

Vertrag Planejamento – International Centre for Sustainable Cities
City Planning Internship: Curitiba, Brazil
Final Report
July 2007 - January 2008
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Sao Jose dos Pinhais linear park and relocation project site visit

Foreword

I have gained invaluable experience partnering with leading sustainable development planners in both Brazil and Canada. Partaking in the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) youth internship program under the guidance of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC), has taught me that the best way to promote sustainable development is to participate in the work being done in different cultures and countries. I was able to explore what sustainable planning is, to whom does it matter and how to implement it. Working at Vertrag Planejamento with Luis Fragomeni was critical to gaining this understanding. I am profoundly appreciative to CIDA for making this important intercultural work opportunity possible through their kind generosity.

Introduction

On July 22 2008, I arrived in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil. I assumed the role of Program Officer for the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC) and the PLUS Network as well as Planning Intern at Vertrag Planejamento. Research related to the internship was also conducted in conjunction with LAURB (Planning Laboratory) at the Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR). The internship was coordinated and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The internship concluded on January 14th 2009 upon my return to Toronto, Canada.

Preparation

Prior to the five and a half month period in the field, I undertook a week of intensive training at ICSC's offices in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Specialists in sustainable planning and public consultation held private seminars to assist myself and other interns in preparing for our work abroad. Sessions to prepare for cultural integration and meetings with prior Program Officers also took place. The training period was skillfully organized by Amber Zirnhelt and Zoe Mullard. Their considerable experience in Canadian and international planning provided an invaluable knowledge base to build upon. During this time the concept and goals of the internship were discussed and evaluated. These topics will be explored in detail in this report.

Internship

Concept

The internship position at Vertrag was created to further establish the relationship between ICSC and its Plus Network partner cities in Brazil. Porto Alegre and Salvador were the other possible choices for locating the internship as ICSC has strong ties to the planning community in these cities. Curitiba presented an opportunity to enhance the sustainable development approach to planning that is fundamental to the Plus Network. In addition, Curitiba's emphasis towards environmentally sound practices provided an ideal setting for a youth intern to learn and exchange ideas. Vertrag Planejamento, an influential urban planning firm based in Curitiba, offered to serve as the host agency for the five and a half months during which the overseas placement took place. Vertrag is a private planning firm that plays an important role in the development of metropolitan Curitiba. The internship based out of Vertrag's offices created a synergistic situation to increase relations between all of the planning entities involved, namely ICSC, Vertrag and municipal and state run planning and development agencies. The original concept for the internship also foresaw a significant partnership between the intern, ICSC and the local academic community. Carla Caldas a planning professor at the Federal University of Parana (UFPR) initiated a project to create a planning atlas for Curitiba. The intern played a role in the research process, developing a database of planning information throughout metropolitan Curitiba.

Goals

The overall goal of the internship was to increase communications between the planning agencies involved in the PLUS Network. Vertrag is the PLUS Network's main contact in Brazil. The placement of a Canadian intern in Curitiba with a background in international planning and extensive Portuguese language skills created a constant dialogue between these groups. The Internship was designed to significantly enhance this pre-existing relationship.

The importance of this improved dialogue is the use of the internship as a forum to study planning and exchange ideas. The internship was designed to overcome significant cultural and language barriers between Brazil and Canada, which have their own well defined concepts of urban planning.

A series of personal goals related to the intern were developed during the week long pre-internship training that took place in Vancouver. These goals sought to provide benefits on a personal, professional and educational level. They include:

- Development of a career path.
- Learning about sustainable development.
- Applying my experiences and educational background to the implementation of planning efforts at Vertrag.
- Improving my understanding of Brazilian city planning.
- Learning how city planning works in Brazil, its processes, legal framework and underlying concepts.
- Travel to gain an understanding of planning in a regional context

Internship Activities

While working at Vertrag I participated in various projects. The majority of the work being carried out was contracted from municipalities in the metropolitan area of Curitiba. Planning was also being conducted throughout the state of Parana. At the conclusion of the internship, a housing plan for Florianopolis, in the neighbouring state of Santa Catarina had been initiated. Below is an outline of the activities undertaken during the internship.

Parana State Plano Diretor Evaluation

A study of the Plano Diretor of municipalities widely distributed throughout the state of Parana is under way. As a result of Vertrag's highly regarded experience in the process of creating numerous Plano Diretor, the office was requested to assist in the study. Research was conducted for three cities (Apucarana, Iguaraçu and Nova Esperança). As part of the research team, I gained a unique understanding into how Brazilian public services assess the efficacy and accountability of recently mandated planning regulations. Ultimately, the principle day to day activity of the internship was the detailed analysis of the Plano Diretor for this study. The Plano Diretor is the underlying municipal data, legislation and development plan required of all Brazilian cities with a population of 20,000 or when they represent strategic or environmental importance. The research required in depth investigation into the Plano Diretor of three cities mentioned above. Interdisciplinary teams of architects, planners and lawyers conducted the study. The two fundamental areas of investigation were focused on the provision of social housing and establishing an environmentally sustainable framework for the city's future. The questions outlined by the study for the researchers relied heavily on determining the existence and utilization of zoning classifications originally established in the Lei do Plano 2001. The Lei do Plano is the fundamental document in Brazilian planning. It was created at the federal level to regulate city planning and establish basic principles of municipal development throughout the country.

Santa Helena Plano Diretor

The Plano Diretor is a federally mandated city plan required for all municipalities with populations greater than 20,000 or of specific environmental or strategic significance. Vertrag has created Plano Diretor for cities throughout the state of Parana. Participating in the elaboration of the Plano Diretor for Santa Helena provided me with invaluable insight into the fundamental processes of city planning in Brazil. Activities included organizing data and public opinions gathered from community meetings held in Santa Helena. Information based on public opinions of the city's strengths and weaknesses were prioritized and allocated into the overall strategy of development outlined in the Plano Diretor.

Sao Jose dos Pinhais Event Centre

Sao José dos Pinhais is a city of 280,000 people on the western fringe of Curitiba. A strategically valuable parcel of land is being studied by Vertrag for potential development. In particular, the opportunity for the construction of a convention centre is under consideration. This project offered a great deal of insight into the economic development process of municipalities in Brazil.

Sao Jose Dos Pinhais Wetland Protection and Population Relocation

One of Curitiba's most famous features is its expansive park system. Protecting and expanding these green spaces is an integral part of Curitiba's long-term plan. As part of this effort, Vertrag is developing a strategy to convert a vital connection in the green system from residential occupation to protected parkland. This will require the relocation of a community of over 700 people. The goal is to protect residents living in a potentially dangerous floodplain and ensure that the community's voice is an essential part of the relocation process. I have taken part in an ongoing series of meetings with relocation specialists. During an investigative field work trip I met with state representatives in geology and engineering. We evaluated land parcels for their zoning concordance and suitability to support structures. The location has presented a number of complexities due to its permeability to water. Vertrag will be developing creative solutions to the complex issue of urbanization bordering wetlands as the project develops.



Park Itaqui sketch and housing design

Curitiba Planning Atlas

A Planning Atlas of Curitiba entered the initial research and elaboration stage. I took part in round table discussions with the research team at the Universidade Federal do Parana (UFPR). The team is composed of advanced level students in the architecture and urban studies program. The meetings were a great opportunity to exchange research tactics and ideas on urban planning with creative aspiring planners. Basic research continues to be carried out.

Internship Activities Timeline

Activity	Date
Santa Helena plano diretor	August 2008 - December 2008
Visit with Curitiba transit authority	August 2008
Sao Jose dos Pinhais event centre	August 2008 - December 2008
Parana state plano diretor assesment	October 2008 - December 2008
UFPR planing atlas	November 2008
Ilha do Mel conservation area field trip	November 2008
Sao Jose dos Pinhais linear park/relocation	November 2008 - Decmeber 2008
Sao Jose dos Pinhais linear park/relocation field trip	November 2008
Florianopolis field trip	December 2008

Lessons Learned

The following section offers an overview of lessons learned from the five and a half months of field work in Brazil.

Luis Fragomeni maintains an open door policy at Vertrag Planejamento. In addition, he constantly approaches his planners and architects encouraging them to explore for innovative ideas. He frequently discussed potential green strategies throughout the planning process. It was highly instructive to work at a planning firm where sustainable development was a priority. The engaging nature of the process of planning at Vertrag was also enlightening in terms of how leadership and planners can interact and play productive roles.

Vertrag is also closely linked to educational institutions. This relationship acts as an incubator for ideas. Promoting this type of educational/professional working relationship in partner cities would help promote new ideas and create networks to support the field from the ground level up. In many ways, Vertrag acts as an incubator for young planning professionals. The opportunity to participate in private and government projects shows students that are interested in the field that there is a lot out there in terms of careers and the ability to make a difference, which is an increasingly important facet in career choice.



The conference room at Vertrag

The focus on Installing Plano Diretores throughout Brazil has created a vacuum in the development of larger scale, integration oriented, regional scale planning. Enhancing independent interstate regional planning organizations could have a positive impact on sustainable development in Brazil. The role of an organization like the Regional Plan Association (RPA) that acts as an advisor in the northeastern United States could benefit a wide variety of concerns including conservation efforts, infrastructure natural resources and tourism. Curitiba is ideally located to be a centre of regional planning efforts. It acts as the corridor connecting the economic powerhouse of Sao Paolo to the north with the highly developed economies in the southern states. Vertrag in particular has a high degree of insight into the interdependent nature of the economies of regions. A great deal of their work has focused on the connectivity of widespread economies throughout the state of Parana.

Application to the PLUS Network

Boosting relationships with the cities of the PLUS Network is critical to the continued success of the organization in promoting sustainable development. Future interns could greatly benefit by working with the staff at ICSC in preparing both large and small scale planning ideas into a presentation. A deliberate visit by ICSC leadership to check in on the intern's progress and meet with key country representatives would augment the status of the PLUS Network and enhance the role of the intern. Structured into this trip would be the intern presentation.

The wetland park creation and population relocation planning being carried out by Vertrag in Sao Jose dos Pinhais illustrated the complications with moving populations in general and non-standardized housing specifically. However, the professionalism and dedication of Vertrag to the needs of the community provided an engaging lesson in promoting equitable services to a disenfranchised district. This was illustrated through the conducting of open public forums and setting up of local organizations. The exceedingly complex and intricate work of adequately valuing property that is not on the city grid could be useful as part of a data base in general on relocations in certain planning situations. The ability to relocate populations amicably and to the benefit of the residents will become an increasingly important part of planning as natural resources deplete and lower income populations continue to proliferate to the margins of large cities. The physical location of this type of work will vary from country to country and conferences dealing with the issue come and go but a data base reference to the successful implementation of strategies supported by the PLUS Network would be a long term scale tool.

The core work undertaken during the internship revealed an interesting concept for studying city planning. Organizations like ICSC would be uniquely suited to assist provincial or federal efforts to study and create a database of city plans throughout Canada. The impacts of such a study, if appropriately funded and professionally conducted, could be profound. Canadian city plans lack the fundamental federally legislated structure of the Brazilian Plano Diretor. Studying the underlying structures of Canadian city plans and municipal laws could generate considerable insight into what makes cities successful and what confounds them.

Conclusion

Undertaking this internship in Curitiba was an exciting learning experience. Luis Fragomeni and my co-workers at Vertrag offered me profound insight into the planning process on a daily basis. Their friendship and professional expertise provided an ideal support network for the cultural and work experience of this internship. The other half of the internship team was the staff at ICSC. My personal advisors, Zoe Mullard and Amber Zirnhelt provided their support, experience and enthusiasm throughout my time abroad.

Annex

Budget (Major Expenses)

Item	Cost	Total Cost 5.5 Months
Housing	\$600/month	\$3300
Groceries	\$75/week	\$1650
Telephone	\$40/month	\$220
Medical expenses	approx. \$500	\$500
Laundry	\$100/month	\$550
Long distance calling cards	\$40/month	\$220
Travel Insurance	\$1/day	\$180
Flight to and from Brazil	\$1600	\$1600
Transportation	\$2/day	\$360
Brazil Visa	approx. \$150	\$150
Training in Vancouver - Flight/Housing	\$1500	\$1500
Total		\$10230