

Caribbean Urban Forum 2017 Proposal Submission
Conference Presenter: Sophonie M. Joseph

1. Presentation Title: “How Policy Mobilities Immobilize Planning in Haiti? : An Extended, Case Study of How the Multiplication of Complex, Networks of International Circulation of Planning Ideas and Practices Inhibits Planning’s Emancipatory Power and Threatens the Discipline’s Viability.”

2. Abstract: This paper describes how the simultaneous spread of multiple, contrasting planning models, that rarely move to an implementation stage, has left planning as a discipline in Haiti with a tarnished reputation as a useless endeavor. I overview how Western planning ‘myths,’ ideas and practices ‘travel,’ ‘translate’ and ‘diffuse’ within Haiti, with an emphasis on how the challenges of ‘cultural translation’ across dissimilar planning knowledge affect ‘planning as a discipline’s’ sustainability in Haiti. My main argument, in brief, is that the planning discipline struggles to work in Haiti because of the 1) ‘international development apparatus’s’ funding methods and modes of operation and 2) the plurality of planning models simultaneously operating with minimal coordination from the Haitian state. The main themes this dissertation focuses on are the ‘international diffusion of planning’ myths (‘imaginaires’), ideas and practices; particularly, the cultural translation of ‘spatial and process-oriented planning models’ ‘originating’ in Europe and North America and ‘landing’ in Haiti. This extended, case study is limited to the contemporary era, 1915 to the present. In order to demonstrate how the complex diffusion of international networks of planning knowledge minus the institutionalization and legal integration of planning ideas and practices within the Haitian government’s organizational structure hinders the ‘emancipatory’ possibilities of translating and embedding, development planning ‘imaginaires’ as an embodied experience or ‘konesans’ for local stakeholders instead of the rampant ‘participation fatigue’ the ‘professionalization of development’ era has brought upon the ‘Land of 10,000 NGOs.’ I undertook qualitative research that included participant-observation, interviews of Haitian planners who studied abroad and returned to practice in Haiti and relevant planning documents’ content analysis. The main results are the thick description of how the current planning system in Haiti, as a sub-unit of the larger international development apparatus, is not working due to: unsustainable and problematic planning funding mechanisms and the complexity introduced by the quantity and diversity of planning knowledge circuits simultaneously operating in Haiti.

Keywords: policy mobilities, multiplication, complexity, networks, international circulation of planning ideas and practices, emancipatory planning, sustainability, cultural translation

3. Related Conference Sub-theme: b.) Green Space: Planning and Social Issues

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8. Short authors biographical statement: **Sophonie M. Joseph** is a Doctoral Candidate in Urban Planning at Columbia University in New York City. Her research is focused on how the dynamics of policy mobilities, or travelling planning ideas and best practices, may actually be contributing to the detriment of the planning discipline’s sustainability in aid-dependent, developing country contexts, such as Haiti.