# Histories of placemaking in the Gold Coast City: The neoliberal norm, the State story and the community narrative

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## Abstract

The Gold Coast City is Australia's fourth largest touristed city. This paper is a case study of placemaking, 'tourism urbanisation' and its counterpart 'community urbanisation', on the Southport Spit; the last remnant of undeveloped public open space in the Gold Coast City. In touristed cities like the Gold Coast histories of tourism urbanisation predominate and other placemaking histories are largely marginalised or erased. We seek to address this outcome by relating a story of community urbanisation on the Southport Spit, a story that emerged because of tourism urbanisation. The histories related demonstrate that within an overarching, dominant urbanisation discourse local everyday placemaking practices flourish and have effect. The paper concludes with possibilities for recognising and acknowledging these other practices of urbanisation.

Keywords: placemaking, urbanisation, tourism, everyday

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## Introduction

The landscapes of the Gold Coast City have been subject to continual reinvention, change and transformation (Wise and Breen, 2004; Wise, 2006; Griffin, 2006). Patricia Wise (2006, p. 177) writes: 'The City of the Gold Coast is largely a product of the second half of the twentieth century, continually remaking itself physically, and refusing to settle as an idea.' The Gold Coast City is located on the eastern coast of Australia in the south east corner of the State of Queensland; about 75 kilometres southeast of the State's capital city, Brisbane. It is not a conventional city, it has no urban core or centre. The region, named the Gold Coast City, has grown over the last 60-70 years from a number of small seaside holiday and rural settlements into a linear conglomerate approximately 80 kilometres long and 12 kilometres wide (Spearritt, 2004; Spearritt, 2009). The Gold Coast City has been given as a leading example of 'tourism urbanisation' defined as 'the process whereby urban areas, particularly large cities, are specially developed for the production, sale and consumption of goods and services providing pleasure' (Weaver and Lawton, 2004, p. 286). In this scenario, tourism urbanisation is liked to meta or hyper-neoliberal discourses; hegemonic, market driven and market led.

Drawing on Booth (2006) hyper-neoliberalism emerges when neoliberalism and its companions, globalisation, competition and consumption, are taken to the extreme. Hyper-neoliberalism is defined by a sustained downsizing of Government in many areas of traditional involvement and an increasing reliance on private enterprise and not for profit organizations to deliver goods and services once provided by Government. In this scenario, continued high rates of economic and population growth and a large, vibrant and innovative private sector keep the growth machine turning over, and the city becomes 'rootless and memoryless' (Booth, 2006, p. 56). Booth (2006, p. 57) argues that in this hyper-neoliberal view, public management is expressed as 'reiterative free engagements' resulting from 'episodic free will'; there is neither responsibility for the past nor any obligation to future communities. Under this hyper-neoliberalism, tourism is a network of consumption related goods and services so deftly woven into the economic landscape of the city that it is unable to be isolated.

The potential to 'lock out' local people from a place — be it a result of social or economic factors — is perhaps the greatest impact hyper-neoliberal (tourism) urbanisation has in the re/creation of places in touristed cities. We argue that place values and meanings of local people are pivotal in ensuring viable places, places that are economically, socially and ecologically sustainable. The question then arises, in capitalist market driven, hyper-neoliberal tourist cities like the Gold Coast, is it possible to design for and achieve local places that are also tourist places? This concern his embedded in the understanding that urban landscapes suggest — and indeed produce — certain codes of behaviour and particular identities (Knudsen, Metro-Roland, Soper and Greer, 2008). The two modes of behaviour and set of identities associated with the two different sites — home/local and tourist/global — often seem irreconcilable as this paper reveals.

As argued below, histories of the Gold Coast City suggest it is a hyper-neoliberal city characterised by rapidly changing spatial, social, economic and environmental landscapes. Because of the rapid growth and neoliberal agendas that have dominated the City's development, and in particular tourism urbanisation, the Gold Coast is often depicted 'as a symbol of excess, extravagance, tackiness, and placelessness' (Weaver and Lawton 2004); a city without a 'real/meaningful' history or heritage. Graham Griffin (2006) writes:

[the Gold Coast's] tourism industry is centred on the beach, theme park entertainment, and shopping: not on its history or heritage. Its building industry depends on an ever-growing influx

of tourists and settlers. It reinvents and rebuilds itself every 20 years or so. It doesn't need a heritage or a heritage industry – it doesn't have the time for one.

The outcomes of hyper-neoliberal placemaking in tourist cities like the Gold Coast are global identity markers that are shaped by consumption. That is place is largely produced and identified by the visual, verbal and textual construction of global imaginings, as they relate to the apparent appeal and desires of some tourists. Within hyper-neoliberal modus operandi planners, urban designers and developers — place makers— frequently contrive meaning and a sense of belonging to place (emotions and values that grow and are nurtured over many years) to be fully fledged at birth.

Without denying the hyper-neoliberality of the Gold Coast City, we suggest that within this dominant framework of growth there are opportunities for insurgent and grassroots practices that impact upon tourism urbanisation. These 'other' practises are forms of community urbanisation or hypo-neoliberalism which comprises minor placemaking processes. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate how these 'other' 'minor' agents, strategies and practices work to disrupt the image of the Gold Coast as a place characterised by rapid development and re-development, a sort of homogenised homage to leisure consumption and hedonistic pleasure (Cartier and Lew, 2005; Mullins, 2003; Zukin, 1995).

Many eminent geographers have written histories from this proposed theoretical standpoint. Once such scholar, Donna Houston (Houston 2008), writing about the Gold Coast relates that 'Local community members [that is to say those other/insurgent agents] have … been active in defending public open space, cultural heritage and non-human nature against a variety of development proposals … .' The most published and contested development proposal on the Gold Coast to date was (and remains to some degree) the Queensland State Government's proposal for a second International Cruise Ship Terminal on the Southport Spit; a mega piece of hyper-neoliberal tourism urbanisation.

The paper begins by suggesting different theorisations of placemaking in support of our objective given above. This is followed by an outline of a history of the Gold Coast City that establishes it as a hyper-neoliberal touristed city. We then relate a narrative of the proposed International Cruise Ship Terminal on the Southport Spit. This narrative offers a counter balance to tourism urbanisation and the image of the City as a place characterised by hyper-neoliberalism, driven by forces beyond and outside the influence of its inhabitants and elected representatives. The aim of this second narrative is to demonstrate that there are other agents at work, and opportunities for resistance and insurgence arise because of the so called hegemonic neoliberal discourses. In addition, drawing on Elaine Stratford (Stratford 2009) the development proposals for the Southport Spit 'illustrates larger dilemmas of … [placemaking], democratic participation in the local politics of place, contestations over ecological space, and decisions about land use.' These concerns are central to the home/local and tourist/global debates. Planners, urban designers and decision makers often overlook local everyday attachments to place, and as a consequence urban landscapes potentially become de-localised as property prices and placemaking development reflect tourist industry ideals and economies (Knudsen, Metro-Roland, Soper and Greer, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is not to determine with any certainty the precise causal connections between problems and solutions, between causes and effects, or between actions and outcomes. Instead, the task is to interpret the social world, examine the situation or problem, and from these understandings, opportunities emerge for more creative and innovative actions and solutions. As social scientists, our task in this paper is to examine and interpret the issues around placemaking and tourism and in doing so 'illuminate the relationships, conflicts and connections among ideals' (Talen, 2006, p. 84).

# Hypo-neoliberal urbanism and minor placemaking

As already stated, in this paper we seek to respond to and provide a counter balance to the meta narrative of the hyper-neoliberal touristed city. This counter balance is premised on multiple narratives of the hypo-neoliberal everyday city; a place characterised by insurgence and difference, driven by local and everyday forces of inhabitants and elected representatives. Following John Law (2006) we argue for a baroque understanding of the global, an understanding that is revealed by looking into the detail and complexity rather than looking up to expound a higher level of explanation or order. A baroque perspective focuses on the small and non-coherent and reminds us that even big things are situated and specific (Jacobs 2006). In adopting this approach, history is important. Everything is produced in an historical context; what goes on before necessarily influences the present and the future. Understandings of place are thus historically embedded and effect how we relate to the world. Historical exploration therefore lies at the core of hypo-neoliberalism and it is a central theme of this paper.

Our theorising of a hypo-neoliberal urbanism on the Gold Coast is both inevitable and, hopefully, novel. The coupling of tourism urbanisation, as a hyper-neoliberal discourse, and placemaking is embedded in the marketing and imaginings of touristed cities like the Gold Coast. The offspring of this coupling are mostly hegemonic discourses of Economic Development. In order to diversify this output, and drawing upon Pauline McGurik and Robyn Dowling (2009) and others theories of non-coherent heterogeneous neoliberalisms, we argue for the acknowledgment of a parasitic 'other'; a form of hypo-neoliberal community urbanisation comprising minor or everyday placemaking processes and practices. Hypo-neoliberal urbanism can be understood as 'an assemblage of connections' rather than a bounded location ((Dovey et al. 2009). It is a process whereby pre-existing understandings of place are reassembled with a focus on unexplored perspectives; 'more like a soup than a salad in the sense that the flavour is found in the interaction of the ingredients rather than in fragmented parts' (Dovey et al. 2009).

Minor placemaking processes and practices are the ingredients of a hypo-neoliberal urbanism. Our thinking of minor placemaking is based upon Jennifer Bloomer's concept of 'minor architecture' (Bloomer, 1991; 1992a; 1992b; 1993). Our starting point is the assumption that the world is complex and messy, defying one simplistic overarching explanation or one easily identified relationship between cause and consequence (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001; Law 2004; Tribe 1997). The processes of constructing place meanings, values and attachments are the result of a multitude of influences and factors (Dovey, 1999; (Cresswell 2004); (Massey 1994) (Carter et al. 2007; Vanclay et al. 2008). Place is read and understood as a physical site in relation to both built and natural environments, as well as through written, verbal, visual and non-verbal media and marketing. Language, and in particular advertising, is a key constructor of place, especially with regard to touristed places. Importantly, it is the everydayness of human life, or minor placemaking, that shapes the landscape around us. The feeling of attachment that is produced from knowing a place comes from living that place. Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley (2000, p. 1) suggest that '[p]lace making is the way all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live'.

Place meanings and values emerge out of everyday activities and are produced through and by global and societal influences. For touristed areas such as the Gold Coast City, place is not simply a location — it is a culmination of everyday social processes along with the 'intersection of various global flows, not just of money or capital, but of visitors' (Urry, 1995, p. 435). The failure, by planners and urban designers, to take into account local everyday meanings and values can result in the alienation of residential subjects 'from each other and from their own place' (Cartier and Lew, 2005, p. 183). The result is a 'risky' place that holds little meaning for local people and fails to capture and hold the interest of tourists. Essentially the place becomes vulnerable as local everyday activity nodes move elsewhere and tourists do not return.

It is important to note that meaningful places are not meaningful for everyone and the reason place holds value is different for different people. Mary McLeod (1997, p. 21) writes that 'Difference is experienced differently, at different times, in different cultures, by different people. The point is not just to recognize difference, but all kinds of difference.' Minor placemaking is an approach that recognises difference and diversity and has the potential to heighten images of localness in a global tourist landscape and thus, broaden the tourist profile. In this way the neoliberal — economic and global — agendas are secured and at the same time local residents retain a presence and a part of the re-production of place. Minor placemaking processes and practices, as illustrated by the story of the Southport Spit related later in the paper, are a means to reconcile the home/local and tourist/global dichotomy. But first we contextualise and ground this story by outlining a history of the Gold Coast City that constructs it as a hyper-neoliberal city.

## The Gold Coast as the neoliberal norm

The stretch of coast that is now known as the Gold Coast City was home to some of the first aborigines to settle on the Australian continent. The relationships these people had to the land were ontological. The land defined who they were and they defined the land in stories, songs, drawings and dreamings. This same stretch of land captured the attention of colonial settlers in the late 1800s, settlers whose concepts of home and placemaking were different from the people for whom the coast was home.

Since European settlement, the Gold Coast City has grown from a series of small towns to become the seventh largest Australian city (see table 1) and Australia's fourth most visited destination for international leisure visitors; after Sydney, Melbourne and Tropical North Queensland (Tourism Research Australia 2008). From the 1930s domestic tourism in Australia was stimulated by the prosperity of a modernising economy and a growing cultural attachment to the outdoors and the beach in particular. The Gold Coast benefited from these trends which bolstered land speculation in the area. A group of developers with shady reputations, who became known as the 'white shoe brigade' (Jones 1986), tapped into Australia's post-war prosperity feeding a desire for every Australian to have a holiday house by the beach. This trend towards second homeownership stimulated the development of construction industries and property services and secured the Gold Coast's property boom. By the end of the 1959 financial year the value of Gold Coast building approvals was an Australian wide record (Anonymous, 1959, p. 8) and the City has held this position almost consistently throughout the latter part of the twentieth century.

Table 1: Historical Timeline

| 2000BCE | Indigenous people arrived in the area now known as the Gold Coast (The Yugambeh language group) |
| 1770 | Captail Cook sighted the Gold Coast and chartered prominent coastal features |
| 1842 | First detailed survey map of the Gold Coast area<br>Timber getting commences providing building products fort the growing colony of Brisbane |
| 1859 | Queensland declared a separate self governing colony |
| 1860s | Timber now a prosperous industry on the Gold Coast |
| 1869 | Hotelier Tom Hanlon names Southport after the seaside resort in Lancashire UK |
| 1870 | Cobb and Co commences coach transport to Nerang. The area becomes a popular seaside haven and holiday area for the |

| | wealthy. |
|---|---|
| 1874-75 | First land sales by auction offered at Nerang |
| 1876 | First house built at Southport<br>Blacksmith's opened at Southport |
| 1878-9 | Post office, hotel, grocery store open at Southport |
| 1884 | Governor of Queensland (Sir Anthony Musgrave) makes his summer residence at Southport. The area becomes known as a place for the wealthy to establish holiday homes. |
| 1889 | Railway reaches Southport, making it accessible to more people from Brisbane. |
| 1905 | First guesthouse at southern end of the Gold Coast at Greenmount, Coolangatta. |
| 1915 | Block of land with ocean frontage now known as Surfers' Paradise are subdivided and auctioned. |
| 1918 | Southport becomes a municipality |
| 1925 | Bridge over the Nerang River links Southport to Elston (later to become Surfers' Paradise) |
| 1936 | Coolangatta airport opens |
| 1935-6 | Town of South Coast declared, then declared a city a year later |
| 1950s | Regular domestic air services begin |
| 1966 | Marineland opens, the Gold Coast's first major theme park |
| 1972 | Ski Land of Australia (later redeveloped as SeaWorld) |
| 1981 | International Airport opens |
| 1987 | Sheraton Mirage Resort established, the first of a number of major international integrated resort developments |
| 1990s | Major theme parks open – Warner Bros Movie World, Wet and Wild, SeaWorld, Dreamworld |

The narrative that we are interested in here emerges out of the 1950s building and population booms, at a time when progress and success were measured by the magnitude of change; by the extent of the reshaping and re-moulding of the land. A local newspaper at the time proudly reported the transformations evidenced in the Gold Coast area: 'FROM ABORIGINAL [sic] corroboree ground and bora ring to a rapidly developing Gold Coast residential area - that is the success story of [the Gold Coast]'(1968). And in a separate article: 'All around Surfers Paradise today, there is ample evidence of foul swampy areas being eliminated and producing excellent land suitable for subdivision' (1958). In part is was the risk of disease and the fear of the inaccessible and indigenous landscapes that prompted the reclaiming and taming and marking and ordering of the land; to make it familiar, to render the land known, to render it 'normal' and thus produce a recognisable 'place'.

As suggested above, the place image of the Gold Coast began to change dramatically after 1950. Up until then it had been 'Brisbane's traditional seaside resort' (McRobbie, 1984, p. 81). There was nothing fancy or flash about the place, it was an affordable place for the people of Brisbane to escape to (Davidson and Spearritt 2000). The beaches offered adequate camping grounds and many of the holidaymakers participated in communal games and festivities (Condon 2003). However, by the early 1950s the Brisbane Courier Mail was reporting new development on the Gold Coast to be 'tawdry, vulgar, clip joint, millionaire's mile, garish, brassy and Americanised' (McRobbie 1982, p. p.81). This image of the Gold Coast was fuelled, in part, by the extended

opening hours of shops, which were restricted elsewhere in the State. In addition, cinemas on the Gold Coast were open on Sunday nights, a practice that was not permitted in other major cities in Australia (McRobbie, 1982). Bikini clad meter maids, surfing legends and 'pyjama parties' held at a local hotel helped to consolidate the Gold Coast's saucy reputation (McRobbie 1984; Davidson and Spearritt, 2000). According to the editor of a Special Edition of Architecture Australia (Editorial, 1959 p. 47) these practices contributed to 'a chaos of the worst type of commercialisation … [and] … a wild jungle of indecorum'.

In addition to the image of the Gold Coast as being amoral, the changes to the physical form of the City were rapid and significant. Many of the timber and iron holiday or second homes built along the coast were being demolished and replaced with motels, which soon thereafter were demolished and replaced by the emerging highrise architectural typology. Ann Green (1982), a local Gold Coast resident at the time writes of this phenomenon: '[American style motel developments] are peppering our already littered highways with neon-lighted promises of tea-bag accommodation and the Coast's wonderful old guest houses went into gradual decline, and with them the last traces of Australian individuality'. The motel phase was soon overtaken by the growing popularity of apartment accommodation. The new modern 'American' serviced apartments proved so popular that many other holiday accommodation types, including the rapidly dated motel accommodation, were left vacant for much of the year (McRobbie, 1984; Burchill, 2005). This change of use proved significant in years to come. As land on the coastal strip became scarce and property prices soared, these now humble holiday units, homes mostly to elderly pensioners, became the focus of the economic growth machine; fodder for entrepreneurs and developers.

By the 1980s the opening of the international airport, highrise hotels and residential towers and the development of canal estates stretching the length of the coast consolidated the Gold Coast as a landscape of consumption (Stimson and Minnery, 1998). The opening up of the Gold Coast to foreign visitors also stimulated the rise of unparalleled international investment in the City's property sector. By the 1990s the City had established itself as 'simultaneously brash, trendy, sophisticated, relaxed, overdeveloped and over urbanised' (Stimson et al. 1996)).

The Gold Coast City is currently one of Australia's most iconic coastal destinations and it is one of Australia's fastest growing urban regions. Since World War II the Gold Coast City has consistently recorded some of the highest local Government population growth rates in Australia. The recent (2009) estimated resident population of the Gold Coast is 496,906 people; growing at just above four percent per annum (approximately 13,000 to 16,000 people per year) (Gold Coast City Council, 2009). The Gold Coast City Council (2009) predict that by 2030 the Gold Coast City will be home to about 900,00 people.

The contemporary (2010) City is characterised by a high rates of population mobility, high rates of building growth and rapid churn in development (i.e. development, refurbishment and redevelopment). The City also has some of the highest rates of building approval and commencement data (Gold Coast City Council, 2008). As the Gold Coast has grown as a tourism destination, it also laid claim to 'big things'. In 2007 it boasted the 'World's Tallest residential tower' (Q1) and it is the theme park capital of Australia. Global and national events include car racing (which returns $60 million to Queensland economy), the Quick Silver & Roxy Pro Surf Contests, Gold Coast Triathlon and Marathon events, Pan Pacific Masters Games, XXXX Gold Beach Cricket, Conrad Jupiter's Magic Millions Racing Carnival and the Gold Coast Schoolies Week (Gold Coast City Council, 2007b). These characterisations have produced an image of the City that is epitomised by spectacle, hedonistic consumption and competing moralities. As already stated, this image is not new, it began in the early 1950s. Davidson and Spearritt (Davidson and Spearritt 2000) write that the Gold Coast continues 'to offer sun, sand and sex, as it has always done … [but] [t]he marketing ploy of … the 1960s [has] been replaced with an

aggressively commercial air, where shops and restaurants and accommodation providers [vie] with each other for market share'.

Consumption related industries (e.g. retail, business services, accommodation, cafes and restaurants) generate the most employment in the Gold Coast City (Gold Coast City Council, 2007a, 2007c) (see table 2). These industries, and in particular tourism, construction and property services, are characterised by a progressively disembedding of traditional allegiances and hierarchical lines of engagement. The result of this is a growth in sole traders and small and medium enterprises that are empowered by networks, partnerships and allegiances; neoliberalism writ large.

**Table 2 – Industry Contribution to Gross Domestic Product of the Gold Coast Region 2004/5 (Adapted from the Gold Coast City Council, 2007a)**

|  | Value Added $M | Percent of GRP percent |
|---|---|---|
| Construction | 3443.82 | 21.59 |
| Property Services | 2286.66 | 14.34 |
| Retail Trade | 1167.50 | 7.32 |
| Business Services | 1049.97 | 6.58 |
| Accommodation, cafes and restaurants | 620.50 | 3.89 |
| Cultural services | 595.68 | 3.73 |
| Other | 6785.37 | 42.55 |
| TOTAL | 15949.50 | 100 |

This then is the popular narrative of the hyper-neoliberal Gold Coast City; the hedonistic city; 'a symbol of excess, extravagance, tackiness, and placelessness" (Weaver and Lawton 2004), a city without a 'real/meaningful' history or heritage. But there is another history, 'the Gold Coast isn't an easily definable place with a singular identity, even though it might appear to lend itself to easy typecasting' (Griffin, 1998, p. 286). The history we construct in the second half of this paper is a different, parasitic placemaking narrative that emerges within and because of the meta narrative of hyper-neoliberal urbanisation. This is related through stories about the Southport Spit. Stories about placemaking and place makers; local residents and local values, insurgence and grassroots interests pitted against the State Government and State wide values, top down intervention and the overarching and frequently overriding interests of 'The Economy'. Matthew Condon (2006) writes that the 'Southport Spit, for much of it history, has been a field of dreams.'And it is this story that we now relate.

## The Southport Spit and the State story

In the late 1800s the sand dune at the mouth of the Nerang River in Southport was reconfigured by a series of storms and the Southport Spit was formed. The Spit is at the northern end of the Gold Coast City, across the Broadwater from the early (1880s) settlement of Southport. Southport began its life as a holiday destination for well-to-do inland residents. By 1918 the population of the town had grown significantly and the State Government declared the area a municipality. The urban growth histories of Southport are tied into the neoliberal narrative of the Gold Coast City as outlined earlier. The Southport Spit however, has largely escaped tourism urbanisation. Notwithstanding, the Spit has been dogged with development proposals since the early 1960s. One of the first to object to development on this prime beachfront dune was the local National Party Member of Parliament at the time, Doug Jennings (the son of Sir Albert Jennings who was the founder of the national housing construction corporation, A. V. Jennings).

Jennings's last fight to save the Spit was instigated in 1979 when the Queensland National/Liberal State Government, under the Premiership of Sir Jon Bjelke-Petersen (see Wear, 2002; Whitton, 1989), established the Gold Coast Waterways Authority to address tidal inundation and the impacts of storm surges in the Boardwater and the erosion of the Spit. As a result, by the 1980s the Broadwater and the Spit were 'secured' by the construction of groins, channel dredging and a sand bypass system. The Waterways Authority were frequently involved in controversy over commercial development rights on public land on the Gold Coast (Condon, 2006). In one case a prominent Board member obtained 64 hectares on the western side of the Spit for tourism urbanisation (now the theme park Sea World). Other tourism related developments on the Spit were also approved during this time and were subsequently built, renovated and extended: an exclusive shopping precinct, a commercial fishing wharf (now also accommodates super yacht berths), an exclusive resort complex and an international hotel and apartment complex. Other development proposals that did not get off the ground included an 'amusement oasis', a mini city comprising 8000 permanent residents and a golf course (Condon, 2006).

Development controversy on the Spit ended in 1992 when a newly elected Labor State Government disbanded the Waterways Authority. However it was not until 1997 that the Labor Government set up the Gold Coast Harbours Authority to take a more local approach to the management of the Broadwater and Spit environs. The 1998 Gold Coast Harbour Study Issues Paper discussed below was part of this endeavour to address local issues at the local scale.

## The Southport Spit and a community narrative

The Southport Spit is an important place within the rapidly changing landscapes of the Gold Coast City. It is 'land that constitutes the last genuine ocean-side parcel of undeveloped real estate on the Gold Coast' (Condon, 2006) and it has significant social and cultural meanings and attachments for many Gold Coast residents and visitors (see SOSA a, Condon, 2003; Lazarow and Tomlinson 2009). Between February and September 2007 we carried out 88 intercept surveys on the Spit to determine what place values, meanings and attachments users of the Spit held. The surveys were done at various times of the day and on different days of the week through out the survey period. While we acknowledge that survey data is problematic (Hay, 2000; Law, 2006) nonetheless the data collected offers some important insights into the meanings and value the Spit has for many local users. The majority of survey respondents were employed (non professional) Australian males aged between 25-54, which corresponds with the major activities of surfing and diving.

An analysis of the survey data indicated that 73 percent of the respondents had been visiting the Spit for three or more years, with 28 percent of respondents visiting the Spit for over 16 years. Not surprisingly most respondents indicated that they spent over three hours at the Spit at any one time. This corresponds to the activities of surfing, diving, fishing and dog walking; the four primary everyday activities that take place on the Spit. It is important to note that the Spit is one of three (and it is the primary) off-leash dog exercise beach. Given the population figures of the City and the number of dog owners, these beaches are highly valued by the users thereof. Importantly, the survey data indicated that the Spit environs were perceived as a 'safe' and valuable community asset. Memories and frequency of visits contributed to the high value attributed to these two indicators.

Our story of the Southport Spit, as a counter balance to the history of the Gold Coast as a hyper-neoliberal city, begins in 1998 when the Gold Coast City Council released the Gold Coast Harbour Study Issues Paper for public comment. The intent of this Paper was to produce an 'integrated and coordinated land use and management plan for the Gold Coast … Broadwater.' (Whelan 2006) The Issue Paper and public consultation associated with it was essentially about

the making of places; viable places that were valued by tourists and locals alike, a place where the home/local and tourist/global dichotomy was reconciled with positive outcomes for all. The outcome of the community consultation process however produced instead a 'strong picture of people's dissatisfactions.' (Whelan 2006). This was partly because, as Urry (1995) agues elsewhere, planners, urban designers and developers often perceive place meaning in accordance with pre conceived notions and pre determined outcomes. These notions and outcomes frequently privilege and inscribe normalised and idealised neoliberal views and expectations of tourist subjects. Local place meanings and values are often subjugated and marginalised or erased. One thing that did emerge from the 1998 Gold Coast Harbour Study was that the Gold Coast City Council agreed that no development (private or commercial) would occur on the remnant of public land at the northern end of the Southport Spit and that the open space character of the area would be retained and enhanced (Gold Coast City Council 2003).

Notwithstanding, the Gold Coast City Councils planning regulations, nor the lengths to which previous National Party Government officials had defended the Spit against development, nor the fact that the Government had specifically set up the Gold Coast Harbours Authority as a local approach to the management of the Broadwater and Spit environs, on 15 September 2005 the Queensland Labor Government announced its intention of developing an international cruise ship terminal and related services on this valued and valuable piece of public open space. In order to bypass local Government planning restrictions (and we argue the views and input of local communities) the State sought absolute control over the planning and development processes by declaring the project a 'Significant Development'. This declaration triggered State legislation that called for an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) which meant the Government had direct control over the way the EIS was developed, the criteria by which it was to be assessed and it enabled other legislation to be bypassed if necessary. Importantly, by declaring the project as a 'Significant Development' the local planning Authority, The Gold Coast City Council, and significantly local communities, were positioned as observers with no authority to input into the project other than decreed and regulated by the State Government.

In December 2005 the Queensland State Government created a Gold Coast Marine Development Project Board to act as the proponent for the Spit development. The Board was set up to advise the Premier and the Co-ordinator General and to undertake tasks as required by the Government. In effect the State Government created its own proponent for the project, a proponent that was also to advise the Government. All decisions taken by the Government were to be, and in fact were, based upon the advise of the Board. To heighten this inbred decision making process the State Government called for expressions of interest from developers at the same time as it commissioned an EIS for the site (Bligh, 2005). The supposition being that the advise from the Board would be in favour of development. In addition the Government sought direct control over the proposal, feasibility and development of the project.

To provide effective opposition to the State Government and its plans for the Southport Spit a consortium of community groups joined to form the Save Our Spit Alliance (SOSA). This energetic and dedicated group organised a number of rallies and delegations and petitions over the next 2 years and maintained (and continue to maintain) an evocative and resourceful web site. By July 2006 (just 10 months into the feasibility studies) the SOSA had collected over 20,000 signatures as part of their petition to the State Government to stop development on the Spit (SOSA d).

The SOSA's objections to the State Government's development proposal were founded on five key points. These were (SOSA b):
The economic benefits to the community, the City and the State were marginal because SOSA research indicated that cruise liner passengers spent more money on board the than they did on shore.

The loss of public open space in the face of rapid population and urban growth. This was given support from Methven Sparkes, President of the Nerang Community Association, who said (SOSA b):

On any weekend the Spit is filled with thousands of picnickers, walkers, runners, cyclists, divers and snorkelers, fishers, surfers, dog walkers, and exercise enthusiasts, all of whom value the opportunity to access such a beautiful area so close to the CBD.

Safety issues relating to the use of seaway.

The negative impact the development would have on existing tourism operators on the Spit, namely the dive industry, surfing industry, fishing industry, charter boats and kayaking.

Environmental impacts, including dredging, erosion, flooding and air and water pollutants from the cruise liners.

The SOSA mounted their campaign based upon thee five factors. A few months after a well attended and enthusiastic protest, and in response to a continued barrage of criticism about the development proposal (see SOSA a), the then Deputy Premier, Anna Bligh, herself a Gold Coaster by childhood experiences, summed up the situation. She said (Courier Mail, 2006): 'it would be great if [the Spit] was less environmentally sensitive, if people had less emotional attachment to it – that would make it a lot easier.' We suggest that in this statement the Deputy Premier was casting local place attachment as an obstacle in the development process. Hyper-neoliberalism, as already argued, is underpinned by notions of competition and investment and driven by globalisation. The State Government largely upheld this agenda in their pro-development debates for the Spit. The Government perceived the Spit to be, and valued the site as, a space of economic opportunity. A member of Parliament at the time in support of the Government's Spit development proposal argued that 'The Beattie Government has a duty to provide, amongst other things, economic stability and employment opportunities for the people of this State …' (Smith, 2006).

Notwithstanding, on Friday 03 August 2007 (just over two years from the first public announcement) the Premier Peter Beattie proclaimed that the Cruise Ship Terminal on the Spit would not proceed. The Premier did not directly acknowledge that this decision reflected the views of over 22,000 local residents (SOSA d). Instead the augment put forward by the Government was that the decision not to proceed was based on the cost to tax payers; an economic, rationale not an environmental, nor a cultural, and certainly not a social or community rationale. It is important to note however, that the decision by the Government not to proceed was taken at the height of a State Government election campaign.

At the time a Gold Coast channel nine TV news program (SOSA c) conducted a poll with the question: 'Will the Beattie Government lose your vote over it's push for a cruise ship terminal at The Spit?' (emphasis in the original) and the published result showed that 86.4 percent of respondents said YES.

It of interest to note that 50 percent of users surveyed in our intercept surveys were not aware of the development proposals for the Spit and only 15percent were or had been involved in community action against the proposed development that threatened the Spit environs. This suggests that the people who signed and attended the rally were not necessarily the ones who visited the Spit on an everyday, regular basis. Those that did used the Spit regularly, as the surveys testify, perhaps took the Spit for granted or felt disempowered. One thing that did emerge from the data was that all respondents who indicated that they were unaware of the development proposals also indicated that they were against development on the Spit, but not necessarily opposed to the he upgrade of facilities.

Indirectly, tax payers (who were also petition signers) changed the course of history, placemaking and tourism futures on the Gold Coast. Hyper-neoliberalism then is not so hegemonic after all, but rather because of it, opportunities for resistance emerge and are heightened.

So the Southport Spit is safe and saved; well for the present anyhow. The site continues to ride a wave of development abuse. On the 11 February 2010 the local Federal Member of Parliament send out an email survey asking his constituents if they wanted 'a cruise ship terminal on the Spit, the Broadwater or neither?' This email followed in the footsteps of a previous announcement by the State Government, in mid 2008, of their (renewed) intention of developing a cruise ship terminal in the vicinity of the Southport Spit. In addition, other smaller private and commercial development proposals continue to be lodged for this section of prime public undeveloped, somewhat raw, open space.

## Conclusion

The battle between local interests and local placemaking practices and global, neoliberal interests and touristed placemaking practices is ongoing. The answer then to the question that we raised at the beginning of this paper is both yes and no: In capitalist market driven, hyper-neoliberal tourist cities like the Gold Coast, is it possible to design for and achieve local places that are also tourist places? The two modes of behaviour and set of identities associated with the two different sites — home/local and tourist/global — are often irreconcilable. But this does not mean that one is more important, nor necessarily excludes, nor has to be dominant over the other.

The history of the Gold Coast City that we have related establishes the City as a hyper-neoliberal city. Since the 1950s the neoliberal discourses that have produced the City have shown little responsibility for the past and scant obligation to future generations. As such the production, sale and consumption of goods and services providing pleasure has become so deftly woven into the economic landscape of the City that it is not easy to isolate them in policy or practice. This condition has raised concerns and excited resistance around 'democratic participation in the local politics of place, contestations over ecological space, and decisions about land use' (Stratford, (Stratford 2009), concerns that are central to the Southport Spit and also to the home/local and tourist/global debates.

In the case of the Southport Spit local placemaking practices and local communities succeeded in achieving a local outcome, valued and upheld by many local subjects. An outcome that also has global tourist value albeit different from perspective of the State Government; consumption driven Cruise Ship tourism urbanisation vs undeveloped, accessible, free, urban, beachside public open space. The story of the Southport Spit demonstrates that within the overarching dominant hyper-neoliberal image of the Gold Coast City, local everyday practices flourish and have effect. It also demonstrates that the two different sites — home/local and tourist/global can co-exist, albeit sometimes in conflict.

The significance of this paper has been to demonstrate the importance of forging a more engaged and critical planning process that reaches across communities of interest, in mediating placemaking processes and practices in tourist cities. Discourses on placemaking involve decisions about what communities value. This requires a structured and rigorous approach to learning, understanding and managing the tensions and differences that may exist between stakeholders. That is, any attempt to reconcile competing claims on place involve an understanding of the social processes and practices that contribute to place values, meanings and attachments. In the case of the Southport Spit, the Queensland State Government exacerbated development conflict by ignoring social meanings and local attachments to place that were not consistent with the neoliberal perspective. This was despite a long history of development debate around the site. The Government's dismissive attitude towards local place values and attachments

suggests that the home/local and tourist/global conflict will continue until such time as local place values are meaningfully incorporated into planning and development discourses. To achieve this we argue that the State needs to develop a role in mediating place change by putting aside its emphasis on the neoliberal perspective and by exploring other possibilities of placemaking such as minor placemaking processes and practices.

The objective of this paper has been to disrupt the image of the Gold Coast as a hyper-neoliberal city characterised by tourism urbanisation. To achieve this objective we have looked into the detail and complexity of urban and planning histories rather than looking up for a higher level of explanation or order. Our history of the Southport Spit is premised on multiple narratives of the hypo-neoliberal everyday city; a place characterised by insurgence and difference, driven by local and everyday forces of inhabitants. Our theorising of a hypo-neoliberal city is grounded in minor placemaking processes and practices. Our proposal for a minor placemaking is not a rejection of the current hyper-neoliberal regime. Rather we argue that by working within and upon the neoliberal capitalist city fabric, significant changes can be woven into the urban landscape; generative changes that challenge how we think, design and build places, communities and cities.

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