

## Ineffectiveness of Comprehensive Blueprint Planning as a Planning Tool

### 1.1 Introduction

Grenada! A small island developing state with a land mass of 133 square miles was introduced to planning principles since 1914 by the British, which, grew stronger in the 1940's; principles that involved the development of comprehensive blueprint plans to secure the rights of land uses and establish control over the processes of development to improve the living standards/conditions of the population. Ratcliff (1974), also shared these views when he stated:

**(it) is the art and science of ordering the use of Land and siting of buildings and communication routes so as to secure the maximum practicable degree of economy, convenience and beauty and as an attempt to formulate the principles that should guide us, in human life whose main impetus is thus foreseeing and guiding change (1974:13).**

The use of comprehensive blueprint planning has allowed development planners in Grenada to provide a comprehensive guidance for the future development because it was the best choice at the point in time that combined all planning functions<sup>i</sup> as well as geographical and political jurisdiction for a target time frame (between 15-20 years)<sup>ii</sup>. Although at times the available resources were minimal, this did not prevented the development planners from articulating their ambitious aim. The development of a comprehensive blueprint plan embraced the logical progression from the identification of a problem through a series of stages that culminate with implementation and monitoring (See Figure 1.1).

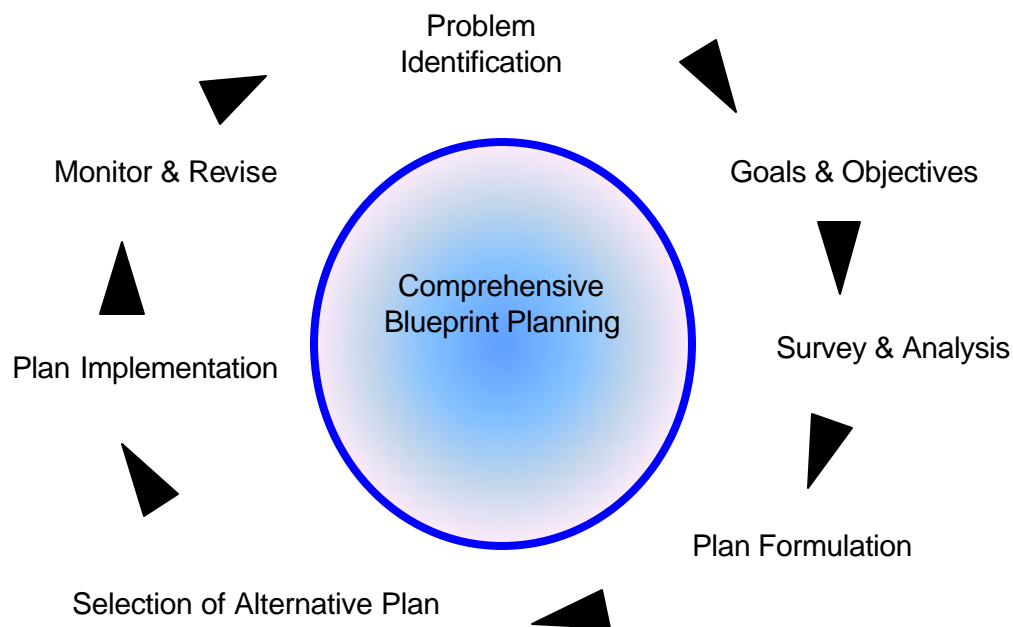


Figure 1.1: The Comprehensive Blueprint Planning Process [Source: University of Technology, Jamaica (1995)].

Interestingly, the merits/aims<sup>iii</sup> of comprehensive blueprint planning have proven to be theoretical ideologies that have been displaced by a 'comprehensive' focus that is being practised in Grenada presently. As such, development planning is slowly slipping into abeyance and has been degenerated into nothing else more than development control. Consequently, emergent anomalies in planning and development activities in Grenada has been depicted within the last four decades, which have proven that comprehensive blueprint planning is no longer, an effective tool in developing land use and spatial plans for the island. One of the fundamental facts underlying the inefficiency of the approach adopted is that the procedure was based on provisions of the British 1947 Acts.<sup>iv</sup> As, such, some of the concerns and/or challenges are: -

1. Lack of plan implementation;
2. The development plans are inflexible;
3. Environmental and other problems that are linked to Agenda 21 have emerged; and
4. There is a lack of new corroborative agendas pertaining to innovative ways of thinking about the relationship between state and market, and state and the public as it relates to land use and environmental change.

## 1.2 Lack of Plan Implementation

After the preparation of a development plan<sup>v</sup>, the intention is to implement it. However, this logic did not translate into reality in Grenada because development planning at this instance has 'assume' a political role; a role in which the decision-makers (who are also the politicians) lack the will to approve the plans for implementation by the agencies responsible. Frankly, the long-term (15-20 years) time frame of comprehensive blueprint planning does not fit well with the short-term (generally 5 years) goals and objectives/realities of the political process. Accordingly, planning is practised on a disjointed incrementalism basis, where the physical planning unit is engaged mainly in reacting to physical and environmental problems where reactive and spontaneous decisions are made, and as a result these decisions lacks innovative skills and technology whereby environmental complexities and change are side stepped.

Additionally, the lack of an overall comprehensive blueprint plan to guide the development of areas also hinders the coherent assessment of development applications. Hence, planning applications are reviewed on an individual basis. In light of this, development planning has ceased to function effectively within the Physical Planning Unit causing developments such as land subdivision to occur outside of the planning process. This usually leads to the loss of valuable agricultural lands and/or the location of settlements in marginal and hazard prone areas, as well as, the use of mediocre infrastructural standards and/or there are instances where no infrastructural provisions are made by the developers.

Traditionally, planning has been a political platform and this political process continues to date simply because it:

- Deals with the allocation of land for a specific purpose;
- Seeks to relate economic planning to the physical planning structure of Grenada; and
- Aims to enhance conditions for the community.

All of these variables imply that planning is of a political nature. As such, the development of a comprehensive blueprint plan involves a complex web of interaction between the institutional framework, government and the external pressure from the community, where in most instances, the planner proposes and the politician disposes. As Catanese stated:

**The historic obsession with planning is an advisory role to decision-makers as a satisfying and effective theory is illusory (1974:126).**

Because the decision as stated by Cullingworth (1997):

**Is a political one, even if it is taken by default (p.12).**

Altogether, political forces have proven to be stronger than rationality in Grenada.

### 1.3 Inflexible Development Plans

Flexibility and discretion should be a central parameter to the plan making process in Grenada because planning is about people and good planning is for the people. In Cullingworth's analysis of the nature of planning, he observed that:

**... the UK system...embraces discretion. This allows for flexibility in interpreting the public interest. It is in sharp contrast to other systems which, more typically explicitly aim at reducing such uncertainty (1997:1).**

Ah ha! Comprehensive blueprint planning must guide change, but in guiding change it must be flexible in order to effectively use resources that will fulfil its broad objectives; because Keeble argues that:

**Planning describes a process flexible and subject to change which attempts in advance to arrange for the effective deployment of resources in relation to human needs (1969:3)**

However, because of the rigidity, bureaucracy, high standards<sup>vi</sup> and lack of regard for citizens' views and the political climate in the comprehensive blueprint plans, development demands cannot be met and/or urgent development issues cannot be dealt with.

The problem with inflexible plans is the increasing social issues that arises due deregulation measures and ineffective response to the changing needs of the country in cases where there is skewed settlement development resulting from new patterns of polarisation (St. George's), uneven social growth, demographic imbalances (communities of Lance, Grand Anse Valley, etc.), unemployment, and dependency on a small portion of the population, infrastructural stress<sup>vii</sup> and environmental degradation (especially in the towns of Gouyave, Grenville, St. George's and other coastal communities).

One of the fundamental problems with comprehensive blueprint planning with regards to its level of flexibility is the top-down (directive) approach it takes due to the severe shortage of skilled planners. At this level, the decision-makers limit the amount of information coming to them, which result in higher levels of abstraction and thus create

inflexible plans. Due to this level of abstractness in both concept and application, it is difficult for the general public to even understand most if not the entire plan.

### 1.4 Problems Linked to Issues in Agenda 21

Grenada has a distinct and fragile marine and terrestrial ecosystem that has come under considerable stress in the last four decades because the quest for rapid economic growth and development has been pursued without much regard to sustainable utilisation of the natural environment. Now if these concerns were adequately dealt with in the comprehensive blueprint plans, they wouldn't have to be discussed today. This alone shows that the idea of 'comprehensiveness' is bigger than what the development planners in Grenada can chew.

Environmental concerns though, are a direct consequence of physical development activities, inappropriate land use practices and ignorance of the natural system, the social, cultural and economic factors, which influence the use of these resources. But even though, comprehensive blueprint plans for the island were developed at a time when the concept of sustainable development as highlighted in Agenda 21 was common place; the development streams at that point in time has lead to the pollution of natural resources and the growing manifestation of mangrove and other habitat destruction. (See Table 1.1).

PARISH	POPULATION	ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS (KEY)
St. George's	33,798	Pollution of coastal waters from waste waters, deforestation, squatting, unplanned development
St. John's	9,253	Soil erosion, squatting
St. Mark's	4,081	Improper waste water disposal
St. Patrick's	10,687	Soil erosion, squatting
St. Andrew's	25,505	Pollution of coastal waters, inadequate waste water disposal and management, coastal erosion
St. David's	11,636	Destruction of mangroves
Carriacou & Petite Martinique	6,051	Destruction of mangroves, over-fishing

TABLE 1.1: Environmental Problems in Grenada <sup>viii</sup>(Source: Jessamy, 1997)

The issue is not just development planning or the spatial design of Grenada, but the use of a comprehensive blueprint plan did not take full account of the impacts of the built development on the ecosystems. The challenges are urgent because solving environmental and development conflicts will depend on whether or not the Government

of Grenada find ways of coping with squatting, unplanned development, combating soil erosion and mangrove destruction and coastal pollution.<sup>ix</sup>

Although, the central theme of Agenda 21:

**calls for ...control and regulation of virtually every aspect of human activity that might impact the environment, which is essentially everything humans do UNEP, 1987);**

There are notable defective features of comprehensive blueprint planning in Grenada, which are:

- Appropriate land use policies and regulations weren't formulated to protect eco-sensitive zones against physical disruption by activities of the built environment.<sup>x</sup>
- Programmes to combat deforestation that will assist in the elimination of the risk of soil erosion, maintain water conservation, and biological diversity is lacking.<sup>xi</sup>
- Programmes that should facilitate the protection and management of the oceans and its ecosystems as life-supporting systems is lacking.<sup>xii</sup>

## **1.5 Issues Surrounding Innovative Ways of Dealing With State and Market, and State and the Public**

Healey (1992) stated that:

**The challenge for planning in the 1990's is to 'adapt' not only to new substantive agendas about the environment and how to manage it, but to address new ways of thinking about, the relationship of state and market and state and citizen in the field of land use and environmental change (p.15).**

So, the role of the state in comprehensive blueprint planning involves the formulation of policy/plans where goals and the means of achieving these goals are drawn up, as well as, establish an effective administrative capacity that will manage and deploy the resources needed for plan implementation.

An effective state is vital for the success of new investment activities and development throughout the island because for one, the state provides the basic public goods and fulfils certain core function; some of which includes:

- Ensuring the security of persons and property, education and public awareness;
- Enforcing contracts deemed essential for the market to flourish; as well as
- The promotion of economic and social development.

But the resources provided by the state are tied to good plans and the planning processes, and these funds are easier to obtain if the plan is well developed and shows extensive public involvement. However, comprehensive blueprint planning lacks one of the most important facets of planning - the public (or the participatory) approach. Hence, the plans most often than not fails to attract the most needed resources for both the private and public sector to run profitable activities that area environmentally sound due to the appropriate land use locational decisions.

The market is still the best instrument for realising growth, but due to the changing global economic and social climate, state intervention is of paramount importance. This is needed for the effective formulation of strategies that are capable of adapting and dealing with increasing complex and spatial variables of the state and the market, and the state and the citizens. For example, new advances in technology can create a scope for competition in the service sectors namely the telecommunication and electric power generation companies. However, the means and ends of comprehensive planning are separate. Accordingly, the means to achieve the blueprint requires a series of disconnected programming actions over the time period of the plan, which in most instances do not coincide with the rapidly changing need of the state/market and state/citizens. As such, the challenge of the state within the comprehensive blueprint planning process is to see that there're incentives within the political process and institutional structures so as to improve the environmental, physical and social welfare of the island.

## 1.6 Conclusion

Planning is dynamic and directing growth is a critical task facing the government of Grenada. However, one must realise that comprehensive blue print planning do not eliminate long-standing problems, nor it solves problems retroactively. It is a technocratic approach towards plan making and provides a framework for the future development of the island. As Wildavsky (1987), puts it:

**If planning were judged by results that is, by whether life followed the dictates of the plan, then planning has failed everywhere it has been tried. No one, it turns out has the knowledge to predict sequence of actions and reactions across the realm of public policy, and no one has the power to compel (p.21).**

In planning for the island of Grenada, it is imperative to take cognizant of the fact that everything is related to everything, and that the planning of one sector must be properly co-ordinated with the planning of others. Therefore, development planning may assume an integrated approach taking on new meanings and functions. It should be harmonised, recognising the interconnectedness of all the sectors while alleviating the traditional comprehensive that was once used. This amalgamated approach allows physical planners to recognise the interdependency of all sectors of development so that planning may facilitate positive and substantial growth and development for present and future generations. As such, planning should be:

**Being about land uses, but it is also about the environment, design, economics, law, the needs of the people and communities and communication (<http://www.ac.uk/~ntcp/undgrd.html> p.1)**

Therefore, the attainment of successful land use/development planning in Grenada will require the nuance appreciation of the evolving planning/development issues. As Cullingworth (1997), stated:

**Planning is imperative: only the form it takes is optional (p.12).**

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> The planning functions being discussed are transportation, housing, land use, community facilities, etc.

<sup>ii</sup> This has been summarised from Cooper, 1998. Module 3: Comprehensive and Strategic Planning. Citizen Planner.

<sup>iii</sup> The merits/aims of Comprehensive blueprint planning is: it promotes the orderly and rationale development of the islands resources while ensuring the physical quality of the island improves or remains attractive; It assist in the planning of major physical infrastructural investments and other public facilities and services so as to attract future development within the island; and it helps in solving problems.

<sup>iv</sup> The British Acts at that point in time (1947) were mostly dealing with philanthropic issues and did not embrace all the issues of development planning.

<sup>v</sup> The development plans done in Grenada so far are the Physical Planning Strategy 1977-1990; Sectoral issues paper for the National Physical Development Plan, 1990; and St. George's Development Plan, 1991. However, none of these plans were implemented after it took between 12-18 months of preparation.

<sup>vi</sup> The high standards of comprehensive blueprint plans do not facilitate low-income settlements, hence the proliferation of spontaneous development throughout the island of Grenada.

<sup>vii</sup> One example of infrastructural stress is in the town of St. George's where the sewer lines that were laid down since 1930's when the population was less than two thousand, however, the population within the town has quadrupled and the sewer lines presently cannot accommodate the current load.

<sup>viii</sup> The population data were modified with the use of the population projections made in 2000 by the Physical Planning Unit, Grenada.

<sup>ix</sup> Chapter 10 of Agenda 21 which deals with an integrated approach to the planning of management nad land resources, highlights the necessity of strengthening existing policies, planning and management procedures and methods that can assists in their endeavour.

<sup>x</sup> These issues are discussed in chapter 17 paragraph17.6 of Agenda 21

<sup>xi</sup> The conservation of biological diversity is essential to habitat and ecosystems survival.

<sup>xii</sup> The is part of chapter 17 of Agenda 21 which deals with the protection of the oceans, sea, coastal areas and the protection of rational use and development of their living resources.