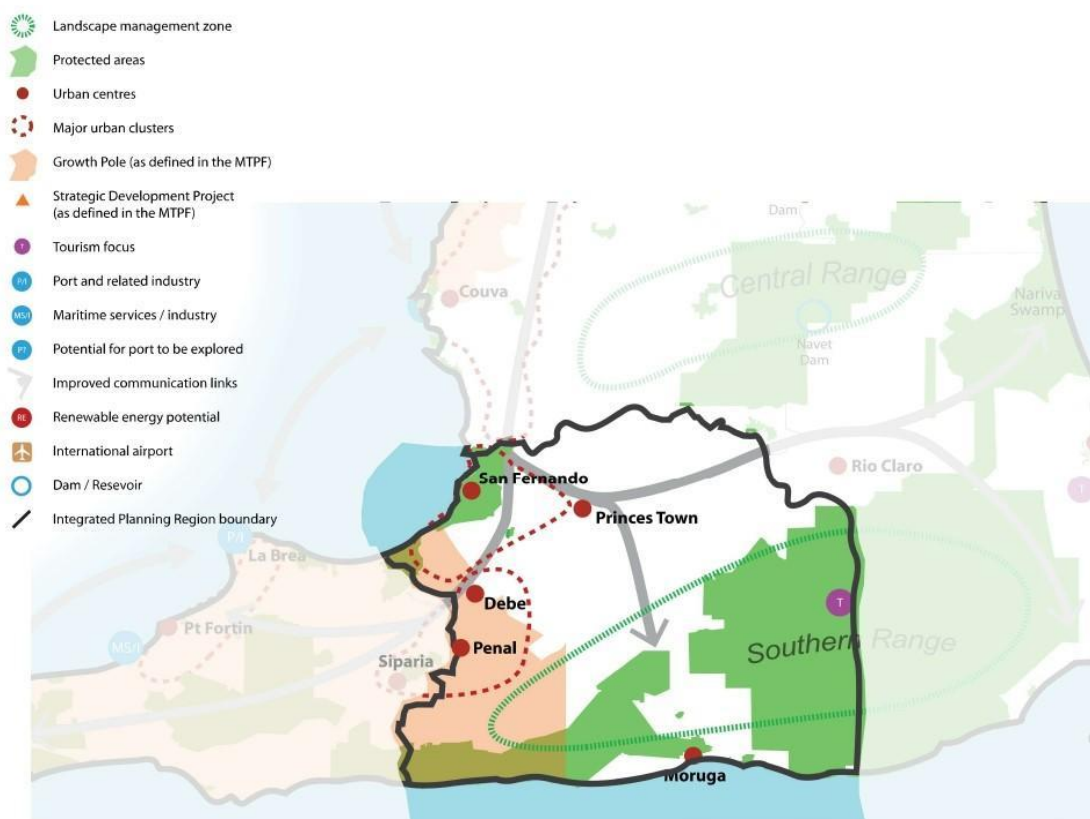
so the elements of the PAFD Act remain unimplemented. The National Spatial Development Strategy as well as its IPR strategy also remain unimplemented.

Table 1: Boundaries and Development Priorities of the IPRs

IPR	Spatial Configuration	Development Priorities
Chaguaramas and the Islands	Special development zone within the Diego Martin Regional Corporation	Recreation and tourism Maritime facilities and services Accessibility improvements Environmental protection and conservation Waste management
Port of Spain and the Capital Region	Metropolitan agglomeration of the City of Port of Spain, the Arima Borough Corporation, and parts of the Diego Martin, San Juan/Laventille and Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporations	Urban containment and intensification Improving the quality of urban centres Industrial, service and knowledge economy Sustainable transportation strategy Environmentally sensitive development
North Coast	Stretches across 3 Municipal Corporations- San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/ Piarco and Sangre Grande Regional Corporations	Rural development Growth Pole- recreation, tourism, fishing, agriculture Ecological protection Preservation of landscape quality
Eastern Trinidad	2 Municipal Corporations- Rio Claro/Mayaro and parts of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation	Consolidation of existing urban centres Resource-based economic development (tourism, agriculture, forestry) Renewable and non- Renewable energy industry Landscape and natural resource protection
Central Trinidad	Grouping of 2 contiguous Municipal Corporations- Borough of Chaguana and the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation	Restraint of urban expansion Service centre consolidation Economic Growth Pole (light, service and creative industries, port facilities, tourism) Natural landscape enhancement and protection
San Fernando and the South	Comprises the City of San Fernando and the Penal/ Debe and Princes Town Regional Corporations	Strengthening the city of San Fernando Improving the quality, functioning and service offer of urban centres Urban containment and the restriction of ribbon development Protection of natural ecosystems
South- West Peninsula	2 Municipal Corporations - Point Fortin Borough Corporation and the Siparia Regional Corporation	Improving the quality of and service offer of urban centres Economic Growth Pole- resource, energy and maritime industries
South- West Tobago	Island of Tobago - parishes of St. Patrick and St. Andrew	Strengthen the capital, Scarborough Integrated approach to planning new physical development Growth Pole- eco- industrial development Protection of natural tourism assets

Source: Adapted from the National Spatial Development Strategy (MPSD, 2014)

5. The Case Study: The San Fernando and South Integrated Planning Region



Map 7: The San Fernando and South Integrated Planning Region

Source: MPSD (2014 pg. 80)

The San Fernando and the South IPR (Map 7 refers) comprises three municipalities, the city of San Fernando and the Penal/Debe and Princes Town Municipal Corporations. This agglomeration allows for the planning of the San Fernando city region together with its hinterland. The IPR has a total area of 878.7km² and a population of 240, 604 persons (CSO, 2011). The population of San Fernando decreased by 11.9% from 2000 to 2011 while that of both Penal/Debe and Princes Town grew by 6.9% and 11.3% respectively, over the same period.

5.1 Historical context

San Fernando has always been the hub of South Trinidad, while Princes Town and Penal/Debe were rural towns. The three municipalities have a shared historical background linked to agriculture, related to the sugar, cocoa, coffee and cotton industries which flourished during the colonial era. With the expansion of the industries throughout the 1800s, San Fernando solidified its place as the administrative and commercial hub of south Trinidad. By the time the oil industry began in the early 1900s, the city had already established itself as a focal point for trade and for transport through the rail network which connected it with the surrounding rural areas. The 'oil boom' of the 1970's and 1980's expanded the city outwards through suburban housing settlements. Throughout much of this growth of the city, the Princes Town and Penal/Debe regions retained their rural character. Small urban centres in these regions served as local service centres for both the towns and the villages further away.

5.2 The municipalities at the time of the development of the IPRs

At the time the NSDS was being developed, the municipalities were all in a state of transition. While the growth of San Fernando had slowed, it remained the administrative and commercial centre and continued to attract mega developments such as the National Academy for the Performing Arts South Campus and several housing estates.

Princes Town and Penal/Debe both had transitioning economies but for differing reasons. Princes Town, which had experienced much growth with the rise of the sugar industry, experienced a sharp blow with the closure of the Caroni 1975 Limited sugar company in 2003. Lands formerly used for sugar cultivation were then allocated to residential use stimulating growth in retail and services (Emrit, 2013). Similarly, Penal/Debe also transitioned from agriculture (PDRC, 2021), with growth fuelled by mega-infrastructure projects. The Solomon Hochoy Point Fortin Highway Expansion sought to connect the southern part of the island to northern Trinidad. The University of the West Indies South Campus along with other notable infrastructural developments such as the Namdevco market, three secondary schools and the HDCs housing estates all contributed to the clustering of shops, restaurants, banks, and other community services in the area.

5.3 The San Fernando and South IPR Focus and Strategy

The San Fernando and South IPR strategy sought to improve ecological protection, urban centre aesthetics and functioning and the availability of services, while intensifying resource-based industries (MPSD, 2014). A closer look reveals the focus on strengthening San Fernando's role as the administrative and commercial centre. Reversal of population decline would occur through appropriate redevelopment and by enhancing the quality of the urban environment. Specific actions identified include the San Fernando Waterfront Development Project and upgrading and enhancing the city centre. Notably, the reverse has happened in the ensuing years, as the pace and scale of development in Penal/Debe in particular, has far outstripped that of San Fernando.

In the regional strategy, Penal/Debe and Princes Town were described as "including abundant natural resources and a rich, diverse history and culture which can be harnessed for eco-tourism", also having busy town centres and the potential to revive the near dormant agricultural sector (MPSD, 2014 p.81). Development involved enhancing and consolidating their roles for service delivery and planning for development ancillary to the University of the West Indies South Campus at Debe. The transition away from agriculture was not mentioned and the strategy also failed to capture the most pressing challenge faced by both municipalities, perennial flooding, a problem requiring joint alleviation efforts. Instead, the strategy only identified extensive ribbon development, infrastructure deficiencies, and squatter settlements as issues to be addressed. This is surprising, given that the areas' challenges were more accurately captured within the respective MDPs which were prepared a few years earlier, and which were expected to feed into the NSDS through the harmonisation of the plans.

Many of the issues raised at the municipal level including congestion within town centres, drainage and transport links must be addressed across borders. Congestion has been increasing over the years along the main thoroughfares leading from San Fernando to the Penal/Debe and Princes Town areas. The Penal/Debe MDP identifies the highway expansion, then in the planning stages, as "a window of economic opportunity" for the area (MLG, 2009 p. 74). The IPR strategy did not consider the impacts of the highway expansion on the development of the region, nor did it address many of the pressing cross boundary concerns.

Examining the characterisation and written strategy in comparison with the spatial policies of the IPR (Map 7 refers), perhaps the most glaring omission is the recognition that the Penal and Debe urban town centres are a major urban cluster and part of a core growth pole area, as defined under the then guiding

policy document, the Medium Term Policy Framework (MPE, 2011). This should have warranted considerable attention in devising the region's developmental priorities.

As a regional development strategy, the IPR should reflect the core elements in the MDP, but does not, signalling a deficit in policy integration. Further, this IPR failed to address much of the municipalities' pressing concerns and development trends at the time, nor did it capture the future development potential of Penal/Debe and Princes Town. Moreover, the IPR was not attractive enough to generate interest in stimulating the regeneration of San Fernando. Considering execution, there was no existing formal mechanism for inter-municipal collaboration, nor did the strategy outline any new governance arrangements to facilitate balanced regional development.

6. Discussion

6.1 IPRs: A Travelling Planning Idea

The IPR strategy was an experiment of its time. It emerged out of a transformed national spatial planning process which recognised a need for faster and more fit-for-purpose policy making, which attempted to connect policy making and service delivery and which aimed to solidify an emergent regional level of planning policy. Similar to Mycoo's (2017) characterisation of the NPDP (1984) as an imported planning idea, so too is the Integrated Planning Regions strategy. The IPRs represent the travel of 'soft spaces' from the UK to the Caribbean by way of the planning consultants, Globe Consultant International.

The IPR strategy and multiple soft spaces which had arisen in the UK appear to have responded to the same imperatives; planning for regional development and working beyond constraining administrative boundaries. Despite this, differences in context are apparent. In Trinidad and Tobago there is little history of formal cooperation horizontally between Municipal Corporations and vertically between the central government agencies who plan and execute large scale infrastructure projects and the Municipal Corporations. The network of actors and players involved in planning and service delivery is also much less dense in Trinidad and Tobago, with less human technical capacity, knowledge and experience and greater resource constraints to overcome (Verrest et. al, 2013). There is a heavy reliance on statutory instruments and corresponding low participation in non-regulatory processes amongst state actors involved in spatial planning. Statutory instruments give agencies their mandates and are also used by actors as protection from politics and as a strategy for navigating the system. The IPRs were the opposite of this, creating a cultural hurdle to overcome, if they were to be implemented successfully.

These differences in context partially explain why the IPRs are an underdeveloped strategy which resembles the original but has little potency beyond its rearrangement of the spatial territory. It intended to correct one of the major problems of the MDPs process highlighted by Mycoo (2017), of plans not considering their wider regions and relationships. This correction began with the Phase 1 harmonisation process. However, there is a case to be made for the IPRs not containing the appropriate grouping of Municipal Corporations, particularly the separation of Penal and Debe from the rest of the growth pole in Siparia. This territorial fixing also ignored the existing relationships across boundaries and areas where it was much less likely for this cross border working to take place due to fraught personal and political relationships.

In fact, IPRs may not be necessary for the entirety of Trinidad and Tobago as was proposed. The introduction of an IPR on top of the Municipal level would be introducing further complexity into a context where there is no home for regional development. Municipal Corporations as they are currently spatially defined make it difficult for regional strategy making. At the municipal level, action is dictated by local politicians and defined around small scale project implementation to fix urban and rural

infrastructure deficits, while nationally the focus is on larger scale infrastructure and programmes. The IPR perhaps is more suited to smaller scale spatial arrangements such as the North Coast; better for planning when there is a clear development mandate such as the Growth Poles; and easier to execute when parallel or detailed administrative structures are proposed.

6.2 Implementing the IPRs

While implicitly imbued with multiple ambitions of fostering collaboration and coherence in development strategies, in essence, the IPR is a strategy without a mechanism. The NSDS defined no governance associated with IPRs and gave no details about how it would function in practice. Furthermore, a change in government rendered the plan less palatable. Even if it were to be used solely to facilitate the implementation of national scale projects there is no documented discussion on the desired relationship between national agencies and Municipal Corporations.

In the minds of the policy makers, the implementation of the IPRs rested heavily on planning reform, which in turn heavily relied upon local government reform. Any failure in either of these decreased the likelihood of the NSDS being successfully implemented. However, neither contain a mechanism where regional development strategy can be formulated by both the national and municipal levels. JPAs allow for cross boundary working at the Municipal level on spatial plans, but this duty to collaborate is dictated and decided at central government level.

While the DPSC by its composition ensured that the plan's considerations were multi-disciplinary, the planning process did not involve the allies, collaborators and implementers that would be needed to execute the strategy. Neither did it contend with issues around land ownership and prices, enforcement, state sanctioned ad hoc investments and trends in the local real-estate market, which guide development. Instead, the IPRs represented the continuance of technocratic planning exercises with weak consultation and little buy-in from citizens or implementing agencies, rather than the creation of better partnerships, networks and relationships, leading to more sustainable outcomes within the context of a 'soft space'.

7. Conclusion

This paper investigated the role and function of the IPRs as a rescaling experiment in regional strategic planning in Trinidad and Tobago. IPRs were proposed in the NSDS as a tool for integrated regional planning and development. The strategy was based on the premise that the territories under the jurisdiction of municipalities were spatially inappropriate to facilitate this. The geographic arrangement of the IPRs created agglomerations better suited for coherent regional level strategy making, but failed to capture some of the existing functional relationships between areas. Designating IPRs only for special development zones where a well-defined, cross-boundary regional challenge can be formulated is perhaps a more reasonable approach. The IPRs can thus be considered as a new arena for inter-municipal collaboration where there was previously none. As a sub-national scale of planning, IPRs also provide a structure through which national policy makers can better understand the regional context of their decisions.

The research however revealed that the IPRs were an incomplete experiment. The operationalisation of the IPRs hinged on multiple components, each of which should have been fully analysed. These include for example, the working relationships between national and local government bodies and among the municipal corporations; the nature and scope of cross-boundary issues and challenges to be addressed; striking the right balance between expediency and a democratic plan making process; and the implications of both the existing governance arrangement and that proposed under local government reform. This type of analysis and detailing requires more time than was available during the NSDS process

and a much greater degree of collaboration and consultation with stakeholders, most notably the municipalities. The strategy fell short as a regional planning instrument to be applied across a diversity of complex spaces, unable to grapple with the political and cultural realities of planning in Trinidad and Tobago.

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