

Between Corporatism and Socialism: Navigating the Waters of International Education in the Dominican Republic and Cuba¹

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ABSTRACT

The Caribbean has long afforded U.S. and Canadian geographers with a rich venue of study-abroad opportunities. Physical and human geography classes are particularly well-suited to the myriad political, social, and environmental landscapes of the region. This article summarizes a few key experiences that have emerged in forging study-abroad venues in the Dominican Republic and Cuba. In the latter, the norms of operation have always been nebulous. Avoiding criticisms of the Castro government is paramount, accommodating tour-guide spies is often necessary, and getting away from the top-down party line is essential. In the former, we describe a study-abroad site that is, culturally at least, so similar to eastern Cuba that it is uncanny. However, the low presence of public institutions and the prevalence of strong corporate agents impose another set of obstacles that must be carefully traversed. The case studies illustrate how geographic field research cannot be divorced from broader political, economic, and corporate interests and that how geographers grapple with these matters should not be done out of the students' view. Rather, with the use of discretion, these obstacles can provide valuable "teaching moments" that are the backbone of international education.

Key Words: *international education, comparative research, Cuba, Dominican Republic*

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INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean has long afforded geographers a rich venue of study-abroad opportunities. Physical and human geography classes are particularly well suited to the myriad political, social, and environmental landscapes of the region. This article summarizes a few key experiences that have emerged in forging study-abroad venues in the Dominican Republic and Cuba (Fig. 1). In the latter, the norms of operation have always been nebulous. Avoiding criticisms of the Castro government and the Triumph of the Revolution is paramount, but at the same time questioning issues of civil society participation is also imperative. Navigating this terrain often means accommodating tour-guides who function as spies. Getting students to go beyond showcase socialist projects and away from the top-down party line is essential for liberal-arts instruction. In the former, we describe a study-abroad site that is, culturally at least, so similar to eastern Cuba that it is uncanny. Tourism in the eastern Dominican Republic has become the single most important economic engine for generating hard currency, surpassing even the much-touted export processing zones of the 1980s and 1990s. Demand for cheap labor now pits Haitians against Dominicans, as well as lighter- against darker-skinned workers. The rapacious tourism sector gobbles up oceanfront properties with seemingly minimal public oversight. Indeed, weak public institutions and the prevalence of strong corporate agents in the Dominican Republic impose another set of obstacles that must be carefully studied.

The case studies illustrate how field research cannot be divorced from broader political, economic, and corporate interests. In the Cuban example, we highlight how even the closest ties with high-ranking scholars and officials can protect one from a government that has little decentralized decision-making ability. We argue that how geographers grapple with these matters should not be done out of the students' view, but should be shared so that students understand the complexities of these nations. Corporatist Dominican Republic and socialist Cuba provide a normative backdrop in which the connections between the state, individuals, and the collective good can be easily contrasted. Instructors can transform these events into valuable 'teaching moments' that are trademarks of international education.

GEOGRAPHY AND INTERNATIONAL FIELDWORK

The merits of fieldwork as a mainstay in a geographer's training was perhaps most clearly noted by Carl O. Sauer (1956, 296). He claimed that "the principal training of a geographer should come, whenever possible, by doing fieldwork." Lonergan and Andreson (1988, 64) contend that field experiences occur in "any arena or zone within a subject where supervised learning can take place via first-hand experience, outside the constraints of the four-walls classroom setting." Moreover, fieldwork has many variants that are shaped by outcome measures, available time, program budgets, and classroom size. Kent, Gilbertson, and Hunt (1997) conceptualize fieldwork along two continua depending on the level of independence and the level of participation provided to students by instructors. At one extreme is what may be called "Cook's tour," where students observe passively or describe a landscape based mostly on what instructors point out without student input. At the other extreme is the independent project (Kent, Gilbertson, and Hunt 1997). The Dominican cases described in this article represent both an observational approach to fieldwork, as well as a project that is somewhat autonomous as students complete participatory fieldwork in groups with general guidance by instructors. The Cuban examples are largely instructor-framed

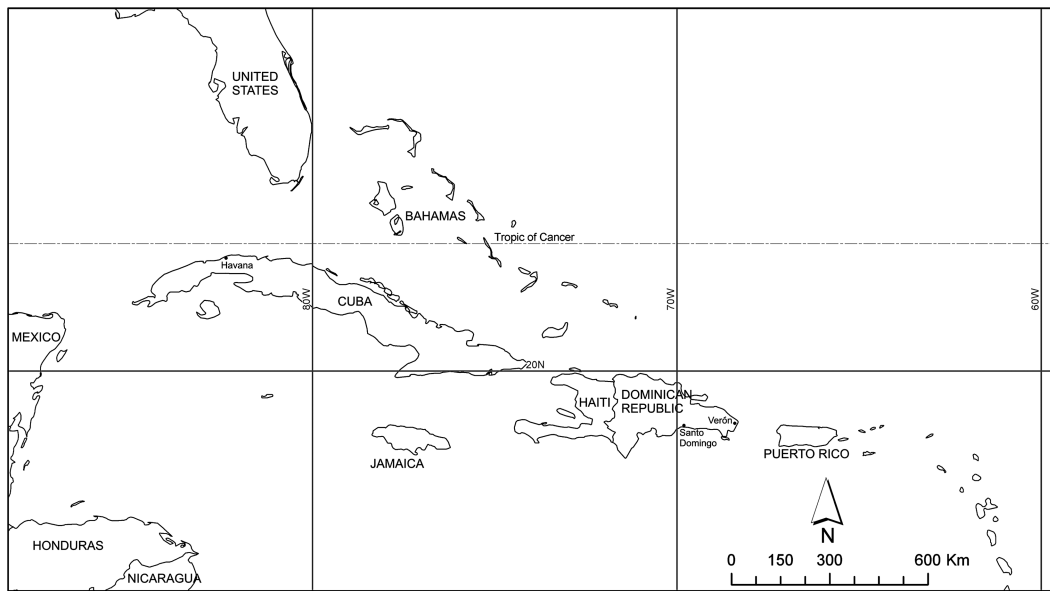


Figure 1. Location of Cuba and the Dominican Republic in relation to other Caribbean nations.

because of the inability for U.S. scholars to carry out autonomous work without Cuban research visas. Because most research has to be approved by the Cuban government (which abhors critical assessment of the society at large), this kind of independent work is much more difficult in Cuba than in the Dominican Republic. Travel to the D.R. requires only a \$10 tourist card while travel to Cuba by students and faculty is governed by cumbersome rules managed by the U.S. Treasury Department.

For two large Antillean nations with a similar history, the past few decades have etched out markedly different courses in terms of population, economy, and quality of life (Table 1). The Dominican Republic is closely tied to the global economy under a neoliberal model, while Cuba is approaching greater involvement in the global economy on its own terms. The service industry makes up nearly two-thirds of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, while sugar cane production is on the decline in both nations. Tourism has traditionally been an important source of capital in the Dominican Republic and is becoming increasingly important in Cuba's economy. Health care in Cuba, provided to all citizens, is free, and adult HIV prevalence and infant mortality rates are low. In contrast, health care in the Dominican Republic is mainly private and employer-sponsored, and infant mortality rates and adult HIV prevalence are higher than in Cuba.

We use the terms corporatism and socialism to differentiate these two nations in the following ways. By calling the Dominican Republic corporatist, we refer to the country's history of legitimizing economic and policy systems by allocating power to certain civic assemblies that reflect the kinds of social, cultural, industrial, or economic groups the

government wishes to sustain. These hierarchical organizations reflect the principal stakeholders in the eastern Dominican Republic where the study-abroad program is located. Key actors include the Eastern Dominican Republic Hotel Association, several municipal town councils, church groups (Pentecostal or Evangelical), and loose associations of workers and residents. Unlike the historical underpinnings of corporatism in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe and Latin America, the Dominican corporate model does not serve as a front for fascism or authoritarianism as it did in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Vichy France, and the dictatorships of the

Southern Cone of Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s (O'Donnell, Vargas-Cullel, and Iazzetta 2004). Sagás (2000) argues that corporatism in the Dominican Republic is premised on a strong *antihaitianismo* that portrays black Haitians as morally inferior and responsible for most of the Dominican Republic's woes. He contends that this "white-nation" façade was originally mined in the era of strongman Trujillo (1930–1961). Unfortunately, this ethos has been used to divide the Dominican Republic's own working classes along racial lines and subtle shades of skin color. Historically, the nation has drawn on powerful (white) agricultural and maritime powers that reflected the nation's commitment to sugar production, exporting, and processing; darker-skinned workers prevail in the trades related to the sugar industry. In the past several decades, however, this pattern has shifted toward national and international corporations that work in tourism. Hotel chains, international airlines, real estate developers, and road builders have come to wield considerable power in the Dominican Republic. Visits to most resorts show a skin-color gradation that darkens from the light-skinned front-office functions down to the gardeners and landscapers.

Socialism refers to the centrally planned economy that operates in Cuba, in which the national government controls land ownership except for some cooperative agricultural lands and leases to multinational firms who manage facilities that belong to the state. The island enlists a single-party system that excludes all other organized political networks, especially opposition groups.

Geographers and planners encourage fieldwork as a way to engage students in the learning process and to apply classroom theories and concepts in the real-world.

Table 1. Comparing and contrasting the corporatist versus socialist aspects of Cuba and the Dominican Republic, c. 2006.

Aspect	Cuba ¹	Dominican Republic ²
Land size; population	About the size of Pennsylvania; 11.2 million	Twice the size of New Hampshire; 9.4 million
Political economy	Communist state; Limited joint-venture enterprises in tourism, mining, food processing, and biotechnology	Market economy with increasingly limited public participation; large multinational corporate presence in agriculture, tourism, & banking
Tourism	Increasingly important; generates roughly US\$2 billion annually with 2.4 million visitors in 2006	Traditionally a significant industry. Generates \$4.2 billion with 4.4 ² million visitors in 2006. ³
Selected economic & geographic concerns	Faces food shortages; demand for consumer durables; remittances slightly greater than net tourism contributions;	Inequitable income distribution; 10% of GDP comes from remittances; destination for money laundering
Sugar cane production	Increasingly unimportant; production fell from 9.2 million tons harvested in 1970 to just over 1 million tons in 2006;	Increasingly unimportant; has a U.S. sugar quota of 180,000 tons, U.S.'s largest trade partner. ⁴ Produced 5 million tons in 2005.
GDP per capita	\$4,500	\$9,200
Leading import partners	Venezuela 26.6%, China 15.6%, Spain 9.8%, Germany 6.4%, Italy 4.4%, United States, 4.3%	U.S. 46.9%, Venezuela 8.4%, Colombia 6.3%, Mexico 5.7%
Leading export partners	Netherlands 21.8%, Canada 21.6%, China 18.7%, Spain 5.9%	U.S. 72.7%, UK 3.2%, Belgium 2.4%
Foreign aid	\$87.8 million	\$76.9 million
GDP composition	Agriculture: 4.6%; Industry: 26.1%; Services: 69.3%	Agriculture: 11.5%; Industry: 28.3%; Services: 60.2%
Access to international capital	The United States pressures the international lending community to deny Cuba funds	Accesses all multilateral and commercial lenders; receives Agency for International Development and OXFAM assistance
External debt	\$16.8 billion (another \$15–20 billion owed to Russia)	\$8.84 billion
Population growth rate per annum	0.25%	1.7%
Migration issues	Illegal out-migration on makeshift rafts (<i>balseros</i>) to the U.S.; declining population growth due to low fertility	Concerns about illegal migration of Haitians; second largest illegal flow of migrants in Caribbean (after Cuba) stems between the D.R. and Puerto Rico (U.S. territory)
Military expenditures	3.8% of GDP	0.8% of GDP
Health care issues	Normatively 100% coverage; free care; good physician-population ratios	Small public-sector presence; largely private and employer-sponsored care
Literacy rate	99.8%	87%
Infant mortality rate	5.93 per 1,000 live births	26.9 per 1,000 live births
HIV/AIDs	<0.1% adult prevalence rate	1.7% adult prevalence rate
Housing concerns	Large portion of housing stock in poor condition; no homelessness. Issues of overcrowding nationwide.	Homelessness and makeshift housing exists in migrant camps around hotel construction sites; shanties throughout the island.

¹Most data in this column derived from *The World Factbook*, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed 7 July 2009).

²Source: BKV Public Relations for DR Ministry of Tourism, Dominican Republic Ministry of Tourism Releases 2006 Visitor Statistics, http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:QNeGYFS1MHYJ:www.godominicanrepublic.com/images/pdfs/Release.DR_tourism_stats.pdf+tourism+figures+Dominican+Republic+2006&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us (accessed May 8, 2008).

³According to the D.R. Minister of Tourism Félix Jiménez. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Tourism+revenue+up.-a0175283874>.

⁴Source: Deibert, M. March 13, 2008. "Haiti/Dominican Republic: Exhibit reveals a bitter harvest. Paris: IPS, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=36905> (accessed May 8, 2008).

Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck (2000) use a charrette technique in the United States and Cuba to show designers, planners, and architects how to tap into community interests whenever politically and economically feasible. Charettes among professionals and their students have

been wildly embraced by Cubans (Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad 2007). Abramson (2005) employed a "studio abroad" to emphasize the advantages of joining Canadian and Chinese planners in collaborative planning activities. Auffrey and Romanos (2001) used fieldwork to examine

both globalization and sustainable development as a project framework. Their use of brainstorming group sessions, seminars joining researchers and collaborators, and field surveys promoted global awareness; not so different from our findings below.

Two decades ago, Rundstrom and Kenzer (1989) noticed a general decline in student fieldwork as secondary data sources were becoming more accessible. Their response was to include both primary and secondary data in courses. In doing so, they could maintain fieldwork as a key part of the curriculum. Melding short-term field projects into other courses can achieve this goal. Fieldwork lends itself to physical and human geography by exposing students to research design, data collection, and data analysis. Luft (1990), for instance, found that students who could “see” geomorphic features in the field had a greater understanding of these principles than those who studied geomorphology with classroom simulation models. Moreover, geographic concepts such as scale, the spatial distribution of different phenomena, and human-environment interactions are ideal (and often essential) for problem-based fieldwork (Bradbeer 1996). Moving beyond the classroom walls gives students a sense of proprietorship; they can become self-guided, which will “demystif[y]” material learned during lectures (Longergan and Andresen 1988, 65). Fieldwork conjoins basic theory gleaned in the classroom with applied research goals (McGuinness and Simm 2005). An urban studies course made students an “integral part of the learning process” when applying an urban planning exercise in a field course (Jennings 1993, 42).

Although there is a growing body of research that shows how university curricula encourage study abroad, there is a dearth of research on the incorporation of hands-on field experiences during a study-abroad course. Several universities have used international field courses solely to teach field methods, yet there is little research on the effectiveness of building a field project into nonfieldwork courses. Goldstein *et al.* (2006) used a well-crafted research focus to replace the traditional “exploration” way many planning study-abroad programs operate. Unlike Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck’s (2000) work, Miller, Hudson, and Scarpaci (1996) found that Castro’s Cuba provides a proximate setting for introducing students to the tensions between the urban design and planning of residences and the possible contradictions that arise in the broader political economy as tourism and joint-venture operations replace sugar and services. In short, visiting a country familiarizes students with multiple geographies, and fieldwork in a study-abroad setting enhances the experience even more (McCarthy 2003), to which we turn in the sections that follow.

CUBA

Cuba has always been controversial. It elicits strong emotions from its friends and enemies because of how it attains social justice. It is also polemical because of the human

costs incurred by the refugees who form part of a growing Cuban diaspora. Despite these conflicts, there is broad consensus across the political spectrum that the island’s capital, Havana, is a tropical gem. Yet, talking about Cuba, Havana, or the Triumph of the Revolution in the abstract pales compared to a visit to the largest island in the Antilles.

Four features of our duties and professional background shape these observations on Cuba. First, one of the authors served as field-director of a land use research project in Old Havana’s UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as coordinator of the study-abroad program. Second, the professor listened to and took notes on student remarks in classrooms and field trips with Cuban instructors. Student interaction with Cubans took place in student-guest houses, the José Antonio Echeverría Polytechnic University campus and dormitories, small farms, and on bicycles in the streets of Havana, Trinidad, Santa Clara, and Matanzas.² Because the instructor also taught a qualitative research methods course to graduate students each year, it was easy to draw on these observations as teaching examples and point out how issues of validity were more important in ethnography than matters of reliability. Third, the instructor read undergraduate and graduate papers stemming from the Cuban field course as well as the journals of students matriculated in programs for credit. Lastly, the authors have non-Cuban and Dominican Republic study-abroad experiences against which we can situate these experiences. One of us served as the coordinator of a six-week study-abroad program in Chile for six years, taught on the then-University of Pittsburgh’s Semester-at-Sea program (now at the University of Virginia) for a ten-port 110-day round-the-world experience in 1993, and in 1999 returned to Cuba as Semester-at-Sea’s interport lecturer (lecturing 400 students at sea from Newport News, Virginia to Havana, Cuba).

Trips to Cuba ranged from fourteen to twenty-one days. We visited no more than four cities, though within each jurisdiction we traveled to multiple sites. Cycling was an especially good way to get students into and even beyond the major public spaces of the island. It promotes the kind of contact that tours in large air-conditioned buses cannot provide. The balance of this section on the Cuban study-abroad program highlights the key differences in field teaching versus the normal didactic venues, and the rewards that one author faced teaching a balanced and historically formed discussion of architectural history, housing, government and economy, human rights, and race and gender issues in Cuba. We situate the discussion according to the historical periods used to approach the field course: colonial (1511–1898); republican (1899–1958), and socialist (1959 to present).

CUBA’S COLONIAL ERA

Columbus landed in Cuba in 1492 but it was not until the second decade of the sixteenth century that Diego de Velázquez established seven original frontier settlements called *villas*. These military outposts served as regional centers during the colonial period that marked that pattern

of the island's settlement geography. Havana became the most important city for Spanish colonial commerce by the early seventeenth century. Its chief function was to transfer mineral wealth coming out of Mexico and Peru. The Spanish flotilla would gather in Havana Bay after cargo from Porto Bello (Colón), Panama, and Veracruz, Mexico, were combined. After hurricane season, the gold, silver, and other commodities crossed over to Seville, Spain. Pirates, corsairs, and tropical storms menaced the convoy. This historical backdrop is useful in assessing the fortresses, batteries, walls, museums, and other material relics that students will see at the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Havana and its fortifications, and the cultural heritage sites of Havana and the Sugar Mill Valley of Trinidad (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002).

Cuba was the last Spanish colony in the western hemisphere to gain independence and become a sovereign nation. Independence movements in the last half of the nineteenth century—including the final one (1895–1898) launched by the Cuban “apostle,” poet, writer, philosopher, and revolutionary, José Martí—broke Spain's hold over the island in 1898. Cubans on the island today categorically denounce the United States' intervention in the last months of their forty-year struggle against Spain as the first of many hostile military and aggressive acts against the island.

CUBA'S REPUBLICAN ERA

Strong U.S. influence in politics, banking, planning, and tourism show how the United States filled a gap of investment and, to a great degree, substituted Spain's grip on the island. U.S. capital upgraded sewage, water lines, streetcar and rail networks, port facilities, telegraphs and telephone infrastructure, sugar mills, shipping lines, and agricultural projects. At the same time, twentieth century Cuba succumbed to various undemocratic and corrupt governments. Havana's skyline in the Vedado district of the city reveals skyscrapers (the Havana Hilton, now the Habana Libre) and other modern buildings (Hotel Capri and Hotel Riviera) that testify to U.S. investment, much of it the result of organized crime operating out of a network originating in Las Vegas and Miami (Schwartz 1997). Students may recall visual records of the late 1950s as recreated in the film *Godfather II*, which underscores the corruption of the Batista government (1952–1958) against which guerilla fighter Fidel Castro and his July 26 Movement struggled. Unbridled capitalism, gambling, prostitution, and the illicit procurement of public and private construction contracts characterize the period and allow geographers and planners to understand the city's growth during this era (Scarpaci, Segre, and Coyula 2002).

CUBA'S SOCIALIST ERA

Although the movements against corrupt governments started with the Orthodox Party's candidates in the 1940s and 1950s, it was Fidel Castro's attack against the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953, that launched a formidable force against the government of Fulgencio

Batista. The courts sentenced Castro to twenty-five years in prison but Fulgencio Batista granted him amnesty and he was released in 1955. He sought exile in Mexico and returned to the island in 1957 with a band of eighty-three men. The derailing of a munitions train on December 30, 1958, by regional commander Ernesto “Che” Guevara forced Batista to flee the country the following day. January 1, 1959, marks the beginning of the socialist government.

Early government pronouncements—a cap on rent, land reform, and the nationalization of key industries—endured the revolutionary government to a large segment of the population in an almost fairy-tale-like scenario of Robin Hood: taking from the rich and distributing to the poor. However, the Castro government sparked significant waves of out-migration (1959–1962; 1964–1968; 1981; and a steady flow in intermittent years).

Two distinct epistemologies can be used to interpret these events. One framework posited by the Castro government is that Cuba's adherence to the Soviet bloc nations and the USSR marked an essential realignment of economic and political forces so that Cuba, along with the rest of the Third World, could withstand the forces of global capitalism and U.S. hegemony.

A competing epistemology contends that Cuba merely replaced one dictator (Batista) and one primary market (the U.S.) for another set of actors (Castro and the USSR; one might argue Hugo Chavez and Venezuela). To be sure, Cuba's reliance on Soviet support led to a lack of diversification and a further reliance on sugar, despite some innovation in the biotechnology realm. In 1988, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the island received an average of US\$5 million daily in Soviet aid and subsidy. Sugar, for example, was exchanged for an equal weight of Soviet oil. In the late 1980s two tons of sugar was required for one ton of oil, until finally the Soviet Union imposed a cash-only basis for its ailing economy (Mesa-Lago 1994). By 1990 Cuba had entered the most difficult economic period of the revolution, and Castro dubbed it the “Special Period in a Time of Peace,” a euphemism for an economic tailspin that eroded quality of life conditions (Mesa-Lago 2007).

To illustrate the challenges and opportunities that these economic periods afforded our study-abroad course, we turn to a review of three thematic issues that pervade every trip: architectural history, the hotel industry, and neighborhood workshops.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

As geographers, we appreciate how the region's cities hold great appeal for students, scholars, and tourists. They enhance our understanding about how Latin America has evolved over half a millennium of urbanization. In field courses our philosophical bent is to teach students to treat the cultural landscape or built environment as “text,” an empirical score that has social actors who transform it, a syntax (that we define as a pattern or logic of urban form and function), and a style that determines which artistic

(colonial, baroque, neoclassical, eclectic, modern, brutalist, Art Deco) forces prevailed. The challenge, of course, is that “text” is always interpreted through paradigmatic and epistemological lenses. As daunting as this may seem, Latin America provides architectural history that can be used to contrast built forms that students will see in residential and commercial housing patterns stateside, such as urban sprawl, green buildings, and sustainable development.

Havana, though, is an easy “read” because Habana Vieja (Old Havana) holds the largest stock of Spanish American colonial structures in the world. Unlike other Latin American historic districts (Scarpaci 2005), the former walled city suffered less from bulldozers, urban renewal, or natural disasters than did the colonial quarters of Mexico City, Guatemala City, Lima, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, or Santiago de Chile.

The Cuban capital is replete with examples of foreign architectural styles. These forms of design span the realm from Spanish stucco and tile roofs, to Baroque churches in its city center, to the Art Deco designs of suburban Miramar in the western edge. Students—even those outside architecture, geography, and planning—can soon distinguish among key styles. Each building and neighborhood, moreover, has a history that, when reconstructed, lets students make connections between building, neighborhood, city, nation, and the global economy. These scales of analysis have been a hallmark of one thread of human geography (Abler, Adams, and Gould 1972). At the same time, though, this sort of muddy-boots-begets-knowledge approach to human geography facilitates the students’ ability to make and see these connections between political economy and the built environment (McGee 1978). Instructors can emphasize how the atomistic approach (Segre 1975) of understanding only a building’s design should be avoided in the training of architects and urbanists. Rather, who builds what, where, and in what style indicates the nature of capital that, in turn, allows student to connect a chain of capital and investment that is central to many disciplines.

HOTEL INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF THE HABANA LIBRE (GUITART) IN VEDADO

One of the striking features of revitalized Havana in the past two decades is the rehabilitation of many hotels left to languish as the Cuban revolution invested in other sectors of the economy. The architectural style and history of the former Havana Hilton is a useful teaching exercise. It has undergone a name change from Havana Hilton (1958) to Habana Libre (Free Havana) in 1959, to Habana Libre-Guitart (in the early 1990s), and back to Habana Libre in the late 1990s.

Just after the opening of the Havana Hilton in late 1958, the Cuban Revolution triumphed on January 1, 1959. Shortly thereafter, Castro established his revolutionary government on the top floors of the hotel. Then, the hotel became a well-known retreat for the “bearded ones” (*los*

barbudos); peasants, soldiers, teachers, and volunteers were rewarded with lodging at one of the Caribbean’s premier resorts. When the decision was made in the early years of the revolution to downplay tourism (in promotion of biotechnology, health care, and education), most hotels fell into slight disrepair. In the case of the Havana Hilton, it meant that three decades of attrition left their mark on hotel decor. In 1991, when one of the authors visited, most rooms were just as they were in 1959. With the beginning of the Special Period in a Time of Peace, Cuba suffered greatly. In 1993, joint-ventures were encouraged to invest and the hotel’s management was leased out to a Spanish consortium called Guitart. By 1995, two-thirds of the 1,200-employee staff had been laid off. This labor downsizing indicated how the Cuban labor force was drastically impacted by the vicissitudes of the global economy (Colantonio and Potter 2006). Displaced workers saturate the Cuban safety net as Cubans seek out remunerative work that pays in hard currency. This leads to the popular saying on the island that, “In Cuba, everyone has employment, but not everyone has a job.” Foreigners easily notice that when entering a state store they may see four workers behind a counter: two chatting idly, one talking on the phone, and another taking a cigarette break. Inefficiency has become rampant in the state-bloated government, and a post-Soviet era has led, to some extent, to streamlining payrolls, especially in the internationally competitive tourism industry (Scarpaci 1998, 2000). The Habana Libre represents the substitution of moral for material incentives that is transforming daily life and labor across the island.

When power blackouts frequented Havana in the mid-1990s, the special generators of the Habana Libre provided light, energy, and a surreal indoor “public plaza” as the lobby became one of the few places where light, food, water, and bathrooms could be secured. Suddenly, indoor and once-elite places had become coveted by the masses. This tale unfolds dramatically by standing in the circular sky-dome modernist lobby and recounting the facility’s history to students.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOPS

Our students visit several neighborhood workshops (*talleres de barrio*) scattered about metropolitan Havana. The goal of the *talleres* is to gather community input about a variety of housing and community needs and then serve as a bridge in securing technical advice from a quasi-nongovernmental organization (QUANGO) called the *Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la Capital*. The talleres receive municipal government support as well as some European nongovernmental (NGO) support to try to provide low-cost housing projects that enlist (1) local, low-energy, and ecological resourcefulness; (2) a rational response to global political and economic forces beyond the control of local residents; and (3) an admission that more alternative housing solutions that rely on local resources should have been initiated before the onset of the Special Period. Of all the field site visits, these community

workshop visits provide the best showcasing of socialist projects. At the surface, students are led to believe that low-energy housing—much like the prefabrication efforts of the 1960s and 1970s—may satisfy Cuban housing needs. Students who pursue lines of questioning with our Cuban hosts, however, quickly discover that neither the high-rise prefabricated housing projects nor low-energy microbrigade projects are widespread today. The key pedagogical value is that the question-and-answer sessions reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the socialist reality. This field trip lets students cut through the window dressing of showcase socialist tourism and see potentially viable sustainable practices juxtaposed with the reality of low-skilled labor and informal market economies, both of which are evident in the Dominican Republic.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Students visiting the Dominican Republic see a landscape that is at times both similar and a polar opposite to that of Cuba. While low-skilled labor and an unregulated informal market are similar to conditions in Cuba, as well as a recent reliance on tourism, there is very little evidence of national government other than the presence of schools. Police are rarely seen and few public authorities take an active role in the life of Dominicans. In addition, the development of tourist industries in the two countries has come from vastly different points of view. Whereas most tourist facilities are controlled by the Cuban government even if foreign investment is involved, the Dominican tourist industry is controlled by foreign corporations that are watched by a *laissez-faire* Dominican government, even in terms of environmental impact in coastal areas (where most development takes place). In that way, students can view the difference between corporatism and socialism.

Our Dominican study-abroad participants begin their stay in the country living in a dorm in an ecological center that is associated with a for-profit resort in the eastern Dominican Republic, where the tourism industry is only a few decades old and is focused on the “all-inclusive” resort that dominates tourism in much of the Caribbean today. This is juxtaposed with tourism centered on the colonial era in Santo Domingo, visited during the last part of the course.

SUN, SUN, AND TOURISM IN THE EASTERN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

More than forty high-end tourist resorts dominate the economy and land use of the eastern end of the Dominican Republic. Migrants from other parts of the country as well as neighboring Haiti migrate to the shantytown of Verón, located just outside resort properties, looking for work. Verón started in the mid-1990s as a small squatter settlement at the edge of a resort’s property. Because it was situated near the landing strip at the Punta Cana International Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration threatened to disallow U.S. landings if the shacks were not cleared from the flight-path field. Some squatters relocated voluntarily,

but others demanded that a local resort build them homes. In keeping with the prevailing corporatist model in the country, after much negotiation and to avoid bad press, a few homes were built. However, some homeowners “flipped” them for a considerable profit (Leavenworth 2002). Since relocation, the community has expanded to over 6,000 residents as migrants have been attracted to the area because of the demand for cheap labor in construction, housekeeping, and other service-related jobs in the tourism industry. The resort has since deeded the property to the Dominican government, which in turn aided residents in making property claims.

Students observe the impact of tourism development in the formerly agricultural eastern Dominican Republic through a generally autonomous field project in the shantytown of Verón. Students on two study abroad trips, in 2005 and 2007, collected data on building location, land use, and building quality in the community. They next searched for spatial patterns of relative locations of land uses alongside regional urban growth trends after entering the data into a geographic information system (GIS).

The goal of gauging shantytown growth between 2005 and 2007 could be partially achieved by using satellite imagery and change detection techniques. However, there was no substitute for fieldwork, which was necessary to evaluate land use patterns and individual structures. For example, it was possible to detect structures from air photographs, but we could not decipher whether the structure was residential, commercial, or institutional (church, school, government office) without field reconnaissance. Students collected and entered land use and building material data into a spreadsheet while still in the Dominican Republic, but most analyses were carried out after returning to the main campus. The data collection methodology followed Scarpaci (2005) in which a doorway is considered the unit of analysis; for multiple doorways into the same structure, closer observation determines whether or not the second doorway leads into a space used by different occupants. For example, a single structure could be divided into residential living space for two families or households.

In order to accomplish the land use data collection, students were divided into mixed-gender teams with at least one student who could explain the project in Spanish. Each student on a team had a different responsibility but all worked together to complete the task. One student noted each structure’s location and shape on a piece of tracing paper tied to an aerial photo, another took a digital photograph of the structure, and the remaining students completed the land use survey. Of critical importance was the consistent use of case identification numbers for structures; the number on the survey instrument for each structure had to match the number noting the building’s location on the map and the photo identification number. The land use project for programs were very similar and used nearly the same data collection instrument; differences between the two field projects occurred due to the number of students enrolled in each class and

the resources available while in the Dominican Republic. Architecture students enrolled in 2005 were particularly interested in the underlying and internal building materials used to construct each structure, so those data were collected during the 2005 project and were not collected in 2007.

Following data collection in the morning (to avoid high afternoon temperatures), students entered data from the survey instrument into Excel and downloaded digital photographs. Additionally, on the study area map posted at the student center, groups highlighted the areas of the community in which data collection was completed that day in order to track progress. In 2005, the structure locations were not entered into ArcGIS until returning to campus; in 2007, students were responsible for digitizing building location and shape into the GIS program while still in the Dominican Republic. A recent aerial photograph served as the backdrop in the GIS to facilitate the accurate digitizing of structures within the community. This gave students a "context-specific look at the application of GIS" within the field (Montagu 2001, 193), which may benefit them in future careers.

Finally, using data contained within the master spreadsheet and displayed in ArcGIS, simple analyses were conducted in order to assess land use in Verón and, for 2007, to evaluate changes within the two-year period. For both years, a sum of the total number of structures for each use category was calculated, a sum of the number of structures in each quality category (good, fair, or poor) was calculated, and the proximity of different uses and quality levels to the main road was noted. Data gathered in 2007 were compared to data gathered in 2005 in order to assess where new construction is taking place in Verón and in what direction(s) the community is growing. Students concluded that the shantytown's growth has occurred through in-fill development as well as "edge city" growth along the outskirts of the community.

Since 2005, a new highway has been built to the north and east of Verón, which will constrain growth in those directions. This limited-access toll road now sweeps tourists from the airport directly to their mostly all-inclusive hotels. The new highway raised issues of relative accessibility: on the one hand, tourists will not even see the community as they peer out of their air-conditioned buses. On the other hand, reduced high-speed traffic passing through the heart of Verón will enhance pedestrian safety; at least two pedestrians have been killed each year between 2004 and 2007.

Student journals and essay responses showed a rather sophisticated understanding of politics, urban and social geography, and planning in the shantytown, La Alta Gracia Province in the eastern Dominican Republic, and the interface of for-profit hotel chains and nonprofit environmental groups. This exercise considered to what extent shantytown growth signaled demand for low-skilled hotel and construction workers. Based on that assessment, they then turned to whether there would be parallel

need for public water, waste removal, health care, and educational services. Students shared their baseline land use and housing quality data with the local *junta de vecinos* (neighborhood group) and a local environmental NGO. A regional hotel association and several consultants were also given the data because they were drafting a master plan. Sadly, no systematic regional planning by provincial or national governments exists in the Dominican Republic. As a result, the fieldwork assignment became a student service-learning project.

Generally, this fieldwork project gave students the opportunity to see the lack of government investment in a shantytown whose growth is driven by the private tourist industry, the poor quality housing prevalent in the community, and the lack of infrastructure such as a sanitation and drinking water system. As in Cuba, shantytown residents use informal economic activities to make ends meet, and students observed Verón's residents selling eggs, fruit, and music CDs from the backs of trucks or on foot. The poverty of Verón contrasted with the relative wealth of life in the capital city, Santo Domingo.

OBSERVING SANTO DOMINGO'S LANDSCAPE

The Dominican study abroad had students visit sites in reverse chronological order as they began with a stay near tourist facilities constructed in the last twenty years, and ended their visit in Santo Domingo, the oldest continuously settled city founded by Europeans in the western hemisphere. Through field trips, students observed colonial-era buildings, which are some of the few government-controlled tourist facilities, as well as construction that occurred during the reigns of Trujillo and Balaguer (1960–1962, 1966–1978, and 1986–1996). As with Cuba, the colonial portions of Santo Domingo are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. However, unlike Havana, the private sector dominates colonial Santo Domingo while public institutions are visible at every corner in the Cuban colonial core.

Evidence of Trujillo's reign as president of the Dominican Republic, who re-named Santo Domingo after himself as Ciudad Trujillo, is viewed as students visit a church that has the temporary name of the city engraved on a bell in the church's tower. Perhaps the most obvious public structure on the landscape of Santo Domingo is the Columbus Lighthouse (Faro a Colón), constructed during Balaguer's rule as a monument to the settlement of the Dominican Republic by Europeans. The somewhat controversial construction project was completed in time to attract tourists in 1992 during the 500th anniversary of Columbus' landing, and cost nearly a quarter of a billion dollars (US). A field trip to the structure prompted students to discuss the merits of the Faro's construction. Some remarked that the money would have been better spent on providing quality public education and health care to Dominican residents, while others felt that it was a worthwhile investment to attract tourists to the country.

CONCLUSIONS

Fieldwork is an appropriate way to expose students to local communities and broader political economies while on a study-abroad trip. We have drawn examples from two geographically proximate yet markedly dissimilar nations. In the Dominican Republic, a corporatist model of government prevails where elite economic sectors exert a disproportionate amount of influence on social change. In Cuba, the centrally planned socialist system makes the state the final arbiter. In both nations, grassroots development oftentimes leaves the downtrodden without legitimate tools to make their claims heard by the government. Accordingly, they must improve their quality of life by relying on their own resources, and not the state.

While fieldwork can take many forms, students can complete a participatory and somewhat autonomous field project during either a short- or long-term study-abroad program. Additionally, the land use project in the Dominican Republic presented here could easily be applied in any community, including a local setting near the home college or university. The field exercise does not require extensive foreign-language skills, though they are certainly useful. Students found that carrying a clipboard and observing the built environment was an innocuous form of participant observation.

Shantytown residents were usually eager to talk about the materials used to build their homes, the plans they had for future expansion, and the hopes they had for their families. They had much to say about the issue of squatting on hotel property, and their narratives provided a contrasting perspective to those told by hoteliers. As John Forester has argued, getting to understand the "story" behind the planning exercise is a powerful skill for students and practitioners alike:

Listening... we can understand more about how power and rationality interact, about how what seems well founded may never come to pass, and about how planners' and citizens' good ideas can be watered down, lost in a bureaucracy, held hostage to one politician's campaign. These stories might nurture a critical understanding by illuminating not only the dance of the rational and idiosyncratic but also the particular values being suppressed through the euphemisms, rationalizations, political theories, and "truths" of the powerful. (Forester 1998, 519)

Field experience allowed students to link the nomothetic with the idiographic and piece together their own version of the planner's role in this Dominican Republic shantytown. Students in both Cuba and the Dominican Republic must tease out competing narratives. Was the hotel consortium a benevolent corporate entity that ignored squatting? Or, did allowing the squatter community to grow compensate for the low wages? Are Haitians to blame for petty crime,

illegal dumping, and even the spread of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, as many Dominicans contended?

Following the study-abroad program, students clearly had a greater understanding of life in the corporatist Dominican Republic, which supports the findings of Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) that even short-term study-abroad programs can have a significant impact on students' perspectives. We argue that adding a field project to a study-abroad course further enhances the students' experience and can provide essential baseline data for public administration and governance. In a socialist yet post-trade-embargo Cuba, an optimal field course would be to arrive in Punta Cana, D.R., travel the country by bus, fly from Santo Domingo to Santiago de Cuba, and bus westward to Havana, and then back to the Miami to explore both Dominican and Cuban diaspora. This juxtaposition of two similar yet distinct Antillean nations provides a powerful experience to examine the corporatist and socialist states of these Caribbean nations. In other words, to what extent has the corporatist portrayal of a white and anti-Haitian development model been used to accept neoliberalism during the two terms of Leonel Fernández in the Dominican Republic? How has the U.S.-led Cuban trade embargo thwarted efforts for the island to evolve in a truly "different America" that embraces the pillars of socialism? Study-abroad experiences in these two Antillean nations will allow students to begin to grapple with these and related questions.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this article titled "Teaching Urban Affairs and Planning in Cuba: Balance, History and Objectivity in the Classroom," was presented at "The Role of Advocacy in the Classroom Conference," in a session titled "Advocacy in the Teaching of Cuban Studies," held in Pittsburgh, June 3, 1994.
2. Between 1992 and 1994, we boxed our bicycles and took them with us because fuel was expensive and most Cubans were getting around on Chinese-brand Phoenix and Flying Pigeon (single-speed bicycles). Compared to our students' 21-gear mountain and road bikes, we traveled in relative luxury. The juxtaposition of technology provided a convenient forum for discussing everything from bicycling in the rain, to OPEC, the embargo, and exercise, to gender roles. One student wrote in her journal, "Cubans look at [we Americans] on our \$700 titanium-frame mountain bikes like we are Martians; they are both surprised and intrigued that we would even want to see Cuba from behind two- versus four-wheeled vehicles. Then, jokes ensued about the 'free' air conditioning one gets when going down a small hill." It was a standard line that U.S. students used to get conversations going with other cyclists.

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