

Island Research for Masters Students

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Contributor



L-R: Laura Fanning, Kathleen Stuart, Ariana Silvo, Ryan O'Connor, Faiz Ahmed, Ryan Boulter, and David McGuigan, (President of Student Economic Association)

Would you consider Bermuda to be a country? Is Taiwan a sovereign state? Are the Caribbean holiday destinations for Canadians – like Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos Islands, or the Cayman Islands – be independent? What about lonely Pitcairn in the Pacific or massive Greenland in the North Atlantic?

In all these cases, the answer is 'no.' However, these and similar islands are not just your average municipalities. Many have significant decision-making powers. (Like Prince Edward Island, which is the smallest province in Canada.) But how do such powers translate into economic development? Are all islands reaping maximum benefit from their powers?

A number of students enrolled in the Master of Arts Program in Island Studies (MAIS) at UPEI are engaged in pioneering research, looking at the specific characteristics of the world's island territories which are not fully sovereign. The research is supported by a generous, three-year standard research grant made available by SSHRC (The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) to Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino, Canada Research Chair in Island Studies at UPEI.

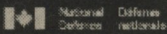
The grant is to support the development of a profile of the capacities of the world's sub-national island jurisdictions. More simply, what

makes these places tick? How can a small group of people living on a small, resource-poor rock or coral outcrop afford to survive in the modern world? How does their ability to pass laws (their power of jurisdiction) make a difference, if at all?

Some answers to these questions were presented at a seminar organized by the Economics Students Association of UPEI recently. The MAISers did a good job explaining the project, and illustrating what they were doing by selecting a number of island examples, vividly displaying their arguments by suitable photos.

Kathleen Stuart, Graduate Student Coordinator of the Jurisdiction Project explains: "As project leader, my first task was to create a list of sub-national island jurisdictions (provinces or territories) for study. The researchers gather data on each of these island territories, its economy (what is this island actually doing to survive and thrive), its jurisdictional resources (what political structure does the island have and what steps has it taken to enhance its leverage and prosperity), what are the human resources, and finally what elements of history and culture explains the prosperity (or lack thereof) that is otherwise not explained by economic and jurisdictional resources. The researchers follow a template to systematically gather the data so that we can ultimately find patterns that

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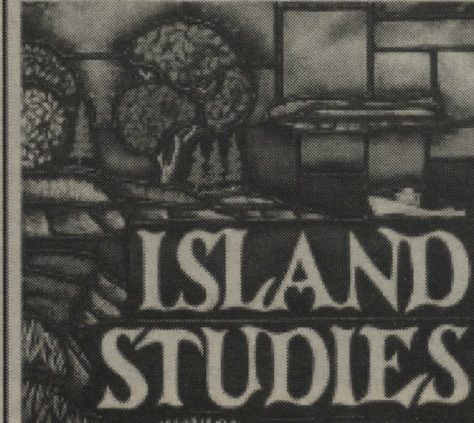
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