

# A Multiuniversity Planning Studio at the World Planning Congress

## An Opportunity for International Planning Education

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The transformation of the global landscape has changed economic and social realities in the United States. It has put the need to address international issues in the curriculum on a higher priority in U.S. planning schools, just as it has earlier done in U.S. business and law schools. Policy makers at the municipal level are confronting the local economic implications of changed labor composition and production processes and the impact of immigrant presence on provision of social services and amenities. They are asking their planning departments to develop strategies to address them.<sup>1</sup> This has caused U.S. planning academics, sometimes reluctantly, to accept that if nothing else, an understanding of the globalization forces that influences local planning realities is important to convey in planning pedagogy.

The need to internationalize the curriculum of U.S. planning programs and to infuse planning pedagogy with a global perspective is an idea that has achieved currency since the 1990s. Salient to this shift has been the fact that liberalization of economies throughout the world served to lower barriers to international trade in ways that would have seemed impossible in the late 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Also critical were breakthroughs in information and communication technology and the resulting ubiquitous use of the Internet. These breakthroughs reduced the significance of the friction of distance in manufacturing and trade and transformed these systems into transnational entities.<sup>3</sup> Globalization of production and services piggybacking on information and communication technology innovations and liberalization have changed and tangibly affected the local economy of U.S. cities and regions. Immigration, both documented and undocumented, particularly across a seemingly porous border to the south of the United States, has brought the impact of an international labor pool to bear on local economies and affected local service delivery. The significant migrant presence has rendered immigration a forefront issue for policy makers throughout communities in the United States. In the 2008 U.S. presidential elections, candidates' positions on immigration policy, particularly with respect to the southern border with Mexico, have become important (see Stoll 1997; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005). Also see Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon, eds., *New Destinations: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage 2005).

There is thus a need, within planning curricula, to teach planners to address emergent issues rooted in internationalization and globalization.

### **Abstract**

The need to internationalize planning education is increasingly apparent, but planning programs in the United States have varying capabilities and resources to incorporate an international dimension in their curriculum. Offering a multiuniversity studio and study abroad course in Mexico, in conjunction with the World Congress in 2006, provided an opportunity to collaboratively address this need. The synergies that accrued are worth considering. An argument is made for adopting similar studio efforts as an integral component of future World Planning Congresses.

**Keywords:** *international planning education; World Congress; studios; multi-institutional collaboration*

Larger planning schools in the United States have long enjoyed the benefit of more faculty, students, and resources enabling them to offer professional planning students various opportunities to engage in some form of international planning experience. These have included curriculum offerings such as courses dedicated exclusively to addressing international planning issues or to comparing the U.S. planning experience with that in other parts of the world. Efforts at providing a more direct, first-hand exposure through international exchange and foreign travel have included summer abroad courses, collaborative agreements for student faculty exchanges, grants and fellowships for community-based action and research abroad, study trips, faculty and student exchanges, and the presence of visiting international faculty and students who inform and acculturate U.S. planners about planning processes in their own countries.<sup>4</sup>

### **Internationalizing U.S. Planning Education**

Different programs have emphasized the international to varying degrees in their curriculum. But rarely, if ever, is it a part of the core course requirements. The challenge for many U.S. planning programs in fully embracing internationalization, beyond initial reservations about the virtues of incorporating a global perspective, has been that faculty resources for such enrichment of programs have been lacking. Given that small, already overcommitted faculty are required to teach a breadth of courses in the core curriculum, there has been an inability to give priority to the international and to allocate scarce faculty resource in this area.<sup>5</sup>

Yet discussions on what is needed to internationalize a planning curriculum have been ongoing and persistent over the years, and the central themes have remained somewhat constant. Initially, the discourse was driven by academics involved in research and scholarship in other countries, many of whom had themselves immigrated to the United States. The growing interest in international planning and increasing numbers of faculty in U.S. universities engaged in international research and scholarship, if not teaching in this area, resulted in various efforts to organize. In 1994, these efforts culminated in the distribution by Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) to all U.S. planning schools the report of an ACSP National Commission. Titled *Global Approaches to North American Planning Education* and referred to as the “Blue Book,” it served to “legitimize” the teaching of international planning issues in U.S. planning curricula.<sup>6</sup>

As evidenced by the growth of membership in the Global Planning Educators Interest Group and its listserv, academic expertise in international planning has grown.<sup>7</sup> At the ACSP 2007 annual meeting in Milwaukee, an oversubscribed round table titled “Ethics of International Planning

Educational Exchange” and a poster exhibit and presentation session in conjunction with this provided a forum for planning academics to describe efforts in arranging ethical and equity-driven international planning experiences for their students.<sup>8</sup> The presentations, delivered with considerable passion, underscored the fact that many planning programs are trying to sustain an international component to their curriculum. The initiatives described made clear that they are often driven by the hard work and significant time commitments of junior and mid-career faculty, most of whom are involved in scholarship and research in international development planning. Besides surfacing the ethical issues of creating an egalitarian north–south exchange and dealing with power and economic hierarchies implicit in the north–south relationship, several additional recurring themes in international planning pedagogy emerged. They concerned the need to:

- Broaden the two-way process of exchange so that it is not the exclusive privilege of big planning schools.
- Identify innovations that can be useful to all planning schools and address the resource differences of various schools in internationalizing their curricula.
- Address the costs of international exchanges and the burdens they pose for students, faculty, and planning schools in the north and the south, given that costs of faculty time, travel, local expenses, and expertise all present sometimes prohibitive barriers.
- Address the ethical and absolute need to differentially support students and faculty in the South so that they can participate on an equal basis in an exchange. Seek out appropriate strategies to recognize, compensate, and reward professionals in host countries on whom costs of orienting visitors are considerable.
- Recognize the costs in time and effort of junior faculty spearheading these exchanges. Consider the particular burden such exchanges place on junior faculty and the fact that scholarly publications and output are generally slow in emanating from such involvement and factor this into the academic rewards and assessment processes.
- Deal with local expertise in a respectful open manner, value and incorporate it, even when the discourse and mode of communication are posited in nonmain stream planning language or offered from different political ideologies or world views.

This last issue, following on largely resource based concerns, was perceived to be a particularly significant element in establishing egalitarian north–south collaborative relationships. Clearly apparent was the fact that sustaining a commitment to an international dimension in the curriculum represents challenges for planning schools in the United States, particularly smaller planning schools. It has been suggested that this is an area where action by ACSP, the Global Planning Education Associations Network (GPEAN), the American Association of Planners (APA), and partner organizations can help lower the barriers for all. This article describes one opportunity for such action.

## **An Opportunity for ACSP, GPEAN, and APA in Internationalizing Planning Education**

Acting creatively to initiate or support collective initiatives that serve to internationalize planning curricula would represent a significant contribution by planning organizations such as ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and other partner organizations. The experience of arranging a study abroad course and a multiuniversity international studio in conjunction with the World Planning Congress held in Mexico City in 2006 offers insight and potential for such a collective venture at future World Congresses. It offers a way to make an international planning experience available to planning students within the structure of the World Congress. The effort in Mexico warrants attention as one way that institutions and organizations of planning academics might make possible, as a group, a “studio and study tour” course that cost effectively provides a rich international planning experience.

### **The Arizona State University (ASU) and Universidad Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) Studio and ASU Study Abroad Course**

Inspired by the fact that the Second World Planning Congress was to be held in the historic core of Mexico City in July of 2006, ASU and UNAM, the host institutions for the Second World Congress, initiated a joint studio on themes deemed of importance to Mexico City. The studio ran concurrently with and followed the Second World Congress, thus enabling studio participants to draw on the resources of the Congress. Students had access to a distinguished spectrum of planning academics from around the world attending the Congress. Students from several U.S. planning institutions worked collaboratively with planning students from and in the host country. The ASU/UNAM multi-institutional studio was thus cost-effective in drawing on a rich array of resources gathered together under the auspices of a World Planning Congress. An ASU study abroad course preceded the meeting. It was open to students from all U.S. planning programs and structured to allow students to learn in situ from planning efforts to sustain the historic core in relevant metropolitan cities in Mexico. Involving participation of the World Congress host institution and other partners in the host country, the joint studio and accompanying study abroad course offers a case that, with refinement and support from ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner institutions, could in future World Congresses benefit the planning academy and allow planning students in many institutions to engage in a rich international planning experience.

The UNAM/ASU studio was held in the Academy San Carlos, a beautiful eighteenth-century courtyard building, set in the heart of Mexico City’s historic core, adjacent to the Palacio Nacional (National Palace housing the office of the

president of Mexico) and the Zocalo or central plaza, which is the political heart and major public square of the city. Prior to and leading into the World Congress, eight students from ASU, Ohio State, and University of Oregon completed an intensive one-week study abroad course on Mexican metropolises offered by ASU’s summer programs. Students visited cities in the Mexican industrial heartland—a belt stretching from Guadalajara, Guanajuato, through Queretaro to Puebla and Mexico City. Intensive presentations by and interactions with some sixteen local government officials and local practitioners served to sensitize students to the salient planning issues of preserving the historic core of these cities and the variety of responses and solutions implemented, which responded to diverse city histories and political configurations.<sup>9</sup> Culminating in Mexico City at the start of the World Congress, the group was joined by some fifteen to twenty UNAM students. A work session was held at the Congress to refine the themes set out for the studio, namely

1. Urban Revitalization and Street Vendors in the City Core
2. Thematic Tourism in the Centro Histórico of Mexico City
3. Mexico City Water Infrastructure
4. Housing Challenges of the City Core

Students formed collaborative, cross-institutional teams to address these themes and attended World Congress panels on related topics in other regions of Mexico and the world; they participated in field trips, site visits, and workshops that took them to various parts of Mexico City for guided and informed views of the city and planning efforts in these areas. The subject of relevant field visits included informal housing, conservation of water resources, traditional land and agricultural conservation techniques, and heritage tourism. Students were provided a locally grounded site exposure to these issues. Such exposures served to reveal the complex social, political, and economic context of urbanization and urban planning in Mexico City; the richness of the urban fabric and landscape of this world metropolis; the legacy of precolonial and colonial past on its present urban form and function; the challenges of globalization and sustainability for metropolitan planning; the visions, strategies, and practices of Mexican planners; and the perspectives of local actors, including neighborhood residents, business leaders, politicians, and scholars. The Congress organizers did a wonderful job of exposing Congress participants to the region through these workshops. Students were privileged to share these experiences.

At the conclusion of the World Congress, the students moved to the Academy San Carlos to begin teamwork on one of the four themes.<sup>10</sup> At this time, they were joined by ten students from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne (UIC).<sup>11</sup> Through invited guest lectures and trips through the surrounding city fabric, the students were exposed to major urban planning issues faced in the city core by one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. They had the unique



**Figure 1.** Some thirty students from five planning programs and faculty from four universities celebrate completion of studio in the courtyard of the Academy San Carlos, Mexico City.

opportunity to observe and analyze, in situ, the intersections of metropolis formation, globalization, sustainability and governance as it affects the life space, fabric, and lives of people from different economic strata: the powerful people in government and in the private sector; the poorest and most disenfranchised homeless people sheltering themselves in the habitation surrounding the core; and the informal, entrepreneurial vital community of street vendors. The studio course was energized by location in an extraordinary historic urban fabric and vital public realm of the Zocolo; by faculty and student participation from several institutions and agencies.<sup>12</sup> It was challenged by language constraints that put extra pressure on all, particularly those who were bilingual. This particular studio experience has been described in Dandekar, Lara-Valencia, and Balsas (2006). A survey of U.S. student participants revealed that they had found the experience to be rewarding and culturally enlightening.<sup>13</sup> Successful, immersive studio experiences tend to elicit positive student evaluations. Thus, this studio was by no means unique in eliciting favorable student reactions to the experience. What was significant is that the studio was designed to draw on, and was significantly enriched by, the World Congress and the multinational expertise and multi-institutional effort it embodies.

Despite the logistical inability of the faculty organizers to level the field and have all students obtain equal academic credit for their work and equal exposure to Congress offerings, students from all the institutions participated fully and gave considerable energy to the academic endeavor.<sup>14</sup> There were reports of all-night work sessions and socializing that bode well for building relationships and collaborations into the future.<sup>15</sup> Some thirty students from five planning programs participated in the studio and presented their results on the last day to a jury of invited practitioners and studio faculty (see Figure 1).<sup>16</sup> Two students executed a poster describing the studio and articulating



**Figure 2.** Poster of the Arizona State University/Universidad Autonoma de Mexico Studio experience displayed at Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, Milwaukee.

the lessons learned that would be useful for similar studios that might be attached to future world Congresses (see Figure 2).<sup>17</sup>

### Implications for Future Efforts

The ASU/UNAM experience is perhaps, in and of itself, no less or more compelling than a wide variety of successful international exchanges and studio efforts. The transformative nature of a good studio experience, of hands-on engagement of planning teams with real-world problems and the key benefits of this teaching approach are known and described in the literature.<sup>18</sup> But the opportunity to engage in a studio with students from the host country in a stimulating and exciting context such as Mexico City and learn from an international group of academics and scholars at a World Planning Congress clearly adds enrichment to the endeavor.

The ASU/UNAM international studio, piggybacking on the offerings of the Second World Congress, had the virtue that it was located not just in a different, exciting, visually rich, stimulating, culturally enlightening place; but also that it required using the communication and collaborative skills of working with individuals from other cultures and societies, under a tight time frame, and with students from that country who knew the context in greater detail and specificity. The specific benefits of this studio were many, and some of them are noted in Figure 2. Although students who earned credits for the course reported favorably and enthusiastically on the experience both at the end of the course and some two years later, that is not the key issue here.<sup>19</sup> Rather, it is that the positive experience of the ASU/UNAM Mexico studio and course

serves to make a strong and more generic case for ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner institutions to endorse and institutionalize such an offering in future World Planning Congresses.

The effort in Mexico was far from perfect. But it was remarkable in that in the short planning time frame, it was made to happen and was a positive experience from which much was learned. More could be done to deepen the pedagogic outcomes and broaden the base of participation and involvement. With leadership and endorsement by ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner organizations of the World Planning Congress, and most important, with the participation of the host institution, collective action to offer a multi-institutional studio at the next World Planning Congress would make an important contribution to internationalizing planning pedagogy. Early endorsement would allow timely planning and collective efforts to improve and amplify what was achieved in the ASU/UNAM studio and help spread the benefits to more students in more programs while reducing the burden on individual faculty and lead institutions. Success would serve the larger planning academy in the United States, in other countries, and the host country for the World Congress.

### **A Multiuniversity Studio and Course at a Future World Congress**

The studio in Mexico City was driven by two lead institutions, UNAM and ASU, with assistance from planning programs at UIC, University of Oregon, and Ohio State, that participated by sending their students to the studio; and by faculty from ASU, UIC, UNAM, and other institutions who contributed their time and efforts. It was a pilot venture that was initiated in the relatively short time frame of nine months.<sup>20</sup> The timeline was too short for a comprehensive effort and precluded developing various communications and elaborations that would have enriched the pedagogic and collaborative outcomes. Some of the ways to improve the logistics were noted by students,<sup>21</sup> and although some of these had been thought of and discussed by lead faculty, they proved to be difficult to implement given the short time frame and lack of a formalized partnership.

In the future, a similar studio and summer abroad study course could be made an integral component of planning for the next World Congress. At the time a World Congress host and date are set, lead institutions to organize the studio and summer abroad study course might be selected. This would provide a longer lead time for establishing collaborative arrangements, publicity, outreach, and allow the studio to be comprehensively planned so as to optimize the benefits and synergy that accrue from partnering. A process could be implemented to elicit expressions of interest and to select

lead institutions in the United States and host country to coordinate and plan the course and studio. Logistically, endorsement and acknowledgement of the studio and study abroad course by ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner institutions would serve to enhance the status, visibility, and profile of the effort; elicit greater participation from more planning programs; and encourage broader involvement of local planning agencies and officials.

Endorsement and acknowledgement would have symbolic value, raise the profile of the effort, and serve to publicly register that there is an institutional commitment to internationalization of the profession. It would make the studio and study abroad credible to a larger number of students and faculty in U.S. planning programs, particularly programs that are small and unable to launch such initiatives independently. Historically, mostly doctoral students have participated in presentations at ACSP meetings and at the first Planning World Congress in Shanghai, China. The ASU/UNAM studio served to attract predominantly master's planning students and a few undergraduate planners to attend the World Congress. This is encouraging and desirable in that it enabled master's and undergraduate planning students to engage with international issues. This is professionally enabling and a valuable addition to planning pedagogy. Requests to APA, partner organizations, and relevant foundations could be made by the lead institutions, with ACSP and GPEAN endorsement, for modest funds earmarked: to reduce student registration costs to the World Congress; to pay for student assistants to key faculty in the lead institutions to help them sustained long-term organizational effort that is needed; and to pay for tokens of recognition for the practitioners who assist the studio and study abroad course. These awards can be announced at a plenary session of the World Congress.

### **Suggested Interventions**

The advantages of piggybacking a studio and study abroad course on a World Planning Congress are many and can be enriched with institutional endorsements and acknowledgements. The experience of the ASU/UNAM studio suggests the following actions on the part of ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partnering organizations to facilitate and support such an effort:

- Disseminating information about the studio and the study trip that precedes it so as to elicit broader participation.
- Identifying and garnering support of and participation by planning practitioners at the city sites and venues visited by the study tour. Recognizing practitioners who provide such support at a plenary session of the World Congress.
- Selecting as a lead institution for the study abroad a university whose tuition structure for such an offering is relatively low, as was the case at ASU. Facilitating the transfer of credits earned so that they are accepted by U.S. planning programs. This will bring down the costs for students

and help internationalize the planning curriculum of participating units.

- Encouraging planning programs to earmark one or two student fellowships to support participation of their students in the studio and study abroad course.
- Offering a few student scholarships or subsidies for students from less affluent countries, and/or, host country. These would help increase equity between students and enable more students to participate in and get academic credit for their efforts. ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner organizations might take a lead in fund raising for this cause.
- Offering a reduced registration to the World Congress for students enrolled in the studio and study abroad course might be made possible by collective fundraising for this by partnering institutions.
- Recognizing planning academics at the World Congress who assist in the studio with tokens of appreciation such as presidential certificates. The World Congress attracts a rich pool of well-known planning academics, some of whom may be willing to contribute pro bono to the studio effort. Informing studio organizers about pertinent attendees is important so as to have a sufficiently long lead time that they can proactively secure their services as studio critics or advisors. Senior faculty particularly might be induced to offer their services pro bono.
- Assisting in enhancing synergy between offerings at the World Congress and the studio and study abroad course. Actions might include tailoring of some workshops and field visits to augment the studio foci, organizing panels of practitioner presentations on topics relevant to the problems addressed in the studio, and facilitating the involvement of relevant planning agencies and academic programs in the World Congress to enrich the studio.
- Endorsing, noting on the program, and supporting a mixer at the start of the World Congress for all studio participants to enable students and faculty from around the world to get acquainted.
- Recognizing and acknowledging the studio at the Congress plenary session and providing participants a unique identity at the Congress with T shirts or other artifact such as a pin or button that earmark them as studio participants. Low-cost gestures such as these could serve to create a visibility and momentum for the studio.

Beyond these practical and instrumental actions, more generically and conceptually what is suggested is a symbolic and high-profile endorsement and acknowledgement by ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner planning organization of a collective multi-institutional effort at international planning pedagogy that lends visibility, resources, and structural and institutional commitment to the venture.

## Conclusion

The World Congress represents a great opportunity for academic planning programs and their planning institutions to increase their international offerings through participation in a multiuniversity planning studio and study abroad course at the World Planning Congress. A multi-institutional studio that was offered by ASU/UNAM at the last World

Congress held in Mexico City provides an imperfect but useful model for such an effort. It demonstrates the advantages of pooling resources to create a structure through which many planning students can gain an international experience at relatively low cost for students, their academic programs, and national planning institutions. The experience of the experimental venture of the ASU/UNAM studio and study abroad course in Mexico substantiates that a strong case can be made for institutionalizing and making an international studio and study abroad course a regular component of future World Planning Congresses.

## Notes

1. For research that addresses issues important to city policy makers in the southwestern region of the United States, see Cleeland 1999, and a description of Abel Valenzuela's day labor study at <http://www.college.ucla.edu/news/05/valenzueladaylabor.html>. Also see Dandekar, Balsas, Fisher, Skay, and Labadie's 2005 report, which presents the salient issues that the predominantly Hispanic, inner suburban areas of West Phoenix must address as the city attempts to reinvigorate this area, a magnet location for immigrants parts of which are blighted by high crime and dilapidation.

2. The magnitude of the change to free market since the 1990 is a phenomenon that few people had predicted. The dissolution of the former Soviet Union in 1991 brought a vast territory into the global network. The Chinese economy, currently the fastest growing economy in the world, moved to global engagement. Liberalization of the Indian economy, initiated in the early 1990s, brought a population, anticipated to grow larger than China's in the next twenty years, into the global marketplace. The European Union, formed in 1993, created a single market; and the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect in January 1994, creating one of the largest trade blocs in the world in terms of combined GDP.

3. A journalistic description of the consequences of these changes are also found in the Friedman (2005) and Storper and Salais (1997).

4. A variety of articles in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* and the *Journal of the American Planning Association* have documented the experiences of (or the insights obtained from) such efforts. For an example of comparative research, see Hou and Kinoshita 2007. For insights on key features of successful, international, studio-based educational collaborations, see Abramson 2005. Goldstein, Bollens, Feser, and Silver (2006) categorize a range of efforts in internationalization as "total immersion," "protective studies," and "tour models" (351). They elaborate on a multiuniversity, international collaboration and categorize it in the "total immersion" category.

5. At the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) meeting in Denver, Colorado, in 2003, some members of the ACSP governing board voiced this concern after the ACSP Planning Globally Taskforce Committee presented its findings, which included the suggestion that an international component be added to the core area coverage needed for accreditation. The recommendation was taken under advisement by the board, discussed, but not adopted.

6. This was one of the first successful efforts to put international planning on the map of planning schools in the United States. Issued by the ACSP National Commission and edited by

Ibrahim Jammal, it laid out the rationale for internationalizing U.S. planning curricula. The commission consisted of the following members: Farokh Afshar, Hooshang Amirahmadi, Gill-Chin Lim, Hemalata Dandekar, William Goldsmith, Alan Kreditor, Linda Lacey, Riad Mahayni, Paul Niebanck, and Ibrahim Jammal (chair). The members developed salient ideas from a May 1990 conference on "Global Approaches to Planning Education," held at the Center for Comparative Studies in Development Planning, School of Architecture and Environmental Design, SUNY Buffalo, which was organized by Jammal. Thirty-three participants, including most of the chapter authors in Sanyal's *Breaking the Boundaries*, were at this meeting and contributed ideas of how U.S. planning schools could incorporate internationalism into their curriculum. Also see Sanyal (1990), which delineates specific pedagogic approaches for implementation.

7. On the comprehensive Global Planning Educators Interest Group Web site <http://gpeig.org/>, which is created and maintained by Dr. Keith Pezzoli, the organization is described as an interest group that fosters an understanding of the global perspective in planning education and research. The listserver, when it was first started in 1999, had some 120 or so members. Dr. Sukumar Ganapati (personal communications, January 8, 2008) who created and maintains the listserver notes that in December of 2007 it listed some 211 e-mail addresses. In the Fall 2007 issue of the Global Planning Educators Interest Group voice, the coordinators for the ACSP 2007 conference track International Development Planning (Track V) Keith Pezzoli and Victoria Beard report, "This year the International Development Planning (IDP) track received 77 submissions. It was initially the fourth largest track out of fifteen tracks present at the conference. Only the Housing and Community Development track, Transportation Infrastructure Planning track, and Environmental Planning and Resource Management track received more submissions: [http://gpeig.org/files/GPEIG-Fall2007\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://gpeig.org/files/GPEIG-Fall2007_Newsletter.pdf) (accessed May 31, 2008).

8. The roundtable elicited much interest in discussion on the Global Planning Educators Interest Group listserver. Two round tables of eight contributors each appeared feasible, but conference space constraints precluded back-to-back sessions. Eight presenters were listed on the conference program, and several more offered informal commentaries. Representation was from mostly large planning schools: Cornell, MIT, Washington, ASU, Florida, Illinois Champagne-Urbana, and Ball State. The countries involved in exchange with U.S. institutions included Brazil, Mexico, China, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, and South Africa. The range of activities was broad and time commitments were from multiyear to one-time short engagements.

9. Three instructors at ASU—Carlos Balsas, Hemalata Dandekar, and Francisco Lara-Valencia—collaborated in teaching the study abroad course in Mexico. Of these, Francisco Lara-Valencia possessed both language skills and extensive contact networks in Mexico. The burden of making local arrangements therefore fell disproportionately on him. His efforts in organizing highly informative sessions at each city visited were extensive and time consuming. Release time from some teaching responsibilities was warranted but not provided. A lead institution should be prepared to make such investments in future efforts such as this. For an overview of planning issues and responses encountered, see Dandekar and Lara-Valencia 2008.

10. Tremendous support was given to the joint studio by the host organizers led by UNAM Professor Sergio Flores Peña, assisted by Professor Enrique Soto Alva and their very able student assistant Manuel Estrada Lagunas. Parts of the Academy San Carlos, designated studio and exhibition spaces for the College of Architecture and Planning at UNAM, were not in active use. Tables, chairs, furnishings, as well as computer stations for each

team had to be transported to the Academy at the conclusion of the World Congress. The sites of the Congress and the studio were both in the city center, but the logistics of the move and the arrangements for the studio space represented an additional responsibility for the UNAM team. It was one that followed immediately on the heels of the grueling task of organizing and coordinating the World Congress. Thus, a host institution's participation in a similar joint studio venture represents a major burden and commitment. This must be recognized by the organizing committee at the outset. Resources, both financial and personnel, need to be earmarked for the studio. Partner organizations of the World Congress need to make cash and in-kind contributions of support.

11. University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne (UIC) students were unable to obtain support to register for the World Congress and enroll in the study abroad program. However, they were able to obtain travel assistance from the UIC planning program through the office of the then department head Christopher Silver. UIC also contributed resources to cover some studio expenses. The UIC students were enterprising in finding low-cost hostel accommodation in Mexico City, which they self-funded, and in navigating the public transportation system to cut down on travel expenses. They demonstrated the ingenuity that students bring to make travel cost-effective.

12. Faculty from ASU's School of Planning, Dandekar, Lara-Valencia, and Balsas, were joined by UNAM's Sergio Flores Peña, University of Illinois-Urbana Champagne professors Elizabeth Sweet and Elizabeth Harwood, and Cal State Northridge Professor Teresa Vazquez-Castillo. Guest lectures from invited UNAM faculty and practitioners in relevant city agencies in Mexico City rounded out the substantive flow of information. Student teams included students from different institutions, with care taken that at least one or two were fluent in both Spanish and English.

13. In May 2008, some 2 years after the Mexico multiuniversity planning studio, students who took the ASU study abroad course for credit were surveyed about their experience. They commented, "I think this kind of exercise should be REQUIRED of planning students . . . especially the ones emphasizing International Planning!" and "There were three key aspects to the success of this course: 1) Actually experiencing the country and meeting its people, not just tourists on a resort beach, up close and personal. 2) Participating in personalized presentations from each of the Planning Agencies in several cities, and being able to compare them immediately. 3) Participating in the Mexico City planning studio with UNAM students."

14. Students involved in the ASU study abroad program received five units of credit for the work. UNAM students received none but could attend the World Congress as student volunteers. UIC students received neither credit nor access to the World Congress presentations, as they were not registered. To their credit, teams developed varied and constructive strategies to ensure that the workload was distributed, commensurate to the level of engagement that could be fairly expected of each student for the varying levels of credit or recognition he or she would receive for participation. It was gratifying for the faculty involved to see the depth of investment and the contribution that all students, including those not receiving academic credit, made to the joint team effort. This was gratefully noted by course-enrolled students in their evaluations. There was great cooperation in sharing information and excellent participation by all in the effort to develop the idea sets, engage in visioning and problem formulation, and participate in data gathering. Students taking the studio for credit were responsible for a final team report and an individual paper on the subtheme they had investigated. These papers were submitted in the week after returning to their

respective institutions in the United States. The ASU instructors of the for-credit course (Dandekar, Lara-Valencia, and Balsas) found that the quality of the written reports was good, reflecting substantial individual and group learning. The faculty who juried the final studio presentations in Mexico City agreed that the goal of this pilot effort had been met. The goal had been to provide a stimulating context, replete with compelling planning issues, and to encourage groups of planning students—from different countries and planning institutions, and who were carrying with them their own, culturally contextualized paradigms of defining the problem—to engage in collaborative planning research and program formulation.

15. Some 2 years after the studio, students at ASU report being in e-mail communication with students from UNAM. One student reports, “Think we were enriched by the experience and relationships established. We are in touch from time to time with two individuals—UNAM counterparts—with whom we worked for the studio. We hope to visit Mexico City and them again and reciprocate if they would like to visit Arizona.”

16. On the last day of the studio, July 19, 2006, PowerPoint presentations were made by the student teams and critiqued by the faculty and practitioner jury. The faculty consensus was that the students had grasped the major parameters of the problems that were being addressed and that the cross-national and comparative insights that they brought to the proposed recommendations were useful and added an interesting dimension to the problem analysis. In short, in a very quick but intensive engagement, the students had produced credible products that were on target and contained contributions that were valuable, as they were based on comparative, cross-national scans of possible actions.

17. Two students, Janet Gonzalez and Janet Bunchman, prepared the poster on the studio for presentation and exhibition at ACSP 2007. They queried fellow students to identify refinements that could be made in future efforts.

18. The studio method of teaching represents a key pedagogic approach that has been the hallmark of the professional planning and design disciplines. The literature on studio teaching delineates that the studio experience requires and/or yields the following desirable benefits:

Grounded experiential knowledge and ability to identify action opportunities

An ability to engage in rapid scanning of the environment for first-hand experiential insight on what appears to be significant on the ground

Development of skills in the use of interview and primary source methods for collecting information

Development of skills in the use of visual and graphic modes of documenting the context and communicating the options

An ability to come to terms with limited time and information and to reach recommendations on actions and policy despite incomplete and imperfect knowledge

An ability to draw on similar cases and policy experience to develop alternatives and insights for application

Development of skills in small group techniques of brain storming and consensus building to elicit a creative and rapid formulation of the problem and extrapolate alternatives

An exposure to legislative and institutional structures that affect resource distribution

See, for instance, Clark and Dandekar 1991, and Dandekar and Clark 1992.

19. The number of students who took the five-unit credit study abroad trip and the studio was relatively small, consisting of eight students from three U.S. universities. They were surveyed at the end of the course in follow-up conversations and a brief questionnaire was sent out two years afterwards. At both times, responding

students expressed great appreciation for the opportunity that the studio offered them to work with students from other institutions and host country. They were positive about the travel and study experience. One student noted, “I enjoyed the trip very much and to this day continue to talk about it with friends and family. Meeting all of the UNAM students and truly interacting with our UNAM group mates during our group work and outside of it was a fantastic experience. Getting shown around the city by our group mates and others was the best learning experience to understanding their culture and needs of the community. The UNAM students were outstanding hosts, always very patient and willing to answer any questions that we had.” The UNAM students and their efforts in this course were noted with gratitude by all the students who responded to the survey in 2008. Working with UNAM students has clearly been a highlight of the experience. Students were sensitive to the fact that students from different universities had differing expectations and rewards from their own institutions. One student commented, “I think it is important for the different universities to agree on what students will have to do. The UNAM students we worked with got no credit or anything for helping us, but I think even more collaboration could take place if there was a formal incentive for them to work.”

20. The idea was discussed in some detail by ASU and UNAM core faculty at the ACSP meeting in Kansas City, in October of 2005, and the studio was held in Mexico City in July of 2006.

21. Student made the following suggestions for improving the studio and study abroad course:

“setting up some kind of blackboard/blog for both ASU and UNAM students to have communicated prior to meeting in Mexico would have been ideal to set the tone for the trip and the expectations of the course. A little more coordination between schools would have been great to get the most out of the short studio.”

“a blog created with the UNAM students. In this manner ASU and UNAM students could establish a dialogue on subjects and meet on line.”

“professors could have communicated a bit more to fully coordinate what was to be expected of the students. The UNAM students did not receive any credit and the ASU students did—the same should have been done for the UNAM student’s hard work and effort. Again, a little more time to have prepared prior to the trip would have relieved a lot of the stress that I felt towards the end of the trip when my group was running around trying to get our final project completed.”

“Our studio topic was enriched by visiting the Public Works department of Mexico City with the UNAM students—a highlight. If meetings with government official could be secured in advance; tours of locations could be established and the experience would be enriched.”

“I would strongly suggest that there be coordination between students and faculty from both institutions to contact one another and set the tone for the project and/or work that is to be done while on the trip. Students can therefore prepare a lot of the general background information prior to leaving for the trip, thus eliminating some of that time needed to be spent researching and instead leaving time to do other things like getting to know the host’s city.”

“I think more pre-work would help a lot. Groups could be formed before the final week, preferably with people from the different universities participating. Ideally groups could be set up months in advance. You can use the internet to have some discussion about topics, things to look for, themes, comment on the readings etc. This should happen before the trip so that even if there is limited internet access on the trip things can progress.”

“It would be good to have regular internet access, but that might be difficult, depending on the site. Having to depend on



our hotel internet in Mexico City was not only expensive, but it was stressful because groups were vying for the same computers.”

The instructors agree with these suggestions. The Internet and various Web interfaces can and should be used to erase geographic distance and allow students to engage in research, form teams, plan approaches, initiate field research, and so forth, in anticipation of the studio. If strong collaborative relationships are established over a longer time frame and strengthened by endorsement by ACSP, GPEAN, APA, and partner institutions, and some financial support be obtained from an outside source through a grant proposal, these suggestions could be implemented at the next iteration of a similar studio and study abroad course. This article is making a case for such endorsement and planning.

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