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We navel-string bury here: Landscape history, representation and identity in the Grenada islandscape

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Abstract

“We Navel-String Bury Here”: Landscape History, Representation and Identities in the Grenada Islandscape.

Identities are by their nature restless, complicated by our unique historical chronologies and cultures that often either support or hinder our search to become ourselves. This study explores the process of identity creation in the Caribbean archipelagic space by examining the last five centuries of Grenada’s layered history through detailing and analyzing the major human-environment interactions that have transformed its landscape, particularly following the invasion of Europeans since the 17th century and the establishment of plantation agriculture and slavery (utilizing enslaved Africans and their descendants), village settlements and subsistence agriculture, and much later tourism. It will analyze its landscape transformations by examining land use and settlement patterns of its human occupants from the Indigenous Kali’nago to its current inhabitants via the concept of creolization. Centuries of interactions between and among these various groups of people and the Grenadian environment have created a landscape best described as a palimpsest where layer upon layer of interactions intertwine, overwrite and blend with each other through time. Yet leaving glimpses or blurred pictures of impacts in various and discernable ways, thus creating a long-term biography of this islandscape. By examining the Grenadian palimpsest and analyzing the concept of landscape identity through historical representations and *memory-traces* embedded in the Creole cultural landscape this study explores the relationship between people and the landscape over time.

This dissertation takes a multidisciplinary approach because of its far-reaching objectives of exploring land use, landscape biography, landscape identity and sense of place in the Grenada islandscape by analyzing the thesis question: What can the life history or landscape biography of a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) like Grenada tell us about how people convey value to the landscape through their various representations and *memory-traces*, and how sense of place and identities are created in this creolizing islandscape? By bringing together extensive local knowledge and experiences, this study will utilize a diversity of disciplines, including landscape studies, anthropology, heritage studies, archaeology, historical research, economic history, and humanistic geography to examine multiple data

sets via Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS) mapping and spatial analysis to generate outcomes on land use/land cover over multiple historical periods. This study of land use and landscape change will produce a comprehensive biography of Grenada's historical landscape that will also inform agriculture, heritage, and the environment. These are needed as Grenada enters a new phase in its development while confronted by difficult and increasing environmental or rather societal concerns like climate change and coastal degradation, and how to achieve sustainable economic development for its ever-growing population within this seemingly bounded isandscape.