

**CITATION:**

**Burns, P.M. and Bibbings, L.J. (2009) The end of tourism? Climate change and societal changes. 21st Century Society, 4 (1): pp. 31-51.**

Master Plans and Master Planning:

Deconstructing Paradise and the lessons from Samoa

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## **Master Plans and Master Planning: Deconstructing Paradise and the lessons from Samoa**

### **Abstract**

Tourism master planning for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has been framed and dominated by donor aid agencies and their executive institutions including the World Bank, various United Nations agencies, and regional development banks as well as the European Union. The paper argues that for the South Pacific, this framing has been a Western construct based, in part, on the myth of paradise and notions of Saidian 'Other.' The Samoa Plan for 1992-2001 is a typical example of this problem, which has wider implications for other SIDS. The paper undertakes, from a historical perspective, a detailed critical analysis of the plan (undertaken by the then EU Tourism Council of the South Pacific) concluding that a) the flaws and contradictions in tourism master planning could have been avoided by a more careful reading of classic planning texts from as early as the 1960s, and b) the plans are too complicated, take little account of local sensibilities, and fail to recognise the balance that needs to be struck between national plans and the regional context in geographic locations where individual island states are, in effect, too small to ignore intra-regional cooperation.

### **Keywords**

Samoa, Tourism Council of the South Pacific, Tourism Master Planning

## INTRODUCTION

The central theme of this paper lies in the idea that tourism master planning for many of the Pacific island nations has followed something of a standard format based on a Western construct that such islands are an earthly form of 'Paradise.' The historic roots of this approach to planning can be traced back to the 1967 World Bank's tourism master plans for Tahiti (Choy, 1991) and Fiji (1973) both of which were undertaken by, essentially, the same Hawaiian-based consulting firm. This master plan approach created something of a mindset on the part of planners was established which, it is argued in this paper, remained well into the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will be argued that in the case of the Pacific, the planning formula and planning mindset, was refined and developed by consultants of the European Union financed Tourism Council of the South Pacific (TCSP). The TCSP approach to tourism development and planning is to be found in Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Fiji. A similar approach to aid assisted planning was also taken by other international companies and organisations in the Marshall Islands (Hoff and Overgaard), Niue (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO), Tonga (Nicholas Clark Associates), and Vanuatu (UNWTO). The four main purposes of this paper are firstly, to provide a detailed historic retrospective of a 'typical' master plan of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, second, to identify cultural traits in foreign tourism master planners, third, through content and text analysis of a particular tourism plan to deliver a 'thick' rather than 'thin' analysis (Geertz 1973) of the planning process and finally to extend the research by conceptualising how flaws in the master planning process might more easily be identified and thus rectified.

Content analysis of these and other master plans (Burns 2004), reading between the lines so to speak, reveals different agendas and social dynamics between planners, national counterparts and recipients. For example, in the case of Tuvalu, the Tourism Development Plan (TCSP, 1992) begins with a foreword by the Minister responsible for tourism who introduces the plan by acknowledging that 'this Plan has addressed these [socio-cultural/ environmental] issues comprehensively and recommends a model and strategy for sustainable development of tourism in our country' (TCSP, 1992:viii). Such forewords are not present in the Solomon Islands (Burns 2004) or Samoan (the focus of the present paper) tourism plans. This may seem a small matter, but in societies still framed by heavily ritualised communications these 'small matters' help inform an understanding of the dynamic between the foreign advisors and host governments: in

the case of Samoa, the *avalonga* or talking, 'orator' chiefs remain, as it will be seen, of supreme importance.

In the case of 1992 Samoa, the government took action on restructuring the national tourism office (NTO); contracted a full-time adviser on a two year contract, funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat, hired an *avalonga* to act as education manager, and recruited a number of young, university educated Samoans to implement the Plan. These new recruits however, had their own agenda for tourism and soon developed their own, low-impact, approach to tourism, which will be discussed in the penultimate part of this paper.

### *Tourism planning for Small Island Developing States*

Thinking specifically about tourism and planning in Small Island Developing States (SIDS in UN parlance) is a useful activity, because SIDS do constitute a relatively distinct subset of the wider debate surrounding tourism and its impacts. There are links to be drawn between corporate strategic thinking of multinational tourism companies (such as hotel groups and airlines) and the ability (or lack thereof) of governments to implement complex plans. Islands have certain shared characteristics in terms of industrial growth and diversification, which place them in a very low position within the international political economy. These typical characteristics include, as Milne (1992) points out, high transportation costs which raise the price of imports and places exports at a competitive disadvantage, employment characterized by a limited skills base and reliance on expatriates, limited land mass and physical distance from markets, and finally small, fragmented domestic markets that lack 'critical mass'

Such economies are characterised by the acronym 'MIRAB' (Watters 1984, and see Milne, 1992 for an application within the tourism context of the Cook Islands). They comprise: *outward migration* (MI); a dependence on high levels of *remittances* resulting from the migration (R); *overseas aid* (A) receipts (often from former colonial/ administrative power) to cover trade deficits, and a reliance on the *bureaucracy* (i.e. the government) (B) for job creation. For many island microstates this situation is, along with fishing, tourism and perhaps offshore banking, the only option for economic stability. Government planning will often incorporate measures to diversify the economy, and typically have goals related to achieving independent financial viability and trying not to neglect outer islands or interior regions. Tourism, along with limited agriculture and fishing, can help government work towards achieving these aspirations. In relation to tourism, governments will have strategies that promote healthy working relationships between private and public sector, incentives and strategies to upgrade tourism sector standards,

encouraging international air capacity, and promoting the destination through public-private sector marketing collaboration.

Access to destinations within the South Pacific region is dominated by airlines (an obvious point) but in general terms, Butler and Waldbrook (1991:9) describe access as the 'result of a combination of physical transportation linkages as well as the accessibility provided by ease of purchase'. Their next point, which sets out to make a link between choice of destination for adventurer travellers and the ease of access (the point being that for adventurers, difficulty of access is an added attraction) is one of the framing factors for the characteristic of island tourism. Milne (1992) observes that in the foreseeable future, the reality for MIRAB countries of the South Pacific, this access situation is almost the only viable economic option: national flag-carrier airlines subsidised by the state are rapidly becoming objects of economic derision and highly vulnerable to World Trade Organisation rules.

#### SAMOA, AND ITS PACIFIC CONTEXT

Samoa is Polynesian. Crocombe (1989:20) describes the points of Polynesia in geographic terms as being triangulated by 'New Zealand at the bottom, Hawaii at the top and Easter Island in the far east.' Crocombe goes on to identify Polynesian countries as having shared cultural characteristics, the three most obvious features of which are the importance attached to ascribed status within stratified societies, controlled marriage alliances within high status families, and the strong links between ascribed social status and power.

The economic characteristics of Polynesia are framed by a relative scarceness of basic resources, which has led to symbolic and spiritual links between the environment and culture. With regard to this, it was observed during the field trip, that references to the metaphysical links between land, sea and sky were frequently used as conversational metaphors. As a matter of cultural contextualisation, this is much less the case in the Melanesian countries (*inter alia* Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands) with their diversity of produce, products and land masses. The general uniformity of land, coupled with the lack of land masses in central Polynesia (i.e. Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Tokelau, Niue), has created a lack of competitiveness amongst tribal or clan groupings over natural endowments and resources, 'most of Polynesia... was comprised of small, relatively uniform islands where similar commodities were generally available in each district or accessible island' (Crocombe, 1989:119). This, according to Crocombe, has led to a lack of trade development and low volume of trade, which is manifested in cultural barriers to exploiting capitalism. In Polynesia, exchange and especially redistribution has been dominated by ritualised

contact, for example through wedding ceremonies and funerals. Finally, in common with the rest of the Pacific, Polynesia's history and destiny is framed by colonialism where 'Islanders withdrew from active participation in the economy, apart from being passive labourers, passive buyers of bully beef, passive producers of fruit or copra' (Crocombe, 1989:121).

In the past, Samoa had a reputation for cultural conservatism (Crocombe, 1987) but as O'Meara identifies:

it is clearer now in hindsight that the causes of the apparent conservatism of the colonial era lay not so much within Samoan culture itself as in the economic and political backwardness of the times. While Samoans often resist changes imposed from the outside, they have also shown an ability to modify their culture from within to adapt to changing times (1987:75).

In a more specific sense, this ability to modify has been manifested in changes to traditional land tenure systems that 'restrict the number of people who may claim a particular plot to those individuals who cleared the land and their direct descendants rather than allowing the wider extended family' (O'Meara, 1987:111). The implication of this for development is that 'the administration of any plot is kept in a small number of hands [and thus enables Samoans] to respond to economic incentives' (O'Meara, 1987:75). This however, is a somewhat optimistic view given the highly complex relationship between Samoans and their land.

#### *Tourism in Samoa at the time of the Plan*

Tourism in Samoa at the time of the plan is a matter of historical record, but in brief (and to provide a historic context, there being no intention to discuss the present state of tourism in Samoa), the pattern for visitor arrivals in the decade 1984–1994 was inconsistent, as table 1 illustrates.

#### **INSERT Table 1 international visitor arrivals to Samoa 1984–1994**

Tropical cyclones Ofa (February 1990) and Val (December 1991) along with recession in New Zealand and Australia, which, apart from the neighbouring country of American Samoa, were at the time Samoa's main markets, accounted for some of the variations.

Table 2 provides a snapshot of tourists by purpose of visit. The table shows that the German market generated the highest proportion of pleasure visitors this is probably accounted for in the folk memories that remain in both countries following Germany's colonisation of Samoa (1900–1914).

### **INSERT Table 2 visitor arrivals by purpose of visit (as percentage) 1991**

The end column of table 2 shows that for 1991, only 34 per cent of visitors were pleasure tourists. Not surprisingly, given the strong Polynesian cultural and modern migratory patterns of the Pacific, American Samoa and New Zealand generated a high proportion of VFR traffic. Insofar as tourism and the economy are concerned, this profile is illustrated under four categories in table 3.

### **INSERT Table 3 multipliers and the Samoan tourism economy (1986, 1990)**

In common with many of the MIRAB economies, tourism represents one of the few options with the potential to increase GDP. In 1990 tourism accounted for over 17 per cent of Samoa's foreign exchange receipts. In the early-mid 1990s, tourism played an important role in its economy, earning more than the entire merchandise export sector, and contributing usefully towards servicing the national trade deficit.

#### *TCSP's Samoa Tourism Development Plan 1992-2001: analysis*

Within its overall development context, the government of Samoa identified the following six issues as being fundamental to its development planning: employment; external balances; sources of growth; land use; economic efficiency; (and) regional imbalances (page 35 of the Western Samoa Development Plan 6, 1988-90, referred to here as WSDP6). Given tourism's broad range of economic impacts, it is not surprising that the government saw it as having potential to have a positive input into all of these factors. The TCSP Tourism Development Plan was framed by the existing Samoan government's policies on tourism. These, and the TCSP responses to them, will be described. Like most developing countries, Samoa follows the practice of preparing Development Plans. At the time the TCSP Plan was written, the government's policies were officially noted in WSDP6, with the overall policy on tourism is stated thus:

Present government policy on tourism places considerable importance on the tourism industry as a means of accelerating real economic growth. Although rapid development of the sector is encouraged, the need for controlled growth is recognised and is sought through appropriate tourism development policies and strategies that would minimise any radical social changes to the traditional way of life and social relations of the country. It is however recognised that tourism will continue to effect change in the same manner as will other economic developments. (WSDP6, 1988:93, cited in TCSP, 1992:51)

The last sentence is instructive in that it fails to recognise tourism's special social impacts that social changes occur not merely through the process of modernity and the introduction of a wage economy, though these too will have their changes as consumption patterns become distorted and ownership of material goods becomes an issue. The next extract acknowledges the importance of economic linkages:

The development of tourism is seen in the long-run to be a potentially viable means of diversifying the production front. While this potential has been evidenced over the past years through... the apparent substantial contributions of tourism earnings to the balance of payments, the realisation of greater net benefits to the country... calls for a carefully devised tourism development programme that emphasises the linkages with other sectors of the economy (WSDP6:96, cited in TCSP, 1992:51)

But few strategies appear to have been developed to promote this policy, with the exception of an attempt through ecotourism, which, because of its village/ rural location has a natural affinity with maximum linkages and minimum imports.

The WSDP6 identified five broad objectives for tourism which are cited here:

1. to generate employment and increased local income through providing greater opportunities for active local participation in tourism development;
2. to enhance and preserve Samoa's rich cultural heritage and beautiful natural environment, both of which provide important types of tourist attractions;
3. to promote the expansion of other economic sectors through developing and improving the linkages with those sectors;
4. to retain a higher share of tourist expenditures in the local economy; (and)
5. to increase the level of tourism awareness among local people and visitors to Samoa (WSDP6:96, cited in TCSP, 1992:51).

The Plan discusses these policy statements, observing that 'The weakness of DP6 is its failure to match this policy with appropriate and effective strategies and programmes for product planning, and investment in facility development' (TCSP, 1992:51). The Plan provides a brief reflection on this issue under the theme 'Policy into Action' (TCSP, 1992:51) concluding that the poor growth record and performance of Samoan tourism might be the result of unofficial ambivalence towards

tourism on the part of government, as was the case in Fiji up until the mid-1980s. The discussion is capped by an unusually strong, seemingly critical, statement, which is reproduced here:

The main conclusion that clearly emerges... is that what is needed is not so much a new basic tourism policy, but a detailed definition of practicable strategies and programmes designed to overcome all those constraints that are believed to have impeded growth in the past. Given political commitment to develop tourism, both the public and private sectors of the industry need to be equipped with a feasible plan of action. (TCSP, 1992:52).

It is interesting to note the planners' easy dismissal of policy, the inference to be made is the level of frustration that arises when working in what is perceived to be an amorphous, ambivalent atmosphere. From an 'insider' position, as consultant, the present author knows that this passage is heavily encoded; the planners continue:

It is, therefore, the central task of this... plan to address all the constraints identified above – lack of investment, inefficient administration of incentives machinery, institutional inadequacies, insufficient funding of the [NTO], lack of airline marketing support – as well as other related issues, and propose specific practical measures to deal with each one effectively (TCSP, 1992:52).

In the following section the TCSP Plan will be further examined and inferences drawn from it. This is a process where nuances are important; the process of 'reading between the lines' is one way of assessing attitudes, relationships and mindsets.

The TCSP Plan was financed through the EU's Pacific Regional Tourism Development Programme (PRTDP) with a team assembled and led by TCSP foreign advisers. The Plan was published (in two volumes) in April 1992. The government had four main purposes in commissioning the Plan. First, to enable it to make a clear policy choice and demonstrate a commitment to the development of the tourism sector; secondly, to equip itself with a strategic 10 year plan including a medium term action programme designed to achieve a step-by-step, managed expansion of the tourism sector as part of an integrated overall economic development plan; thirdly, to enable the government to attract outside donor assistance for tourism infrastructure and other projects, and finally, to acquire a much needed and effective tool for tourism investment promotion (WSVB archives)

What is interesting about these four purposes is that they are almost identical to the government objectives cited by TCSP in their preparation of the earlier Solomon Islands Plan. On the one hand, it could be that government purposes would be similar for many countries at comparable stages of development, but on the other, it begs the question ‘whose aims are these?’ Like the Solomon Islands Plan, the Samoa Plan is also in two volumes with the main report containing the detail. In the case of Samoa, this comprises thirty chapters under the following nine sections: Natural, Socio–Cultural and Economic Environment; Tourism Resources; Market Analysis; The Tourism Development Plan; Guidelines for Plan Implementation; Institutional Framework and Human Resources; Tourism marketing and Promotion; Financial and Economic Analysis; (and) Action Programme.

The appendices contained a number of additional detailed inputs, including guidelines for environmental impact assessment, institutional guidelines for the NTO, and a model development scheme for a beach resort. The study was divided up amongst an eight-member team. The team leader took responsibility for tourism planning and organisation. The remaining team members each took responsibility for: economic and financial analysis; physical environment; physical planning and architecture; education and training, socio–cultural matters; marketing and promotions, and statistics, forecasting and transport. In addition, a Fiji based construction firm gave advice on resort construction costs.

The general approach is illustrated in Figure 1, the Process of Tourism Planning for Samoa which has been designed around the dates and methodology of planning as stated within the Plan’s text.

**INSERT Figure 1 the process of tourism planning for Samoa**

Although the level of consultation with the government is seen in Figure 1 as relatively high, it may also be observed that at a lower level, no particular mention is made of meetings with clan or village leaders, priests or other community/ grass roots institutions or individuals. This may simply be an oversight in the matter of describing the planners’ approach and methodology, but even if this is the case, it is a significant omission and that it provides a insight into the mindset of the planners, i.e. that such consultations, if they took place, were of minor significance. If local people at a village level were not consulted, then it may be further suggested that the Plan is seriously undermined. For a socially complex sector such as tourism, ‘carrying’ or persuading the local population has to be at a deeper level than the proposed public awareness programme. However, when this approach is taken in the context of the Plan’s entirety, a somewhat more positive picture emerges. It becomes apparent that some very careful sociological field research was carried out. For instance, in the advice given on village–based tourism contains warnings that

‘it may become detrimental if not planned, monitored and controlled’ (TCSP, 1992:110) and that the balance to be struck between occasional visitors and disruption to normal village life, which at times is very structured and ritualistic, ‘is a very delicate one’ (TCSP, 1992:111). The Plan continues with a very distinct policy statement:

In general, visitor accommodation within villages should be avoided or severely restricted. Individuals, families or whole communities may very well operate visitor accommodation facilities outside their villages, thus ensuring physical separation between routine village life and tourist activity (TCSP, 1992:111)

In addition, the tourism strategy, the chapter of the Plan that frames its whole approach, answering the questions of ‘how, where, and when tourism should take place’ (TCSP, 1992:107) continues in this theme by identifying two key guiding principles ‘which are at the heart of the whole process of strategy formulation’ (TCSP, 1992:107):

First, the need to achieve a qualitative and geographical balance of product development. The country lacks beach resort facilities and is thus unable to capture a share of important markets...The second... affects the designation of development centres and sites. The human settlement patterns in Samoa reflect a concentration of the population on coastal areas, with villages adjacent to the foreshore. Frequently, highly attractive beach locations are within such villages. *This plan considers the relocation of populations for the purposes of freeing land areas for tourism development as inappropriate and unnecessary* (TCSP, 1992:107–8, italics added)

This last (italicised) sentence is very important as it makes the position of the planners unambiguous, and whatever other shortcomings exist within the Plan, including those that have been identified with the benefit of hindsight, this at least recognises the foolhardiness of trying to separate or alienate Samoans from their land.

Accommodation in Samoa at the time of the plan was dominated by the two largest properties that made up 51 per cent of the available rooms. They were both in Apia on the main island of Upolu. The first hotel, Aggie Grey’s has legendary status among travellers in the Pacific. It continues to be a well-run family business. The second, the Kitano Tusitala is owned by the same Japanese company (Kitano) that owns the Mendana Hotel in the Solomon Islands. All the remaining accommodation is small-scale as table 4 illustrates.

#### INSERT Table 4 tourist accommodation in Samoa (February 1992)

From table 4, it can be clearly seen that tourism in Samoa at the time was at an early stage of development. It could also be deduced that there are only four hotels with more than 30 rooms. The Plan is somewhat dismissive of these small properties, describing the large majority of them as having ‘Substantial qualitative deficiencies... both in terms of physical facilities and standards of service’ (TCSP, 1992:71). In another passage describing such accommodation units, the Plan uses language that reveals a mindset unfavourable to these Polynesian micro-businesses, and a misunderstanding of, or lack of sympathy towards, the budget traveller or tourist who wants low key accommodation, ‘the smaller establishments have a tendency to include more than two beds per room, *presumably to provide communal accommodation for budget travellers*’ (TCSP, 1992:70, italics added).

The Plan made five further observations. First, that there was very little by way of new accommodation being planned; secondly, that accommodation was unevenly distributed with 92 per cent of rooms concentrated in and around Apia; thirdly, that ‘a large proportion of smaller units, often with sub-standard facilities and services, cannot be effectively used for tourist promotional services.’ The next point concerned the lack of a major beach resort, a situation which is described in the Plan as being a ‘lopsided structure’ which was seen as a ‘major drawback [and a] vital missing link in the total tourist product of Samoa, which has deprived it of the opportunity of being a larger tourist destination in the South Pacific Region.’ The final point contrasts the relatively high proportion of business travellers with the low standards of business support services (secretarial, meeting rooms, communication facilities) offered (TCSP, 1992:71).

The Plan’s dismissive attitude towards the small operations, which are invariably owned and operated by Samoans is captured in this description, ‘Too small to be operationally and financially viable... the tour operators and travel agents in tourist generating markets will be normally disinclined to promote and sell such marginal facilities by including them in their tour packages’ (TCSP, 1992:71). From a development perspective, what is troubling about this is the complete acceptance of the status quo, and lack of imaginative response. The planning approach, as seen in action here, is to assume a standardised norm and measure local performance against that. While there may be a ‘rational’ logic to this, such rationality disintegrates if the solutions cannot include i) an alternative appraisal of visitor types, i.e. the likely response of visitors to such ‘inadequate’ facilities, and ii) an alternative approach to justifying what is meant by ‘viable’ in the sense that viability might have different meanings to a European accountant or tourism planner than for a Samoan family. Insofar as the first point is concerned, the Plan highlights a

significant failing in the TCSP's other activity for Samoa: its periodic visitor surveys. Here, the Plan quite rightly points out the distortion in responses to survey questions concerning visitor satisfaction when 'a fairly high proportion of tourists [stay] at Aggie Grey's and Tusitala' (the two main hotels). Again, no notion of changing either the relationship between the visitor survey and its role as a management information system or of suggesting a survey that pinpoints consumer perception of the establishments dismissed as inadequate. On the second point, Samoan attitudes towards money come a definite third behind church and family. One interpretation of this is that the function of a business is to provide a living for the family. Thus, if the business enhances agricultural or fishing activities, or if one or two members of the family hold salaried jobs, then total income for the family is sufficient, making the business just one part of an economically viable family unit.

In discussing visitor attractions, the Plan focuses mainly on two areas: natural and cultural assets, which are stated as being able to 'provide the basis for the related activities undertaken by visitors, [and] are the foundation on which the future development of the tourist industry will be based' (TCSP, 1992:53). The chapter goes on in some detail to give an assessment of the tourist potential of a number of specific natural locations. These are summarised as table 5.

**INSERT Table 5 specific natural attractions listed in the Plan**

One feature of table 5 is its focus on beaches even though Samoa has no particular reputation for them. It is almost as if a sort of geographical stereotype is being cast upon Samoa, because it is an island its tourism should revolve around beaches. This inference is difficult to prove or measure scientifically, but nonetheless provides interesting colour to the overall picture, and a useful observation on the mindset of these particular tourism planners.

The Plan also identified a number of key determinants that would frame the potential for tourism development and growth; two words incidentally, used synonymously: implying that tourism development and tourism growth are the same thing, which they are not. Table 6 summarises what the Plan said about these determinants.

**INSERT Table 6 determinants of tourism development as described in the Plan**

There are tensions between the development determinants listed in table 6, best illustrated by the demand for growth against the acknowledgement of the need to protect cultural and environmental resources. The tensions are also evident in the necessity of slow and reasoned growth to protect Samoa's cultural heritage and the need for speedy planning approvals. In

attempting to clarify and rationalise these conflicting issues, the planners defined the tourism development concept as follows:

Western Samoa will undertake a planned, orderly and sustainable development of its tourism sector as part of an integrated national economic development programme. It will do so by developing, through private sector initiatives, a balanced and qualitative tourist product based on the country's beautiful natural environment and unique cultural heritage, and aiming at moderate yet steady rate of growth. This will result in manageable volumes of visitor inflows consistent with the country's environmental and socio-cultural carrying capacity, while at the same time optimising the sector's economic benefits to the community at large (TCSP, 1992:110).

The Plan develops this mission statement by further elaborating the development strategy, mainly around a low-volume, high-yield philosophy, and ends the section by stating with great certainty that the development concept did not include the country 'becoming a mass tourist destination, or [developing] large scale resorts and other large scale tourist facilities' (TCSP, 1992:110).

#### *Tourism Development Concept: a Critique*

While there are areas of the Plan which seem to be thought through, including the comments on village-based tourism as noted above and also the section on environmental aspects, there remains something of a familiar paradox in stating on the one hand that Polynesian culture 'provides one of the principal attractions for tourists' (TCSP, 1992:1) and on the other the frequent references to beaches or, more significantly, the lack of beach resorts. For example, a passage in the executive summary states:

Failure to achieve greater penetration of the leisure/ holiday travel [is due in part to an] inability to provide the necessary tourist product range, e.g. beach resorts to attract major potential markets [and] lack of sufficient international standard accommodation facilities (TCSP, 1992:2).

This is revealing in that it repeats patterns seen elsewhere (Fiji, Eritrea, Ghana) of planners paying lip service to the importance of cultural heritage and disaggregated/ differentiated tourism while actually promoting what amounts to a homogenised destination that can be found anywhere: the basic bundle of benefits that includes sun, sand and sea. For example, the product strategy suggested is, to cite directly from the Plan:

To effect an all-round upgrading led by a small number of pace-setting beach resorts... new beach resort hotels should be the pivotal facilities around which the industry should provide products... for tourists engaged in the following types of tourism:

- beach resort, single destination holidays and honeymoon travel;
- touring and sightseeing travel;
- pleasure cruising and sailing;
- scuba diving;
- sport fishing (including deep sea);
- adventure tours, e.g. trekking;
- nature tours- to see and learn about flora, wildlife and marine life; and
- meetings and conferences (TCSP, 1992:237).

These products seem like a list of vacation attractions that could apply to any tropical destination, nothing unique is offered. Given that on the next page of the Plan which details the Market Strategy, the important source markets are listed as Australia and New Zealand, North America, Europe and Japan, this broad swathe of tourist products and equally broad swathe of markets (in fact the above list of markets surely represents all major global markets) there is little evidence to suggest a genuine attempt at creating a differentiated product for highly selected markets, or as the Plan puts it '[to] follow a policy of "low-volume, high-yield" traffic, and attract discerning and environmentally and culturally aware visitors' (TCSP, 1992:3). As in the case of the Solomon Islands, Samoa has a host of attractions that some would find attractive, but it is not a destination for everyone. The product strategy seems to suggest the gradual development of a destination with the same range of attractions as elsewhere in the Pacific.

The search for 'discerning tourists' as the Plan describes them is not, it appears, a message that has got through to the travel trade. In the middle of Virgin Territory's 1994 holiday brochure The California Collection (Virgin Holidays collateral which features California, Hawaii and other US destinations), under the headline 'In Search of Paradise,' Samoa is described as being 'impossible to do justice to within the context of a short introduction' but that:

If your dream of the far Pacific Isles is one of smiling people, of warm sunlit islands where time has stood still, then Western Samoa will not disappoint you. Robert Louis Stevenson lived, loved and died here... You will find no “commercialism” in Samoa. Amazingly our “Western Lifestyle” does not prevail. Crime is virtually non-existent and strangers are welcomed with legendary hospitality. In “town” you will be greeted with a smile but in villages you will be welcomed with pride like a returning family member. For each village is one extended “family” and your presence will be an honour for that family (Virgin Holidays Annual Brochure, 1994).

These generalities are wrong. They are at odds with the complex social rules whereby a Samoan family will ‘adopt’ a visiting stranger, but this is to protect that stranger on the basis that not to have a family is to be a nobody, a situation described by travel writer Paul Theroux in the following terms:

Having a local family gave you status and protection. Samoans quite freely co-opted strangers and made them part of the family... if you were alone on the islands and did not know anyone you would be victimized... The family looked after itself but was indifferent to the plight of other families (Theroux, 1992:335–6).

Virgin Holiday’s description of Apia (Samoa’s capital) as ‘the most charming and unspoiled in all Polynesia’ contrasts richly with Theroux’s perception of the town, which he describes as:

The squalid harbor town... [which] seemed to me mournfully rundown, with broken roads and faded and peeling paint on its ill-assorted wooden buildings, and Samoans rather gloatingly rude and light-fingered, quoting the Bible as they picked your pocket (Theroux, 1992:324)

While Theroux’s well known cynicism means that descriptions by him should be taken with caution, his work nonetheless provides a powerful contrast with the vacuous descriptions found in the tourist brochures and the market-oriented blandness found in the TCSP Plan.

#### *Some Flaws & Contradictions in Tourism Master Planning*

While evidence from a single plan studied with the benefit of unfolded history, hindsight and passing references to some others within the same region is not sufficient to conclude that traditional tourism master planning approach is fundamentally flawed, it may be argued that

processes originally developed for urban and regional planning (Chadwick, 1978, Faludi, 1973) have been interpreted in a narrow, product-led way that places 'true' knowledge as resting with consultants and industry at the centre of tourism planning which failed to integrate the well argued social components of planning. The ethos of such urban and regional planning as described by Glass (in Faludi, 1973:63) in a paper originally written in 1957, is 'the rational and just pursuit of the public interest.' The case of Samoa seems to offer little evidence that this philosophy formed any part of the planning process. Glass continues:

It is undoubtedly the ideology of planning, far more than the techniques of design and administration, which needs to be considered and advanced. Planning without social policy does not make sense, and social policy without systematic thought and research is liable to become meaningless and eventually unacceptable (Glass, cited in Faludi 1973:67).

There seems no discernible ideology in the tourism planning that occurred in the case presented here, apart from the ideology of the market place. Bolan (1973:371) expands on Glass' work by noting the 'special demands for awareness of the complex decision web in which the planner must function.' Bolan continues by suggesting that community involvement in planning should be part of planning culture, 'since its rules, customs, and actors determine the fate of the community planning proposals.'

While Bolan is undoubtedly correct in this assertion, this quote highlights the important difference between urban and regional planning as discussed in Faludi's / Chadwick's works and tourism planning advice given to Less Developed Countries; as foreigners and outsiders, the planners cannot be described as a part of the community, especially in the light of difficulties encountered over an agreed definition of 'community'.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The over-riding paradox that emerges from an examination of the Samoa Plan is the difference between the generalised rhetoric concerning the need to develop a differentiated tourist product in terms of culture and nature, and the realities contained within the Plan with regard to its intense focus, or even a pre-occupation with beaches. The present author remains somewhat critical of the TCSP's tourism planning in Samoa, even though there is evidence to support the coming of a sea-change, especially in the way in which cultural matters and land issues were addressed.

However, the second approach, ecotourism, does show the dangers that arise from a weak grasp of industry requirements. Examining the archive material available in Apia on this approach gives a strong sense of self-indulgence, or 'ego-tourism' as Wheeler (1993) has termed it, where the development issue is as much in second place as it is with other forms of tourism planning (Burns, 1999); the focus this time being on the egos of potential tourists rather than a focus on the needs of the locale. What is evident from the analysis of tourism planning for Samoa is the need for a way that enables the existing strong social institutions and village structures present in Samoa to lead the process of development.

In a more general sense, the contradictions and tensions described above seem to suggest that master planning is not sustainable from four important viewpoints. First, from a technical perspective, such plans are too complicated, involve far too much commitment from government in the form of financial and human resources. Apart from being used as a reference from time-to-time, a number of such plans 'sit and gather dust on ministry shelves.' The classic example of the genre remains the 1973 Fiji Plan which was elaborate, and based around totally unrealistic investment needs and which took absolutely no account of local capacities to implement their plan.

The second flaw in traditional tourism master planning is that by their very nature plans produced under this culture encourage a reductionist, homogenising approach where, in effect, destinations are developed and changed to meet the requirements of familiar market segments and tourists.

Evidence based on field research in a number of countries suggests that steering committees are almost without exception, technical in nature. They are dominated by representatives of government and are industry biased. This is further emphasised when the World Tourism Organisation's description of the tourism planning process (WTO, 1994:66-71) and the 'Checklist of the Major Elements of a National or Regional Tourism Plan' contain no meaningful discussions about participation in planning and decision-making.

Fourthly, master plans are by their very nature, limited by national boundaries. The process of planning will inevitably involve setting up mechanisms that place countries in competition with each other. Bounded by the increasingly irrelevant concept of national borders, master plans rarely take cognisance of intra-regional possibilities, international networking and co-operative measures to combat the power of transnational corporations. A possible exception to this has been the EU regional aid given to the Caribbean and Pacific, but in the case of the latter, a curious anomaly arose in that the individual master plans produced by the TCSP were not regionally focused. So, while the purpose of TCSP at the time was to take a regional perspective on tourism

development, that philosophy was not carried over into TCSP assisted national planning as demonstrated by the case study of Samoa. So, while global trends in patterns of travel consumption can be taken into account when planning within the national boundaries, serious doubts arise over the ability of national plans to be implemented in the face of the business planning from multi-national or global airlines and service providers.

The complex relationships between planners and 'planees' (the official recipients of the planners' efforts) and the South Pacific Paradise syndrome can be placed within the Saidian concept of 'Other' whereby Edward Said (1978) in discussing positional superiority 'which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the upper hand' (1978:7) made a telling point. While Samoa is not the Orient, there is no doubt that Margaret Meade's attentions have created images about the simplicity and sexuality of Samoa, which remain part of Western consciousness in relation to Polynesia. Malinowski's 'Sexual Lives of Savages' (first published in 1929) though about Melanesia not Polynesia, also adds to the social construct that frames outside images of the South Pacific. Robert Louis Stevenson or Tusitala ('writer of stories') added his own chapter to the foreigner's perception of Samoa. Arthur Grimble (1970, first published 1952) in his 'Pattern of Islands' (an autobiographical account of time spent as a colonial District Officer in the Gilbert Islands) describes one encounter with a 'pretty, golden-brown girl' who had 'the brilliant laughter of her race, carefree and golden voiced' (Grimble, 1970:186. Further afield, Hutt (1996) in his discussion of the influence of James Hilton's novel, *Lost Horizon* on western perceptions of the Himalaya, makes a point similar to that of Said about images of 'exotic' places being formed and then used to confirm positions of power. No doubt Hutt's notion of the role of fiction in image formation could be applied to the movie *South Pacific* with its emphasis on Polynesian 'beauties.' The travel writer Paul Theroux, captures the spirit of this argument while reflecting on the role that Robert Louis Stevenson had in creating an image of Samoa:

A place that has been described in a novel by such a person is given a power of bewitchment that it never really loses no matter how much its reality changes... fiction has the capacity to make an ordinary place seem special (Theroux, 1992:324).

If this general argument about perception and preconceptions of place carries any weight, then it must apply to foreign consultants who may subconsciously view locals as exotic unspoilt beings, and on the part of locals who may view the foreign 'expert' as a *font* [or fount?] of irrefutable knowledge. In mentioning this cultural framing, the present author as both scholar and consultant

may inevitably (i.e. through a process of comparative cultural referencing) be drawn into seeing people as 'Other.' The question of how consultants use national counterparts assigned to them for the duration of a project, or how researchers interact with local informants, is not something to be pursued here, but it is useful to raise the question in order to make the point that the observations and conclusions will be viewed, as Hutt (1996) suggests, through, the distorting lens of the observer's culture.

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