

Landscape Synergy: An exchange of Culture, Ideas and Opportunities
Paysages de Synergie : Un échange de culture, d'idées et de possibilités

CSLA CUBA 2007 CONGRESS

All those present at the 2007 CSLA Congress that was held in Havana, declared a World Heritage Site in 1982, will remember for a long time the rich exchange of “culture, ideas and opportunities” that took place between Cubans and Canadians on the subject of landscapes.

Organized jointly by the AAPQ and OALA with support from the CSLA and several Cuban partners, this unique event, organized for the first time outside of Canada, was more than two years in the making. The congress was co-chaired by Serge Poitras, AAPQ and Jim Vafiades, OALA. Organizing a conference in a country such as Cuba had its particular challenges. Government restrictions of all kinds and logistical constraints were a reality, but above all we had to find common ground of interest with the Cubans and develop a program that would be stimulating for everyone.

The congress created an opportunity to understand the issues and expose new methodologies and tools for protecting Cuba's historic sites and monuments, its natural habitats and for improving its cities and living environments. What better place than Havana to make this happen, a historic port city with its exceptional architecture and streetscapes.

The program encouraged a dialogue between Canadian landscape architects and Cubans around three themes: 1) Heritage and Cultural Landscapes; 2) Parks and Natural Reserves and 3) Sustainable Coastal Tourism Development.

The great participation of Canadian landscape architects at the congress has raised the image and profile of the profession in a country seeking new ways to improve environmental sustainability and good practices in urban planning, development and governance. These were unique opportunities to have a genuine exchange of knowledge and ideas, to offer a Canadian point of view and to better understand the local context in Cuba. They were also opportunities for Cuban professionals to find out about alternate methodologies and planning tools, to experiment with the Plaza de Cristo charette as a participatory process and to adapt it to their own needs.