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## Creating settlement spaces in a small economy

Trinidad and Tobago

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# **Creating settlement spaces in a small economy. Trinidad and Tobago**

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## **RATIONALE**

Our responsibility to ourselves as a nation, as a people, require us to create spaces to express ourselves humanly in family relationships, in professional achievement, in culture. The environment – physical, economic, social – can facilitate or impede such creativity. The environment can be and is manipulated by policy changes, hence my concern for people-inspired policy initiatives.

The external policy directives of economic liberalization gives undue advantage to foreign interests especially multinational corporations. The socialist and communist countries emphasize the satisfaction of people's basic needs like food, housing, health care and education. The freemarket of the so-called Western democracies do not always organize to ensure minimum standards of health and housing for all citizens.

My thesis hopes to recommend strategies for the masses accessing minimum standards of health care and housing while they enjoy greater participation in the decision making process. My goal is making government policy and peoples' will coincident, in making democracy work for freedom and for meeting human needs.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The philosophy seems unclear in policy and planning. There is persistence of historical relationships – dominance and subordination. Foreign intervention and control are ‘blessed’ by the international institutions. As a result there is insufficient preparedness of planning in the growth years but insufficient funds for plans in the decline years. Undue dependence on foreign intervention diminishes the possibility of continuing replication.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The quality of life will improve with inclusion of people’s participation in an informed and negotiated mix of state intervention and market forces.

## **WHAT THE STUDY INTENDS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

Trinidad and Tobago can be considered to have a fair level of housing : 70,4 % owner-occupied dwellings as at 1988 and 4.08 persons/households as at 1990. But really low income households are excluded from any of these opportunities and the unemployed youth have little to hope for, thus far.

References will be made to community projects in other nation states in so far as these are considered useful.

Carl Stone first described Trinidad and Tobago as a state-interventionist market economy in the 1980’s. This has so far worked in the national interest because in 1997 the UNDP report lists Trinidad and Tobago as the first of seventy-eight developing countries in terms of effectiveness to eradicate poverty. But poverty is on the rise again and the nation must seek to protect itself from harmful effects of the new globalization.

The period of structural adjustment is being selected for closer scrutiny because perhaps in difficult circumstances there is added

pressure on individuals to search deep within themselves for inner resources and creativity to satisfy their basic needs in their specific socio-cultural context.

## **DISCUSSION**

Government intervention can be varied without removing initiative, choice and creativity from citizens, yet keeping the direct link between work and reward. Government must intervene on behalf of the weakest, for example persons with disability. Special projects must be devised to cater for the otherwise unemployed youth if self employment for them is to become a reality since self employment implies control of some physical space.