Resort spatiality: reimagining sites of mass tourism

Zelmarie Cantillon

Bachelor of Communication
Bachelor of Communication with Honours

School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science
Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

February 2017
Synopsis

This dissertation theorises resorts – destinations famous for ‘sun, sand and sex’ – as distinct kinds of urban milieux. Taking account of their similarities as well as their differences, I focus on six international destinations: the Gold Coast, Australia; Miami, United States of America; Cancún, Mexico; Ibiza, Spain; and Phuket and Koh Phangan, Thailand. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre, Soja, Massey, Highmore and Deleuze and Guattari, I attend to the material and symbolic production of lived spaces in these resorts. In particular, I consider the mutually constitutive, mutually transformative relations between their spatial formations, built environments, popular imaginaries, representations, narratives of identity, rhythms, and the experiences and practices of both tourists and locals.

To investigate these dynamics, I conducted extensive literature research and undertook fieldwork in each of these resorts. My applied methods included a mixture of participant observation, photography, rhythm analysis, and semi-structured interviews with resort residents. Recognising the impossibility of ever comprehensively representing infinitely complex sites such as these, the methods were intended to be impressionistic, partial and to some degree autoethnographic. The places, phenomena, observations and findings I discuss are taken to be ‘examples’ in Agamben’s (1993) sense – singular instances which nonetheless provide insight into wider social and cultural processes.

Resorts are distinct in that they are imagined as sites for the excessive consumption of spectacle, for hedonistic indulgence in sensuous (and often sexualised) pleasures, and for the enactment of transgressive, potentially risky behaviours. Dominated by tourism, they are designed as places in which people can escape the roles, routines and responsibilities of their everyday lives. As such, they are often positioned and imagined as socially, spatially and temporally liminal (Shields 1991), as ‘elsewhere’ from conventional cities, ‘normal’ life and ‘serious’ endeavours. Consequently, resorts have often been stereotyped as depthless, superficial, overdeveloped, and fake or hyperreal, and as exemplifying the ‘worst’ aspects of globalisation and mass consumption, which are seen to enforce homogeneity and erode local cultures.
However, my analysis reveals that resorts are heterogeneous, shifting spatial assemblages. Each resort has its own local specificity and distinctiveness, with a multiplicity of communities, histories, narratives of identity, imaginaries and rhythms existing beyond the most familiar touristic metanarratives and practices. Globalisation and mass tourism, therefore, cannot be understood as having any kind of linear, universal effects, since these processes manifest differently in each unique spatial context. Similarly, places like resorts cannot be understood in terms of binary logics, as my analysis of their lived spaces reveals complex tensions and movements between local and global, real and fake, authentic and inauthentic, fixity and mobility, insider and outsider, heterogeneity and homogeneity, real and imagined, everyday and exotic, familiar and unfamiliar.

The thesis argues for more nuanced approaches to conceptualising tourism, globalisation and spatiality, reimagining how they unfold in lived spaces. Despite their commonalities, each resort has different trajectories, strengths, issues and social dynamics at play. Their local specificities demand policies and processes that are attentive to these particularities and idiosyncrasies. Rather than trying to regulate or control the messiness of urban spaces (Highmore 2005) or trying to impose coherence on them through overly simplified assessments, we must work productively with their complexity and disorder. By taking a cultural studies approach to urban analysis, this thesis demonstrates the value in attending to relationality, hybridity and liminality, to acknowledging multiplicities, contradictions and disparities, and to embracing openness, fluidity and partiality.
Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

____________________________________

Zelmarie Cantillon

Publications arising from the dissertation

Sections of this dissertation have been published in the following journal article:


Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance for this project was granted on 18 June 2013 (Ref: HUM/28/13/HREC). Please see Appendix A for confirmation of ethical clearance.
Table of Contents

Synopsis ................................................................................................................................. 2
Statement of originality ........................................................................................................ 4
Publications arising from the dissertation ................................................................. 4
Ethical clearance .................................................................................................................. 4
List of figures ....................................................................................................................... 9
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. 13

Section 1: Project overview ............................................................................................... 15

Chapter 1: Introduction ....................................................................................................... 15
  Resorts: a working definition ......................................................................................... 17
    Commonalities .................................................................................................................. 17
    Differences ....................................................................................................................... 19
  Resorts in the existing literature ................................................................................... 21
  Multiplicities, differences and in-betweens: aims and approaches ......................... 24
  Thesis structure and trajectory ....................................................................................... 27
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 29

Chapter 2: Conceptual frameworks ................................................................................... 30
  Spatiality .............................................................................................................................. 30
    Space and place ............................................................................................................... 30
    Assemblages ..................................................................................................................... 32
    The spatial triad: perceived, conceived and lived space ............................................. 34
    Rhythms .......................................................................................................................... 44
  Tourism .............................................................................................................................. 45
    Globalisation, mobilities and technologies ................................................................ 45
    Tourism and tourists: types and characteristics ......................................................... 47
    The spatiality of tourism ............................................................................................... 57
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 63

Chapter 3: Methodology ................................................................................................... 64
  Methodological choices ................................................................................................... 64
    Multimethodology and bricolage ................................................................................. 64
    Impressionistic approach ............................................................................................... 66
    Agamben's 'example' ...................................................................................................... 67
    Partiality .......................................................................................................................... 68
Observational techniques.................................................................69
Reflexivity and subjectivity..............................................................69
Insider/outsider ..................................................................................71
Experience and the autoethnography..................................................73
Fieldwork............................................................................................74
Photography.........................................................................................78
Urban analysis.....................................................................................80
Thirdspace..........................................................................................80
Rhythm analysis...................................................................................81
Interviews.............................................................................................82
Interview design.................................................................................85
Interviews: reciprocal and interactional ..............................................86
Interviewing and reflexivity.................................................................87
Conclusion...........................................................................................88

Section 2: The resorts .........................................................................89

Introduction.........................................................................................89

Chapter 4: Gold Coast.........................................................................91
History.................................................................................................94
Present context......................................................................................97
Observations........................................................................................103
Conclusion............................................................................................109

Chapter 5: Thailand............................................................................110
History.................................................................................................111
Present context......................................................................................112
Phuket..................................................................................................117
Overview..............................................................................................117
Initial impressions...............................................................................119
Koh Phangan.........................................................................................124
Overview..............................................................................................124
Initial impressions...............................................................................126
Conclusion............................................................................................130

Chapter 6: Cancún..............................................................................132
History.................................................................................................134
Present context......................................................................................136
Initial impressions...............................................................................139
Conclusion............................................................................................148

Chapter 7: Miami................................................................................149
History.................................................................................................151
List of figures

The majority of images used in this dissertation were photographed by the author. All other images used are available in the public domain and readily accessible on the Internet. Sources are provided in the caption with each image and listed in the references. All maps were generated using Google’s My Maps tool.

Figure 1: Surfers Paradise Beach, Gold Coast ................................................................. 91
Figure 2: Population on the Gold Coast, 1991–2015 ............................................................ 92
Figure 3: Map of Australia ................................................................................................. 93
Figure 4: Maps of the Gold Coast and the ‘Glitter Strip’ .................................................... 93
Figure 5: High-rises in Surfers Paradise ............................................................................. 97
Figure 6: Visitors to the Gold Coast, mid-2010–mid-2016 .................................................. 98
Figure 7: Screenshot of ‘Very GC’ television advertisement ................................................ 100
Figure 8: Official Gold Coast tourism website .................................................................... 102
Figure 9: Map of Surfers Paradise ................................................................................. 104
Figure 10: Surfers Paradise sign ..................................................................................... 105
Figure 11: People walking through Cavill Mall, Surfers Paradise ....................................... 105
Figure 12: A Meter Maid and a Hare Krishna chat to people in Cavill Mall, Surfers Paradise ................................................................................................................. 106

Figure 13: Crowds at the markets and watching buskers along The Esplanade, Surfers Paradise ............................................................................................................. 107
Figure 14: A man performs tricks on a unicycle in Cavill Mall, Surfers Paradise ............... 107
Figure 15: Police patrolling Orchid Avenue, Surfers Paradise at night ................................ 108
Figure 16: Patong Beach, Phuket .................................................................................... 110
Figure 17: Map of popular destinations in Southern Thailand .............................................. 111
Figure 18: Visitors to Thailand, 2010–2015 ....................................................................... 113
Figure 19: Official Thailand tourism website ....................................................................... 114
Figure 20: Map of Phuket and Patong Beach ..................................................................... 117
Figure 21: Buildings in Patong ....................................................................................... 119
Figure 22: Power lines in Patong .................................................................................... 120
Figure 23: Shrine to the king in Patong ............................................................................ 120
Figure 24: Patong Beach sign over Bangla Road ............................................................... 121
Figure 25: Umbrellas on Patong Beach ............................................................................ 121
Figure 26: Food and drink stall near the beach in Patong .................................................. 122
Figure 27: Tourists taking photos outside of a bar on Bangla Road ..................................... 123
Figure 28: Women advertising strip shows on Bangla Road ............................................... 123
Figure 101: Men dressed as Maya warriors at the cenote .......................................................... 234
Figure 102: The El Castillo pyramid at Chichén Itzá ................................................................. 235
Figure 103: Souvenir vendors at Chichén Itzá ........................................................................... 235
Figure 104: Indigenous Australian street performer in Surfers Paradise ............................. 237
Figure 105: Chinatown, Southport ............................................................................................. 238
Figure 106: Items on display at the Sexualising the City exhibition ........................................ 239
Figure 107: Pink Poodle Motel neon sign ................................................................................ 240
Figure 108: Billboard with a retro photograph in Surfers Paradise .......................................... 241
Figure 109: Public bathrooms in Surfers Paradise featuring a photograph of men with surfboards ........................................................................................................................................... 241
Figure 110: Heritage panels on a beachside observation deck in Surfers Paradise .............. 242
Figure 111: 'Gold Coast's sixth theme park' map ...................................................................... 244
Figure 112: An Australian restaurant/bar and a McDonald's in Patong Beach, Phuket ....... 252
Figure 113: Shops along Surfers Paradise Boulevard ............................................................... 267
Figure 114: Meter Maids chat to a police officer in Surfers Paradise .................................... 268
Figure 115: Young people outside of a nightclub on Orchid Avenue, Surfers Paradise ....... 269
Figure 116: Families and clubbers on Cavill Avenue, Surfers Paradise late at night ............ 270
Figure 117: Map of Wave Break Island and The Spit, Gold Coast .......................................... 286
Figure 118: South Beach Local bus route .................................................................................. 288
Figure 119: Miami Metromover route ....................................................................................... 289
Figure 120: Street art on buildings in Wynwood, Miami ............................................................ 294
Figure 121: A man rides a bicycle through Wynwood, Miami ................................................ 295
Figure 122: Painted crosswalks in Wynwood, Miami ............................................................... 295
Figure 123: 'No panhandling zone' sign in Downtown Miami .................................................. 298
Acknowledgements

Foremost, I want to express my deep gratitude for the most wonderful supervisory team a PhD student could ask for: Associate Professor Patricia Wise and Associate Professor Sarah Baker. I could not have made it through the last four years if it were not for your genuine enthusiasm for my project and your unwavering confidence in my abilities. Thank you both for inspiring, encouraging and mentoring me, for your wisdom, guidance and care, and for your friendship. Leading by example, you have taught me so much about academia – not just about critical thinking, researching, writing and publishing, but also about the importance of being kind, generous and humble.

I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received from Griffith University, specifically the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science; the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research; the Griffith Graduate Research School; and the Gold Coast Association of Postgraduates. The grants and scholarships provided to me by these bodies greatly assisted me in undertaking my fieldwork and attending conferences. I also want to thank the academic and administrative staff in the School and the Centre for their help over the years – for educating me, answering my questions, giving me advice, and showing interest in the progression of my studies and my academic career.

Special thanks to the PhD students with which I have shared this journey: Kristy, Ashleigh, Laura, Diti, and everyone else I met along the way. I have often heard that the PhD can be a lonely, isolating experience, and I feel fortunate that I always had someone to talk to. Thank you all for the much-needed lunch dates and coffee breaks, and for making me feel totally normal when I was suffering from imposter syndrome.

To my dearest friends, Serena, Maryanne and Annie – thank you for keeping me sane, and for keeping me connected to the world outside of academia.

My sincere thanks to my family: my brother, JJ, who has always been so supportive and proud; and my mother, Marion, who has always been there for me.
Finally, to my partner and best friend, Rogan – your love, warmth, intellect and understanding have made these past two and a half years the best of my life. Thank you for learning about Lefebvre with me, for letting me read my dodgy first drafts aloud, for sharing your insights, for excitedly telling our friends all about my research, for the pep talks, and for teaching me how to believe in myself.
Section 1: Project overview

Chapter 1: Introduction

‘So, where are you from?’

This is a question I have been asked regularly since moving to the Gold Coast eight years ago. I hear it in what feels like the most mundane of moments – waiting at my tram stop to go to uni, buying jeans at my local shopping centre, eating with a friend at my favourite tapas bar. Puzzled, I usually answer with my suburb – ‘um, Southport?’ Fellow Gold Coasters respond apologetically – ‘Sorry, I thought you were a tourist!’ – while tourists respond with fascination – ‘Oh wow, you live here? You are so lucky!’

These kinds of exchanges have always irked me, made me feel out of place. Why am I expected to be from elsewhere? The usual racist undertones attached to the ‘where do you come from?’ question in Australia do not apply to me – I am white, I have an Australian accent, and I do not wear any form of ethnic or religious attire. So, then, do I not look like a ‘Gold Coaster’? Perhaps. The more likely reason, however, is that the city’s public spaces – especially its leisure spaces – are seen to belong to visitors rather than residents.

The Gold Coast has long been dominated by tourism in its image, economy and development. Specifically, it is famous for a particular brand of ‘sun, sand and sex’ mass tourism, boasting long stretches of sandy beaches, family-friendly theme parks and a lively nightlife scene. The city being largely geared towards the desires and demands of tourists has created a peculiar context for the lives of locals. It is from my own everyday experiences living on the Gold Coast that the inspiration for this

---

1 That is, this question is normally asked with the assumption that someone non-white must come from elsewhere, even if they are Australian, and even though all white people in Australia come from elsewhere.
2 Colloquially, this would refer to surgically enhanced, tanned, toned, tattooed people, but this aesthetic is not so much ubiquitous as it is emblematic of the city’s obsession with beauty and the beach.
PhD project emerged. Following my move to the Gold Coast from its hinterland, I quickly became accustomed to a set of popular, localised attitudes towards the city that I had readily picked up from interactions with new friends and strangers. These attitudes are that we frequently complain about tourists, calling them annoying and rude, and we deride and (try to) avoid the tourist hub, Surfers Paradise, especially when major touristic events are on. We say the Gold Coast only cares about tourism dollars, and we often express disdain for the city’s superficiality, tackiness and supposed lack of culture.

However, these attitudes are always marked by ambivalence. Many of us have jobs in tourism-related industries such as in hospitality, retail and construction and thus rely on tourism for income. We also inevitably, and reluctantly, end up spending time in Surfers Paradise – it is, after all, the city’s major entertainment and nightlife precinct. Further, even though we say the Gold Coast does not have ‘culture’ in the ways that Melbourne or Sydney do, we have witnessed an increasing number of arts festivals, boutique bars and trendy cafes popping up all over the city. Despite our criticisms, many of us enjoy living on the Gold Coast, and for the very same reasons that lure the tourists – the weather, the beaches and the lifestyle.

As a by-product of my passion for cultural studies, I have become adept at inadvertently thinking critically and reflexively about various aspects of my everyday life. In the last several years, I have grown especially interested in the attitudes outlined above, and in the spatial context(s) in which I am immersed. In the initial stages of this project, it struck me that the Gold Coast was a unique kind of place, different from other Australian cities. At the same time, it seemed to have parallels with other places around the world – other beachside mass tourism destinations that I call resorts (and which I define below). Thus, in my desire to better understand where I live, I selected a handful of other similar places with which to draw comparisons – Miami in the United States of America; Cancún in Mexico; Ibiza in Spain; and Phuket and Koh Phangan in Thailand. This comparative work became the basis of my doctoral thesis, allowing me to explore not only the

---

3 I grew up on Tamborine Mountain, a small town roughly 30-minutes drive from the Gold Coast.
4 And when we say this, we mean the local government and other groups with the power to make decisions about developments and city branding.
ambivalence felt by those who reside in such places, but how they operate spatially, and where they figure in relation to the larger flows of global tourism.

The principal objective of this dissertation is to contribute to conceptualisations of spatiality, particularly in relation to sites of mass tourism. I theorise resorts as distinct kinds of urban milieux, and analyse the ways in which their lived spaces are materially and symbolically produced. I consider the commonalities that delineate them as particular types of places, but also the differences that set them apart. Acknowledging the deeply inter-implicated nature of these sites and their tourism industries, I explore the imaginaries and practices of tourists as well the perspectives and experiences of locals, and the dynamics between and within them. Moving beyond the pervasive stereotypes and assumptions that dominate discourses surrounding mass tourism destinations, this thesis demonstrates that resorts are unique, complex, heterogeneous socio-spatial formations.

Resorts: a working definition

Commonalities

Resorts share a number of symbolic and material commonalities that distinguish them as particular kinds of places. Most obviously, as cities or urbanised regions, their economies have long been dependent on the tourism industry, which has created unique historical, social and spatial conditions (Pons, Crang & Travlou 2009). Specifically, the resorts explored in this thesis are sites of intensified mass tourism development of the sun, sand and sex variety (Pons et al 2009; D’Andrea 2007; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Pi-Sunyer, Thomas & Daltabuit 2001). They are known for their warm weather and beautiful beaches, but also for nightlife and for playing host to events like Spring Break in Miami and Cancún, Schoolies on the Gold Coast, Full Moon Parties in Koh Phangan, and the summertime clubbing season in Ibiza. As such, resorts attract visitors seeking family vacations, romantic getaways and clubbing/partying holidays alike. Each of these resorts is an international destination with established tourism-related infrastructure, services and amenities, including various natural and built attractions; numerous accommodation options

---

5 Also known as ‘sun, sea and sex’ (Meethan 2001, p. 82) or the 4 S's of tourism: sun, sex, sea and sand (Córdoba Azcárate 2011; Pons et al 2009; Momsen 2005; Buhalis 2001; Pi-Sunyer et al 2001; Crick 1989).

6 These events are discussed further in Chapter 9.
(from backpacker hostels to five-star hotels); restaurants, bars and nightclubs; shopping malls and precincts; gyms and spas; and tour operators to ensure that visitors are readily able to access what is on offer.

As explored in depth in Chapter 9, resorts share similarities in terms of their popular imaginaries, myths, tourism narratives and representations, being perceived and marketed as places associated with escapism, fantasy, hedonism, spectacle and excess. Simultaneously, as a consequence of the dominance of mass tourism, they are frequently stereotyped and disparaged as being overdeveloped, tacky tourist traps; as banal, transient, depthless and fake; and as representative of the ‘worst’ aspects of globalisation and mass consumption, which are seen to enforce cultural homogeneity and destroy local cultures (see Chapter 10). Therefore, although tourism has been important in forming the economic base of these places, and although it continues to generate employment and large amounts of revenue (Briggs 2013; Sakolnakorn, Naipinit & Kroeksakul 2013; McDowall & Choi 2010; Cohen 2008; Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead 2008; Westerhausen 2002), the industry has also had negative impacts, both socially and environmentally (see Chapter 11).

Resorts can be described as examples of tourism urbanisation: ‘the process whereby urban areas, particularly large cities, are specially developed for the production, sale, and consumption of goods and services providing pleasure’ (Mullins 1992, p. 188, original emphasis). Mullins (1991, 1992) suggests that this trend gained traction due to the same series of post-World War II social and economic changes in the West that gave rise to the emergence of mass tourism – technological advancements, greater disposable incomes, paid holidays, and so on. Unlike the conventional modern metropolis, which has its roots in ‘the agglomeration of manufacturing industry, trade, and administration’ (Gladstone 1998, p. 3), sites of tourism urbanisation are characteristically postmodern, based on leisure and consumption rather than the production and exchange of commodities (Pons, Salamanca & Murray 2014; Weaver 2011; Zukin 2010; Meethan 2001; Winchester, McGuirk & Everett 1999; Gladstone 1998; Symes 1997; Mullins 1991).

This plays through, for example, into a lack of traditional central business districts (CBDs) in resorts. While they may have zones where legal, financial and
administrative services are concentrated (such as the downtown regions of Miami and Cancún), these do not serve as singular, dominant centres. Indeed, much like Soja’s (1996) exopolis, resorts tend to be de-centred as urban areas, featuring multiple, scattered centres and peripheries with different functions for tourists and residents. Perhaps more significant and recognisable than any kind of CBD are recreational business districts (RBDs) (Meyer-Arendt 1990; Butler 1980; Pigram 1977; Stansfield & Rickert 1970; Stansfield 1969) or tourism business districts (TBDs) (Getz 1993). Usually located along the coastline, these are tourist-oriented hubs of entertainment and ‘pleasure’ (Holmes 2001; Symes 1995), densely occupied by restaurants, food stalls, hotels, apartment buildings, souvenir shops, pedestrian malls and other tourist facilities (Meyer-Arendt 1990; Stansfield & Rickert 1970). In the resorts on which my thesis focuses, these tourist hubs are: Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach on the Gold Coast; Patong Beach in Phuket; Haad Rin in Koh Phangan; the Hotel Zone in Cancún; and Miami Beach in Miami. Often, the most developed centres in resorts are these recreation and tourism districts, which are designed to cater for transient tourist populations rather than to serve the needs of residents (Mullins 1992; Meyer-Arendt 1990). This raises important questions about local senses of belonging and who has rights to urban space (see Purcell 2014; Shields 2013; Harvey 2003, 2008; Mitchell 2003; Lefebvre 1974 [1968], 1996b), which are addressed in Chapter 11.

Differences

In addition to sharing such commonalities, each resort is also different. They have their own ‘local specificity’ (Massey 1998, p. 122) or ‘urban spatial specificity’ (Soja 2000, p. 8), which refers to their unique geographical, social, political and cultural contexts, histories, trajectories, materialities and imaginaries. Like all places, resorts have different landscapes, architectural styles, demographics, social and political issues, cultural practices, and so on (Soja 2000). As Massey (1994, 2007) argues, there are multiple sources of local specificity – they not only originate internally, but are shaped by external forces as well. Places are constituted by the local and the global, by ‘a distinct mixture of wider and more local social relations’ (Massey 1994, p. 156). Resorts are nodes in a global network of other similar destinations – they

---

7 A portmanteau of pleasure and leisure.
8 Photographs, maps and descriptions of these tourist hubs are provided in Chapters 4-8.
are products of (and contributors to) global trends in mass tourism, but these trends manifest differently depending on each place’s local specificity. Further, as Massey (2007) observes, ‘[a]ctions in one place affect other places’ (p. 15). Thus, to conceptualise the spatiality and local ‘character’ of a resort, we must notice its relations with what is beyond, both in terms of how it is influenced by and how it influences other localities (Massey 1994, 2007). In Massey, Allen and Pile’s (1999) words, ‘it is impossible to tell the story of any individual city without understanding its connections to elsewhere’ (p. 2).

This is one of the reasons why this project is comparative and multi-sited (Falzon 2016 [2009]; Saukko 2003; Marcus 1995). Such an approach allows me to notice patterns and connections in how particular global phenomena play out across various local sites, while still attending to differences, discontinuities and idiosyncrasies (Saukko 2003). Therefore, in selecting which destinations this project would focus on, I took into account my initial impressions of both their similarities and their differences (and more examples of both emerged throughout the research process). The selection was a relatively straightforward process, with certain destinations standing out to me as obvious choices based on the most dominant imaginaries and narratives associated with them, as well as being unique places in their own regional/national contexts.

I chose Miami because the Gold Coast has frequently been compared to it, most notably due to their similar skylines, high-end waterfront real estate, weather and tourism industries, but there have also been claims that the Gold Coast was deliberately modelled on Miami Beach (Scott, Gardiner & Dedekorkut-Howes 2016; Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2004, 2005, 2006, 2012; Griffin 1998; Goad 1997; Pigram 1977). However, Miami also seemed particularly valuable as an example because of how mature and iconic it is as a destination, having experienced periods of ebb and flow in its popularity several times over the years. Cancún came to mind because, like Miami, it attracts university students during Spring Break. However, Cancún is different in that it is the newest destination among my choices, being a purpose-built resort – a ‘planned utopia’ (Murray 2007, p. 340) – initiated by the Mexican government in the mid-1970s. I also wanted a non-Western destination, and settled
on Southern Thailand\(^9\) for its popularity among young Australians, being in close proximity to us and relatively affordable. The Thai resorts also struck me as distinctive in that Thailand is imagined as an ‘exotic’ destination in which cultural experiences of the Other are embedded in mass tourism offerings (something that I later found to be the case to varying extents in other destinations, particularly Cancún). Due to an original intention to focus this project more on youth and nightlife, I picked Ibiza because of its reputation as a global mecca for mainstream dance music culture. Despite a shift to a broader project focus, Ibiza remained a very useful selection for its emphasis on the ‘sex’ aspect of the sun, sand and sex style of mass tourism, in which ‘sex’ encompasses not only sexual pursuit, but partying, drinking and other adult activities.

*Resorts in the existing literature*

Although the terms ‘resort’, ‘resort city’ and ‘resort town’\(^10\) are not uncommon in the literature, these kinds of places have not been extensively theorised. In particular, with the exception of tourism urbanisation, there is little scholarly work on resorts from the perspectives of urban cultural studies (Fraser 2015; Highmore 2005) or cultural geography that is in the same vein as conceptualisations of urban formations like the exopolis (Soja 1996, 2000), fantasy city (Hannigan 1998), megalopolis (Gottmann 1961), edge city (Garreau 1991), post-industrial city (Gospodini 2006; Mommaas 2004; O’Connor & Wynne 1996; Hall 1997), and so on.\(^11\)

In tourism literature, however, there are several case studies of specific resort destinations, as well as a small body of work focused on the urban morphology and evolution of resorts.

---

\(^9\) As explained in Chapter 5, because Thailand was the first overseas destination I visited for fieldwork, and because Australians often speak of a ‘Thailand holiday’ rather than mentioning specific places, I was unsure of which islands or towns would be most relevant to my research. I ended up travelling to several of them, and chose to include two – Phuket and Koh Phangan – as examples of the type of tourism development that occurs across Southern Thailand.

\(^10\) When I use resort throughout this dissertation, I am referring to urbanised (or urbanising) beachside resorts as defined in this chapter. I recognise, of course, that the term is also used to refer to ski resorts and mountain resorts, among other types.

\(^11\) There is also a substantial body of research on broader categorisations like postmodern cities and world or global cities, which are often implicated in the other urban formations listed here.
On specific resorts in the tourism literature, the most notable and influential studies have been those of British seaside resorts (Agarwal 1997, 2002; Shaw & Williams 1997 [eds]; Walvin 1978; Hern 1967; Barrett 1958), especially Blackpool and Brighton (Webb 2005; Urry 2002; Meethan 1996; Shields 1991; Bennett 1983, 1986; Gilbert 1949). Meethan (2001) suggests that these early resorts are significant in that they ‘set the dominant patterns for mass tourism’ (p. 9) that persist today. As becomes clear in Chapter 9, some of the key recognitions emerging from this work, in particular from the work of Shields and Urry, continue to be useful to an analysis of the contemporary resorts that are the focus of this thesis.

On the basis of some of the earliest research on seaside resorts – especially by Gilbert (1949) and Barrett (1958), who identified some common phenomena among such places – the concept of ‘resort morphology’ was developed (Liu & Wall 2009; Andriotis 2003, 2006; Meyer-Arendt, Sambrook & Kermath 1992; Jeans 1990; Meyer-Arendt 1990; Pigram 1977; Lavery 1974; Stansfield 1969). Resort morphology examines the spatial formation of (usually seaside/beachside) tourism destinations in an attempt to illustrate the relations between form, function and development (Liu & Wall 2009). By identifying similarities between resorts, this literature highlights the distinctiveness of these types of places as urban formations (Liu & Wall 2009; Pigram 1977; Stansfield & Rickert 1970). Researchers have observed that the form of resorts reflects their function as sites for tourist consumption: development is most intensified near the beach, expanding along the coastline in a linear fashion but also sprawling inland (Andriotis 2003; Pigram 1977; Stansfield 1969). In this development pattern, the beachfront is commonly tourist-focused, dominated by the attractions, amenities and accommodation which constitute the recreational business district – a concept which originated in resort morphology literature (Getz 1993; Meyer-Arendt 1990; Pigram 1977; Stansfield & Rickert 1970; Stansfield 1969). Residents’ housing, institutions and services, on the other hand, are more likely to occupy areas further inland, but wealthier residents tend to live closer to the beach than other residents 12 (Stansfield 1969). As will become apparent, these general trends are certainly evident in the urban formations

---

12 Clearly, then, the (often blurred) spatial divisions between tourist and local areas are also representative of localised social stratification based on class. This is explored further in Chapter 11.
of the resorts I am studying, but in each case with important variations. That is, for all their shared features, these resorts are also marked by differences.\(^\text{13}\)

Closely related to resort morphology is a body of literature that theorises how these sites develop and change over time. This is grounded in Butler’s (1980, 2006) tourism area life cycle, Smith’s (1991, 1992) work on beach resort evolution, and Prideaux’s (2004, 2009) resort development spectrum. I provide a more comprehensive outline of these models in the next chapter, but what they each identify is a pattern of development that tracks resorts from their quiet, small town beginnings to their evolution into large, international mass tourism destinations and, often, into cities with increasingly diverse economic activities. Each model outlines various stages or phases that resorts may go through, defined by criteria relating to population growth, tourist arrivals and overnight visitors, accommodation types, local participation and resident attitudes, environmental impacts, and more. These models are primarily intended for audiences interested in the planning, development and management of resort destinations (see also Prideaux [2009], Mill [2008] and Agarwal & Shaw [2007] [eds] on resort management).

In terms of literature on the specific resorts I have chosen, there is a substantial amount on each from varying disciplinary perspectives, including work on issues in urban planning; historical accounts; environmental impact studies; reflections on tourism trends; quantitative research on sex, drugs and alcohol use among tourists; and qualitative, ethnographic work on the experiences of tourists and, less commonly, residents. Relevant articles and books are cited throughout this dissertation, and particularly in Chapters 4–8, in which I provide an overview of each resort. As for comparative studies, however, very few of these sources draw explicit parallels between the resorts on which I focus, and those who do so make only fleeting comparisons. For example, Gladstone (1998) analyses tourism urbanisation in the United States (particularly Las Vegas, Orlando and Atlantic City) through reference to Mullins’ Australian examples of the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast (Gladstone also mentions Miami Beach and Cancún as further examples); and D’Andrea briefly notes Koh Phangan as another site for the

\(^{13}\) Doubtless this is equally true for all places that provided the basis for resort morphology.
manifestation of the nomadic dance countercultures which she examines in Ibiza and Goa.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Multiplicities, differences and in-betweens: aims and approaches}

The literature on tourism urbanisation, resort morphology and resort evolution tends to focus on the materiality of resorts – their landscapes, built environments, attractions, developments over time, and the flows and activities of tourists and residents. Inspired by the works of Lefebvre (1991 [1974], 2004 [1992]) and Soja (1996, 2000), my project differs from a great deal of the existing literature in that I aim to conceptualise the spatiality of resorts not only in terms of the ‘real’, but also the imagined and the lived. I consider how resorts, as distinct urban milieux, are produced and reproduced from both macro- and micro-level perspectives. I examine the material aspects of resorts referred to above; their symbolic existence (their associated popular imaginaries, representations and narratives of identity); and the lived experiences of their social spaces (which draw together elements of the material and the symbolic).

My interest in this framework for conceptualising spatiality stems, in part, from my own experiences of living in a resort. I have often noticed dissonances between how the Gold Coast has been represented in the media, how it has been branded by city officials, and how I perceived it based on my everyday experiences. I have also become interested in disjunctures in the spatial practices and rhythms (Lefebvre 2004) of tourists and locals, particularly in Surfer Paradise. These disparities are heightened by the Gold Coast’s role as a mass tourism destination. Resorts are saturated by touristic images, marketing discourses and other myths that are so pervasive that they can eclipse residents’ understandings and definitions of urban identity.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, to outsiders, the tourist hubs of resort cities/regions are

\textsuperscript{14} As further examples: Byrne and Houston (2016) list Miami, Cancún and the Gold Coast as examples of sunbelt cities; Weaver (2011) lists Cancún and the Gold Coast as examples of tourism urbanisation; Mullins (1992) observes tourism urbanisation as occurring most evidently in ‘the Mediterranean littoral and in the United States along Florida’s coastline’ (p. 187) in addition to on the Gold Coast; and Smith (1991) briefly compares Phuket to Surfers Paradise. References relating to comparisons made between Miami and the Gold Coast are provided earlier in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{15} Obviously, all cities and their citizens are subject to tourist representations and myths to greater or lesser extents. In resorts, however, these effects are greatly intensified by the fact that the primary reason for the existence of the city is tourism, and thus tourism discourses
often imagined to represent resorts in their entirety, which in turn reinforces stereotypes of such places as being overdeveloped, homogenous, superficial and contrived. As a resort local, however, I am aware of the diversity and complexities that exist beyond these zones, and as a tourist, I know that experiencing lived spaces can disrupt simplistic imaginaries or reductive stereotypes. Further, as a researcher I came early to the realisation that despite the obvious usefulness of approaches such as resort morphology and models of resort evolution, they can go only some of the way towards understanding resorts as diverse and complex assemblages. This is because while comparison of like with like can reveal patterns and shared characteristics, at the same time it can tend to obscure or undervalue the significance of differences.

Through these recognitions, it became clear that there are multiple ways that the same space(s) can be imagined, and thus different ways that space(s) can be represented and lived. Among these, there is no more ‘correct’ or ‘authentic’ way in which space can be perceived, and in fact these multiplicities and differences feed into the ongoing production of space. Thus, in this dissertation, I look at the touristic and the local, and the material and symbolic, to elucidate how their interconnections create distinct forms of spatiality, sociality and temporality.

To investigate these dynamics, I have conducted extensive literature research (see Chapter 2) and undertaken fieldwork in each of the resorts on which the work focuses (see Chapter 3). My applied methods include a mixture of participant observation, photography, rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre 2004), and semi-structured interviews with resort residents. These methods were intended to be impressionistic, partial and to some degree autoethnographic, in process and outcomes. They were designed to allow me to reflect on my own experiences as a local, tourist and researcher, and to speak to and about some key aspects of resort spatiality without making any totalising claims as to universal experiences or processes. Places are open, infinitely heterogeneous and always changing, and as such, cannot be simplified or comprehensively represented. Therefore, taking my

and representations are dominant over all others (unlike, for example, Sydney, New York, Paris or London which draw large numbers of tourists, but also have other histories, myths and representations).
cue from Ben Highmore (2005), my objective ‘is not to render the city legible, but to render its illegibility legible’ (p. 7).

The places, phenomena and observations I discuss throughout are taken to be ‘examples’ in Agamben’s (1993) sense, always partial, caught between the universal and the particular. They function as ‘generalizable particularities’ (Soja 2000, p. 154, original emphasis) – singular instances which do not apply to all contexts, but nonetheless provide insight into wider social and cultural processes and forces. This is why I believe it is crucial to consider both the similarities and the differences within and between resorts. The term ‘resorts’ may seem like a universal category, but it is more usefully understood as a term that identifies some commonalities (such as in how these places develop, and how they are imagined, represented and experienced) among singularities, each of which has its own local specificity, nuances and trajectories. Each resort is a unique expression of more global processes.

Although only initially deployed as a methodological tool, the conceptual moment encountered in Agamben’s (1993) work on the example became one of the key frameworks informing my analysis. I am interested in rethinking all too familiar, taken-for-granted binary oppositions (like the universal and the particular) by accounting for the tensions and movements between them. The dualisms that I deal with at various points in this thesis include macro/micro, global/local, homogeneity/heterogeneity, mobility/fixed, tourist/resident, outsider/insider, official/unofficial, real/imagined, authentic/inauthentic, high culture/popular culture, everyday/exotic and order/disorder.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004 [1987]), Deleuze and Guattari disrupt the logic of binary oppositions through an exploration of the complex, uneven relations between a number of related dualisms, such as arborescent/rhizomatic, striated/smooth, molar/molecular, and so on. In each pairing, the former terms refer to systems, processes or ideologies that are (or at least attempt to be) ordered, systematic, fixed and closed, and are based on binaries and hierarchies (Deleuze & Guattari 2004). The latter terms, on the other hand, are characterised by unpredictability, fluidity, openness and expansion (and also breaks and ruptures)

---

16 See Chapter 3 for more on Agamben’s (1993) use of ‘example’.
A rhizome does not have a central organising principle or a clearly defined beginning and end, ‘but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p. 23), forging connections between elements of a different nature.

Importantly, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) stress that neither of the terms in each pair exists in pure form, nor can one be privileged over the other. Indeed, the two ‘exist only in mixture’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p. 524), with rhizomic formations always being marked by arborescent processes and vice versa:

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy ... (p. 10)

Since binarised terms hold significant weight and have long shaped how people think of the world and perceive places like resorts, my intention is not to abandon them altogether, but to approach them with the knowledge that they are relational, manifesting as in-between, liminal or hybrid. Such an approach recognises the conflicts, juxtapositions, heterogeneity and complexity which produce and are produced by lived spaces.

**Thesis structure and trajectory**

This thesis is organised into three sections comprising twelve chapters. Section 1 (comprising Chapters 1–3) is dedicated to introducing my PhD project and outlining my approaches to the research process. While literature review is embedded throughout the thesis, Chapter 2 discusses the key theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning my thinking. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this project – which stems from a background in cultural studies, but dips in and out of cultural geography, tourism studies and cultural sociology – I am not claiming to provide any kind of definitive coverage of the literature, but rather an overview of the ideas that are relevant to the particular kinds of places I am examining. Drawing on the work of Massey, Lefebvre, Soja, Shields, Highmore, and Deleuze and Guattari (among others), the first half of Chapter 2 explores contemporary understandings of space and place. In particular, I consider the mutually transformative relations
between representations, imaginaries, narratives, rhythms, socio-spatial practices and the built environment, and the ways in which these elements are implicated in the production of space. In the second half of the chapter, I shift my focus to the relevant literature on tourism, with an emphasis on the role of tourism in contemporary culture, tourist motivations, types of tourism (such as Fordist/mass tourism and post-Fordist/alternative styles of tourism), and tourism spaces and developments. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodological concerns informing my fieldwork and analysis, as well as giving a detailed account of the design and implementation of my applied methods. I explain my use of multiple methods and my impressionistic approach, and discuss matters of objectivity, reflexivity and positionality.

Section 2 (comprising Chapters 4–8) provides an overview of the resorts central to this study. This section is organised according to the order in which I visited each place: Chapter 4 on the Gold Coast, Chapter 5 on Thailand, Chapter 6 on Cancún, Chapter 7 on Miami and Chapter 8 on Ibiza. In each chapter, I outline the resort’s history in relation to tourism development, the current position of the tourism industry, the popular imaginaries associated with the resort, how it is represented in official tourism discourses, and some of my initial observations of its lived spaces (focusing on the tourist hubs). The purpose of these chapters is not only to provide background information on the sites of my research, but to begin to analyse some of the factors involved in the ongoing spatialisation of resorts. Each resort is examined separately so as to highlight aspects of their local specificity, although similarities between them also become increasingly clear as the section progresses.

Section 3 (comprising Chapters 9–12) more explicitly draws together and theorises the similarities that emerged in Section 2, as well as exploring key differences. In Chapter 9, I discuss commonalities in popular imaginaries, representations and dominant narratives of identity, which characterise resorts as escapist, hedonistic, excessive, sexualised, risky, carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984) and liminal (Shields 1991). I explore these themes through the example of nightlife in resorts, which constitutes a core aspect of tourist activity. In Chapter 10, I turn to

---

17 Since this section comprises a collection of short chapters, I include a section introduction outlining what will be done in each chapter, and a section conclusion drawing together some of the commonalities and highlighting key differences.
the less dominant, emerging tourism narratives, which are increasingly emphasising cultural experiences and attempting to alter existing popular imaginaries of place. This marks a transition from Fordist to post-Fordist styles of tourism, and challenges stereotypes of resorts (and of tourism) as homogenous, depthless, superficial, transient and fake or hyperreal (Baudrillard 1994 [1981]). These issues are explored in relation to culture and capitalism, questions of authenticity, and the interplay between the global and the local. Chapter 11 moves the focus to the residents of resorts and what exists beyond tourism. To produce a more nuanced conceptualisation of resort spatiality, it is necessary to consider both guests and hosts, tourists and locals (Chio 2011). The tourism industry provides the context for local experiences just as localised spaces and cultures provide the context for the tourism industry. Drawing on insights collected through interviews, I explore the impacts of tourism on resort locals, providing their perspectives and experiences and also drawing on my own. Specifically, I look at what locals like and dislike about where they live, how tourism influences their everyday lives and spatial practices, and how living in sites geared towards catering for tourists can affect residents’ senses of belonging and attachments to their locality. Chapter 12 draws together the key arguments made in this thesis. With reference to the field, I consider the potential implications of my findings for scholars, local governments, urban planners and policy makers. I acknowledge the limitations of this research and at the same time point to how it opens out to possibilities for valuable future initiatives.

Conclusion

I have outlined how and why this project came about, its parameters, and the interests, aims and approaches driving the research process. In particular, I have stressed that in theorising how resorts constitute distinct urban milieux, my objective is not only to produce more nuanced understandings of these particular places, but of lived spaces more broadly. The resorts that are the focus of this thesis are, then, examples through which to explore the complex, heterogeneous nature of spatiality. In the following chapter, I outline some of the key concepts informing my understandings of space and place and the relations that constitute them, as well as tourism’s role in processes of spatialisation.
Chapter 2: Conceptual frameworks

This chapter outlines the concepts that have informed my approach to analysing resorts, and is organised around two key fields of inquiry: spatiality and tourism. In the first instance, I consider contemporary understandings of space and place, and how spatiality is produced by relations between representations, imaginaries, narratives, the built environment, social performances, spatial practices and various other rhythms and flows. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on theories underpinning analyses of contemporary tourism trends, practices and spaces, particularly with regard to tourist motivations, types of tourism, how tourist sites are constructed and how they evolve.

Taking a cultural studies approach, I resist ‘applying’ theory in favour of working through and within theory. I treat theory as providing different modes of thinking about the world, drawing upon ideas and processes I find useful for understanding my work, as appropriate to the context I am engaging with. As such, although I see this project – and myself as a researcher – as having the principal objective of making a significant contribution to theoretical and conceptual discussion, my project is nevertheless very much grounded in ‘reality’ – in lived experiences and lived spaces.

Spatiality

Space and place

Scholarly work has increasingly recognised the significance of the spatial dimensions of culture and everyday life (Soja 1996, 2000), a movement which is often referred to as ‘the spatial turn’. Soja (1996, 2000) argues that these matters of spatiality have, traditionally, been overshadowed by analyses focused on sociality and/or historicality. However, as he insists, the social, historical and spatial are intrinsically bound up in one another. Humans are always spatially located, and sociality and temporality must both be understood in terms of their spatial contexts (Massey 2005; Soja 2000; Massey, Allen & Pile 1999; Lefebvre 1991; Shields 1991). The centrality of space to everyday life means that how we think about space, and how we demarcate it, represent it, regulate it, construct it and move within it, has powerful social, political and historical effects.
These concerns are at the heart of Doreen Massey's work. In *For Space* (2005), Massey problematises the traditional binary of space and place. Space has often been theorised as global, natural, abstract and empty, a surface or void that is disconnected from cultures, histories and meaning (Cresswell 2015; Massey 2005, 2007; Lefebvre 1991). In contrast, place has been seen as that which is local, everyday, meaningful, authentic, closed and fixed (Crang 2006; Massey 2005, 2007). Massey (2005) instead rejects any strict separation between space and place, and offers three propositions which underpin a more productive approach to conceptualising spatiality:

*First*, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny … *Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity … if space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality … *Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction … always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far. (p. 9, original emphasis)

Thus, space is never empty nor static, but rather heterogeneous and always in process, produced through a multiplicity of interrelations and a plurality of trajectories. As such, it is anything but disconnected from cultures and histories: ‘space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations … [I]dentities/entities, the relations “between” them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all constitutive’ (Massey 2005, p. 10).

While the distinction between space and place (and the characteristics associated with each) is false, the concept of ‘place’ nevertheless continues to be a significant framing device for how people perceive, use and regulate spaces, and this has important social, spatial and political ramifications. Therefore, in this thesis, following Massey’s approach, I do not abandon the term ‘place’ in favour of ‘space’ or vice versa. Just as with the propositions about space outlined above, Massey’s work in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) and *World City* (2007) has emphasised the need to reconfigure our understandings of place, to develop a ‘progressive’ or ‘global’ sense of place. People think of ‘a place’ as somewhere that has been territorialised, has a certain name (Cresswell 2015), and becomes associated with a
particular identity, culture, history, government, climate, landscape, spatial formation and built environment. However, while places are indeed distinct and have their own particularities and local specificity, they are not coherent, unified or harmonious. That is, they are full of ‘internal conflicts’ (Massey 1994, p. 155), and can have multiple, contested identities, cultures, and so on.

Despite what maps, local government areas and zoning policies may infer, places do not have easily definable geographic boundaries. As Massey (2007) suggests, ‘places do not lend themselves to having lines drawn around them’ (p. 13). Miami, for example, is imagined as a particular place (as are all of the resorts examined in this thesis), but it encompasses numerous other sprawling cities and neighbourhoods (which are in themselves places that are different from each other), so it is difficult to determine where Miami ends and the next place begins. Miami, as a sense of place, and somewhere that people can identify as living in or belonging to, emanates beyond the rigidly demarcated city limits.

Place, then, is not spatially bounded, fixed or closed, but fluid and open (Massey 1994, 2007). Rather than being threatened by external forces, spaces and processes, places are in fact always connected to and constituted by what exists outside of them (Massey 1994, 2005, 2007; Lefebvre 1991, 1996c). They are not only influenced by what occurs elsewhere, but can in turn affect other places as well: ‘world cities, as indeed all places ... have lines that run out from them: trade routes, investments, political and cultural influences’ (Massey 2007, p. 7). Places like resorts are ‘specific nodes’ (Massey 2007, p. 167) in a wider global network of international mass tourism destinations, and this network is also always shifting, evolving, making new connections and experiencing breaks. This is why my project analyses the spatiality of resorts through a consideration of the similarities and differences between multiple sites.

Assemblages

Places, spaces and networks can also be usefully conceptualised as ‘assemblages’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) terms. An assemblage is a collection of diverse elements that form a larger whole that ‘expresses some identity and claims a territory’ (Surin 2011, p. 91). What constitutes the assemblage is constantly shifting and changing in nature, with the ‘whole’ never actually being completely coherent,
stable or complete. The assemblage is in a perpetual state of becoming, always being made and remade (Surin 2011; Colebrook 2002).

Places are assemblages composed of multiplicities of bodies, mobilities, rhythms,\(^\text{18}\) representations, identities, histories, communities, cultures, signs, power relations, buildings, material objects, imaginaries, affects, and more (Edensor 2011; Surin 2011; Pons et al 2009; Hillier 2007; Sheller & Urry 2004). Grosz (2002 [1992]) illustrates this very usefully in relation to cities:

> By *city*, I understand a complex and interactive network which links together, often in an unintegrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, processes, and relations, with a number of imaginary or real, projected or actual architectural, geographic, civic, and public relations. The city brings together economic and informational flows, power networks, forms of displacement, management, and political organization, interpersonal, familial, and extra-familial social relations, and an aesthetic/economic organization of space and place to create a semipermanent but ever-changing built environment or milieu. (pp. 298–299)

Just as Massey argued with regard to place, assemblages and the multiplicities that constitute them are largely defined relationally, including by relations both within and beyond\(^\text{19}\) the assemblage: ‘Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, pp. 9–10). That is, place assemblages and their multiplicities are rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari 2004) – they connect to other elements and other places, and are transformed (and impel transformation) in the process, but they are also formed through disconnections and fragmentations (Hillier 2007; Wise & Breen 2004; Lefebvre 1996a). Consequently, multiplicities can co-exist, intersect and/or conflict, and their relations are unpredictable and uneven.

Importantly, assemblages involve arborescent processes *as well as* rhizomatic ones – as emphasised in the Introduction, these always exist in mixture. Even though, in their lived actuality, places have a tendency to be messy, dynamic,

---

\(^{18}\) See ‘Rhythms’ sub-section below.

\(^{19}\) This does not imply that there is an inside/outside binary at work in my analysis of places/assemblages – there are things which are perceived to be ‘outside’, such as another city across the globe, but there may still be connections to this ‘outside’ that also make it somewhat part of the ‘inside’ of the place in question.
complex and connected to elsewhere, as well as full of multiplicities and contested uses and meanings, they are also shaped by sedimented histories (Highmore 2005) and traditions, and by current practices. In this sense, they do have ‘lines drawn around them’ (Massey 2007, p. 13): they are regulated by policy and governance, carved up into zones, stratified in terms of class, race and gender, and subjected to metanarratives of identity. As Massey (2007) observes, world cities experience the tensions and movements between ‘the jarring of a territorialised politics with another geography of flows and connections’ (p. 14). These processes, and the unique ways in which they interact and manifest, are part of what constructs a place’s local specificity.

The spatial triad: perceived, conceived and lived space

In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre posits that spatiality can be thought of as a ‘perceived-conceived-lived triad’ (p. 40) of physical space, mental space and social space, which he also refers to as spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. Physical space designates that which is ‘real’ or material, such as the built environment; mental space is the ‘imagined’, including representations, myths and imaginaries; while the ‘real-and-imagined’ of social space refers to lived experiences and practices (Soja 1996, pp. 5–6; Lefebvre 1991). The perceived and conceived are often thought of as macro-level structures and processes, whereas the lived is understood as the micro-level experiences of everyday life (Soja 1996).

Lefebvre and Soja work against a long-standing convention of treating the perceived and the conceived as a binary. Not only is that binary problematic in the sense that all binaries are – that is, creating a false separation between things that are deeply interconnected – but it also largely ignores how space is sensed, felt and lived (Lefebvre 1991). Soja (1996) argues that a ‘thirling’ of the spatial imagination functions not simply to undo the binary, but to restructure it. Social space or lived space – or in Soja’s terms, Thirdspace – combines both spaces of the traditional duality, but also advances the scope and meaning of spatial thinking:

*Everything* comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable

---

20 Soja (1996) similarly refers to these as Firstspace (the perceived), Secondspace (the conceived) and Thirdspace (the lived).
and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.

(Soja 1996, pp. 56–57, original emphasis)

In this thesis, I examine both the micro and the macro through a consideration of the perceived, conceived and lived aspects of resorts, in order to understand their spatialities and their spatialisation, and how these are produced and reproduced. In particular, I aim to elucidate the ways in which the perceived and conceived intermingle to inform the lived experiences of resorts, and in turn, how the lived can reinforce, disrupt, transform or otherwise feed back into the perceived and the conceived. Below, I outline the mutually transformative relations between the most obvious components of the lived spaces of resorts: imaginaries, representations, the built environment, and people/bodies and their spatial practices.

Imaginaries, representations and materiality

Despite arguing in *The Production of Space* (1991) against a perceived/conceived binary, Lefebvre reinforces a similar dichotomy between reality and representation in *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) through his discussion of ‘presence’ and ‘the present’. For Lefebvre, ‘presence’ is the ideal, pure embodied experience of the autonomous human — the immediate, the affective and the material. It refers to ‘authentic’, even transcendent, moments of feeling and being in the world (Lefebvre 2004; Shields 1999). As Rob Shields (1999) observes, ‘In contrast to current positions that unveil the socially constructed nature of nearly everything, Lefebvre had complete, and even naïve faith in the primacy of authentic experience’ (p. 62). The ‘present’, on the other hand, is the image, the representation or the imaginary. For Lefebvre (2004), the present is an imitation of the real, a misleading fabrication which simulates presence. He explains this in terms of television:

> The quasi-suppression of distances and waiting periods (by the media) amplifies the present, but these media give only reflections and shadows. You attend the incessant fêtes or massacres, you see the dead bodies, you contemplate the explosions; missiles are fired before your very eyes. You are there! ... but no, you are not there; your present is composed of simulacra; the image before you simulates the real, drives it out, is not there. (pp. 31–32)

Clearly, Lefebvre’s argument assumes not only that reality and representation are separate, but that representation threatens a romanticised notion of reality. An
analysis of the spatiality of resorts, however, reveals that presence and the present are always folded together in such sites. The present is made into presence as imaginaries and representations are entangled with sensorial, embodied experiences. That is, presence occurs within a context of immersion in the representational and the imaginary.

Before continuing with this point, it is important to understand how conceived space – the realm of the representational and the imaginary – is constructed in order to highlight its influence on lived experiences and spatial practices. Representations are the material depictions of places formed through words and images in various forms of media, including books, magazines, brochures, newspapers, films, television programs, video games, websites, and so on. They inform, and are informed by, imaginaries of places. These urban imaginaries, which are also known as imaginary geographies or place-images (Shields 1991), are the mental, conceptual perceptions and mappings of particular places (Highmore 2005; Soja 2000). They involve not only ideas about how a place looks and how to navigate it, but also what kinds of people occupy it and what goes on there – its landscape, cultures, identities, norms, and so on. Imaginaries are essential for understanding spatiality because they act as ‘the interpretative grids though which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live’ (Soja 2000, p. 324).

Imaginaries are formed at a singular level, such as through subjective experiences and memories, and at a collective level, such as through representations, historical canons, metanarratives and other kinds of texts and myths. Thus, imaginaries are informed by both ‘realities’ and ‘fictions’, the material and the symbolic (Highmore 2005; Donald 1997). When these are widely held or understood, I refer to them as popular imaginaries – perceptions, stereotypes, narratives or reputations of a place that are based on its most iconic, well-known characteristics, events and other myths (Shields 1991). Of course, imaginaries are not universal, since how each person interprets various discourses, signs and images will be contingent on his or her own habitus (Bourdieu 1984), ideologies, social positions (class, age, gender,

---

21 This is very likely to be the case in all places, to varying degrees.
race, ethnicity, etc.) and individual tastes, preferences, beliefs, values and other life experiences.

Narratives are a particularly important component of imaginaries, especially for resorts. By ‘narrative’, I mean a particular set of ideas and images that compose a somewhat coherent story about a place and its identity. While narratives exist in the realm of the imaginary, they are expressed through representations and various forms of spatial materiality. Through tourism discourses and marketing campaigns, the local governments of resorts can brand themselves (Sheller & Urry 2004), disseminating an ‘official’ narrative of identity, or ‘official fiction’ (Olalquiaga 1992, p. xiii). When such a narrative of identity is particularly dominant and pervasive, it functions as a metanarrative. For Morgan (2014), this is the process through which ‘a place becomes a destination’ (p. 211, original emphasis). However, just as Massey (2005) argues in relation to representations, such overarching narratives function to fix identity, obscuring its dynamism. That is, official narratives attempt to simplify and organise the complexities, multiplicities and heterogeneities that actually constitute lived spaces (Degen 2004). In Highmore’s (2005) terms, narratives are a means through which to manage the ‘superabundance of the city’ (p.xi), to ‘make the urban culture intelligible and legible’ (p. 6). Beyond these official narratives there are also multiple unofficial narratives, such as those perpetuated by the news media and in popular film and television, and those of the locals, which are frequently marginalised.

Imaginaries of resorts are informed by tourism narratives and promotions; travel brochures, guides and websites; film and television representations; song lyrics; literature; reports in the news media; stories and photographs shared by family, friends and strangers in conversation, on social media and in online forums; and tourists’ and locals’ first-hand experiences (Abodeeb, Wilson & Moyle 2015; Lean, Staiff & Waterton 2014; Potts, Dedokrkut-Howes & Bosman 2013; Law, Bunnell & Ong 2007; Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen & Urry 2004; Bennett 2004; Urry 2002; Tourism organisations, local entrepreneurs, developers and other citizens in positions of power also have a hand in constructing official narratives, having the capacity to influence how resorts evolve spatially, how they market themselves, how they function politically, and so on.

These different types of narratives are discussed throughout this thesis. In particular dominant official and unofficial narratives are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, while local narratives are the focus of Chapter 11.
These representations and narratives can be conflicting – for example, a tourism campaign may depict a destination as being safe and family-friendly while news reports may focus on drug use and crime. Further, imaginaries will differ greatly between and among tourists and locals depending on their respective experiences and their exposure to certain representations, and how much value they place on either of these. Locals, for instance, are more likely to imagine their city in terms of their everyday experiences than in terms of tourism promotions (although these factor into their understandings as well). Even for tourists, imaginaries and myths are multiple, varied and contested (Urry 1995). As Córdoba Azcárate (2011) puts it: ‘... tourist imaginaries are never homogenous, unified, or uncontroversial entities. They are always heterogeneously produced, contested, and re-performed even within a single tourist destination’ (p. 197). That said, some imaginaries are more pervasive and/or dominant than others.

Sheller (2004) observes how dominant narratives and popular imaginaries operate in terms of a tourism destination like the Caribbean:

In an endless simulacrum, earlier literary and visual representations of the ‘Paradise Isles’ have been mapped into the collective tourist unconscious before they have ever set foot there. The real Caribbean is always a performance of the vivid Caribbean of the imagination. (p. 13)

Here, Sheller is pointing to the ways in which representations shape the imaginaries of tourists, and the necessity for destinations to cultivate lived spaces that closely align with these imaginaries. Through consuming representations of resorts, tourists develop certain expectations of these sites, and these become embedded in their anticipation – their daydreams and fantasies – of what their holiday will be like, and what kinds of memories it will create (Abodeeb et al 2015; Crang 2014; Sandvoss 2014; Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento 2010; Crouch, Jackson & Thompson 2005; Bærenholdt et al 2004; Urry 2002; MacCannell 2001; Dann 1996). As Urry (2002) puts it, tourists ‘seek to experience “in reality” the pleasurable dramas they have already experienced in their imagination’ (p. 13), through, for example, gazing upon spectacle first-hand, feeling the humid air and the sun on their skin, and experiencing the fun and relaxation that has been the purpose for the trip. Destinations therefore make concerted efforts to ensure that their tourism spaces
meet (or at least closely approximate) the expectations of tourists and provide the desired experiences: to make fantasies a reality.

In this way (among others), representations and imaginaries have material consequences (Highmore 2005) in that they transform the real. Shields (1991) refers to this process as social spatialisation: ‘the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as the interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment)’ (p. 31). One of the material effects of imaginaries and representations is that they establish an order of space through ‘normative agendas’ (Crang 2014, p. 69) of what should be seen and done, as well as delineating normative ways of dressing, behaving, interacting and moving (Shields 1991). Conceived space, then, can become embodied and lived out, offering ‘guides for actions’ (Shields 1991, p. 30) which influence spatial practices and social performances. For example, numerous images in tourism promotions of the Gold Coast feature families at the beach and in nearby areas wearing swimwear and flip-flops, which indicates to future visitors that these are the appropriate kinds of attire and activities in the city.

If people perform as they are positioned to by the most dominant representations – exhibiting a kind of socio-spatial competence – then those narratives are reified and their associated norms are reaffirmed and perpetuated, implicitly encouraging others to perform in similar ways. In other words, a degree of coordination between imaginaries, representations and lived experiences is required for certain types of social spaces to be reproduced and naturalised (Shields 1991). However, as Shields (1991) notes, ‘spatialisation … is inherently unstable because it is always challenged by reality. Contradictions are always being encountered and old notions abandoned; old practices being improved by new ones’ (p. 65). Thus, any coordination is tentative and social spaces are always changing. The real, lived spaces of resorts will never be exactly as they are depicted, imagined or fantasised. To an extent,

---

24 The existence of conflicting representations means that people will hold different ideas about what is normal and appropriate in various spaces. This is explored further in Chapter 11 through an example of the Gold Coast’s multiple conflicting rhythms.

25 Tourism promotions, of course, do not always inform the most dominant narratives, as becomes clear in Chapter 8.
representations and imaginaries are partial and reductive, whereas lived spaces are infinitely complex, rich and dynamic. The in situ experience of space inevitably entails subversive performances, surprises, unexpected encounters, sights, smells, and so on – and this is why materiality matters. Traces of these actual uses of space feed back into popular imaginaries and representations, working to reinforce them, transform them, or add another layer to the multiplicity.

Built environments, bodies and spatial practices

The built environment also significantly shapes spatiality. Iconic landmarks and particular architectural styles, for instance, function as symbols of place in popular imaginaries and representations. The long-term existence of such elements can be seen to stabilise some aspects of the popular imaginaries of places, such as the Eiffel Tower metonymically standing for Paris (Allen 1999). Further, since buildings are functional and design elements are purposeful, the built environment expresses something about how its creators (urban planners, developers, architects and interior designers) imagined the space to be used (Allen 1999; Shields 1992a). Therefore, like narratives and representations, the built environment and its significations can be understood as positioning people to enact particular spatial practices (Shields 1992a). Pathways and pedestrian crossings indicate where people are to walk; lighting contributes to a certain atmosphere (such as dim lighting accented by neon and strobe lights in nightclubs); observation decks and balconies encourage gazing upon and photographing visual spectacle; and so on.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1991 [1977]) examines how architecture has been used as a mechanism of control over bodies. He argues that spaces can have disciplinary effects, being produced in specific ways to encourage certain performances:

... an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen ... or to observe the external space ... but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold over their

---

26 By no means does this mean they are false, or inauthentic or unconnected – indeed, representations and imaginaries capture some of the very real elements of places, as well as being multiply connected to other representations and imaginaries.

27 These may parallel or conflict with the norms of spatial usage promoted in representations.
conducted, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. (Foucault 1991, p. 172)

Foucault explores this phenomenon using what have become famous examples, notably the factory, the prison and the educational institution, explaining that they are designed in ways that ensure that one's location and activities are restricted and one develops a sense of always being visible and of being watched, whether or not this is the case at any particular time: ‘... the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action ...’ (Foucault 1991, p. 201). Consequently, individuals internalise the gaze and self-monitor their own performances, becoming docile bodies (Foucault 1991). In this context, power over each individual’s conduct is exercised by the individuals themselves, and through their everyday relations with others. Although some tourist spaces may be read in similar ways, what is most pertinent about these ideas in relation to my project is the capacity for architecture and other forms of materiality (perceived space, in Lefebvre’s terms) to influence spatial performances and practices just as norms and imaginaries can.

Spatial arrangements, norms and imaginaries act as structures of control, and individuals can exercise agency from within them. As de Certeau (2002 [1984]) observes, the built environment ‘organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further)’ (p. 387). The city walker can abide by and actualise these material spatial signifiers but can also abandon or transform them, taking detours or disrupting the normative flows of people through spaces (de Certeau 2002). Such micro-level demonstrations of transgression have the potential to alter macro-level norms and popular imaginaries – that is, agency can influence structure. As Shields (1991) observes, ‘It is ... possible to disrupt the closely woven fabric of social practices and conventions through interventions at the level of spatial practice’ (p. 53). This will inevitably occur since people within lived spaces are heterogeneous, with different cultural backgrounds, social positions, desires, imaginaries and purposes for being there (for example, in resorts, in addition to tourists, there are locals engaging in leisure and in paid labour, homeless people living on the streets,

---

28 For example, nightclubs can be understood as highly controlled, regulated spaces in which the occupants internalise the gaze of their peers and of security personnel, performing in ways that are both normative and disciplined as well as appropriately ‘wild’ and disorderly (see Chapter 9 and Cantillon 2015a).
and so on). How one responds to the spatial order is contingent upon these multiple factors, as well as on the ‘disciplinary gaze’ of others performing in lived space (Foucault 1991, p. 174).

Clearly, far from being separate entities, bodies and spaces produce one another (Grosz 2002; Lefebvre 1991). In relation to cities, Grosz (2002) explains:

... I am interested in exploring the ways in which the body is physically, socially, sexually, and discursively or representationally produced, and the ways, in turn, bodies reinscribe and project themselves onto their sociocultural environment so that this environment both produces and reflects the form and interests of the body. This relation of introjections and projections involves a complex feedback relation in which neither the body nor its environment can be assumed to form an organically unified ecosystem ... The body and its environment ... produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made and made over onto the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, ‘citified,’ urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body. (p. 297)

Thus, places and bodies are mutually defining, and their relations do not neatly follow any hierarchical or cause-and-effect models – neither bodies nor spaces can be privileged as more powerful or influential. Bodies cannot be seen as the ‘cause’ which prompts the creation of cities as an ‘effect’ of human needs, nor can cities be understood as unnatural and alienating environments for humans (Grosz 2002). Rather than debating which predates or necessitates the other, it is more useful to understand them as assemblages that are always already interconnected, multiple and dynamic (Grosz 2002).

The wasp and the orchid

The relations between the perceived, conceived and the lived – and between materiality, representations, imaginaries, bodies and spatial practices and performances – can be conceptualised in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) example of the wasp and the orchid:

How could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless derritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements,
form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing its image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is true only on the level of the strata—a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, surplus value of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp. Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. Rémy Chauvin expresses it well: ‘the a parallel evolution of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other’. (p. 11, original emphasis)

Like the wasp and the orchid, the numerous elements (which are in themselves already multiplicities) involved in the production of space, and in the ongoing construction of the resort assemblage, are mutually constitutive and mutually transformative – they are interconnected and contingent, but this contingency is always uneven (a parallel) and unpredictable. The perceived (materiality) shapes and is shaped by the conceived (imaginaries and representations), and likewise, the lived (the experiential) shapes and is shaped by the perceived and the conceived, and how these relations manifest depends both on local specificity and connections to elsewhere.

For me, recognising urban formations as rhizomic assemblages is key to understanding resorts: each resort is such an assemblage with all the complexities and connections that are implied by that usage. This has meant developing my conceptual and theoretical positions, as well as my methodology, in ways that can deal with multiplicities, fragments, connections, disconnections, movements and volatility. Thus, I have drawn on the scholars whose influence is clear in this discussion and at the same time kept my ways of thinking open to reflexive reconfiguration throughout the project. My theoretical/conceptual work is, then, a rhizomic assemblage that interacts dynamically and productively with the work of others, as well as with my applied work and the effects/affects of the resorts themselves.
Rhythms

The relations between perceived, conceived and lived manifest in social space as rhythms. Lefebvre (1991, 2004) broadly defines rhythms as the connections between space, time and energies. He distinguishes between linear and cyclical rhythms – linear being routine social activity and imposed structures of organisation, or ‘the daily grind’ (p. 30); cyclical being things in nature, such as day and night, seasons, tides, and so on. This also includes rhythms of the body, such as respiration, circulation and hunger (Duffy, Waitt, Gorman-Murray & Gibson 2011; Lefebvre 1991, 2004). There would be no capacity to measure the linear without the cyclical, and the two ‘exert a reciprocal action’ (Lefebvre 2004, p. 8).

Every place has its own unique rhythms (Allen 1999). Although places are always changing, their rhythms mark a degree of regularity and routine, and this is part of what comes to define a place’s specificity or distinctiveness (Edensor 2010). Urban rhythms consist of movements of people, such as tourists, shoppers, clubbers and those going to and coming from work or school; the effects of transport schedules and traffic lights; sensory elements such as smells, sounds and moods; as well as less obvious influences such as global flows of capital, ideas and trends (Edensor 2010; Highmore 2005; Lefebvre 2004; Allen 1999). Thus, there exists a multiplicity of simultaneous, interwoven rhythms which intersect and interact in various ways. How these rhythms shift throughout the day and night alters the meanings made available in spaces, and thus how people act within them (Allen 1999). For example, in the transition between the cyclical rhythms of day and night, linear rhythms shift as well, since day and night are associated with different norms and activities.29 Therefore, although a rhythm is lived and material – and thus can be sensed and observed – it is also connected to the imaginary and the representational.

By acknowledging and analysing the relations between space and time, the concept of rhythms works to further destabilise the traditional notions of space that Massey critiqued. That is, space has typically been counterposed to time – the former associated with emptiness, stasis and fixity, and the latter (as history) with richness, progress and movement (Grosz 2001; Massey 1994; Foucault 1980). Such understandings ignore that time is spatialised and space is temporalised (as

---

29 This is explored in more depth in Chapter 11 using the Gold Coast as an example.
expressed by the term ‘space-time’). Indeed, as the above discussion demonstrates, the past, present and future are always folded together in lived space as one’s experiences are simultaneously shaped by one’s past expectations and imaginaries, the materiality of the present moment, and the formation of memories and narratives (as well as the accumulation of cultural artefacts like souvenirs and photographs) that can be carried into an imagined future. Conceptualising places in terms of their rhythms highlights the inseparability of spatiality, temporality and mobility (Edensor 2011), as well as the interplay between the material and symbolic (Highmore 2005). This approach foregrounds the dynamic, complex and relational nature of places as assemblages.

Tourism

Globalisation, mobilities and technologies

Scholarly debates surrounding globalisation have been central to explorations of both tourism and spatiality (as well as myriad other social and cultural processes and phenomena, and in numerous other scholarly disciplines) over the past several decades (Featherstone & Lash 1995). Globalisation refers to the increasing intensity and speed with which flows of goods, services, money, people, trends, information, images and cultures circulate across the world (Guillén 2010; Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2005; Urry 2003; Featherstone 1993; Giddens 1990). Such flows or movements are also the focus of the new mobilities paradigm, which constitutes a significant field of inquiry within studies of globalisation, tourism and spatiality/geography alike (see Cresswell & Merriman 2011; Burns & Novelli 2008 [eds]; Cresswell 2006; Hannam, Sheller & Urry 2006; Larsen, Urry & Axhausen 2006; Sheller & Urry 2004 [eds], 2006; Urry 2000, 2007).

Globalising processes have existed for centuries, facilitated by the cultural imperialism and exchanges implicated in forms of mobility such as world ‘discovery’, colonisation, wars, transnational trade, and the consequent travel of explorers, merchants, migrants, soldiers, pilgrims and missionaries (Macleod 2004; 2006).

---

30 This has similarly been described in terms of the ‘cycle of anticipation, activity and retrospection’ (Crouch et al 2005, p. 1) and ‘anticipation, performance and remembrance’ (Bærenholdt et al 2004, p. 3).

31 This is also why, as I outline in the following chapter, the concept of rhythms is a useful tool for analysing lived spaces.
Over time, these processes have only become quicker, easier, more affordable, more accessible and more pervasive with the advent of technologies like ships, trains, cars, aeroplanes, television, computers, the internet, mobile phones and digital cameras (Urry 2003; Appadurai 1996; Poon 1993).

Globalisation is often described in terms of the shrinking of the world (Fainstein & Judd 1999; Belk 1996) or of the compression of time and space (Larsen et al 2006; Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2003; Massey 1994; Robertson 1992; Harvey 1989). In other words, places, people and organisations around the globe are increasingly interconnected and interdependent (Guillén 2010; Pieterse 2010a; Savage et al 2005; Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2003; Meethan 2001; Wahab & Cooper 2001; Giddens 1990). As Castells (1996) argues, networks – rather than hierarchies – have become the overarching organising principle of relations in contemporary society, or ‘the information age’ (p. 469). These networks are multiple, open and dynamic (Castells 1996), much like rhizomes. In Global Complexity, Urry (2003) commends Castells’ concept of networks for how it ‘breaks with the idea that the global is a finished and completed totality’ (p. 10). The global is always in process, marked by complexity, diversity and unpredictability more than by any kind of linearity or universal causes and effects (Urry 2003).

Tourism is both a process and product of globalisation. It is at once comprised of different mobilities and is in itself a key form of mobility in contemporary society, being marked by fluid and multiple rhythms of people, objects and ideas across space (Hall 2008; Shaw & Williams 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004, 2006; Degen 2004; Urry 2000, 2007). As an agent or process of globalisation, tourism enables people with different cultures, expectations, desires, habits, norms and knowledges to travel to far off places relatively easily and affordably (or at least for those with a certain degree of economic capital). Thus, international destinations like resorts have a constant – but always shifting and heterogeneous – presence of transient, culturally diverse visitors who transform the spatiality, sociality and local cultures of these places as they consume them. At the same time, experiences of these

---

32 A more in-depth exploration of the relations between the local and the global in resorts is undertaken in Chapter 10.
destinations make their mark on tourists as well, who carry new knowledges back home with them.

As a product of globalisation, tourism – whether regional, domestic or international – has been shaped significantly alongside global changes and technological advances. International destinations, in particular, are not only occupied by people from around the world, but also multi-national hotel chains, global brand retailers and global fast food outlets in addition to boutique local businesses and attractions. Wahab and Cooper (2001) argue that worldwide population growth, the increasing affluence of some nations and technological innovations (such as in transport and computers) have bolstered tourism industries across the globe while simultaneously making destinations more competitive.

Those of us privileged enough to travel and to access new technologies can now see, learn about and form detailed imaginaries of places before ever visiting them, through engagements with representations found on the internet and in film and television. These feature multiple and often conflicting narratives and images, ranging from carefully crafted campaigns presented by local and national governments on official tourism websites to anecdotes from individuals on forums and social media. The internet has made it easy for us to research destinations, plan our own itineraries, search for the best deals, book our own holidays, leave reviews for others to take into account, and share our travel stories and photographs. As Buhalis (2001) suggests, this access to information has made (some\(^{33}\)) tourists more independent, sophisticated, discerning consumers, for whom destinations must cater in order to stay competitive.

Tourism and tourists: types and characteristics

Tourist motivations

Tourism – travelling for pleasure – has become a central practice in the lives of people across the globe. While people from every nation can be tourists, the opportunity to participate feasibly in these activities is constrained significantly by

\(^{33}\) As is discussed below in relation to Fordist and post-Fordist styles of tourism, some tourists still very much want packaged holidays organised and booked through a travel agent.
class, particularly in terms of an individual’s economic capital and commitments to paid and unpaid labour. These factors also influence whether tourists travel domestically or internationally, how long they vacation for, and how much they spend. As such, most tourists tend to be middle to upper class, and from countries with a high GDP per capita and a high rank on the Human Development Index (HDI), which are usually Western nations. For instance, one recent survey found that the world’s most frequent travellers (to both domestic and international destinations) were from Finland, United States, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and France (Traveller 2014). Each of these countries ranks within the top 25 worldwide in terms of the HDI (The United Nations Development Programme 2015), and all but one (Hong Kong) can be considered Western nations.

For people from these nations and elsewhere, travelling has become a normalised, routine life experience (Hall 2008; Urry 2002; Fainstein & Judd 1999). In Edensor’s (2001) words, ‘... tourism is increasingly part of everyday worlds, increasingly saturating the everyday life which it supposedly escapes’ (p. 200). Our daily lives often involve touristic practices – shopping, people watching, gazing upon spectacle – just as our holidays often necessarily involve daily tasks – grooming ourselves, caring for children, eating regular meals (Crang 2006). This overlap of tourism and the everyday is not only the case for tourists, but for those whose everyday lives take place in spaces dominated by tourism (the focus of Chapter 11).

In spite of this blurring between the everyday and exotic, the mundane and spectacular, the familiar and unfamiliar, tourist experiences are nonetheless marked by that which is out of the ordinary. Urry (2002) suggests that we encounter places we visit with a ‘tourist gaze’, a fluid and dynamic construct which designates particular people, places, things and experiences as being different and pleasurable, as defined in contrast to what is available for consumption at home. Thus, the desire

---

34 For instance, single parents working multiple jobs and caring for children will undoubtedly find it difficult to organise time away from work for an extended period of time, let alone pay for a vacation for them and their children. These kinds of difficulties are compounded in nations with low living wages and/or with limited (or no) annual leave or similar benefits.

35 A ranking system devised by the United Nations which takes into account factors such as life expectancy, expected and mean years of schooling, and gross national income per capita.

36 The tensions between these is explored further in Chapter 10.
to experience novelty and Otherness – in various forms – is the underlying motivation for most tourist activity (Berger 2007; Urry 2002, 2006; Desforges 1998). Tourists can experience difference by visiting unique landmarks, landscapes and attractions, undertaking unusual activities, and engaging with unfamiliar people and lifestyles, but also by encountering familiar things in new contexts (Urry 2002).

In *The Tourist: A new theory of the leisure class* (1999 [1976]), Dean MacCannell posits that tourists are fundamentally motivated by a search for authenticity. He argues that modernity is alienating, and that people feel that their lives are shallow and inauthentic (Meethan 2001; MacCannell 1973, 1999). In response to this, people are said to seek out authenticity through practices like tourism, with the objective of recovering some sense of wholeness that has been lost (Crouch 2005; Meethan 2001; Selwyn 1996). Authenticity, then, must exist outside of one’s everyday life in modernity, in more ‘traditional’ cultures and more ‘natural’ places (Chhabra, Healy & Sills 2003; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; MacCannell 1999; Brown 1996). Thus, the tourist desires that which is (or is marketed and imagined as) exotic and untouched, ‘the authentic other, the pristine primitive’ (Meethan 2001, p. 13).

MacCannell’s work on the tourist has been extensively debated, critiqued and adapted in the literature. While notions of authenticity are indeed significant in framing the tourist gaze and tourism spaces, what ‘authentic’ means to individual tourists is highly subjective, fluid and variable, as is discussed in Chapter 10. Additionally, feelings of alienation are not universal, especially in the conditions of postmodernity (Selwyn 1996), with many subjects being perfectly content with, and finding great meaning in, eclecticism, fragmentation and fluidity.\(^{37}\) Further, authenticity – whatever that may mean – is not paramount for all tourists. MacCannell tends to speak of tourists as a homogenous mass, when in fact there are different motivations for travel and different forms of tourism in which one can choose to participate (Selwyn 1996). In particular, MacCannell’s ideas seem more relevant to cultural and heritage tourists than to mass tourists or post-tourists (Wang 1999). Various broad categories of tourists/tourism will be examined below.

---

\(^{37}\) One such example are post-tourists, who are discussed later in this section, and again in Chapter 10.
Despite differences among tourists and their motivations for travelling, there are some commonalities in the experience and effects of engaging in tourism. Specifically, tourism experiences function to shape one's self-identity and autobiography (Crang 2014; Desforges 2000; Rojek 1993; Giddens 1991). Brown (1996) observes that tourism is not only about the quest for the authentic Other (as per MacCannell’s proposition), but also the search for an authentic self. This may manifest in the aim simply to have a good time with friends or family, or involve more ‘serious’ endeavours to ‘find’ oneself. While the latter is problematically essentialist, it is nonetheless the case that travel experiences can be a powerful force in constructing the self (rather than uncovering a self that already existed). Many tourists exhibit reflexivity and self-awareness in that they set out to have particular experiences and create specific memories that will define them as a certain type of person (Desforges 1998). For instance, going clubbing in Ibiza might define someone as being wild, carefree and youthful, whereas visiting museums and galleries across France might be associated with someone who is cultured, intellectual and mature.

Even if tourists are not actively seeking to shape their identities or senses of self, travel experiences still have that effect. Holidays are significant moments in people’s lives (Ryan 2002b) and can ‘become a resource to mobilize and recount when called upon to define ourselves’ (Crang 2014, p. 72). That is, tourism experiences are implicated in biographical narratives – devised both for the self and for others – about who we are, what we have done and where we have been (Crang 2014; Desforges 2000; Giddens 1991). This explains why tourists take photographs (and post them to social media), buy souvenirs, and collect ephemera like plane tickets and airline baggage tags: they serve as material reminders of past experiences while at the same time they signify something about the individual to others. As such, beyond the vacation period, tourism experiences can also have lasting effects in terms of accumulating cultural capital and heightening social status (Zukin 2010; Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2002; Meethan 2001; Desforges 1998, 2000; Rojek 1993). People ‘collect’ places (Relph 2008 [1976]; Desforges 1998), becoming ‘connoisseurs’ of difference (Urry 2006). Being ‘well travelled’ in this way is associated with affluence, maturity, worldliness and ‘good’ taste (Desforges 2000). This is, however, contingent on the types of tourism one chooses to engage in, with
mass tourism being seen to yield less cultural capital than alternative forms of tourism.

Mass tourism

Mass tourism (also known as Fordist tourism or old tourism) is typically defined as large-scale, standardised, predictable, inflexible and packaged forms of touristic consumption, which can be understood as ‘[m]imicking mass production in the manufacturing sector’ (Poon 1993, p. 4; see also Vainikka 2013; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Pons et al 2009; Aguiló, Alegre & Sard 2005; Shaw & Williams 2004; Torres 2002; Urry 2002; Poon 1993; Cohen 1972). In short, mass tourism is closely associated with the principles of rationalisation which predominated under modernity. According to Poon (1993), mass tourism emerged after World War II, facilitated by the increasing availability and affordability of automobiles and commercial air travel, which enabled inexperienced tourists to travel to destinations en masse. Further impetus was provided by a wave of economic prosperity in the Western world and the advent of paid recreation/holiday leave, which allowed people the time and money to take vacations. Mass tourism has been closely associated with the sun, sand and sex model of tourism exemplified by resorts, and thus also identified with spaces like crowded beaches, theme parks and nightclubs (Pons et al 2009).

Mass tourists are seen to be motivated by a desire to escape their everyday lives, roles and responsibilities, seeking difference and pleasure through intensified, collective experiences of fun, excitement and/or relaxation (Briggs & Turner 2011; Re Cruz 2003; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; MacCannell 2001; Boissevain 1996; Poon 1993). They are assumed to value convenience, comfort, efficiency and familiarity (Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a; Shaw & Williams 2004; Cohen 1972). In his typology of four main tourist roles, Cohen (1972) distinguishes between ‘the organized mass tourist’ and ‘the individual mass tourist’ (p. 167). For him, the former is unadventurous, sticks to the tourist hubs and opts for guided tours and packaged deals with neatly organised itineraries, whereas the latter desires greater degrees of novelty and agency, but still chooses to stay in established, mature destinations with a plethora of hotels, attractions and purpose-built tourist facilities. In these ways, the contrast between home and away may be considered less apparent for mass tourists (Rojek 1993).
Mass tourism, and mass tourists, are frequently deprecated in the literature, in the media and in popular discourse. ‘Tourist’ has become something of a pejorative term (Westerhausen 2002; MacCannell 1999, 1973), referring to visitors who are characteristically homogenous or ‘robot-like’ (Poon 1993, p. 4), lacking in ‘taste’, vulgar, selfish, careless, obnoxious, loud, disrespectful and sometimes patronising or racist towards host communities (Knox 2009; Pons et al 2009; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Poon 1993). As Rojek (1993) observes:

Tourists are presented as lacking initiative and discrimination. They are unadventurous, unimaginative and insipid. For them, travel experience is akin to grazing – they mechanically consume whatever the tour operator feeds them. Their presence coarsens the quality of tourist sights. Mass tourism is often likened to a plague, which destroys the beauty and serenity of civilization. (p. 175)

In such constructions, mass tourism is perceived as a ‘destructive force’ (Vainikka 2013, p. 273) that erodes meaning, authenticity and difference through processes of mass production and consumption, which are seen to homogenise, standardise and Westernise tourist spaces to cater to the desires of mass tourists. In turn, these understandings of mass tourism directly undermine the qualities that MacCannell and Urry suggest tourists want most, which are, respectively, authenticity and difference. These negative perceptions of mass tourism and tourists are, of course, overly simplified, as demonstrated by my analysis of the complex spatiality of resorts.

Alternative tourism

Alternative tourism refers to forms that reject the practices, tastes and motivations commonly associated with mass tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Aguiló et al 2005; Boissevain 1996). Although alternative, non- or anti-mainstream ways of doing tourism have long existed alongside mass tourism, they have become increasingly popular and widespread over the last several decades. This trend has prompted the emergence of what is described as post-Fordist tourism, and seen the development of new categories for tourism styles, including ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, heritage tourism and backpacker

38 In terms of elitist sensibilities which conflate good taste with high culture.
tourism (Vainikka 2013; Berger 2007; Shaw & Williams 2004; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Meethan 2001; Craik 1997; Poon 1993).

Whereas mass tourism espouses the principles of modernity and rationalisation, alternative tourism is more closely linked to characteristics associated with postmodernity, such as heterogeneity, diversity, eclecticism and fluidity (Meethan 2001; Boissevain 1996). In contrast to mass tourists, these alternative consumers are experienced and discerning, favouring individualised or customised (rather than packaged and standardised) experiences tailored to their particular interests and lifestyles, and wanting greater independence, flexibility and opportunities for spontaneity (rather than predictability) (Carson 2013; Vainikka 2013; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Shaw & Agarwal 2007; Aguiló et al 2005; Prideaux 2004; Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2002; Buhalis 2001; Boissevain 1996; Poon 1993). The technological changes brought about by the information age (as described in the above section on globalisation) have enabled and impelled these kinds of needs and practices. To cater to the specific and varied desires and preferences of post-Fordist consumers, the tourism sector has become increasingly segmented, developing niche tourism products and marketing tactics aimed at different groups (Aguiló et al 2005; Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2002; Meethan 2001; Poon 1993). For example, many destinations, including Miami and Ibiza, have now developed specialised guides for LGBT tourists, in addition to their more familiar arrangements for retirees and families.

Post-Fordist tourists tend to prefer ‘unique environmental, cultural or social landscapes’ (Torres 2002, p. 88). They are assumed to be more ‘green’ or environmentally conscious. Ecotourists (who seek nature-based activities) are especially associated with an awareness of ecological sustainability and conservation efforts (Berger 2007; Aguiló et al 2005; Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a; Torres 2002; Buhalis 2001; Poon 1993). However, alternative tourists more broadly – backpackers, adventure tourists, cultural and heritage tourists, rural tourists – are very likely to share these concerns. Similarly, while cultural and intellectual experiences demonstrably preoccupy cultural tourists, many other alternative tourists also understand their encounters with cultural knowledge to be integral to their tourism. Instead of seeking ‘the simple aimless pleasures of mass tourism’ (Meethan 2001, p. 128), alternative tourists – especially cultural tourists – are seen
to be motivated by a desire for self-improvement (Meethan 2001; Rojek & Urry 1997; Boissevain 1996; Rojek 1993). Through engagements with supposedly authentic people, places, practices and objects, alternative tourists expect to acquire insight, knowledge and more sophisticated tastes, with the aim of returning home as ‘better’ versions of themselves (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Craik 1997; Rojek 1993).

In the literature, these visitors are sometimes distinguished from tourists (taken to be mass tourists) by instead being called ‘travellers’ (Law et al 2007; Rojek 1993). As Rojek (1993) posits:

The traveller is associated with refined values of discernment, respect and taste. Travel is seen as pursuing the ageless aristocratic principle of broadening the mind. It is posited as an exclusive confrontation between self and Nature and self and Culture. Society is elided from the equation. Instead travel experience is presented as a resource in the task of self-making. Travel is required to yield an intensified, heightened experience of oneself. It shakes you up in order to make you a more mature, complete person. (p. 175)

Westerhausen (2002) takes this a step further, suggesting that travellers are not just alternative tourists, but those who want to leave home long-term in order to immerse themselves in other ways of life. In Cohen’s (1972) typology, the characteristics of the traveller are captured by ‘the explorer’ and ‘the drifter’ types: the former wants to get away from mass tourism spaces and to experience and connect with other cultures, but does not completely abandon basic comforts and scheduling, while the latter is much like Westerhausen’s (2002) conceptualisation of the traveller, seeking out the most remote areas s/he can to get as far from his/her everyday life as possible, and living among the host culture(s) for extended periods of time. For these drifters, authenticity is associated with ‘roughing it’ – sacrificing material comforts, sometimes even shelter, electricity and running water – in places and cultures that have been minimally influenced by Western cultures (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003).

Despite definitional variations, what alternative tourists/travellers have in common is a desire to go beyond where the mass tourists go, to find solitude in ‘hidden’, ‘untouched’ or ‘pristine’ places (Law et al 2007; Torres 2002; Westerhausen 2002; Rojek 1993). For these people, the idea of authenticity depends on an absence of anyone non-local, and especially the absence of mass tourists, who
are seen to ‘spoil’ cultures and landscapes (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Rojek 1993). Of course, these alternative tourists are themselves non-local and thus complicit in ‘contaminating’ the supposed purity\(^\text{39}\) of the places they visit. In Coleman and Crang’s (2002) analysis:

... such activity bears with it the ironic seeds of its own destruction, as the very presence of the tourist corrupts the idea of reaching an authentic and totally different culture. Paradoxically, a nostalgic semiotic economy is produced, one that is always mourning the loss of that which it itself has ruined ... The really authentic unspoiled place is always displaced in space or time – it is spatially located over the next hill, or temporally existed just a generation ago. (p. 3)

In other words, the authentic (in an objective sense) is always just out of reach, a conceptual ideal which can never really be obtained.\(^\text{40}\) Further, alternative tourists become ‘agents of change ... by initiating a process that frequently ends in a perceived “hostile takeover” of their destination sites by conventional mass tourism’ (Westerhausen 2002, p. ix). Their presence can instigate the development of tourism infrastructure and attract others to visit, so that eventually, their hidden places can become mass tourism destinations (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Law et al 2007; Coleman & Crang 2002; Meethan 2001). Once this occurs, the alternative tourists find somewhere else to go, driven by ‘an often futile attempt to remain one step ahead of the relentless tourism development’ (Westerhausen 2002, p. ix), and the cycle repeats.

Contemporary tourisms

Mass tourism and alternative tourism are frequently binarised, with the practices and principles associated with alternative tourism being privileged over those of mass tourism. As mentioned earlier, mass tourism is often thought of as ‘bad’ tourism (Pons et al 2009). Alternative tourism, on the other hand, is perceived as ‘good’ tourism, as being more sustainable, with less negative social and environmental consequences for the host communities and the environment (Crang 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Westerhausen 2002). For instance, Mugerauer (2004) argues that mass tourism is understood as destructive to local cultures and

\(^{39}\) As discussed further in Chapter 10, this perception of purity is itself a fallacy, given that almost all cultures are hybrid in some way.

\(^{40}\) As also discussed in Chapter 10, these tourists might still feel that they are experiencing authenticity, even if what they are encountering is staged or has been ‘contaminated’ by tourism.
places, whereas ecotourism strives to minimise its impacts on places and to benefit the hosts more directly. Alternative tourists, then, are regarded as superior to mass tourists, being apparently more affluent, educated, cultured and respectful (Shaw & Williams 2004; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Torres 2002; Boissevain 1996).

Despite what these discourses infer, mass tourism and alternative tourism are not separate entities. Not only do they co-exist in contemporary tourism destinations (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003; Torres 2002), they also often overlap, intersect and blend together to create hybrid forms. Fordist and post-Fordist tourism styles are interlinking, mutually defining processes, and as such one cannot erase the other. As explored further in Chapter 10, alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism and cultural tourism, for instance, can often exhibit qualities of mass tourism. As the demand for these kinds of alternative experiences grows, natural and cultural sites may be staged and commodified to optimise consumption; visitors may expect fun and spectacle as well as authenticity and education; and matters of preservation and sustainability may become peripheral concerns (Law et al 2007; Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a; Shaw & Williams 2004).

Tourists, likewise, cannot be strictly categorised as either mass or alternative, with many wanting experiences relating to both types, whether separately or in mixture. An individual may go backpacking alone across Asia for several months on a shoestring budget, searching for people, places and encounters s/he deems to be authentic (like an explorer or drifter), but this activity does not preclude him/her from choosing to fly to Ibiza with friends for a week of partying at another point in time. Similarly, a tourist might spend most of his/her vacation on the beach and in theme parks, but may also choose to visit local museums or go for a hike in a secluded forest; while another may want to spend several weeks ‘roughing it’ in a small village, bookended by stays at five-star hotels at the beginning and end of his/her trip. Tourists can dip in and out of, and mix and match, high and low (or popular) cultural activities (Smith 2003). Smith (2003) suggests that this eclecticism is characteristic of the post-tourist\footnote{I expand on post-tourism further in Chapter 10.} (Feifer 1985) who, unlike mass tourists and alternative tourists, is reflexive, playful and conscious of the contrived nature of tourism, finding pleasure in inauthentic places and things.
These ‘types’ – post-tourist, mass tourist, alternative tourist and so on – should not be understood as discrete entities or existing in pure form, since a single tourist can exhibit qualities of each of them in different times and spaces. As scholarly work on post-Fordist tourism emphasises, contemporary tourists are, above all else, hybrid and heterogeneous. They are, furthermore, unpredictable and flexible in their desires, motives, demands and practices. Tourism destinations can no longer be based on standardisation and uniformity, but must offer a variety of attractions and experiences to cater for the diverse tastes of visitors. Therefore, even though resorts have long been dominated by mass tourism – and even though they may be read as mass tourism destinations par excellence – they have also been shaped, and continue to be shaped, by trends associated with alternative tourism.

The spatiality of tourism

Tourism is an inherently spatial phenomenon (Minca 2000). Tourists seek out different landscapes, climates, cultures and attractions, each of which have spatial (as well as social and temporal/historical) dimensions. Tourists depart from their everyday spatial context (Minca 2000) to visit other unfamiliar spaces, which are in themselves everyday spaces for those who live there. Resorts, then, are shaped by mobilities as much as moorings (Cresswell & Merriman 2011; Hannam et al. 2006), visitors as much as residents.42 Thus, as demonstrated in the discussion throughout this chapter, tourism spaces and practices (and tourist-centric places like resorts) are never completely fixed nor static, but always dynamic and in process (Degen 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004; Coleman & Crang 2002; Edensor 2000). They are continuously being made, remade, abandoned, reconfigured and contested (Shaw & Williams 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004).

Tourism as a performance

Tourism is often described as a performance, enacted by both hosts and guests as well as material objects, landmarks, buildings, landscapes and representations (Cresswell & Merriman 2011; Urry 2006; Crouch 2005; Sheller & Urry 2004; Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Coleman & Crang 2002; Edensor 2000, 2001). That is, what brings a tourist space into being includes the actions and dispositions of hosts, such

42 And, of course, residents can be mobile as well, and visitors have their own social and spatial moorings elsewhere.
as hospitality staff, entertainers and tour guides; the images, representations and narratives of place disseminated by governments, tourism-related businesses, investors, news media and popular cultural representations; the existence of basic tourist amenities, such as public bathrooms, accommodation, currency exchange services, signage and maps; and the staging of natural, cultural and built attractions to facilitate tourist consumption. The latter includes the implementation of tours, boardwalks, handrails, observation decks, directional signage, informational plaques and so on, as well as landscaping and regular grooming of the environs,\textsuperscript{43} street cleaning and other maintenance.

Of course, none of this would make a place touristic without the presence and performance of tourists themselves. Far from being passive consumers, tourists play an active role in the production of space (Burns & Novelli 2008; Urry 2006; Bærenholdt et al 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004). As Shaw and Williams (2004) observe, ‘tourists contribute to tourism experiences; they actively create these for themselves and for other tourists: the atmosphere of a tourism site, and the experiences of tourists, are often dependent on the co-presence of other tourists’ (p. 13). How tourists perform is largely informed by their imaginaries of and observations in spaces, which – as outlined earlier – suggest appropriate, normative roles and performative codes (Crouch et al 2005; Bærenholdt et al 2004; Edensor 2000, 2001; Shields 1991). Through their internalisation of such norms, visitors immersed in tourist sites are therefore likely to perform as they have been positioned to perform. In this way tourists participate in the production of the expected dominant rhythms of particular sites by reinforcing popular imaginaries about how the space is to be encountered, consumed and performed.

In an argument reminiscent of de Certeau (2002), Edensor (2001) stresses that people within tourist sites have the capacity to exercise agency: ‘the organization, materiality and aesthetic and sensual qualities of tourist space influence – but do not determine – the kinds of performances that tourists undertake’ (p. 63). Indeed, tourist performances can also be subversive: ‘this (re)production is never assured, for despite the prevalence of codes and norms, tourist conventions can be destabilized by rebellious performances, or by multiple, simultaneous enactions on

\textsuperscript{43} In Surfers Paradise, this even includes the routine vacuuming and raking of the beach overnight.
the same stage’ (Edensor 2001, p. 60). Expectations of normative roles and behaviours in tourist spaces can thus be unsettled *in situ* by the experience of *being in* a space, by the complexity and messiness of its livedness. This can occur when encountering, for example, non-touristic rhythms and performances (such as locals with groceries, or children in uniforms returning home from school) or unusual tourist performances (such as a goth in full leather or tourists wearing hijabs among a mass of tourists in beach wear). Tourism spaces and performances are neither predictable nor uniform, but diverse and fragmented.

However, as mentioned above, a certain degree of coherence in performances is needed for the experience of lived space to align with representations and imaginaries of that space, and for the desired performances to be observed, internalised and reproduced. In Sheller and Urry’s (2004) words, ‘if the performances by hosts and guests no longer happen then the place stops “happening”’ (p. 7). The same is true if another crucial element of the tourism assemblage disappears or deteriorates, such as with the destruction of natural and built attractions or the dilapidation of tourist facilities. Further, since tourist sites compete on a global tourism stage, they are always under threat of being surpassed by a more ‘authentic’ or more ‘cool’ destination (or whatever the particular allure may be) (Degen 2004; Sharpley 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004; Urry 2002). Thus, to remain popular, they must ensure that the desired performances are taking place, adapting to changing consumer tastes and needs while moving towards a post-Fordist model.

Tourism area life cycle

The rise and fall of destinations is often analysed in terms of Butler’s (1980, 2006) ‘tourism area life cycle’ (TALC). This is also referred to more specifically as the ‘resort life cycle’ when examining coastal mass tourism destinations (Agarwal 2002). Butler (1980, 2006) proposes that the development and evolution of tourism destinations follows a series of stages:

1. **Exploration stage** – the destination receives only small numbers of visitors in irregular patterns, has few tourism facilities and may be difficult to access.
2. Involvement stage – greater numbers of visitors begin to arrive, usually in more regular patterns, with peak seasons beginning to emerge. Locals become more involved in catering to visitors, setting up tourism-specific facilities and taking on hospitality and service roles.

3. Development stage – visitor numbers continue to grow, distinct tourism hubs begin to take form, the landscape starts to change visibly, specific tourism attractions are developed, and marketing initiatives intensify. Local involvement declines as external corporations and organisations develop larger, more modern tourism facilities.

4. Consolidation stage – visitor numbers level out, increasing at a slower rate than previously. There are attempts to attract more visitors during low season and to less touristic areas. Franchises and chain stores become more common. By this stage, the economy of the area is bound up in tourism and its related industries, and locals begin to express discontent with tourism’s dominance in the area, particularly in terms of how tourism restricts their everyday lives.

5. Stagnation stage – growth in visitor numbers halts and remains relatively stable, since the destination is popular but no longer as trendy as it once was. Artificial or manmade attractions become more prominent than natural ones, and social and environmental problems worsen.

6. Decline stage – the destination loses its competitive edge as newer, more trendy sites emerge and as attractions deteriorate. Visitor numbers decline, especially in terms of overnight stays and international tourists. Over time, tourism-related businesses and facilities are replaced by non-touristic ones (and thus, local involvement may increase again as these sites become more affordable). In Butler’s (2006) words, it ‘may become a veritable tourist slum or lose its tourist function completely’ (p. 8).

In short, destinations start out as relatively unknown and undeveloped for tourism, much like the ‘pristine’ or ‘untouched’ places that some alternative tourists may seek, as described earlier. As these types of visitors increase, locals in the area respond by developing touristic infrastructure and amenities, which attracts even more visitors. As tourist arrivals continue to increase, partly due to focused marketing efforts, multi-national corporations and chains occupy more spaces, and the area solidifies itself as a popular mass tourism destination. After this point, the
destination stagnates before eventually declining, ‘falling out of play’ on the global tourism stage (Sharpley 2004, p. 28).

The TALC can be treated as a kind of predictive model (Faulkner & Tideswell 2006; Aguiló et al 2005), warning of the consequences of certain kinds of development. As such, the literature has often focused on the model’s final stages (see Garcia Sastre, Alemany Hormaeche & Villar 2015; Diedrich & García-Buades 2009; Cohen-Hattab & Shoval 2004; Baum 1998; Priestley & Mundet 1998), and what destinations can do to avoid them or cope with them. To this end, Butler (2006) outlines that destinations may also experience an additional stage of rejuvenation following periods of stagnation and decline. This rejuvenation stage must involve a reorientation or restructuring of the destination through changing official narratives and marketing techniques, targeting new markets, constructing new attractions based around previously untapped natural and cultural resources, upgrading tourism facilities, and implementing measures to reduce negative social and environmental impacts (Butler 2006; Aguiló et al 2005; Prideaux 2004). That is, rejuvenation entails a diversification of tourism products and markets, consciously adopting more post-Fordist approaches to increase competitiveness (Faulkner & Tideswell 2006; Agarwal 2002; Aguiló et al 2005). Butler (2006) argues, however, that rejuvenation only delays – not reverses – decline, with few destinations being truly timeless in the face of ever-changing consumer tastes and demands.

Clearly, the TALC is problematic in that it positions itself as a universal model. Butler (2006) argues that while the length of each stage and rates of growth may vary in different destinations, the TALC is nonetheless observable in most destinations, and most will face the same final result – decline. However, as Massey (2005) points out, places have different histories and trajectories, and linear models for measuring their development are often simplistic, ignoring the myriad complexities and multiplicities at work. Thus, applications of the TALC to destinations have yielded varying results.44 For example, France’s (1991) study of

Barbados revealed that different areas of the island were at different stages in the cycle, and that criteria from different stages appeared in the same space and time.

In a similar vein to Butler, Smith (1991, 1992) considers the evolution of beach resorts specifically. Drawing on examples like Pattaya, Thailand and the Gold Coast, and using similar criteria to Butler, Smith (1991, 1992) suggests that the transition from ‘natural’ to ‘urban’ landscapes in these sites occurs in eight stages: pre-tourism; second homes; first hotel; resort established; business district established; inland hotels; transformation; and finally, city resort (Smith 1991). Similarly, building on the TALC, Prideaux (2004) proposes the use of the ‘resort development spectrum’, which outlines several broad phases of development: phase one – local tourism; phase two – regional tourism; phase three – national tourism; phase four – international tourism; and a potential fifth phase of stagnation, decline or rejuvenation. While sharing many similarities in criteria to the TALC, Prideaux (2004) explains that his model differs in that it takes into account micro-economic factors, focusing on changes in tourism infrastructure (accommodation, attractions, transport/accessibility and retail), government policy, marketing tactics, and visitor types and activities. Using the Gold Coast as his case study, Prideaux maps the evolution of the city’s tourism industry in terms of these variables. For instance, during the local tourism phase, the Gold Coast’s accommodation offerings were primarily beach houses, caravan parks and motels, whereas the international tourism phase has seen the rise of international hotel chains and five-star accommodation.

Each of these models, when treated as loose conceptualisations rather than rigid or deterministic frameworks, can be valuable in examining the resorts which are the focus of this thesis. In particular, they are useful for understanding the shared patterns in the past development of these destinations, most likely due to the fact that, as sites of tourism urbanisation, they have been predominantly marked by Fordist-style mass tourism. The models, however, are somewhat less reliable with regard to the present context. While each resort is a mature, international tourism destination, signs as to whether they are stagnating or declining are not readily discernible. Lawton (2005) and Faulkner and Tideswell (2006) suggest that the Gold Coast is in a stagnation phase, with strategies currently in place to prevent decline. Aguiló et al (2005) observe the same of the Balearic Islands (the region of
Spain in which Ibiza is located). Although Butler (2006) identified Miami Beach as an example of a destination in decline, it has successfully rejuvenated itself and experienced renewed growth a number of times (see Chapter 7). No matter which stage they are in according to these models, what will become clear throughout the next section is that each resort is making a concerted effort to diversify and restructure its tourism industry, incorporating more of the principles of post-Fordist tourism.

Conclusion

Urban assemblages – and their spatialities, socialities, temporalities and mobilities – are constituted and reconstituted by a multiplicity of different actors and forces. In resorts, tourism is one the most influential of these forces. Tourism-related representations, narratives, infrastructure, facilities, governmental policies and socio-spatial performances and rhythms have come to define significantly the lived spaces of resorts. They are shaped as much by the inside as the outside; as much by locals as by tourists; as much by moorings as mobilities; as much by the local as the global: never either/or, but always in between, always both, and always in terms of their relations, interconnections and breaks. In Chapter 11, I focus more on local experiences of resorts and attachments to place. Before that, in Chapters 4–8, I contextualise these experiences through examining the tourism industries in each resort, and how these places are represented, imagined and materially constructed through tourism (both mass tourism and emerging alternative styles). This analysis not only speaks to the complex relations which produce lived spaces, but also emerges from my own lived experiences of such spaces as considered through my practices of auto-ethnography and participant observation in the field, both at home on the Gold Coast and elsewhere. The following chapter focuses on my approaches and methods for undertaking this fieldwork and for implementing my conceptual analysis.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The analysis and discussion throughout this dissertation are based in information gleaned using the practical methods described here, in combination with my literature research. Because methods (and concepts) do not merely describe reality, but are productive of reality (Coleman & Ringrose 2013; Law 2004), it is important to be thorough, transparent and reflexive regarding my methodology. As Pink (2012) observes, ‘the research process and the methodology that informs it cannot be separated from the findings of the research, right through from research design to its representation’ (p. 4). This chapter therefore provides a detailed explanation of my approach to the applied research process, my chosen research methods, the conceptual/theoretical considerations informing them, how I carried them out in the field, and how I recorded and analysed my findings.

Methodological choices

Multimethodology and bricolage

My applied methods include a combination of participant observation, photography, urban analysis and interviews. This multimethod approach was not used in an effort to establish a ‘complete’ picture of the social phenomena in question (Silverman 2013). Rather, my motivation was to gain a degree of ‘rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2008, p. 7) in relation to the organisation of urban spaces; the tactics, strategies and practices revealed by how people use those spaces; and how people perceive their experiences. The objective was to understand not only how resorts are imagined, represented and materially constituted, but how they are lived as these elements collide.

Cultural studies has often been associated with using an eclectic mix of methods and methodologies in this way (Pink 2007). While some disciplines have their own specific, unified set of methodological conventions and procedures, cultural studies is marked by interdisciplinarity, appropriating tools and processes from fields such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history and philosophy (Schwoch & White 2006; Gray 2003). The cultural studies project can be described as bricolage – made up of a diverse range of tools, theories, influences and other bits and pieces. This is a matter of pragmatism – as a bricoleur, I selected an array of concepts, methods and
approaches that I felt were effective in exploring my research questions, and also suitable for the limitations of the project, the dynamics of the social contexts, and so on.

However, the *bricoleur* also continuously negotiates and renegotiates these choices during every step of the research process, understanding that circumstances will shape her methods (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg 2011). I intended for my methods to be kept flexible, developing with my research and adapting to the situation in the field (Kincheloe et al 2011; Pink 2007). Flexible methods acknowledge and embrace the dynamism and unpredictability of social processes, allowing the researcher to work productively with the unexpected, drawing upon new strategies and theories as appropriate (Gray 2003).

Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) discussion of ‘maps’ and ‘tracings’ provides a useful means through which to illustrate this approach. For Deleuze and Guattari, a tracing is an attempt to reproduce *what is there* and the term therefore refers to approaches that are structured, fixed, closed, reductive and potentially decontextualised. In this case, tracing would refer to the use of methods which have been pre-planned and are imposed on the field, laid over it. For instance, I have alluded earlier to some of the comparative features that can be revealed by resort morphology, models of resort evolution, and Butler’s detailed framework for a tourism area life cycle (TALC). However, I have also stressed that each of these approaches is insufficient, in itself, to reveal or account for the diversity and complexity of resorts. The problematics to which I refer are indicative of what can occur in research practice if a pattern or model that functions well as one analytical tool among others, is instead deployed as a method. In process and product, this can exemplify what Deleuze and Guattari mean by a tracing: the pattern or model is overlaid on a piece of the world – say, a resort – and the outcome of comparison between the pattern or model and the ‘real’ then slides back into the analysis as data that can in turn easily be (mis)taken as providing a complete picture of what is there. A tracing might similarly emerge from scholarly work that involves over-reliance on one way of thinking yet claims to be ‘truthful’, all-encompassing or definitive. A map, on the other hand, takes account of complexity, fluidity and change. It is ‘open and connectable in all of its dimensions: it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p. 13). A geographical map, for
example, is a particular interpretation of reality which shapes our perceptions and expectations of space (thus simultaneously working to construct space). It is subject to change as the space is subject to change. What is important, however, is that even though mapping is a mode involving abstraction and transformation, it takes place directly in relation to the real, the material or the concrete. As Deleuze and Guattari (2004) explain, ‘What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in on itself; it constructs the unconscious’ (p. 13).

In my work, I aimed to produce such mappings of particular spaces, people and experiences. My approach was to continually modify my methods and shift my focus of interest according to what I was observing and reading. This is not to say that one can only work with mappings or tracings. The research necessarily involved tracings – in the form of plans, preconceptions and representations, and in the form of data such as demographic statistics. For Deleuze and Guattari (2004), how we make use of tracings is ‘a question of method: the tracing should always be put back on the map’ (p. 14). That is, methods and theories should emerge from practice, from the field, and should always be examined, re-examined and transformed in relation to the real.

Impressionistic approach

Regardless of any inferences that might be drawn from my choice of methods, I am not producing an ethnographic account. Ethnography usually entails in-depth or prolonged involvement in the everyday lives of a particular group, community or culture bound by a common ethnicity, lifestyle, place, practice or attribute (Tedlock 2008; Pink 2007; Probyn 1993). In contemporary ethnography, those being studied are treated as active participants and collaborators in the research design (Angrosino & Rosenberg 2011; Pink 2007; Angrosino & Mays de Perez 2000). In my

---

45 This is how Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of mapping differs from practices of ‘mapping’ that are commonly used in urban planning, cultural policy and cultural development. In such contexts, mapping involves quantitative research, such as demographics, statistical analyses, community surveys and other arborescent modes of producing data about a site and conceptualising processes at work in it. This more closely resembles Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the tracing, unless, of course, such data is then contextualised and adapted in relation to the field and its more complex, qualitative realities (thus meeting Deleuze and Guattari’s expectation that the tracing should always be put back on the map).
project, the people, spaces and experiences I explore are connected but varied, and my engagements with them were transient. I could only seek impressions, and any depth of insight arose from my own experiences and the perceptions provided by the local participants I interviewed. Similarly, although these locals were not involved in the research design, their expression of their experiences informed how I structured the research outcomes and discussion. Thus, I have found it useful to draw on ethnographic methodologies in terms of how I approached the research process and my fieldwork, but I resist any positioning of my work as ‘ethnographic research’. My project does not seek to draw empirical conclusions. On the contrary, it was designed with the scope to be impressionistic and open-ended in its methods, and with the aim to produce predominantly conceptual outcomes.

Agamben’s ‘example’

In terms of how I recorded, analysed and presented my findings, I drew on Agamben’s (1993) reconsideration of the function and value of examples. An example ‘holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all’ (Agamben 1993, p. 10). Thus, an example is ‘[n]either particular nor universal’, always in flux between the two (Agamben 1993, p. 10). In Outside Belongings (1996), Elspeth Probyn explains how this method functions in her work:

... I am drawn by examples: I seek to examine examples as interstitial moments in the work of articulation ... The example of the balconies in Montreal has no necessary meaning, yet it exemplifies for me a certain movement as different and distinct elements are brought together, if only momentarily ... Lines of class, gender, sex, generation, ethnicity, and race intermingle as people hang out. (p. 5)

The places, events, observations and experiences I selected for discussion are all examples. They are singularities and are not intended to stand for anything universal or to have totalising effects, but are nonetheless connected to (and in fact elucidate) a range of structural issues, influences and trends. Thus, the examples ‘work centrifugally’ (Highmore 2005, p. xiii) to provide valuable insights into matters of identity, subjectivity, belonging, spatiality, locality, tourism and globalisation at a wider social and cultural level.
Partiality

Conceptualising my research as *bricolage* and presenting my findings as examples is particularly appropriate considering the impossible challenge of ever comprehensively representing cities, spaces or social phenomena. Soja (2000) compares the problem of representing lived spaces to writing a biography: ‘There is too much that lies beneath the surface, unknown and perhaps unknowable, for a complete story to be told’ (p. 12). The world is infinitely complex and always unstable. This understanding underpins all of my thinking. As discussed in the previous chapter, social spaces are heterogeneous, multiple and constantly shifting. They are assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari 2004) made up of a multiplicity of diverse elements, flows and connections, including different people, groups, relations, mobilities, meanings, imaginaries, representations, histories, and so on. The assemblage is a becoming, perpetually in construction, always being disorganised and reorganised (Hillier 2007). Thus, it never settles or becomes ‘finished’ or ‘whole’ (Colebrook 2002), meaning that space is constituted by ‘accumulations that don’t add up’ (Highmore 2005, p. 6).

The question, then, is not how to present a thorough or exhaustive account of resorts, nor how to ‘manage’ or tame complexity, but how to work with it effectively (Highmore 2005). In *After Method* (2004), John Law argues that social science methods must be adapted to better deal with flows, messiness, fluidity, unpredictability and contextual specificity. He asks:

> If much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn’t really have much of a pattern at all, then where does this leave social science? How might we catch some of the realities we are currently missing? Can we know them well? Should we know them? (Law 2004, p. 2)

Law (2004) suggests that we must ‘find ways of knowing the indistinct and the slippery without trying to grasp and hold them tight’ (p. 3). He is critical of the normativities attached to traditional methods, but does not advocate abandoning them all together. Rather, he emphasises the need to be open to unconventional approaches – ‘a broader, looser, more generous’ (Law 2004, p. 4) understanding of method that employs ‘techniques of deliberate imprecision’ (p. 3). For example, I make use of ethnographic methods, but I do so with impressionistic approaches and intentions.
Further, I acknowledge that the complexity, heterogeneity and flux of the world means that no researcher can present a whole or stable truth (Gray 2003). I do not make claims to any totalising notion of what spaces mean, what they do, how they are produced, or their effects (since all such claims must be taken to be false). The knowledge that emerges from my work is necessarily and deliberately partial and fragmented, a particular version of reality (Gray 2003). My observations are of fleeting moments and circumstances, which may since have changed, and in any case these moments never represented all of what was going on. Issues, stories, people and spaces have inevitably been left out. I work through examples because they embrace partiality while still providing opportunities for insight, being composed of a multitude of connections and disjunctions. Thus, this thesis – albeit with its years of work organised into chapters, sections and subsections, beginning with an introduction and ending with a conclusion – is necessarily incomplete and open-ended, a rhizome.

**Observational techniques**

Observing the engagements of people with urban spaces and with each other in resorts was core to my applied work. This was undertaken in the simplest of ways – by spending time in the day and night spaces most heavily used by tourists and locals, recording my impressions in writing and using photography (see below). While the methods are simple, there are a number of issues to be considered in relation to how I understand the subjects of my research and how I position myself in relation to the sites and the subjects.

**Reflexivity and subjectivity**

Traditionally, ethnography strove for ‘objectivity’ and to limit the researcher’s involvement with the research subjects in the field (Angrosino & Rosenberg 2011; Angrosino & Mays de Perez 2000; Reed-Danahay 1997). It is now widely recognised, however, that all ethnographic knowledge is mediated by the researcher (Pink 2007; Gray 2003). The researcher is not only an observer, but also an active, experiencing participant in what is being observed (Angrosino & Rosenberg 2011; Tedlock 2000). With this recognition comes the need to be reflexive about how one conducts the research and how one represents others (Pink 2007; Reed-Danahay
Probyn (1993) stresses that one of the central questions for cultural studies research should be ‘who speaks for whom, why, how and when?’ (p. 2).

Stuart Hall (2006 [1990]) observes that all knowledge is situated (see also Haraway 1991), that ‘we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture’ (p. 202). The embodied performances, vantage points and subjective positions of researchers, such as age, class, gender, ethnicity, personal history, habitus and self-identity, shape how they interpret the field and how others respond to them (Erickson 2011; Giardina & Newman 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Banks 2007; Gray 2003; Denzin 1997). A few of my relevant characteristics are that I am a woman in my mid-20s, white of European ancestry, Australian, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied, an academic, and a resident of a resort city/region. However, it is not enough merely to recognise and list one’s social positions and vantage points – these need to be interrogated critically as well (Saukko 2003).

The researcher should be self-reflexive, noticing how s/he behaves, how s/he is treated, and explicitly clarifying how these factors may influence the knowledge produced (Silverman 2013; Giardina & Newman 2011; Kincheloe et al 2011). The aim of reflexivity is not about ‘noticing and eliminating bias’ in order to achieve a more objective outcome (Banks 2007, p. 50). This would imply that there is a natural, untainted, authentic reality out there that we can capture by actively removing our subjectivity from the research process (Gray 2003). Instead, the purpose of being reflexive is to indicate to the reader that the thesis is to be read as a version of reality, created through my subjectivity: ‘by communicating those understandings to the reader, the reader would have a greater opportunity to position the text, to understand the viewpoint and perspectives of the ethnographer’ (Banks 2007, p. 51).

In simple terms, I noticed certain things and made certain assumptions in the field, and I exercised reflexivity by questioning why I noticed them, and what effects this may have produced. For instance, in the field I was always drawing comparisons to home. As such, the fact that I am an Australian and from the Gold Coast matters a great deal because it determined (along with other factors) what struck me as interesting and what I wrote field notes about. There are many other ways of interpreting the same situations or moments. Someone from a different background,
a different type of urban formation, would doubtless notice different things.

This is one of the reasons I designed the project the way that it is – the Gold Coast had to be the centre point from which I drew parallels because it was unavoidable that I would be thinking about it more (and more intimately) than the other places. Thus, in my project, reflexivity was not an afterthought or obligation – it shaped the entire research design and process.

Of course, my interpretation was increasingly influenced by the other fieldwork sites as well. Each time I went to a new fieldwork site, my analysis of it was shaped by the previous trips. When I started the research, my intentions were exploratory and fairly loosely defined, and what I took away from the field was a series of possibilities and interesting, but fragmented, anecdotes and observations. As I visited more places and accumulated more research material, the project became progressively more focused because I was able to notice similarities and consistencies, and just as importantly, differences. That is, the lines of argument that appear in this thesis asserted themselves through the fieldwork, becoming more distinctive and more concrete as I went along.

My interpretation of the field was also filtered through my theoretical knowledge, as is my everyday life. Critically analysing and theorising the social world as I experience it has become, through years of studying, a default mode of meaning-making for me. I theorised inadvertently in the field and I theorised purposely in the field journal. These ideas and observations influenced what I read next, and that newly acquired knowledge went on to shape the next fieldwork experience. This process represents a cumulative theory/practice loop in which the conceptual and the practical continuously plugged into each other in messy and unpredictable ways. The whole project was interactional in this manner, always making connections – it was responsive to the fieldwork, to my reading, to my subjectivity, and so on.

Insider/outsider

How the researcher is positioned in terms of her ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ status has been a central preoccupation for ethnographic methodology. Flick (2009) argues that the researcher must choose to approach the research from either an insider or

---

Moreover, even someone else from the Gold Coast might notice different things since there is a range of other social positions filtering my perception (as outlined above).
an outsider perspective. Being on the outside can be valuable in that it allows the researcher to analyse something on her own terms, from a different position to the insider (Grosz 2001). In some circumstances this can be problematic due to power relations between the researcher and a marginalised group (Erickson 2011; Tedlock 2000). For example, a Western ethnographer temporarily immersing herself in another culture may think ethnocentrically, imposing her understandings and values on contexts that operate differently (see Said 1978).

An outsider may also have a tendency to overlook important nuances (thus producing research that is less ‘true’ to the situation) or misread the complexities of particular relations. In *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (2001), Elizabeth Grosz weighs up the benefits and disadvantages of the outside:

> This is the rare and unexpected joy of outsideness: to see what cannot be seen from the inside, to be removed from the immediacy of immersion that affords no distance. However, this always occurs at a cost: to see what cannot be seen is to be unable to experience this inside in its own terms. Something is lost – the immediate intimacy of an inside position; and something is gained – the ability to critically evaluate that position and to possibly compare it with others. (p. xv)

Being an insider, on the other hand, can be seen as more accurate and ‘authentic’ (Erickson 2011; Tedlock 2000). Scholars have warned against becoming too deeply embedded in the field as an insider, or ‘going native’, as the researcher may lose the critical perspective needed to conduct the analysis (Flick 2009). Gray (2003) contends that this is not necessarily a problem for cultural studies projects:

> ... cultural studies seeks to analyse and understand cultural practices and processes which are much nearer to ‘home’. Thus, at the very least, the researcher operates within the same overall cultural framework of his or her respondents. (p. 84)

It can also be argued that an academic is always positioned on the outside by virtue of her occupation (Tedlock 2000; Reed-Danahay 1997). Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) maintain that the research subjects are affected less by a researcher’s status, and more by how she presents herself and behaves.

Obviously, the boundaries between insider and outsider are not clearly delineated. Crang (2011) reflects on how such boundaries can become especially
blurred in fieldwork examining tourism, as the researcher moves between being/becoming an academic and being/becoming a tourist. I might be considered an insider on the Gold Coast as a local, but an outsider as an academic. I am an outsider in relation to the locals in the cities I visit, but an insider among the young tourists. Even among the young tourists, however, senses of community are transient, and what designates an ‘insider’ is difficult to define – tourists view and ‘do’ travelling differently.\(^{47}\) Similarly, residents of resorts have varying senses of affinity with the place, and shifting ideas of insider and outsider – there are locals, exiles, cosmopolitans, nomads, and people who fit in these broad categories may experience belonging differently (Nijman 2007). Further, even though tourists are always changing in composition as individuals come and go and patterns of consumption evolve, since they retain something of a collective identity\(^{48}\) and are a mainstay of resorts, can tourists not be seen to belong there? Are they not insiders?\(^{49}\)

An insider/outsider binary is too simplistic to capture the volatile nature of belonging, and this becomes especially obvious in sites and situations involving diverse subjects. It seems to me that to position myself as an outsider because of one of my identifications (being an academic) is to acknowledge myself as multiple, complex and in-between, but to treat the ‘insiders’ – whether tourists or locals – as somehow homogenous, cohesive and uncritical of their social conditions. My research acknowledges that the people whose experiences I am researching are, like me, at once inside and outside of their belongings (Probyn 1996).

*Experience and the autoethnographic*

My participant observation involved not only observing the practices of others, but noticing and reflecting upon my own participation, sensations, feelings, memories and embodied experiences in the lived spaces of resorts. In this way, my method is similar to autoethnography, which makes the researcher’s autobiography and participation central to the study at hand (Chang 2008; Tedlock 2008; Reed-Danahay 1997). Chang (2008) encourages styles of autoethnography which are

\(^{47}\) This is discussed in Chapter 2, and is further explored in Chapter 10.

\(^{48}\) That is, being viewed by locals, industries and institutions as a mass with particular patterns of behaviours, characteristics, needs and expectations, despite always being a different collection of singular people.

\(^{49}\) This is discussed further in Chapter 11.
more analytical than descriptive, combining personal narratives with literature research and cultural analysis.

My subjective responses and experiences reveal something about the social formations in which I am immersed, and how these come to be lived out in everyday life (Probyn 1993). That is, I am a product of the contexts, discourses and structures that I seek to interrogate, and thus my experiences are one of the analytic tools that I deploy (Probyn 1993; Saukko 2003). Probyn (1993) suggests that the experiential, ‘[f]ar from being a self-indulgent affirmation’ (p. 29) can be used to map the movements between the ontological and the epistemological:

Images of the self arise from the ‘livedness’ of the interaction of individual and social and then return as a critical tool to analyze and cut into the specificity of the social formation. As an active articulation of ontological and epistemological levels, the experiential may enable an enunciative position which puts forward a level of being as the conditions of that being are problematized. (p. 29)

My experiences constitute examples in Agamben's (1993) sense. They are singular instances: they neither subsume nor substitute for the experiences of others (Probyn 1993). At the same time, my experiences reach beyond myself to connect to the experiences of others, to broader social structures and to my epistemological concerns. I also questioned whether my observations about other locals raised issues about their lives that did not arise in relation to myself, such as with experiences of poverty. This kind of reflection and reflexivity underpinned my intention to keep my methodological approaches flexible and open to reconsideration in the site of the research.

Fieldwork

As I live on the Gold Coast, my fieldwork here has been ongoing, with special attention paid to the areas of Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach (the main tourism and entertainment hubs) and to peak times around large-scale events such as
Schoolies\textsuperscript{50} and the Gold Coast 600 V8 Supercars race.\textsuperscript{51} As can be expected, my observations of the Gold Coast are not limited to the fieldwork undertaken for the purposes of this thesis – I also draw on observations from previous research projects, and more informal observations (such as memories) based on my lived experience as a local immersed in this context on a daily basis.

In planning my fieldwork trips abroad, I wanted to be sure to visit each place during its peak travel period in order to see, and be a part of, the tourist presence in its most intensified state. Of course, I would also have liked to experience these places at quieter times for comparison, but this was not feasible given funding and time constraints. I stayed for two weeks in Thailand in December 2013, during the high season;\textsuperscript{52} one week in Cancún and 10 days in Miami in March 2014, during the Spring Break vacation period for university students;\textsuperscript{53} and one week in Ibiza in July 2014, during the peak clubbing season.\textsuperscript{54} Prior to conducting my fieldwork, I had never been to any of these cities, nor had I travelled overseas at all.

In each place I purposely chose accommodation that was located within or in very close proximity to the iconic tourist hot spots – Patong Beach in Phuket and Baan Tai Beach on Koh Phangan; the Hotel Zone in Cancún; South Beach in Miami; and Playa d’en Bossa in Ibiza. I stayed in hotels in Thailand, Ibiza and Cancún, but opted to stay in an Airbnb\textsuperscript{55} apartment in Miami for affordability (as hotels were

\textsuperscript{50} Schoolies is an annual Australian rite of passage/ritual in which as many as 40,000 (Red Frogs 2014) final year school leavers (17–18 years old) descend on the Gold Coast for a week of partying to celebrate the end of high school. Because states finish their final assessment period at different times, Schoolies lasts for three weeks from November into early December. For more on Schoolies, see Chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{51} Still colloquially referred to by its former name, 'Indy', the race is held in late October each year. The track runs through the beachside suburbs of Main Beach and Surfers Paradise.

\textsuperscript{52} This is typically from November to February, when the climate is dryer (the wet season or low season occurs mid-year). This is also a popular time to travel because it coincides with Christmas and New Year holiday periods, as well as the Australian summer school holiday and university holiday period.

\textsuperscript{53} Spring Break is a week-long vacation period for North American university students falling at different times during February and March. Celebrating the end of winter, students usually travel to sunny beach destinations like Miami and Cancún. For more on Spring Break, see Chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{54} Nightclubs in Ibiza are only open from late May to early October (marked by opening and closing parties) during the European summer. For more on Ibiza's nightlife scene, see Chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{55} A website allowing people (hosts) to advertise their spare rooms or apartments/houses for other users to book and stay for short- to medium-term.
substantially more expensive there) and for a somewhat different touristic experience.\textsuperscript{56}

I also chose to visit several other nearby places on each leg of my fieldwork trip. In Thailand I visited the islands of Koh Phi Phi and Koh Samui, which are very popular tourism destinations, but appeared to have a slightly different target market than Phuket and Koh Phangan – that is, more relaxed and couple-oriented. I also visited San Francisco and New York in the United States, and Paris, Barcelona, Amsterdam and Berlin while I was in Europe. These places were different from resorts, being either more conventional metropolises or attracting different kinds of tourism. Encountering these other places provided a valuable point of comparison, enabling me to understand resorts as distinct urban formations in both their national and international contexts.

The process of this kind of fieldwork followed the five stages of the travel experience outlined by Hall (2011), who posits that, for both researchers and tourists, journeys for fieldwork or leisure involve ‘decision making and anticipation’, ‘travel to the site’, ‘on-site behaviour’, ‘return travel’ and ‘recollection’ (p. 10). To plan my itinerary for each place, I did what most tourists would do – I picked up brochures at travel agents, checked TripAdvisor for top-rated activities and iconic sites, asked my well-travelled friends for recommendations, and Googled lists for the ‘must see’ and ‘must do’. My aim was to cultivate a quintessential tourist experience. I wanted to visit cultural heritage sites, local museums, beaches, shopping strips, nightclubs, and arts districts, as well as local neighbourhoods that did not have any major tourist attractions.

I planned my trip in this way not only for the purposes of my research, but also because it was what I felt compelled to do in visiting somewhere for the first time – how could I go to Miami and not try Cuban food? What would people think if I went to Paris and didn’t visit the Louvre? Wouldn’t I be missing out if I didn’t get to see a ladyboy show\textsuperscript{57} in Thailand? I \textit{wanted} to visit the tourist traps, I wanted to experience the iconic, no matter how ‘inauthentic’ or ‘tacky’ it was deemed to be. In

\textsuperscript{56} This is discussed briefly in Chapter 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Cabarets featuring drag queens, transsexual and/or transgender performers, popular among tourists throughout Thailand.
this sense, I was what John Urry (2002) terms a post-tourist – I was acutely aware of how contrived and ‘generic’ some of these sites and practices were, but I took pleasure in them nonetheless.\textsuperscript{58} Thinking reflexively about these desires was interesting for how it highlighted which attractions, experiences and events seemed to be most strongly associated with the identity of that place and its tourism industry. I recognised that my travel research – necessary for both conceptual analysis and for practical matters concerning the planning of fieldwork on a tight budget and schedule – functioned to reinforce particular myths and popular imaginaries of place, which were later unsettled \textit{in situ} as I came in contact with lived spaces.

I participated in spaces the way a normal tourist would, which is not surprising considering I was at once tourist and researcher. I took photographs at tourist attractions and danced in nightclubs, which allowed me to adopt the perspective of a tourist, to fit in (Fontana & Frey 2000), and to enjoy my fieldwork. This is not to say I was trying to be covert and disguise my role as a researcher. In terms of observation, for example, I was enacting performances that the normative sociality of the spaces made readily available to me as the acceptable, and expected, way to behave. That is, tourists are already always engaged in observation, gazing and voyeurism, so my observation as ‘people-watching’ was nothing out of the ordinary.

I recorded notes on my smart phone each day in the field, as this was far more discrete than using pen and paper. I would record anything interesting I noticed about my surroundings. This included micro details such as the sights, the smells, the sounds, the weather, how I felt, how people dressed, how people behaved in different spaces, and how different groups of people interacted with me and with others (for example, tourists interacting with each other, tourists interacting with hospitality staff, etc.). It also included reflection and analysis that struck me in the moment, such as noticing how spaces were designed and hypothesising as to why these choices were made; comparisons between different times of day; thinking about how a local might experience what I was encountering; or beginning to notice differences and similarities between one place and the other places in my study.

\textsuperscript{58} As explained in Chapter 10, many of the other tourists in these places could be described as post-tourists as well.
At the end of my trip, I emailed all of these field notes to myself and collated them into a reflective fieldwork journal on my laptop. Doing this at the end of the trip, rather than at the end of each day, allowed me to start seeing ‘the bigger picture’, to start noticing trends and themes, formulating possible lines of argument, and brainstorming useful directions for further literature research.

Photography

As an additional tool to record my observations, I took photographs of various public spaces. Pink (2007) argues that, in order to be ethical, visual ethnographic methods must be designed and implemented in collaboration with those being researched. My visual methods are not intended to be ethnographic, focusing primarily on urban spatiality and rhythms, not on individuals or particular groups. For my project, this method serves as an alternative form of research material (Posser 1998), adding another dimension to my written work. As Banks (2007) observes, photography can be valuable for how it reveals ‘insight that is not accessible by any other means’ (p. 4).

In the past, the use of photographs in anthropology, geography and sociology has suffered criticism for purporting to be a neutral, objective reflection of reality (Pink 2012; Crang 2010; Banks 2007; Harper 1998). It is now widely recognised that photographs are highly subjective productions, or interpretations of reality (Harper 1998), as are representations of any kind. That is, ‘photographers not only document but “capture” images – composing information rather than documenting reality’ (Crowe 2003, p. 472). The photographs are mediated by and reflect the researcher’s subjectivity and social positions (Pink 2007; Harper 2004). In the field and upon reviewing the photos, I tried to question my intentions and choices: how was the photo framed, and why? Why did I think the subject matter was worth photographing? What/who was left out? What theories informed these choices? (Banks 2007; Pink 2007)

The subjective nature of photographs does not make them an unreliable or inappropriate methodological tool, especially for a project like mine that slants towards autoethnography. Rather than ‘representing reality’, or ‘providing

59 Since consent could not be obtained from those within the spaces I photographed, I have blurred all faces in photographs throughout the dissertation to ensure anonymity.
ethnographic insights’, the photographs are my interpretations of the field, and a reflection of my personal experiences and what I determined to be interesting at particular times during my observational work (Harper 1998). This is no different to the process of taking field notes, which is equally selective.

I set out to take photos to document architectural styles, tourism sites and spectacles, movements of people, and transitions from dayscapes to nightscapes in tourist-centric areas. However, I also captured scenes that I was drawn to as a tourist – anything that struck me as bizarre, funny, novel or beautiful. This meant I ended up taking photos in private spaces like nightclubs, as I was meeting new people and visiting interesting and different places. The distinctions between my role as a researcher and my role as a traveller began to blur, and my touristic experiences became intermingled with my more purposeful, theory-driven field notes and photographs. While I cannot use some of these photos in my thesis (as I only have ethical clearance to present photos taken in public spaces), they helped me to ‘relive’ particular moments, and thus recollect how I felt in the space, and how this fitted into my overall perception of the place I was visiting.

Depending on the context, I switched between using my DSLR (a Canon 550D), a point-and-shoot camera (a Sony Cyber-shot DSC-TX30) and my iPhone. Using the DSLR was the preferred option as it produced the best quality photos, and for the most part carrying it around made me look like a regular tourist. In some places, however, I felt it more suitable to use smaller, more discrete devices. For example, in Playa d’en Bossa in Ibiza, I attracted quite a bit of attention for using a DSLR to take photos on the street. Presumably, this is because there is no particularly remarkable scenery or architecture in this area, and thus it appeared as if I was taking photos of specific people – most tourists would probably not be using a high quality camera to take shots of a strip of convenience stores, parked cars and restaurants. My intention to be discrete was not motivated by a desire to produce covert research material, but rather to avoid disrupting the usual spatial rhythms, as well as to protect my personal safety. After returning home, I uploaded all

---

60 This is not to say there were any likely threats to my safety, but as a young woman travelling alone and holding expensive equipment, I felt more comfortable when I was less noticeable to others.
photos from my phone, point-and-shoot camera and DSLR to review them and add further reflective notes.

**Urban analysis**

*Thirdspace*

In my approach to urban analysis, I drew on Soja’s idea of Thirdspace (discussed in Chapter 2). This involves conceptualising the city from micro and macro perspectives, and privileging neither by focusing on how they continuously interact (Soja 1996, 2000). Soja (1996, 2002) has criticised the recent shift in urban studies to privilege micro perspectives over the macro through work that focuses on the intimate, the local, streetscapes, and so on. He argues that ‘both the views from above and from below can be restrictive and revealing, deceptive and determinative, indulgent and insightful, necessary but wholly insufficient’ (Soja 1996, p. 314). Therefore, one must resist a macro/micro binary in favour of an approach which embraces the continuous movements between these broad categories:

> Understanding the postmetropolis requires a creative recombination of micro and macro perspectives, views from above and from below, a new critical synthesis that rejects the rigidities of either/or choices for the radical openness of the both/and also. (Soja 2002, p. 190)

I consider both the macro elements of perceived and conceived space, such as popular cultural representations, tourism and marketing narratives, imaginary geographies and place-images, and built environments, as well as the experiential, micro elements of social space, such as how a place is sensed, felt and lived. This approach is particularly appropriate given that I am conceptualising urban spaces as assemblages: if my aim is to explore some of the connections, flows and relations which produce the assemblage, it makes sense that I would be discussing a variety of different elements and realms. My embodied experiences of resorts were especially important, given the heightened awareness of materiality and corporeality that tends to accompany travel. Sensory encounters with other bodies, and with new sites, smells, sounds, tastes and feelings, are central to the anticipation of the holiday, the active engagement in it, the development of self-narratives, and the re-telling of stories after the trip (Urry 2002).
I make use of representations – websites, movies, TV shows, news articles, tourism brochures – to understand how the places in my study are positioned as tourism destinations, and thus what myths, imaginaries, narratives and identities are associated with them. As discussed in the previous chapter, a place is more than its physical environment – it exists in the imaginary and these ideas and preconceptions are shaped by texts. As with all representations, these texts may be based on a reality, but they do not simply reflect the reality, they work to constitute it. Highmore (2005) observes that analysing a city through texts is not to favour the fictional over the real, but:

... to insist that our real experiences of cities are ‘caught’ in networks of dense metaphorical meanings. Or, perhaps more optimistically, it is to insist that experiences are syncopated or punctuated by an accumulation of images and signs. It is the tangle of physicality and symbolism, the sedimentation of various histories, the mingling of imaginings and experience that constitute the urban. (p. 5)

The real and the fictional, the material and the representational, are always intertwined in urban spaces, and thus both must be understood in order to account for how space is lived.

**Rhythmanalysis**

Lefebvre’s method of rhythmanalysis\(^{61}\) offered an effective means to examine the lived aspects of urban spaces. As Highmore (2005) puts it, ‘rhythmanalysis is dedicated to the living, breathing, dynamic existence of cities’ (p. 157). In the light of renewed interest in materiality, rhythmanalysis as method has become increasingly popular in a diverse range of scholarly work (see for example: Cantillon 2015b; Sgibnev 2015; Rantala & Valtonen 2014; Smith & Hetherington 2013 [eds]; Chen 2013; Lehtovuori & Koskela 2013; Wunderlich 2013; Simpson 2012; Duffy et al 2011; Edensor 2010 [ed], 2011; Vergunst 2010; Edensor & Holloway 2008; Lashua & Kelly 2008; Cronin 2006; Highmore 2005; Crang 2001). It is an approach that can allow observers to overcome some of the impacts of our preconceptions and assumptions, making it more likely that we might notice things that could otherwise be hidden in plain sight. Further, as Edensor (2011) points out, this method ‘emphasises the dynamic and processual qualities of place’ (p. 190),

---

\(^{61}\) That is, the analysis of rhythms, which I defined in Chapter 2.
enabling the researcher to comprehend and capture some of the various connections and relations which constitute lived spaces. Noticing different urban rhythms – and interrogating why they exist, who takes part in them, who resists them, and what material and symbolic phenomena work to sustain them – was a key part of my observational fieldwork.

The researcher’s own body is the reference point for experiencing and analysing these city rhythms (Lefebvre 2004). Thus, the rhythmanalyst must be anything but passive or detached, because her subjectivity is central to the research process. Rhythmanalysis is at once concerned with internal and external, micro and macro, surface and depth, recognising the inter-implication of these. In Highmore’s (2005) words, it:

... is oriented to the specific and to its connectivity with the totality – it is never simply particular, but finds the totality through the particular. Its concentration on the body grounds it in an active and already rhythmic assemblage that provides a complex perspective on the larger rhythms of the city. (p. 157)

Rather than the micro or the experiential being privileged over the macro or the structural (or vice versa), this approach highlights the interconnectedness between them (Smith & Hetherington 2013; Soja 1996). That is, rhythmanalysis is attentive to the mutually constitutive, mutually transformative relations between representations, imaginaries, materiality, spatial practices and lived experiences, or the ‘(reciprocally influential) rhythms in interaction’ (Lefebvre 2004, p. 43) which produce space.

Interviews

To gain insight into the experiences of residents in the tourism-oriented realities of resorts, while in the field I conducted several anonymous,62 brief, semi-structured interviews with locals. These interviews were designed to provide supplementary material, serving to complement my observational techniques rather than drive my research process. As well as the planned interviews, my informal, unrecorded conversations with people I encountered (for example, taxi and transfer drivers, waiters, hotel staff and fellow tourists) also shaped my perceptions of the places I

---

62 All names of interviewees that appear in this dissertation are pseudonyms.
visited. All recorded interviews were transcribed once the fieldwork stage was complete, which enabled me to reflect on common themes, connections and differences between interviewees and across resorts.

Interviews were integral to ‘filling in the gaps’, providing at least something of what participant observation could not reveal. Since I had no first-hand knowledge of the local experience in resorts other than the Gold Coast, semi-structured interviews allowed me to gain some insights regarding shared (and disparate) attitudes and issues among locals. Further, I was in each site a very brief period of time, and thus could only be exposed to specific events at a specific time of year. Talking to local people was helpful in that they had a more comprehensive view of the tourism industry, having lived through annual tourism cycles multiple times. The research material that the interviews produced was invaluable in pointing me to aspects of the work that required further exploration, based on what the interviewees raised as being particularly important, imminent or omnipresent issues and experiences.

Interviewees were recruited in two different ways: by me getting into contact with friends and friends-of-friends living in the selected fieldwork sites, and by contacting overseas universities and asking them to circulate my request for participants among their postgraduates in relevant departments (sociology, cultural studies, geography, and so on). As I had no intention of seeking empirical outcomes, formal sampling techniques were not used. Nonetheless, I ended up with a varied spread of participants: four women and eight men, ranging in age from 21 to 60, with diverse nationalities and ethnic backgrounds including Australian, British, Czech, Turkish, Nicaraguan, Colombian, Spanish, Filipino and Mexican, among others. This diversity also happened to enable me to interview people with different senses of belonging to the resort in which they lived – immigrants, expatriates, impermanent residents such as postgraduate students, and people who had lived there since birth.

I faced a number of obstacles and complications in arranging interviews for my research. One outcome of this is that the research material I collected from each site was uneven – three interviews in Thailand, three interviews on the Gold Coast, five in Miami, one in Cancún, and none in Ibiza. The result is that in the dissertation some places have received more attention in terms of this form of primary material than
others, simply because there was a wider range of examples to draw from. While it would be significant if this was an ethnographic study with empirical aims, this unevenness is not necessarily a hindrance in the light of the impressionistic nature of my research. However, it does highlight some methodological concerns that are worth discussing. Recruiting participants on the Gold Coast should have been easy because I live there and have extensive networks, but I ended up having more informal, unrecorded conversations with people precisely because these networks are based on close friendship. Recruiting participants in Miami was relatively easy because of the universities’ and postgraduates’ willingness to assist a visiting scholar. One of my colleagues had put me in touch with her friend in Thailand, and he was able to introduce me to several of his friends who were happy to participate. The issue there, however, was that none of these people were ethnically Thai.

I had arranged to meet with researchers and potential participants at a university campus in Cancún, but the research centre abruptly stopped answering my emails a couple of weeks before my arrival. I attempted to set up a similar arrangement in Ibiza, but did not receive a response. Thus, for Thailand, Cancún and Ibiza I had to try to source potential participants while in the field. This proved to be much more challenging than I had anticipated, largely due to language barriers (I only speak English). As a transient traveller, it was extremely difficult to come into any kind of meaningful contact with local people, let alone to find locals I could properly communicate with and who were willing to sacrifice their time to meet with me for an interview. This further emphasised my position as a relative ‘outsider’ to local communities; the extent to which touristic ‘front regions’ and local ‘back regions’ (MacCannell 1999) are segregated in resorts; and how little exposure to local life the average visitor in mass tourism destinations would usually experience, even if actively seeking it out. My difficulties arranging interviews, then, provided some valuable food for thought regarding the respective experiences of tourists and locals, and the paucity of opportunities for encounters between them in these kinds of tourist-centric regions.

---

63 This is explored further in Chapter 10.
Interview design

Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining my project and the purpose of the interviews, and a consent form which they were required to sign before the interview took place (the informed consent package is provided as Appendix B: Information Sheet, and Appendix C: Consent Form). Interviews always took place in a relaxed public setting of the interviewee's choosing, such as at restaurants, coffee shops, beach clubs or hotel lobbies. Due to the casual, open structure of the questioning (described below), interviews ranged anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes in duration, depending on how long the interviewee was willing to talk. Interviews were recorded digitally with my smart phone not only because it was convenient and reliable, but because this type of recording device is discrete enough to maintain a naturalistic situation (Flick 2009). That is, it is usually socially acceptable to place one's mobile phone on the table at a restaurant (and most of my interviewees had already done this out of habit), so the use of my phone was perhaps less intrusive than if I had used an audio recorder.

Since I was interested in candid and off-the-cuff reactions, feelings, anecdotes and taken-for-granted assumptions about people's experiences in their locality, the tone of interviews was kept informal and conversational. As is typical for semi-structured interviews, I had prepared a list of questions which served as prompts to further conversation. This ensured that the discussion would be fluid and flexible, but still focused on the issues relevant to my research (Jennings 2010). The planned questions I brought along to each interview were:

- Why do you live here?
- What are the best and worst parts about living here? / What do you like and dislike about your city?
- How do you feel about the tourist presence in your city?
- As a local, do you feel the city caters more to locals or to tourists?
- Where do you usually go out with friends?
- What do you like about those venues?
- Do you feel there’s a good balance of alternative and mainstream venues?

---

64 Please note that these forms have the previous title of this project.
I started with a broad ‘grand tour’ question to break the ice, make the interviewee feel more comfortable, and gather some background information in order to better contextualise the stories to follow (Jennings 2010; Chang 2008; Fontana & Frey 2000). The planned questions were all open-ended to discourage me from leading participants to make particular responses based on my values or opinions (although these did eventually come into play, as I discuss below).

As Flick (2009) suggests, the researcher should ask general, open-ended questions at first and introduce structuring progressively ‘to prevent the interviewer’s frame of reference being imposed on the interviewee’s viewpoints’ (p. 151). This openness was also crucial to ensure that any new lines of inquiry were able to emerge organically, since I had only limited knowledge of what may be worth asking in each situation.

Thus, my aim was to allow the participants to express themselves freely within the parameters of the interview questions. I wanted to let them determine what was worth discussing in terms of what they felt was most important or interesting, or at least what was at the forefront of their mind. To gain a greater understanding, I introduced unplanned follow-up questions to probe aspects of their initial answers (Silverman 2011; Chang 2008). For instance, if they responded with generalised statements, I would ask for some specific examples.

**Interviews: reciprocal and interactional**

For interviewees to respond openly and comfortably, it is essential to build up a rapport with them (Silverman 2011; Gray 2003). Since the semi-structured interview is intentionally conversational, it would not function properly if the researcher tried to be detached for the sake of objectivity (Fontana & Frey 2000). Jennings (2010) proposes that interviews should be treated as a reciprocal exchange to foster trust and a sense of intimacy. As such, I not only asked the participants questions, I also engaged with them through my own anecdotes and feelings, capitalising on the shared experience we had as residents of tourist-centric places. In this way, my interviews can be seen as ‘interactional encounters’ (Fontana & Frey 2000, p. 647) in which interviewer and interviewee are active participants and co-producers of the research material (Silverman 2011; Alasuutari 1995). For example, I would respond to what interviewees were saying by drawing
comparisons to what it is like living on the Gold Coast, or offering my perspective on something I had encountered in their city.65

**Interviewing and reflexivity**

Since I am a key contributor in these interactional encounters, it is necessary to be reflexive about how I might have influenced the interviewing process and the material produced. Alasuutari (1995) argues that analysing interactions is particularly important with conversational-style interviews, as the researcher tends to rely on her ‘gut-instinct knowledge’ (p. 87) and ingrained performances of self. Therefore, just as with my observational techniques, my gender, age, ethnicity, class and occupation would have shaped the power relations and how the interviewee responded to me (Fontana & Frey 2000). It is impossible to pin down exactly how and to what extent these various factors came into play. I can assume that my role as ‘the researcher’ put me in a somewhat more powerful position, which may have led interviewees to conceal certain things from me (Flick 2009; Gray 2003). However, this is inevitable, and the best I could do was try to help the participant feel as relaxed as possible through my tone, body language and the interview techniques described above. Most of my participants disclosed sensitive information66 to me and joked around with me, which I took as an indication that they felt relatively comfortable with me personally and with the level of anonymity assured to them.

The researcher is not the only participant who needs to be considered reflexively and critically – so too does the interviewee. Haraway (1991) has criticised a tendency to romanticise the experiences of the subjugated or less powerful, as if they are somehow more objective or trustworthy. She argues that their vantage points and subjective positions must be as open to examination and deconstruction as those of the researcher. Interviews do not necessarily provide transparently true (or false) information or open out direct access to people’s experiences (Silverman 2011, 2013). Rather, interviews are a form of storytelling which provides the researcher with representations of experiences (Silverman 2011) through ‘socially constructed narratives’ (Silverman 2013, p. 47). Thus, the perceptions collected

---

65 Verbalising these noticings also served as a record for some of my initial analyses.
66 None of which has been included in the dissertation, both for ethical reasons and because it was not particularly pertinent to the argument.
from my interviews cannot be regarded as representative of an ‘authentic’ – let alone ‘universal’ – experience of being a local (Silverman 2013). Rather, these interviews produced ‘multiple versions of the truth’ (Denzin 1997, p. xv) which can, in various ways, speak to the influences of people’s locality and situatedness on how they perceive reality and represent themselves.

**Conclusion**

The sites and subjects central to this research are complex, multiple and constantly changing, and the chosen methods were designed to be attuned to this, to capture aspects of the livedness of resorts that are necessarily partial, yet nevertheless insightful. While taking an impressionistic approach limited the extent to which I could immerse myself in the field and in the lives of others (as I may have done with ethnographic research), it enabled me to notice and account for similarities and differences across several resorts. As such, this approach proved particularly useful for a multi-sited project. Further, my methodology both reflects and acknowledges the impressionistic nature of tourism itself.

By keeping my approach flexible and open-ended, I let the field surprise me, disrupt my assumptions, complicate my imaginaries and prompt me along new lines of inquiry. What follows in this dissertation is a *bricolage* of examples, observations, experiences, narratives, concepts, analyses and theories which, working together, have come to constitute my argument. Indeed, just as resorts can be understood as assemblages constituted by multiplicities, so too can this project, and thus the methods and the argument underpin one another. In the following section, I explore some of the specifics of these multiplicities, drawing variously on historical accounts, statistical data, marketing material, popular cultural representations, and my own photographs and observations, in order to introduce and begin analysing each resort more closely.
Section 2: The resorts

Introduction

In this section, I provide a brief overview of each place I selected for my study, with a particular emphasis on their tourism industries and associated developments, images and myths. For each resort, I discuss its urban formation; its history and growth in relation to its development as a tourism destination, and some of the economic, cultural and political forces which have contributed to this; the present state of its tourism industry; the dominant popular imaginaries of place (especially those commonly held by tourists and reinforced through news media and popular cultural representations); the images and narratives disseminated by official tourism bodies (sponsored by the city, region or country in which they are located); and some of my initial observations and impressions of the tourist hubs, focusing on flows of tourists in particular spaces and at different times. These chapters also engage with the existing literature on each resort as relevant to my project.

Through these overviews, I intend to highlight the centrality of tourism to the development, growth, economy, image and everyday experiences of each resort. By exploring both unofficial and official narratives of identity, I want to elucidate the tensions that exist between how a place is actually imagined – its reputation, stereotypes and common associations – and how official tourism bodies represent that place. By incorporating some of my own observations and experiences, I point to how these tensions manifest in dynamic relation to the materiality of space – how it is actually lived.

The first overview in this section is of the Gold Coast, Australia, since it is where I live, the inspiration for this doctoral project, and the frame of reference I inevitably brought to bear on subsequent places I visited. Each other place is discussed in the order in which I visited them – Phuket and Koh Phangan, Thailand; Cancún, Mexico; Miami, United States of America; and lastly, Ibiza, Spain. Since this section is aimed at ‘setting the scene’ of the research, only occasional comparisons between the

---

67 Less touristic, more localised perspectives, experiences and spaces are the focus of Chapter 11.
places are made throughout. The section that follows this one (Chapters 9-11) draws together and analyses the commonalities that are alluded to here, as well as highlighting some of the key differences that make each place unique.
Chapter 4: Gold Coast

The Gold Coast, located in the south-east corner of the state of Queensland, is one of Australia’s most iconic tourism destinations. Famous for its long stretch of coastline, good surf, lush rainforests (known as ‘the green behind the gold’) and warm, subtropical climate, the city is a popular vacation spot all year round for both regional day-trippers and domestic and international overnight visitors.\(^{68}\) Beyond its natural attractions, the Gold Coast is known for its numerous family-oriented theme parks and a notorious nightlife scene, being dubbed both the ‘theme park capital’ (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015) and ‘nightlife capital’ (Surfers Paradise Alliance 2014) of Australia.\(^{69}\) These elements contribute to an image of the city as a hedonistic sun, sand and sex mass tourism destination (Potts, Gardiner & Scott 2016; Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; King 2007; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Symes 1997). Like its stereotype in national popular culture, the Gold Coast’s self-branding has long been marked by a somewhat uneasy blend of representations of

\(^{68}\) Overnight visitors refer to those who stay \textit{at least} one night in the destination. In tourism, the categories of ‘overnight visitor’ and ‘day-tripper’ function to distinguish between those who use accommodation services and those who do not.

\(^{69}\) Not to mention a reputation as the ‘crime capital’, which is discussed further in Chapter 9.
wholesome family holiday fun and an emphasis on highly sexualised beach bodies; between representations of laughing families enjoying theme parks, wildlife encounters and rainforest walks, and the sensually overloaded, ‘glamorous’ imagery of mainstream nightclub and casino culture (plus the unrepresented but always assumed additional lure of readily available ‘adult entertainment’ in many forms, from the titillating to the hard core).

The tourism industry is a significant asset to the city’s local economy (Tourism and Events Queensland 2016; Council of the City of Gold Coast 2014). Construction, real estate, tourism, retail and leisure-related industries have been the driving forces of the city’s development and continue to impel rapid growth in the area (Scott, Gardiner & Dedekorkut-Howes 2016; Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004; Griffin 1998; Symes 1997). With a resident population of about 560,000 (see Figure 2), the Gold Coast is now the sixth largest city in Australia, surpassing several state capitals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>334,523</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>356,441</td>
<td>+6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>423,719</td>
<td>+18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>450,075</td>
<td>+6.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>515,202</td>
<td>+14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>555,608</td>
<td>+7.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Population on the Gold Coast, 1991–2015

Located on Australia’s east coast, bordering the Pacific Ocean, the Gold Coast’s sprawling growth has formed a conurbation with Queensland’s state capital of Brisbane (about one hour’s drive north) (see Figure 3). With development based on proximity to desirable beaches, the city is dispersed along 57 kilometres of the coast. It is an exopolis in Soja’s (1996) terms, lacking a city centre in the traditional sense. There is no downtown or CBD, and financial, legal, governmental and cultural institutions are spread throughout the city rather than occupying their own districts (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Wise 2006; Wise & Breen 2004). Its form can

70 The 2015 figure has been used because at the time of writing, the results of the 2016 census are yet to be released.
be described as a series of linear strips parallel to the ocean – the beachside high-rise strip at the most easterly edge, the hinterland to the west, and highways, canal estates and suburbia in between (Wise 2006; Wise & Breen 2004). Along the high-rise band, the most intensified hubs for tourism, entertainment and leisure are Surfers Paradise (colloquially known as ‘Surfers’) and Broadbeach, which together are referred to as the ‘Glitter Strip’ (see Figure 4).

![Figure 3: Map of Australia (Google 2017)](image1)

![Figure 4: Maps of the Gold Coast and the 'Glitter Strip' (Google 2017)](image2)
History

Indigenous Australians (primarily the Yugambeh peoples) occupied the area known today as the Gold Coast for many millennia, but the first European settlements did not occur until the 1840s (Dedekorkut-Howes, Bosman & Leach 2016; Jones 1986; McRobbie 1984). Despite the rich diversity of marine and terrestrial resources that sustained the First Peoples, the coastal region was seen by Europeans as undesirable for development due to its isolation and ‘useless’ dune landscape (Longhurst 1995, 1997). Growth in the wider area was also slow because the region was cut by rivers and floodplains, but as it developed, initial economic life was based on primary industry, particularly timber and sugar cane but also livestock, maize, arrowroot, and failed attempts at cotton plantations (Byrne & Houston 2016; Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Blackman 2013; Weaver 2011; Longhurst 1997; Jones 1986; McRobbie 1984). To support these industries and their workers, the towns of Southport and Coolangatta were officially established on the South Coast, as it was then known\(^71\) (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004).

By the late 1800s, the timber industry was in decline but the South Coast was beginning to gain traction as a seaside resort for Brisbane visitors looking for a weekend away (Potts et al 2016; Blackman 2013; Longhurst 1995; Jones 1986). The completion of a railway line from Brisbane to Southport in 1889 made the South Coast considerably easier to access – prior to this, visitors could only come by either stagecoach or coastal steamer. The line was extended southwards to West Burleigh by 1901 and to Coolangatta/Tweed Heads by 1903 (Dedekorkut-Howes et al 2016; Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004). Southport was the first suburb to develop as a holiday spot, becoming popular among families for its calm bayside beaches and relaxed atmosphere (Scott et al 2016; Blackman 2013; Longhurst 1997; McRobbie 1984).

Main Beach (close to today’s tourist hub of Surfers Paradise) initially attracted only a small numbers of visitors (mostly young people) due to its rougher surf beach and relative inaccessibility (Davidson & Spearritt 2000; McRobbie 1984). However, with the opening in 1925 of the Jubilee Bridge, travel between Southport and Main Beach became much easier (Blackman 2013). Access to the South Coast for Brisbane

\(^71\) A reference to the region’s location in relation to Brisbane (Prideaux 2004).
residents was further improved with the construction of bridges over the Coomera and Logan rivers during the 1930s (Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1997). With these upgrades, and with automobiles quickly becoming the preferred method for travelling to the Coast, the area’s tourism industry flourished (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004; Longhurst 1997).

While the Coast had relied almost entirely on regional tourism up until that point, over the following decades this started to shift. The 1930s saw a slight increase in interstate visitors, driven by new rail connections from Tweed Heads to southern states and the introduction of paid annual leave for many workers (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004). Later, during World War II, the area welcomed significant numbers of American servicemen who were temporarily stationed in the Brisbane region and would take leave on the Coast (Prideaux 2004; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1995, 1997). Regular air services from Coolangatta’s airport commenced in 1947, with direct flights between the Coast and Sydney beginning in 1956, attracting even more attention from the national market (Dedekorkut-Howes et al 2016; Blackman 2013; Prideaux 2004; Davidson & Spearritt 2000). Rapidly increasing car ownership, motel developments and improvements to roads and highways ensured that the regional market remained strong throughout the 1950s (Scott et al 2016; Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1997). By 1964, continuing growth in car ownership meant that the railway from Brisbane became uneconomical and was thus closed (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Blackman 2013; Longhurst 1997).

In 1958, the South Coast officially changed its name to the more glamorous-sounding ‘Gold Coast’ (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Blackman 2013; Weaver 2011; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1997). By this time, the city had established itself as a symbol for Australian beach culture and a major domestic tourism destination, with facilities ranging from restaurants, cabarets and nightclubs to shopping centres and wildlife reserves (Scott et al 2016; Prideaux 2004; Longhurst 1995). In addition to its ongoing success as a family holiday destination, the media presented the Gold Coast as a place of fantasy, hedonism and escapism, and a fashionable playground for the young and wealthy (Condon 2014; Prideaux 2004; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1997). The spectacular
appeal of the Gold Coast, and Surfers Paradise in particular, was further enhanced from the 1960s onwards by the rapid development of high-rise holiday apartments and hotels, supplementing and, in time, largely supplanting the earlier motels and fibro beach houses (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Weaver 2011; Wise 2006; Symes 1995). As Davidson and Spearritt (2000) observe:

Surfers Paradise and the Gold Coast took Australia by storm. At last we had a coastal strip and beachside architecture to match the French Riviera, Miami, and Waikiki Beach at Honolulu. Such comparisons were regularly drawn in the promotional literature. (p. 144)

As a consequence of this development boom, however, the Gold Coast quickly gained a reputation for being commercialised, tawdry, gaudy, vulgar and Americanised (McRobbie 1984). This was exacerbated by the city’s own marketing techniques, which included launching the Surfers Paradise Meter Maids in 1965 – women in gold bikinis and high heels who were tasked to top up parking meters, provide visitor information and chat to tourists (Blackman 2013; Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2012; McRobbie 1984).

Rapid development in the tourism sector continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including the establishment of a number of attractions and events that became icons of the Gold Coast experience: large shopping complexes like Pacific Fair; American-style theme parks such as Seaworld, Dreamworld, and Wet’n’Wild; Jupiters Casino; and the Billabong Pro surfing contest (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Blackman 2013; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Longhurst 1997; Symes 1995). The 1980s also saw the beginning of direct flights connecting Brisbane to Asia and Europe, and in the later years of the decade, the construction of high-end golf courses, luxury resorts and five-star hotels (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Prideaux 2004; Jones 1986). The latter changes signified the Gold Coast’s emergence as an international mass tourism destination, becoming at that time particularly popular with Japanese visitors (Faulkner & Tideswell 2006; Prideaux 2004).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Gold Coast continued to expand, with numerous new hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, theme parks and wildlife parks, a new railway line re-connecting it to Brisbane, and a steadily growing resident population (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015; Blackman 2013). Intense and
ongoing development has meant buildings are quickly knocked down and replaced, then demolished and built again, made (and remade) to be taller and flashier (see Figure 5). Thus, the Gold Coast’s decades-old reputation for being commercialised, tawdry, gaudy, vulgar and Americanised is continually reinforced by its own displays of spectacle and excess. However, despite such negative press and frequent stereotyping in popular discourse, overall touristic interest in the city has not waned, and the tourism sector remains strong.

Figure 5: High-rises in Surfers Paradise

Present context

In the 2015–2016\textsuperscript{72} financial year, the Gold Coast received 13 million visitors producing $4.2 billion in expenditure (Tourism and Events Queensland 2016). Of these, 4.7 million were overnight visitors, with the remainder (8.3 million) being regional day-trippers. Domestic visitors accounted for 79 per cent (3.7 million) of overnight stays, making this market a core part of the city’s tourism base. Due to Australia’s distance from other nations (resulting in long travel times for overseas visitors), it is not surprising that the Gold Coast receives more conservative numbers of international tourists than the other destinations in this study.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} July 2015–June 2016.

\textsuperscript{73} For instance, a one-hour flight in most of Australia may get you to the next closest capital city, whereas a one-hour flight in Europe could get you to a number of other countries.
Comprising about 21 per cent (984,000) of total overnight visitors, these international tourists now come predominantly from China and New Zealand, followed by the UK, Japan, Singapore, the USA, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and India (Tourism and Events Queensland 2016). Despite relatively small numbers, the international market is still very important to the city, especially in terms of tourism expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010–2011</td>
<td>11,457,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011–2012</td>
<td>11,139,000</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–2013</td>
<td>11,833,000</td>
<td>+6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013–2014</td>
<td>11,059,000</td>
<td>-6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–2015</td>
<td>11,617,000</td>
<td>+5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015–2016</td>
<td>13,013,000</td>
<td>+12.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Visitors to the Gold Coast, mid-2010–mid-2016**


As Figure 6 demonstrates, tourist numbers have tended to fluctuate in recent years. This does not necessarily signify stagnation of the destination (Butler 1980, 2006), however, since the most recent statistics indicate that an upturn is occurring. Some new developments over the next few years may provide a further boost to the sector. Most notably, the city is set to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games, a move that has prompted the improvement of existing facilities and implementation of new infrastructure. This includes the construction of new sporting venues, a timely multi-million-dollar renovation of Pacific Fair mega shopping mall, and the introduction of a light rail rapid transit system, which runs through the touristic Glitter Strip. The Commonwealth Games will no doubt garner the city a degree of increased international attention and promotion, especially in countries which participate in the Games.

Since the Gold Coast’s economy is so dependent on tourism- and leisure-related industries, the city’s image is key to its appeal and growth. In recent years, there have been persistent attempts on the part of official tourism bodies to re-brand the city and distance it from its more unfavourable associations in the popular imaginary. There has been particular emphasis on changing how the Gold Coast,
especially Surfers Paradise, is often seen as a sexualised, sleazy, tacky tourist trap (Cantillon 2015b; Pierce 2014). Take, for example, the following descriptions of the city on well-known and popular international travel websites:

Beneath a jagged skyline shaped by dozens of high-rise beachfront apartment blocks, the Gold Coast is Australia’s Miami Beach or Costa del Sol, a striking contrast to Brisbane, only an hour to the north. The coast forms a virtually unbroken beach 40km long, from South Stradbroke Island past Surfers Paradise and Burleigh Heads to the New South Wales border at Coolangatta. The beaches swarm with bathers and board-riders all year round: surfing blossomed here in the 1930s and the key surf beaches at Coolangatta, Burleigh Heads and South Stradbroke still pull daily crowds of veterans and novices. In recent years, other attractions have sprung up, notably the club and party scene centred on Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach, and several action-packed theme parks, domestic holiday blackspots mostly based about 15km northwest of the town. Aggressively superficial, Surfers is not the place for peace and quiet, but its sheer brashness can be fun for a couple of days. There’s little variation on the beach and nightclub scene, however, and if you’re concerned this will leave you jaded, bored or broke, you’re better off avoiding this corner of the state altogether. (Rough Guides 2015c)

The neon lights of the Gold Coast have more in common with the glitz and glamour of Miami or the hedonistic pastimes of Las Vegas than they do Australia. But somehow this heady mix of high-rise apartment blocks, airport-sized shopping malls and million-dollar theme parks feels at home here. While there’s no denying that this 35km strip of golden sand is the most aggressively developed patch in Australia, it’s also one of the most popular holiday destinations ... So it must be doing something right. The shared appeal is the sand, surf and nightlife, but there’s more to the Gold Coast than just the beach. Coolangatta and Burleigh Heads have some excellent surfing breaks and there are also laid-back neighbourhoods favoured by families. Beyond the high-rises stands the Gold Coast Hinterland, a densely forested region home to two of Queensland’s best national parks: Lamington and Springbrook. And then there’s Surfers Paradise & Broadbeach, which is both the epitome of the Gold Coast and the exception to the rule. It’s brash and it’s tacky but that’s exactly what people love about it. (Lonely Planet 2014)

Defining the Gold Coast in terms of other international resorts like Miami, these descriptions clearly try to capture a particular sense of place that is noticeably set apart from ‘normal’ Australian life, and is distinguished from that normalcy by a relatively complex set of characteristics that are taken to mark resorts as distinct kinds of urban spaces. Further, while highlighting the most familiar attractions and imaginaries associated with the Gold Coast – the beaches, nightlife, shopping, theme parks, and the perceived superficiality, brashness and tackiness – these descriptions also point to a variety of interesting sites and experiences that exist beyond what is
most familiar. This, too, is the Gold Coast’s own more recent strategy for selling itself: to stress that the destination offers considerably more than sun, sand and sex.

In 2005, the city endeavoured to revamp its image by positioning itself as a glamorous, upmarket destination. Gold Coast Tourism adopted the ‘Very GC’ campaign (see Figure 7), aiming to ‘appeal to non-traditional Gold Coast visitors and promote the destination’s higher-end offerings’ (Johnson 2010). Frequently mocked by locals, the campaign was seen as embarrassingly unsophisticated and pretentious. An element of luxury certainly exists on the Gold Coast, but it is hardly considered to be a defining feature of the city’s identity in the national imaginary or in local experience. Indeed, rather ironically, designing a campaign that tried so hard to be chic that it came off as tacky was actually a very typical, ‘very Gold Coast’ thing for the city to do. Not surprisingly, the campaign failed to resonate with the desired market segment, the existing tourism market and residents alike.

![Figure 7: Screenshot of ‘Very GC’ television advertisement](Image)

Source: M&C Saatchi (2010)

In 2010, the ‘Very GC’ campaign was replaced by the current ‘Famous for fun’ campaign, which focuses more on the city’s traditional beach-based, family-friendly activities. In the words of Gold Coast Tourism Chairman Paul Donovan, ‘We’re an exhilarating, fun holiday destination for families mainly, and this theme is something Las Vegas would kill for’ (quoted in Bartlett 2010). Labelling the Gold
Coast as ‘Australia’s endless playground’, Tourism and Events Queensland’s (2013a) ‘brand story’ states that:

There’s absolutely nowhere in Australia that is so indelibly connected with the word ‘fun’ than the Gold Coast. For generations, the warm sun, inviting sea and golden beaches of the Gold Coast have meant escape and freedom for holidaying Australians. Add in the excitement and laughter of the theme parks, the natural wonders of the hinterland and the non-stop entertainment of the destination and nowhere delivers as many smiles or happy memories as the Gold Coast. (p. 4)

Acknowledging the limitations inherent in only selling the city’s physical attractions, Tourism and Events Queensland (2014) are also aiming to appeal to ‘the consumer’s emotional response’. The marketing material cultivates a touristic experience characterised by play, excitement, adventure and escapism, about which future travellers can fantasise, imagining what their Gold Coast holiday will entail. Further, the experience is touted as one that not only guarantees a ‘joyous feeling’ (Tourism and Events Queensland 2014) in the moment, but produces lasting memories and stories to be retold long after the holiday is over. By recognising the allure of daydreaming, and playing pre-emptively on a sense of nostalgia, the designers of the campaign demonstrate an acute awareness of the importance of the imaginary and representational in the experiential.

Images and text on the official tourism websites, in tourism brochures and in television advertising currently promote the Gold Coast’s traditional family-friendly offerings, including the beaches and warm weather, and its numerous theme parks,74 dining precincts and shopping complexes. At the same time, however, the marketing strategy attempts to incorporate the region’s lesser known natural and cultural attractions (Carson 2013). Despite nightlife’s prominence in the imaginary and actuality of Surfers Paradise, it receives only a few brief mentions in official promotional material, doubtless due to a perception that nightlife is associated with ‘unsavoury’ activities that would undermine the current campaign’s ‘wholesome’ narratives of place.

---

74 Most notably, major theme parks such as Dreamworld, Warner Bros Movie World, Wet’n’Wild and Sea World, but also smaller attractions such as the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.
The official tourism website’s homepage features just as many images of the hinterland as of the beaches (see Figure 8), with the following introductory text:

From the iconic Surfers Paradise beach to the dining precincts of Main Beach and Broadbeach and out to the lush, green hinterland, there’s a new experience waiting for you at every turn on the Gold Coast. Theme parks, world-renowned beaches and year-round sunshine are just a few of the reasons 10.5 million visitors flock to this vibrant city each year. (Gold Coast Tourism 2015)

![Figure 8: Official Gold Coast tourism website](source: Gold Coast Tourism (2015))

The website’s landing page invites viewers to explore the region based on the kind of touristic experience they desire – family vacations, romantic getaways for two, activities recommended by locals, or adventure and ‘hidden gems’ in the hinterland.

Whether beaches or forests, the city commoditises nature for touristic consumption. Tourists can visit wildlife sanctuaries and farms, stay in ecotourism accommodation, go for bush walks, see waterfalls, take scenic drives, and stop off at wineries and eclectic craft and boutique outlets. The increasing emphasis on the hinterland’s idyllic rainforests and niche tourism experiences positions these as tranquil escapes from the already escapist excitement and adventure of the Coast’s mass tourism. This is clearly part of an ongoing attempt to diversify the Gold Coast’s image (and to set it apart from being overly associated with Surfers Paradise) by capitalising on nearby natural assets, offering a holiday with ‘a variety of experiences’ (Tourism and Events Queensland 2014) and ‘the full spectrum of interactive entertainment’ (Gold Coast Tourism 2013, p. 4).
Cultural attractions, on the other hand, are still only a very minor part of tourism promotion. The website lists landmarks, galleries, museums and historical sites, such as the Gold Coast City Art Gallery and the Yugambeh Museum Language and Heritage Research Centre. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the sites listed are relatively kitschy and unconventional as cultural tourism sites. For instance, among the ‘museums and galleries’ listed are Ripley’s Believe it or Not! Odditorium, the Hard Rock Café, the Wax Museum, and Surf World Gold Coast (Gold Coast Tourism 2015). While the last of these is a well-established, carefully-researched popular cultural museum dealing with the history of surfing, including the part played by the region in that history, the others are unlikely to be seen as sites for cultural or heritage tourism.  

Underpinning the emphasis on diversification of the tourism industry is a broader desire to reinvent the image of the Gold Coast as not only a beach resort, but a cosmopolitan, ‘vibrant urban city’ (Carson 2013, p. 33), or a ‘real city’ (Dedekorkut-Howes et al 2016, p. 2). The Gold Coast is now selling a lifestyle as well as a destination, promising that all the factors that make the city a great place to vacation – the beaches, hinterland, restaurants, shops, theme parks – also make it a great place to live (Council of the City of Gold Coast 2014). This is similarly evident on the official tourism website, which features ‘Inside Stories’: articles on topics like the best beaches, bars and things to do, written by bloggers from the Gold Coast or from other parts of Australia. Additionally, a series of short clips entitled ‘VisitGoldCoast.com presents’ feature prominent locals (such as famous surfers, athletes and TV presenters) introducing different suburbs of the Gold Coast. For example, the ‘Broadbeach’ clip follows TV presenter Liz Cantor as she surfs, bike rides, drinks and eats out in Broadbeach, all while emphasising the area’s lifestyle advantages and tourist landmarks: five-star hotels, Pacific Fair and Jupiters Casino (VisitGoldCoast.com presents – Broadbeach 2015).

Observations

For each other place I overview in this section, I end with some of my initial observations and experiences, from the perspective of a visitor (albeit a reflexive

---

75 Cultural tourism on the Gold Coast is explored further in Chapter 10.
76 These clips are strikingly similar to those on Miami’s tourism website, as is discussed in Chapter 6.
and analytical visitor). What I notice in the field is usually framed by inadvertent comparisons to my own locality, the Gold Coast, since it has a significant influence on my *habitus*, my subjectivity and my embodied experiences. I cannot present initial observations here, however, since I am writing from the perspective of a longtime resident. The only frame of reference I have to draw upon is the Gold Coast itself. Thus, instead of comparative analysis, I outline some of my strongest impressions of Surfers Paradise, based on my repeated experiences and observations of its rhythms.

![Figure 9: Map of Surfers Paradise (Google 2017)](image)

During the daytime in Surfers Paradise, families stroll up and down the main streets – Cavill Avenue, Orchid Avenue and The Esplanade (see Figure 9) – and hang out on the beach. These streets are lined with restaurants with alfresco dining areas, fast food joints, ice cream stores, souvenir shops, nightclubs and bars. At the corner of Cavill and The Esplanade is the iconic ‘Surfers Paradise’ sign (see Figure 10), where tourists regularly stop to pose for group photos. The families seen here are considerably more ethnically diverse than the official marketing material depicts. There are Westerners in board shorts, bikinis, sunglasses, flip-flops and fanny packs with beach towels slung around their necks, but it is also common to see young families with women in hijabs and men in fezzes, or to hear groups speaking in Mandarin and Japanese. In a pluralistic society like Australia, one cannot assume
who among these are international visitors, who are domestic visitors and who are locals.

Figure 10: Surfers Paradise sign

Figure 11: People walking through Cavill Mall, Surfers Paradise
Conspicuous among the sea of vacationers are young, slender, fake-tanned women in gold bikinis and hot pants – the Meter Maids. Once a key part of the city’s marketing strategy, the Meter Maids now seem to most locals to be little more than an embarrassing cliché whose current mundane function is to sell souvenirs and have their photos taken with tourists. My friends and I often remark on how their sexualised presence clashes with the supposed family-friendly image of the Gold Coast, but, as suggested earlier (and discussed in more depth in Chapter 11), such oddly paradoxical conjunctios seem to have become emblematic of Surfers Paradise in particular and the Gold Coast more generally.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 12: A Meter Maid and a Hare Krishna chat to people in Cavill Mall, Surfers Paradise**

The early evening is the busiest time in Surfers (see Figure 13). Tourists crowd the beachfront markets, which consist of locally run stalls selling crocheted and/or bejewelled bikinis and novelty sunhats, iPhone cases, crystal dolphins and unicorns, and scented candles set in cocktail glasses, as well as more regular market fare like jams and pickles, craft work and ceramics. Back on Cavill, large groups form around various street performers. Recently, the usual acts include a mime who makes balloon animals for children, a Latin guitarist, a few young men doing tricks on unicycles, and an Indigenous man playing the didgeridoo with a stuffed kookaburra perched on his shoulder.
Late at night, Surfers Paradise becomes the domain of young people going to bars and nightclubs. Until the early hours of the morning, intoxicated club-goers can be observed stumbling between venues, laughing with friends, making out, getting into fights (both verbal and physical), crying, vomiting in gutters, and eating kebabs and
pizza slices from all-hours take away shops, littering the streets with food scraps and wrappers as they go (see also Cantillon 2015a). Police on foot and on horseback and community services like the Chill Out Zone van (offering water, first aid and other assistance) work to regulate these disorderly rhythms. Quite frequently, families with young children can still be seen walking around Surfers at this time of night, signalling a sharp discontinuity between how the area is marketed, and how it is consumed and lived.

Figure 15: Police patrolling Orchid Avenue, Surfers Paradise at night

In my experience, late at night is also the time when more locals are present – although largely younger locals. Indeed, for many of us, this is the only time and space in which we come into regular contact with tourists (who often assume that our presence in the tourist hub’s leisure spaces means that we must be visitors as well). While adolescent and young adult locals can easily stay away from the tourist hubs during the day – when we work, go to university/school, go shopping, go to quieter beaches, enjoy the hinterland, and so on – our only options in terms of clubbing venues are in Surfers and Broadbeach. Thus, for many residents, Surfers is inextricably linked to the transgressive, sexualised, seedy, drug- and alcohol-fuelled socio-spatial practices of the nightlife scene. Despite the city's attempts to downplay this aspect of its entertainment amenity and social life, the lived experience of Surfers highlights that nightlife is still very much a core part of its spatiality.
Apart from nightlife venues, there are many other forms of leisure practices available to locals beyond the tourist hubs. Dispersed across the city are restaurants, cinemas, parks, arts and cultural festivals, surf clubs and local taverns offering entertainment options during the daytime and at night. Such spaces and activities are central to everyday local rhythms, highlighting the extent to which the Gold Coast encompasses more elements of ‘normal’ Australian life than might be initially expected or inferred through popular cultural representations. These local rhythms and experiences are the focus of Chapter 11.

Conclusion

As a tourist resort, the Gold Coast is marked by multiplicities and contradictions. It shares many of the characteristics associated with mass tourism destinations of its kind: most obviously an emphasis on sun, sand, sex and enthusiastic consumption. Consequently, it has acquired a widely held set of stereotyped associations also shared by such resorts, prompting the city to shift its tourism marketing strategies in recent years to emphasise that the city is much more than just a beach resort. However, despite the Gold Coast’s reputation for over-the-top development, tacky commercialisation and a decidedly sleazy underbelly, the city nonetheless continues to attract domestic and international visitors drawn by its natural attractions, excellent facilities and opportunities to experience relaxation, partying and/or adventure. The tensions between the city’s often conflicting representations and imaginaries are a product of the complexity, richness and heterogeneity of its material and symbolic affordances, and of how they are embodied and lived out by millions of different of visitors and locals. These effects and their consequent affects belie the over-simplifications of both official tourism narratives and stereotypes entrenched in national media and popular discourse.
Chapter 5: Thailand

Figure 16: Patong Beach, Phuket

Thailand’s appeal as a tourism destination\textsuperscript{77} lies predominantly in its natural assets – the beaches, lush jungles, limestone karsts and tropical weather – and in its culture – the Thai people, cuisine and historic sites such as temples. This particular mix of natural and cultural attractions contributes significantly to a Western popular imaginary of Thailand as being an ‘exotic’ getaway and a ‘paradise’. Thailand’s tourism industry has successfully capitalised on these real and imaginary attributes, packaging them in diverse ways to market each destination as offering a variety of tourism styles, including ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism, and, of course, sun, sand and sex mass tourism.

When I was planning my trip to Thailand, my project was still in its early stages, and I was not sure which specific resort would offer the most appropriate focus. Growing up in Australia, I had often heard people say they were ‘going to Thailand’, referring to the nation as opposed to a specific island or city – as with ‘going to Bali’.

\textsuperscript{77} Unlike the other resorts in this study, Thailand is largely marketed as a nation, its tourism promotion being managed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Phuket and Koh Phangan, for example, do not have their own official tourism websites.
‘going to the Gold Coast’, ‘going to Paris’, and so on. Thus, the Australian popular imaginary seemed to conceptualise Thailand as somewhat uniform or cohesive, despite the obvious fact that Bangkok is incredibly different from Pattaya, and that Chiang Mai differs greatly from both of these. My focus on resorts meant visiting numerous Thai beach destinations, two of which, Phuket and Koh Phangan, emerged as particularly interesting. While each is unique, these islands share certain commonalities that are representative of a particular kind of tourism that marks Southern Thailand as a resort region (see Figure 17 for a map of this region and some of its most popular destinations). Below, I discuss the tourism industry in Thailand more broadly before outlining the particularities of Phuket and Koh Phangan separately.

Figure 17: Map of popular destinations in Southern Thailand (Google 2017)

History

International tourism in Thailand began to flourish in 1960, following the establishment of the nation’s flagship carrier, Thai Airways International, and the
Tourist Organization of Thailand (now known as the Tourism Authority of Thailand) (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015b; McDowall & Wang 2009; Cohen 2008). That year, Thailand attracted 81,000 international visitors (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015b). Although the development of tourism has been largely funded by private investments and enterprises, the Thai government has played an instrumental role in supporting the growth of the industry through policy (Cohen 2008). Beginning in the late 1970s with the Fourth Economic and Social Development Plan (1977–81), tourism featured more prominently in the nation’s strategies for economic growth as a means to attract foreign currency, generate foreign exchange and provide employment (Cohen 2008; Kontogeorgopoulos 1999; Peleggi 1996). During these early years, visitors to Thailand were primarily international ‘elites’ visiting Bangkok, and backpackers travelling through less-established areas in the north and the south (Cohen 2008; Kontogeorgopoulos 2003).

The first official tourism campaign was launched in 1980, and in the same year, the country hosted two million international visitors (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015b). By the next year, the tourism industry had surpassed rice as Thailand’s biggest source of foreign exchange and its top export, marking a shift away from an agriculture-based economy (McDowall & Wang 2009; Gibbons & Fish 1988). Today, tourism continues to be the country’s largest export, its fastest growing industry and an integral element in its social and economic development strategies (McDowall & Choi 2010; Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead 2008). Tourism’s total contribution to the GDP in 2013 was 20.2 per cent, and the industry’s total contribution to employment was 15.4 per cent (World Travel & Tourism Council 2014, p. 1).

Present context

As one of the most popular destinations in the world, international arrivals (see Figure 18) and visitor expenditure are still increasing, with a record-high 29.8 million international visitors in 2015. This is a substantial number considering the country’s population is just under 68 million (The World Bank 2015). Due to a political crisis that involved a series of anti-government protests, 2014 saw a notable downturn in tourism, but this was short-lived. The country’s tourism industry has a history of recovering well after such events – even after the 2004
Indian Ocean tsunami, which devastated several of Southern Thailand’s popular beaches, tourism arrivals returned to normal levels relatively quickly in the years that followed (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Cohen 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>15,936,400</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>19,230,470</td>
<td>+20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>22,353,903</td>
<td>+16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>26,546,725</td>
<td>+18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>24,779,968</td>
<td>-6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>29,881,091</td>
<td>+20.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 18: Visitors to Thailand, 2010–2015**


Tourism in Thailand is relatively seasonal, with the greatest number of visitors coming from November to February, when the weather is warm and dry. Despite ongoing efforts to appeal to Western visitors (who are responsible for greater expenditure and longer stays), over half of Thailand’s international tourists are from nearby Asian countries – particularly China, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, India, Laos and Singapore – with the most significant Western markets being Russia, the UK, Australia78 and the USA (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand 2015).

Unlike the other destinations I visited for this project, I already had quite a detailed imaginary of Thailand before I went there. For years prior to my trip, I had heard friends and acquaintances retell their Thailand travel stories and share their standard tourist photos on social media. I had seen Leonardo DiCaprio play a backpacker in search of a pristine Thai island in *The Beach* (2000). I had been warned about dodgy taxi drivers and methanol-spiked cocktails by sensationalised current affairs programs on Australian TV. Consequently, I had developed specific expectations about what typically goes on during a holiday to Thailand: tanning on the beach, drinking from coconuts, posing for photos by the clear blue water, riding elephants, visiting Buddhist temples, venturing into one of Patong’s infamous ping pong shows, buying snacks from a street food cart, getting Thai massages.

---

78 835,517 visitors in 2014 were from Australia, which is a large proportion of the country’s 24 million residents visiting Thailand per year (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand 2015).
(potentially with a ‘happy ending’\textsuperscript{79}), using tuk tuks for transport, trying a mushroom shake at the Full Moon Party, bargaining down from an already dirt-cheap price on a designer knock-off.

Many of these activities and images feature prominently in promotional materials, with the notable exception of those with sexual connotations. For instance, the homepage of Thailand’s official tourism website features a tuk tuk, an elephant, a temple (Wat Arun in Bangkok), lanterns, and long tail boats sitting in the glistening ocean with limestone karsts in the background (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a).

![Figure 19: Official Thailand tourism website](source)

The following descriptions of Thailand from the official tourism website and the Lonely Planet and Rough Guides travel websites further reinforce the elements of the popular imaginary outlined above:

Thailand is a wondrous kingdom, featuring Buddhist temples, exotic wildlife, and spectacular islands. Along with a fascinating history and a unique culture that includes delectable Thai food and massage, Thailand features a modern capital city, and friendly people who epitomize Thailand’s ‘land of smiles’ reputation. (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a)

\textsuperscript{79} A colloquial phrase which refers to sexual acts performed on the client at the end of the massage.
Friendly and fun-loving, exotic and tropical, cultured and historic, Thailand radiates a golden hue from its glittering temples and tropical beaches to the ever-comforting Thai smile. (Lonely Planet 2015c)

... despite [its] vast influx of visitors, Thailand’s cultural integrity remains largely undamaged – a country that adroitly avoided colonization has been able to absorb Western influences while maintaining its own rich heritage. Though the high-rises and neon lights occupy the foreground of the tourist picture, the typical Thai community is still the farming village, and you need not venture far to encounter a more traditional scene of fishing communities, rubber plantations and Buddhist temples. Around forty percent of Thais earn their living from the land, based around the staple rice, which forms the foundation of the country’s unique and famously sophisticated cuisine. (Rough Guides 2015b)

A common narrative emerges out of these representations: Thailand is authentic, traditional and exotic, yet still welcoming and familiar, with an abundance of cultural and natural attractions to appeal to any visitor. For the Western tourist in particular, Thailand’s exoticism and Otherness is what sets it apart from Western beach destinations. Although the typical Thailand trip is more about vacationing than sightseeing (Cohen 2008), the impression of cultural authenticity is nonetheless a part of the destination’s appeal, even if only in a superficial sense. Cultural activities like visiting historical sites, going to Muay Thai boxing matches or eating local delicacies are standard parts of the tourist itinerary in Thailand, not just for those seeking more ‘authentic’, alternative travel experiences (as is the case with some of the other destinations in this study).

The country’s current tourism campaign, ‘Amazing Thailand’, plays on this Western desire for a cultural experience, with its slogan inviting Western visitors to ‘Discover Thainess’. As the Tourism Authority of Thailand (or TAT) (2015b) explains:

TAT launched the ‘2015 Discover Thainess’ campaign to showcase the hospitable character of the Thai people and the many cultural assets of the country that make it a unique tourist destination. The spirit of ‘Thainess’ is the blend of traditions and beliefs. Everything is interconnected. For example, Thai boxing incorporates: the Thai way of life in the wai kru dance as a way of paying respect to the trainer; the Thai fun in the enjoyment of the crowd; the Thai wisdom in the techniques and training handed down over centuries; and the Thai wellness in the many techniques used to treat wounds or bruises. The everyday life of the Thai people can boast a similar mix of culture and traditions that epitomises ‘Thainess’ and makes the country stand out as offering unique experiences to all visitors who visit Thailand.
Thai culture is commodified for touristic consumption, and the visitor is encouraged to observe, or temporarily partake in, staged versions of Thai traditions and ways of life. A key aspect of this strategy is assuring the visitors that the hosts embrace this, and that they are kind, welcoming and happy to provide good service – as can be seen in each of the quotes above, Thailand’s people are often described as friendly and hospitable (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a; Lonely Planet 2015c; McDowall & Choi 2010; McDowall & Wang 2009; Berger 2007; Gurtner 2007; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa & Tanner 2006). Thus, visitors are promised a destination that is unfamiliar but still safe (Berger 2007), and a chance to casually interject oneself into the everyday lives of the Other without fear of hostility. This is, of course, a part of a larger touristic imperative (particularly for Westerners) to feel as though they are experiencing something different to home without compromising on the comforts to which they are accustomed.

Considering these touristic desires, it is unsurprising that the Tourism Authority of Thailand foregrounds cultural tourism in official narratives. Since 2007, the TAT has shifted its tactics to target higher quality tourists – those who spend more money, stay longer and are more environmentally aware – rather than simply aiming to attract large numbers of tourists (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015c; McDowall & Wang 2009). To accomplish this, the TAT has focused on diversifying the tourism industry by promoting sustainable development and niche tourism sectors (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015c). Not only does a strong cultural tourism sector provide Thailand with a competitive edge over other mass tourism destinations internationally, but it also helps to mitigate some of the reputational consequences of conventional mass tourism development. For example, Peleggi (1996) suggests that one reason for the TAT’s focus on cultural and heritage tourism over the past few decades is that it may downplay some of the less desirable elements of Thai tourism, such as associations with illicit drugs, sex tours, prostitution, and so on. Similarly, there is also a more significant emphasis on developing ecotourism (which has long been present in Thailand) due to growing concerns surrounding the environmental ramifications of mass tourism (McDowall & Wang 2009; Kontogeorgopoulos 1999).
Phuket

Overview

The first place I visited in Thailand was its largest island, Phuket (roughly 540 square kilometres), situated in the country’s southwest in the Andaman Sea (see Figure 20). Specifically, I stayed in Patong Beach, the island’s most developed and iconic destination. While Phuket is home to a mere 378,364 residents, it attracts more than 13 million visitors per year (Department of Tourism 2016; Department of Provincial Administration 2015b). In popular imaginaries, Phuket is most readily associated with packaged holidays, crowded beaches, luxury hotels, bargain shopping, strong drinks and a seedy nightlife (Lonely Planet 2015c; Rough Guides 2015b; Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a).

![Figure 20: Map of Phuket and Patong Beach (Google 2017)](image)

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, tourism in Phuket was limited to small numbers of backpackers and domestic visitors (Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a, 2009). As with most of Southern Thailand, the island had an agriculture-based economy.

---

80 2014 figure.
81 2015 figure, including both international and domestic visitors.
mainly producing tin, rice, rubber and coconuts, with small fishing communities scattered across the coastline (Cohen 1982, 2008; Gurtner 2007; Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a). Due in large part to targeted development plans implemented by the government through the TAT, as well as the construction of Phuket’s international airport in 1979, the region’s tourism industry began to thrive from the 1980s onwards (Kontogeorgopoulos 2004b, 2009; Cohen 1982). Due to decades of relentless, unregulated and unsustainable growth, Phuket is now frequently criticised for turning into a tacky, overdeveloped mass tourism destination (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003, 2009). Nonetheless, tourism on the island continues to expand, and is becoming increasingly more expensive and upmarket.

In official tourism narratives, the TAT attempts to detract from the negative aspects of Phuket’s image. Thailand’s official tourism website foregrounds Phuket’s cultural heritage, providing a brief history of the island from the 16th century onwards to highlight that there is more to Phuket than mass tourism (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a). It concludes:

... The island’s long history has shaped the Phuket of the present with its diverse ethnic groups, culture, architectural influence, and fine cuisine. These attributes have made Phuket a complete tourist destination that offers a lot more beyond its natural heritage of sea, sand, forest, and world-renowned diving sites. Sino-Portuguese architecture casts its spell delighting travellers to the city, while Phuket style of hospitality has never failed to impress visitors from all walks of life. (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a)

Of course, the website still advertises some of the typical activities and attractions one would expect, including beaches, snorkeling, sailing, cruises and shopping. Additionally, however, the TAT aims to diversify Phuket’s tourism industry by promoting adventure and ecotourism activities such as cave explorations, mountain biking, cycling, rock climbing, elephant and horse riding, bird watching, meditation, spas, Thai boxing, golfing and nature tours (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a). However, as Kontogeorgopoulos (2009) argues, even though it may appear that alternative, sustainable forms of tourism are emerging, these activities are ultimately tailored to appeal to mass tourists – they are short-term, more convenient experiences which can be undertaken in addition to more conventional activities. This is what he calls soft ecotourism or mass ecotourism (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009).
Initial impressions

On my first day in Phuket, I explored Patong Beach to observe and take photos. This, of course, was also my first day in a foreign country, so I was grappling with feelings of exhaustion, disorientation and homesickness. The following excerpt from my field journal details my first impressions of the area and its rhythms:

Stepping out of my hotel, the first thing I notice about Patong is that it's hot, humid and hazy. I walk along the main road (Thanon Ratuthit Songroipi Road) adjacent to my hotel, which runs parallel to the beach, one block away. The smell is pretty pungent, what I can only assume is a mixture of the open drains, garbage accumulating on the sidewalks, and the smoke rising from the street food carts. I guess I'm surprised by this because, as cliché as this sounds, it's not the sort of thing that tourism brochures or travel photos on Facebook prepare you for. Everything seems different to what I expected – more layered. And it's not all unpleasant. I'm quite taken by the mountainous backdrop, the older rundown buildings (something I don't get to see much of at home), and the imposing bundles of power lines above.

Figure 21: Buildings in Patong
Every few metres, someone (usually a man) to the side of the pathway calls to me: ‘taxi?’, ‘good morning’, ‘hello’, etc. There are woman sitting outside of massage parlours with their price lists, but they don’t talk to me. Along the way I see several currency exchange services and tourist booths advertising tours, which signals the degree to which this place caters to visitors. In between these kinds of sights, however, I also see shrines to the king – an expression of local culture.

I can tell when I get to Bangla Road because there’s a huge ‘Patong Beach’ sign hanging above the road, much like the Surfers Paradise signs on
either end of Cavill Avenue. I guess this indicates that the place is iconic enough to warrant a novelty sign ... Running along either side of the road are souvenir shops, bars (filled with people even in the daytime), and all the Western staples – McDonald’s, Starbucks and KFC.

![Figure 24: Patong Beach sign over Bangla Road](image)

When I get to the end of Bangla Road where it meets the beach, I can hardly see any ocean. My view is obscured by hundreds of uniform, brightly coloured beach umbrellas and sun beds, packed in tightly, blocking access to the beach. My plan was to go right down to the water, but I can’t find a spot to squeeze through. I feel like I’m not even ‘allowed’ to go on the beach without paying for a sunbed, since that’s what everyone else seems to be doing.

![Figure 25: Umbrellas on Patong Beach](image)
I give up and return to the road running parallel to the beach (Thaweewong Road). One side of the footpath, at the edge of the sand, is lined with stalls offering massages, manicures and pedicures, body scrubs, henna, cocktails, fruit and fruit juices, and Western snacks like fries, sandwiches and hot dogs. The opposite side of the footpath, at the edge of the road, is lined with parked motorbikes and men offering taxi and tuk tuk rides. Across the road are stores filled with cheap handbags, shoes, shirts, sunglasses and other designer knock offs – this must be what my friends are referring to when they say Thailand has ‘amazing’ shopping, but it’s not really what I’m into. (Field journal, 7 December 2013)

![Figure 26: Food and drink stall near the beach in Patong](image)

At night, Bangla Road was closed to traffic and filled with people. I found it strikingly similar to Surfers Paradise’s Cavill Avenue in several ways. Although I was expecting groups of young, drunk people, there were many couples and families present who, like me, were there to observe the spectacle of it all, not necessarily to go to the bars or shops. We strolled up and down Bangla Road, occasionally stopping to watch and take photos of buskers, vendors demonstrating cheap light-up toys, Thai women dancing provocatively (and unenthusiastically) in the infamous go-go bars, and strippers who could be seen up above, dancing in the second-floor windows of adult entertainment establishments. Scattered through the crowd were scantily-clad white women holding signs promoting a ‘Russian strip show’ (see Figure 28), as well as Thai people advertising ping pong shows. Bangla Road’s adjoining alleyways were lined with bars and clubs, their promoters shouting offers.
for cheap drinks and no cover charge, and their intoxicated patrons sexually harassing women walking by – ‘How much?’ ‘puta!’, ‘Can I come with you? I want you’ and so on. Despite what the characteristics of many of the tourists might indicate, much like Surfers Paradise, Patong's main drag is clearly a sexualised space.

Figure 27: Tourists taking photos outside of a bar on Bangla Road

Figure 28: Women advertising strip shows on Bangla Road
Koh Phangan

Overview

The last place I visited in Thailand was Koh Phangan, a small island (125 square kilometres) located in the Gulf of Thailand in the country’s southeast (see Figure 29). In international tourism narratives, Koh Phangan has had a long association with marginality, hedonism and illicit drugs, making it a particularly popular destination for young Western tourists (Malam 2008). Koh Phangan is also known for its coral reefs, marine life and beaches, many of which are still relatively undeveloped (Malam 2008). With a population of about 7,258\(^{82}\) and 903,255\(^{83}\) visitors per year, residents are often far outnumbered by tourists (Department of Tourism 2016; Department of Provincial Administration 2015a).

Figure 29: Map of Koh Phangan and Haad Rin (Google 2017)

Due to Koh Phangan’s close proximity to the larger, more developed island of Koh Samui, during the early-to-mid 1980s it attracted day-trippers seeking quieter, more relaxed experiences (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a; Westerhausen 2002). For these first visitors, predominantly alternative travellers and backpackers, the appeal of Koh Phangan was that it was ‘off the beaten path’ – it was

---

\(^{82}\) 2014 figure.

\(^{83}\) 2015 figure, includes both international visitors and domestic visitors.
not easily accessible, and thus not yet a part of the mass tourist circuit (Malam 2008). This informed a narrative of the island as being an ‘untouched paradise’, offering the potential for travellers who were seeking ‘authentic’ cultural experiences to have an opportunity to interact with ‘real’ Thai people (Malam 2008). Adding to the island’s appeal was the fact that marijuana was cheap and widely available, and the lack of a police presence meant visitors could do drugs freely (Malam 2008; Westerhausen 2002).

Although Thong Sala was (and still is) the main town for residents on the island, tourism development was centred on the peninsular beach of Haad Rin. Local landholders capitalised on Haad Rin’s growing popularity, constructing more bungalow resorts throughout the 1980s to cater to the increasing numbers of visitors (Malam 2004; Westerhausen 2002). The major catalyst for tourism development from this point was the inception of the Full Moon Parties. The first Full Moon Party was held in 1988, a private beach party hosted by a local with around 50 attendees (Malam 2004, 2008). Party-goers have inundated the island ever since, and today Full Moon Parties host up to 30,000 people during peak times (Collins 2015; Gray 2014; Malam 2004). Two key factors played a significant role in the speed and intensity at which the Full Moon Parties gained momentum: the narratives and imaginaries associated with Koh Phangan as an idyllic, marginal site for escapism, hedonism, transgression and freedom of expression, and the emergence of rave and party drug cultures in the late 1980s (Malam 2008). Further, since the mid-1990s, the news media has played a major role in shaping, reinforcing and circulating representations of Koh Phangan as an out-of-control party space (Malam 2008). In particular, reports have focused on illicit drug use, risky behaviours, accidental deaths and a range of other criminal and/or transgressive occurences.

---

84 This is an extremely common narrative, particularly in relation to beach tourism in ‘exotic’ locations, and is frequently drawn on and perpetuated in tourism and marketing material. Of course, it is highly problematic as it ignores the fact that local people have occupied these sites for a long time. ‘Untouched’, then, means not yet significantly altered by Western development.

85 These notions of authenticity and the ‘real’ are analysed further in Chapter 10.

86 Full Moon Parties are also discussed in Chapter 9.

87 This is expanded on further in Chapter 9.
In the span of a couple of decades, Koh Phangan has evolved from a ‘marginal paradise’ (Malam 2008, p. 336) for drifters and backpackers seeking alternative experiences, to a mainstream, mass tourism destination regularly inundated by hordes of young partiers. In addition to the monthly Full Moon Parties, there are now Black Moon Parties (once per month), Half Moon Parties (twice per month) and a variety of other events to provide visitors with the Full Moon experience at any time. There are a large number of services and facilities catering to the contemporary mass tourist, including bars, restaurants, shops, medical clinics and tour operators, and accommodation ranging from affordable hostels at Haad Rin to more luxurious, upmarket resorts on the island’s quieter beaches.

Despite the high volume of tourists that Koh Phangan receives each year, it has not yet reached the same stage of (over)development as resorts like Phuket. Roughly 70 per cent of the island consists of mountainous tropical jungles, much of the interior has very limited road access, and small fishing and farming communities continue to exist near the quieter beaches (Malam 2008; Westerhausen 2002). The island is still not as easily accessible as many other similar destinations, as it can only be reached via ferry or speedboat, although a small airport has been slowly under construction for several years. Thus, the island still retains much of the ‘exotic’ charm that was at the core of its allure in the first place, and that continues to appeal so strongly to Westerners. The TAT capitalises on this through tourism promotion, suggesting that beyond Haad Rin and the wild Full Moon Parties, Koh Phangan can nonetheless be a great place for relaxation (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2015a). The official website advertises yoga and meditation retreats, wellness programs, ‘moderately developed’ beaches and accommodation to suit anyone from backpackers to families to honeymooners.

Initial impressions

I planned my trip to Thailand so that my final stop – Koh Phangan – would coincide with the Full Moon Party on 17 December 2013. The ferry from Koh Samui to Koh Phangan gave me an indication of the kinds of people who would be attending – it was filled with dishevelled (mostly white) young people with accents from around the world, some of whom were already smoking pot and drinking beer. When I arrived at the pier in Haad Rin, the narrow streets were backed up with taxis and hotel transfers awaiting our ferry’s arrival. It seemed like a small, modest village
with far too many people crammed into it. However, the 10-minute car ride to my hotel – a winding, rolling scenic drive through the jungle – confirmed that the congestion was largely restricted to Haad Rin. Despite feeling more secluded, the hotel nonetheless had the same atmosphere as the ferry and the town, with loud, intoxicated groups of young people walking the grounds and hanging out by the pool.

Knowing that Haad Rin would be entirely different during the Full Moon Party, I set out to visit it before the festivities began. The following is an excerpt from my field journal outlining some of my observations of Haad Rin during the daytime:

Haad Rin is very quiet at this time (12.30 pm) – people must be relaxing at their hotels, recovering from last night or preparing for the night ahead. I’m surprised that this area looks quite run-down, with dirty, dusty roads and old little buildings. I had assumed it would be more built up or modern because so many tourists come here. I don’t mean that in a disparaging way – I think it looks quite beautiful. If I wasn’t so used to problematising the word, I’d probably even call it ‘authentic’.

![Figure 30: Haad Rin during the daytime](image)

Everything here appears to be devoted to the Full Moon Parties – walking around for a few minutes, I’ve seen empty booze stands, toilet signs (with a 20 baht entry fee), the ‘Tourist Police’ office, and Full Moon Party signage indicating rules and safety tips. There’s also the usual touristy shops selling brightly coloured shirts, many of which are Full Moon Party-themed. Tourists in the shops are buying them for tonight, so I do the same.
I also see medical clinics (some designated as ‘Western’), restaurants (like Planet Hollyfood – a play on the Planet Hollywood chain), laundromats, convenience stores, pharmacies, hostels, ATMs – all the things tourists need.

On the beach itself, where the parties are held, there are no sunbeds and umbrellas like you’d see in Patong, but there are a few people lying on the sand. The beach is filthy, full of garbage like straws, drink cups, lost shoes and broken bottles constantly shifting with the rhythmic swash of the ocean. Tables, chairs and alcohol stands are piled up at the edge of the beach, ready to be set up for tonight. (Field journal, 17 December 2013)
Later that night, Haad Rin was completely transformed by the disorderly, energetic night-time rhythms of the Full Moon Party. Much like a music festival, the streets were lined with stalls selling pizza, hot dogs and burgers, alcoholic bucket drinks and themed merchandise. On the beach, a mass of intoxicated young people danced under the full moon to electronic music being blasted by nearby bars. The party continued well into the early hours of the morning, after which revellers slowly began to leave, piling into tuk tuks with strangers to head back to their hotels.
Figure 35: Stands selling alcoholic bucket drinks at the Full Moon Party

Figure 36: Buckets on sale at the Full Moon Party

Conclusion

Phuket, Koh Phangan and the Gold Coast clearly share some key similarities. They are all beach destinations associated with sexualised, drug- and alcohol-fuelled adult fun, whether in nightclubs, strip clubs, bars or at parties. In Phuket and on the Gold Coast, this contrasts strongly with the simultaneous presence of families. On Koh Phangan, on the other hand, tourism is almost entirely geared towards young
adult party-goers. In each case, official tourism discourses have attempted to downplay the transgressive, hedonistic aspects in favour of highlighting the diverse range of activities that can be enjoyed beyond the beach and nightlife districts. In the Southern Thailand destinations, these alternatives often work to capitalise on Western popular imaginaries, which characterise the region as an exotic, escapist paradise, and as culturally rich and unique. Such imaginaries set Koh Phangan and Phuket apart from resorts like the Gold Coast.

Phuket and Koh Phangan have some noticeable differences as well. Despite Phuket’s established reputation for being overdeveloped, it appears that Koh Phangan’s infrastructure is more obviously struggling with its large influx of visitors, as indicated by major problems with traffic and rubbish. Even with official tourism marketing promoting more relaxed, sustainable forms of tourism on different parts of the island, limited access by ferry (with only two piers – Thong Sala and Haad Rin) and no access by air means that embarking on such travel is relatively difficult. These issues, coupled with the dominance of popular imaginaries relating to Full Moon Parties (which largely override official tourism discourses), could lead Koh Phangan into periods of stagnation and/or decline. Destinations like Phuket and the Gold Coast, however, are already actively implementing strategies to ensure that future growth is sustainable, particularly through the promotion of alternative tourism experiences targeted at various niche market segments.
Chapter 6: Cancún

Figure 37: The view from my hotel room in Cancún

Arriving in Cancún in March 2014, it was immediately clear to me as to why it is one of the world’s most iconic destinations. The vivid turquoise waters and white sand surrounding Cancún are a true spectacle. Located in the state of Quintana Roo in south-east Mexico, the city is situated on the side of the Yucatán Peninsula which borders the Caribbean Sea (see Figure 38). Cancún’s development is based around its natural beauty, with hotels and mansions positioned along the 25 kilometre beachfront strip, the Hotel Zone, or Zona Hotelera (see Figure 39). Sitting behind this, bordering the Nichupté Lagoon, are restaurants, shopping complexes, nightclubs and cheaper accommodation. Connected to the Hotel Zone by a single main road running along a narrow isthmus, and set back away from the beach, is downtown Cancún, predominantly occupied by local businesses and services, shops, hospitals, schools and housing for the city’s 750,000 residents (Consejo Nacional de Población 2014).
Figure 38: Map of Mexico (Google 2017)

Figure 39: Map of Cancún (Google 2017)
In the popular imaginary, Cancún is to North America what Thailand’s beach resorts are to Australia – perceived as an exotic, pristine tropical paradise (Castellanos 2010a; Pi-Sunyer et al. 2001) combining beautiful beaches with cultural experiences and heritage attractions. Simultaneously, however, it is also associated with the kinds of behaviours and consumption practices common among American mass tourists and young party tourists. Before going to Cancún, my own place-image of it was based almost entirely on its depiction in popular culture as a Spring Break destination, such as in the documentary *The Real Cancun* (2003), the reality television series *The Real World: Cancun* (2009), and season three of the UK reality television show *Geordie Shore* (2011–present). In addition to that, prior to leaving I had a number of people tell me to ‘watch out for the drug cartels’, signifying that the resort is also perceived as having a dark side.

**History**

In the 1960s, the Mexican federal government determined that tourism would be one of the key strategies to remedy their growing economic problems and increasing debt (Castellanos 2010a; Wilson 2008; Murray 2007; Torres & Momsen 2006; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999; Re Cruz 1996). They initiated a search for the ideal location to develop a master-planned resort, flying over 35 potentially suitable sites before choosing Cancún (Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo 2015; Torres & Momsen 2006; Evans 2005; Mugerauer 2004; Torres 2002; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). It had all the desirable elements of a sun, sand and sea tourist destination – a warm climate, attractive beaches, coral reefs, and a prime position that allowed developers to capitalise on already well-established imaginaries and myths surrounding Caribbean tourism (Brown 2013; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Momsen 2005). Further, it was easily accessible for North Americans as well as close to several Maya archaeological sites that would appeal to cultural tourists from many countries (Castellanos 2010a, 2010b; Torres & Momsen 2006; Momsen 2005; Mugerauer 2004).

Cancún also had the perceived benefit of being sparsely populated and largely untouched by modern development (Castellanos 2010b; Clancy 2001). At the time,
Cancún was an isolated barrier island with only several hundred inhabitants occupying the surrounding areas, mostly indigenous Maya people undertaking subsistence agriculture (Torres & Momsen 2006; Mugerauer 2004; Clancy 2001). The government’s rationale for developing Cancún suggested that it would stimulate the regional economy, provide employment opportunities (in the form of cheap labour in construction and hospitality roles) for the surrounding communities, modernise the area by improving infrastructure, and encourage migration to the peripheral regions of Mexico (Castellanos 2010a, 2010b; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Torres & Momsen 2006; Mugerauer 2004).

Beginning in the early 1970s, the Bank of Mexico oversaw the construction of Cancún’s infrastructure and tourist facilities (including hotels), financed predominantly by federal funds and loans from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank (Castellanos 2010a; Wilson 2008; Murray 2007; Re Cruz 1996, 2003; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). A downtown area was constructed specifically to support the Hotel Zone, cater to the influx of new workers, and intentionally segregate residents and tourists (Murray 2007; Torres & Momsen 2006; Clancy 2001). The first hotels in Cancún opened in 1974 (Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo 2015; Castellanos 2010a; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Clancy 2001; Re Cruz 1996). The following year 100,000 tourists visited (Evans 2005). Although originally intended to be an upmarket resort with five-star hotels appealing to wealthy visitors, in the 1980s Cancún started to cater more to the packaged mass tourism market (Castellanos 2010a; Torres & Momsen 2006; Torres 2002). Not only did this see an increase in tourist numbers, but in the resident population as well, which expanded from several hundred people in the mid-1970s to several hundred thousand by the 1990s. Since then, the destination has continued to experience steady growth in terms of tourist facilities and sites, infrastructure, tourist arrivals (see Figure 40) and resident population (see Figure 41). Of course, the resort has also experienced temporary lulls over the years, particularly after Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 and Hurricane Wilma in 2005, both of which caused substantial

---

88 Accounts of the exact population vary. Castellanos (2010a) states that in 1969 there were 120 inhabitants (117 in Puerto Juárez and three on the island of Kan Kún). Córdoba Azcárate (2011) states that in 1974 there were 100 inhabitants. Momsen (2005) and Torres & Momsen (2006) state that in the 1960s there were 600 inhabitants.
environmental and structural damage; and after the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001, which caused a short-term decrease in US visitors (Agarwal & Shaw 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3,015,690</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3,115,177</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3,642,449</td>
<td>+16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>4,093,942</td>
<td>+12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,387,798</td>
<td>+7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4,622,286</td>
<td>+6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 40: Visitors to Cancún, 2010–2014**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>167,730</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>297,183</td>
<td>+77.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>397,191</td>
<td>+33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>526,701</td>
<td>+32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>628,306</td>
<td>+19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>748,837</td>
<td>+18.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 41: Population in Cancún, 1990–2015**

Sources: United Nations Statistics Division (2015); Brinkhoff (2014) (adapted from Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática, México census data); Consejo Nacional de Población (2014)

**Present context**

Today, Cancún is the biggest resort in Mexico, and one of the most famous tourism destinations in the world (Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Evans 2005; Torres 2002). Development has expanded far beyond Cancún to other areas in the Yucatán, such as the collection of beaches and sites that comprise the ‘Riviera Maya’ district to its south (Brown 2013). Further, in Cancún the tourist presence has begun to extend beyond the Hotel Zone and into downtown. Despite being planned as an exclusive resort, Cancún is now strongly established as a site for mass tourism, packaged holidays, middle-class guests and family-oriented activities. Shopping complexes, restaurants, outdoor activities and affordable accommodation like hostels continue to be developed around the lagoon and downtown to meet the needs of these visitors (Torres & Momsen 2006; Mugerauer 2004).
Cancún caters especially heavily to American tourists, who have been the resort’s most significant market for decades – in 2010, of Cancún’s roughly 3 million visitors, 2.1 million were foreign hotel guests, with 78.9 per cent of them coming from the United States (Caribbean Tourism Organization 2015).\(^8^9\) In addition to families, Cancún appeals to young American party tourists, having become an iconic destination for bachelor/bachelorette parties, birthdays and Spring Break, forms of travel that are strongly associated with leisurely beach activities by day and bar-hopping and clubbing by night. The Spring Break market in particular is a point of contention among businesses, residents and other tourists alike – Spring Breakers may fill hotel rooms and boost spending, but they are also notorious for being noisy, rowdy and disrespectful of property and attractions (Torres & Momsen 2006).\(^9^0\)

To mitigate the perceived negative effects associated with this segment of the mass tourism market, the official tourism discourses of Cancún have shifted over recent years. Torres and Momsen (2006) observe that ‘Cancún has been radically transformed over the past fifteen years from a strictly “sun and sand” tourism bubble into a postindustrial, urban tourism space offering a “kaleidoscope” of activities’ (p. 60). The current official tourism narratives of Cancún emphasise the diversity of its attractions, highlighting alternative tourism experiences while also promoting the variety which exists within mainstream tourism practices. Take, for example, the following excerpts from the official tourism websites for Cancún and Mexico:

As Mexico’s No. 1 tourist destination, Cancun is known all over the world for its spectacular beaches, unique beauty, breathtaking turquoise waters, and colorful culture ... Cancun is a multifaceted destination that combines the very best in luxury, nature, Mayan culture, glamour and world-class amenities with seductive adventure offerings and an up-and-coming gastronomy scene. (Cancún Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015)

You might think you know Cancun – 14 miles of pristine white beaches shaped like a number ‘7’ crystalline waters and sultry nights sipping on the perfect margarita, right? Well, you’re both right and wrong. If this is your idea of what Cancun is all about, read on. There’s so much more ... Cancun delivers to travelers the best of many worlds: the Caribbean and Mexico; modern and ancient; action packed and laid back. Cancun is

\(^8^9\) The remainder of foreign visitors being: 6 per cent Canadian, 6.7 per cent European, 5.6 per cent South American, and 3 per cent from the rest of the world (Caribbean Tourism Organization 2015).

\(^9^0\) There are clear parallels between events like Spring Break and Schoolies on the Gold Coast. This is discussed further in Chapter 9.
unequaled in its ability to offer cultural treasures, natural beauty, infinite activities and North American-style conveniences. (Mexico Tourism Board 2012)

These official narratives aim to position the resort as having something for everyone, appealing to a range of burgeoning niche tourism interests. At the same time, however, they play on already well-entrenched place-images and myths, actively reinforcing existing popular imaginaries and assuring Western tourists that the destination provides all the sights and comforts they have come to expect.

The official Cancún visitors’ website promotes typical mainstream attractions and activities such as snorkelling, scuba diving, fishing, golfing, shopping, day trips to surrounding islands (Isla Mujeres, Holbox and Contoy), day spas, restaurants, cruises and nightclubs (Cancún Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015). Some of the most frequently promoted cultural attractions are the numerous Maya archaeological sites present in the Yucatán, including Chichén Itzá, Tulum, Cobá and Ek’ Balam, which provide a sense of exoticism and ‘authenticity’ to the tourism
imaginary. Two nearby archaeological sites – Xcaret\textsuperscript{91} and Xel-Há\textsuperscript{92} – have also been integrated into eco-parks (theme parks with an ecotourism slant). This is part of a wider trend to tap into the ecotourism market (Agarwal & Shaw 2007), as can be seen with promotion of sustainable or ‘green’ hotels and attractions such as cenotes, jungle tours and an underwater museum. Much like what is occurring in Phuket, this often manifests as soft ecotourism (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009). That is, the eco-parks incorporate elements of nature and ecotourism into a mass tourism product, and in doing so, have threatened the integrity and sustainability of the Maya ruins and surrounding environment (Agarwal & Shaw 2007).

**Initial impressions**

I visited Cancún during the spring of 2014, when the weather was warm, sunny and humid, much like home. After being in chilly San Francisco for the previous week, I was disappointed to feel that all-too-familiar thick, sticky air when I stepped out of the Cancún airport. My fellow travellers, however, seemed to love it. I spoke to several Americans escaping the 2014 North American ‘polar vortex’ cold wave who were overjoyed to be able to wear shorts and lie out by the pool. Since it was the beginning of the Spring Break period, I also encountered numerous young university students taking pleasure in the temporary relief from studying, snow and sub-zero temperatures. Although somewhat obvious, it is worth noting that for tourists the warm climates of these resorts provide a major point of difference from their own localities. Such weather is something I take for granted, since I experience it all year round. It is a part of my everyday life, and always has been. For many tourists, such weather is only made available through travel, and is a significant marker of what makes resort tourism particularly attractive.

\textsuperscript{91} Xcaret offers activities such as animal encounters (swimming with dolphins, sharks or stingrays), scuba diving, snorkelling, speed boat rides, participation in ‘ancient’ rituals, river tours and shopping. It also offers attractions including a rotating tower (for views of the site), a cemetery, chapels, caves, a spa, Maya ruins, a Maya village and a nightly show (Experiencias Xcaret Parque 2015a).

\textsuperscript{92} Xel-Há offers activities such as snorkelling, scuba diving, animal encounters (with dolphins, manatees or stingrays), river tours, zip lining, jungle walks, bike rides, kite flying, and reenactments of ‘traditional’ Maya rituals. Its attractions include caves, cliffs, cenotes, bays, inlets, gardens, historical architecture, Maya ruins and a spa (Experiencias Xcaret Parque 2015b).
I stayed at a four-star, all-inclusive hotel in the heart of the Hotel Zone, right near the only cluster of nightclubs (see Figure 43). I was taken aback by how extravagant and opulent my accommodation was: I couldn’t believe that I could stay in a hotel of that quality for the price I paid, with all food and drinks included. Much like in Thailand (which was even cheaper, but not all-inclusive), it made me wonder what kind of wages the staff must be paid. The hotel had numerous restaurants and bars, two pools, a private beach, a day spa, a hot tub, a gym, a sauna, a souvenir shop, a nightclub in the adjoining hotel, 24-hour room service, a free mini bar, and a variety of activities and water sports available. There were guests of all ages, although very few children and infants. The guests were mostly travelling as couples or bigger groups on vacation together (for birthdays, bachelor parties, family reunions, and so on).

Figure 43: Map of the Hotel Zone (Google 2017)
Figure 44: Hotel lobby in Cancún

Figure 45: Hotel pool in Cancún

During the day, guests would feast at the buffet, order cocktails by the beach, work on their tans (and sunburns), or join in on the games run by the poolside DJ. The following excerpt from my field journal illustrates a typical scene:

I’m lying on a sunbed on the short, crowded stretch of beach that belongs to my hotel. I’m recovering from a throat infection and a trip to the
hospital in downtown yesterday, so this seems an appropriately relaxed method for doing observational work. There’s no point staying in bed here – the poolside DJ blasts dance music all day and evening, and closing my room’s windows hardly works to block it out. I guess that’s just a part of the atmosphere here – always a party.

I’m surrounded by young adults, older couples and a few young families in their bathing suits, ordering drink after drink and occasionally dipping into the ocean to cool off. The bright blue water ahead of me is occupied by some swimmers and a few yachts, speedboats, cruise ships, and the Captain Hook party boat (whose accompanying loud music and MC-ing are another regular feature in the soundscape) in the distance. I’m watching a middle-aged couple – the woman in a thong bikini, the man in a speedo – making out and groping at the water’s edge.

I’m reminded of Thailand and its beach vendors when a Mexican man walks past with a Coca-Cola branded box full of food on his head. Next, another Mexican man trying to sell silver chains to us, and shortly after, another selling sarongs and beach totes. (Field journal, 6 March 2014)
Unlike the other places I visited, my observations in Cancún were very much focused on my hotel. It seemed to me that a trip to Cancún was usually less about exploring the place, and more about relaxing at the hotel and making use of the variety of amenities already on offer. The all-inclusive concept implies that guests will have everything they need available and pre-paid for at their accommodation, with no unexpected extra expenses or inconveniences. The hotels become their own little worlds, with (almost) every service, comfort and experience a guest may desire during their stay. Many visitors to Cancún come for the hotel, the picturesque views and the warm weather. Unfortunately, this means that they are less likely to spend money in surrounding local businesses.

Had I been in Cancún purely for leisure rather than research, I probably would not have ventured outside of my hotel in the daytime (except, perhaps, for a day tour to see Maya ruins). The layout of the Hotel Zone is not conducive to the kind of exploring one would attempt in, for example, a city like New York or Paris, or even Miami, where points of interests like shops, bars, cafes and other attractions are densely packed into a small area and are easy to stumble upon. The Hotel Zone is dispersed across a long distance, making it not at all walkable, and fairly narrow, featuring little more than a mundane main road and a series of hotel entrances and the odd plaza or restaurant by the lagoon.

To visit places other than your hotel, you have to have a specific intention to do so, and make the effort to organise travelling there, whether by public bus, taxi or private transfer. As a result, I mainly stuck to walking around the portion of Boulevard Kukulkán in direct proximity to my hotel (around the 9.5 kilometre mark, as is indicated by pyramid-shaped markers at regular intervals along the side of the road [see Figure 48]). During the day, this area was fairly empty, with only a few tourists hanging around outside the Forum by the Sea shopping mall, and a few others in local bars and the Hooters restaurant.

---

93 This is, however, of interest to some tourists and is frequently promoted by official tourism bodies, as will be discussed more in Chapter 10.
94 As such, there is a significantly smaller tourist presence in the local areas like downtown.
Figure 48: Pyramid-shaped marker along the road in the Hotel Zone, Cancún

Figure 49: Daytime in the Hotel Zone, Cancún
Late at night and into the early hours of the morning, the rhythms of this area changed dramatically. It became packed with tourists – adults of all ages – drinking and dancing at bars and clubs, or watching the spectacle from the streets. On a couple of nights I participated as a partier, meeting other tourists through a club crawl I booked.
On another couple of nights, I took to the streets sober just to observe, which was not an unusual activity for visitors. Just as in Thailand, several bars and clubs were not enclosed venues (such as La Vaquita, Congo Bar and Mandala), inviting the gaze of passers-by. Crowds of people stood outside or across the street, watching the hired female dancers and patrons dancing sexually on podiums.

![Image of bars in the Hotel Zone, Cancún](image)

**Figure 52: People-watching outside of bars in the Hotel Zone, Cancún**

I ventured into downtown Cancún a few times to see how the 'local' area compared to the tourist-dominated Hotel Zone. The first time I went to downtown was my visit to the emergency room at a private hospital, Hospiten Cancún, where I was required to go by my insurance provider to receive treatment for a throat infection. Although it was quiet, the few other patients there at the time were all tourists. The doctor spoke English, but none of the nurses did, nor did the women at the pharmacy. This was markedly different from my interactions in the Hotel Zone, where I could communicate easily with most local workers.

The second time I visited downtown, I travelled by public bus (which was occupied mainly by hotel workers and a few young tourists in swimsuits) and walked around Avenida Tulum and Avenida Bonampak. I noticed that the main roads here were named after popular tourism attractions, with avenues called Chichén Itzá, Bonampak, Tulum, Uxmal, Xel-Há and Xcaret, all Maya archaeological sites. This highlighted not only how new the city is, but how it was purpose-built to be devoted to tourism. While there were numerous shops, restaurants and a few
cheaper hotels around this area, it had much more of a local feel. People on the streets were predominantly Mexican, and I felt quite out of place – not only because I was a white tourist, but because I was taking photos of seemingly unremarkable sights. The roads and buildings appeared run-down, and it was clear that less attention had been paid to the upkeep of these areas than the Hotel Zone. However, on the bus drive back to the Hotel Zone, I was also surprised to see several derelict hotels, shops and restaurants – I had expected these sites to be redeveloped, or at least demolished, to keep the area looking upmarket (although this is hardly an issue if tourists rarely leave their hotels).

Figure 53: Shopfronts in downtown Cancún

Figure 54: A street in downtown Cancún
Conclusion

Cancún shares commonalities with the Gold Coast, Phuket and Koh Phangan in that it is a sun, sand and sex destination that is trying to diversify its tourism offerings and markets. In particular, like the Southern Thailand resorts, Cancún is capitalising on its image as an exotic paradise by promoting cultural tourism and ecotourism experiences. Cancún is different to the other destinations discussed in this thesis, however, in that it is a master-planned, purpose-built resort. The careful planning of the city included the dissemination of a rationale emphasising the benefits of its development for the local people, the regional economy and the nation. While Cancún provides a good example of successful planning (especially compared to a resort like Koh Phangan), the ongoing management of the development has not necessarily been as effective. This is discussed in Chapter 11 in relation to downtown and the experiences of locals, but it is also evident in the Hotel Zone. I have mentioned, for example, the abandoned, deteriorating buildings present in the tourist hub. This speaks to the all-inclusive, hotel-centric nature of a typical Cancún holiday (which limits the opportunities for tourists to encounter anything unsightly), but it also highlights the extent to which I am accustomed to such sites being swiftly knocked down and rebuilt as a part of my own locality’s tourism management strategy: to constantly renew itself.

---

95 This is unsurprising given that the city has progressed relatively rapidly through the various phases of tourism development (as outlined by Butler [1980, 2006] and Prideaux [2004]) since it was built to be an international resort from the outset.
Chapter 7: Miami

For almost a century, Miami has been one of the world’s most famous resort destinations. In popular imaginaries, the city is most commonly associated with year-round warm weather, sandy beaches, Art Deco architecture, Latin culture, exclusive nightclubs, flashy cars, beautiful people and illicit activities. My own expectations of Miami were largely shaped by representations of it in film and television, as well as the frequent comparisons made between it and the Gold Coast by tourism bodies, club promoters, news media and scholars alike. Of all the resorts included in this study, Miami is the most mature destination, having reinvented itself multiple times over the last century (Zukin 1991) amid intermittent periods of decline.

Miami is located on the southeast tip of Florida, overlooking Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean (see Figure 56). Due to its position geographically, Miami was once a peripheral place, relatively isolated from the rest of the mainland United States. Today, the Miami region is one of the largest and most developed urban areas in the country. It is a central node connecting the north and south of the Americas, ‘routing
flows of people, capital, goods, and all things imaginable back and forth between myriad origins and destinations’ (Nijman 2011, p. 202).

Figure 56: Map of the mainland USA (Google 2017)

Figure 57: Map of Greater Miami (Google 2017)
Due to its sprawling development, Miami is decentralised and lacks defined borders. ‘Miami’ technically refers to the CBD (Downtown Miami) and surrounding areas which comprise the City of Miami, but ‘Miami’ is used colloquially to encompass a number of other cities and neighbourhoods in the county, such as Miami Beach, Coral Gables and Kendall. As can be seen in Figure 57, this region (known officially as Miami-Dade County or Greater Miami, and sometimes unofficially as ‘the Gold Coast’ [Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Dombrink & Thompson 1990]) extends from Aventura in the north to southwards of Homestead. The county has a resident population of 2,662,874, of which only 91,732 live in the tourist hub of Miami Beach (United States Census Bureau 2015b).96

Figure 58: Map of Downtown Miami and Miami Beach (Google 2017)

History

Unlike Thailand and Cancún, Miami’s development as a resort was largely due to the initiatives of certain pioneers rather than the government. Although Southern Florida had been inhabited by Native Americans for many years, the area was largely

96 2014 figures.
untouched by modern Western development until the late 1800s (Lavender 2002). At this time, the area was difficult to access and somewhat uninviting – Miami Beach, for example, was still a sandbar disconnected from the mainland, made up of mangrove swamps and occupied by rattlesnakes, crocodiles, rats, wildcats and mosquitoes (Nijman 2011; Lavender 2002; Bush 1999). One of Downtown Miami’s first pioneers was Julia Tuttle, a woman from Cleveland who moved to the area in 1891 after inheriting large expanses of land north of the Miami River (Revels 2011; Nijman 2011; Buchanan 1978). As the story goes, Tuttle was eager to develop the area into a resort town (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011; George 1981). Offering some of her land in exchange, Tuttle managed to convince multimillionaire business tycoon Henry M Flagler to extend his railway southwards from West Palm Beach to Downtown Miami (Revels 2011; Nijman 2011; Alonso 2007; George 1981). 97

Flagler had been in Florida since 1883, building luxury hotels along his Florida East Coast Railway line at locations such as St Augustine and Palm Beach (Alonso 2007). Flagler recognised that Miami had similar characteristics to these destinations and could attract the same wealthy, sun-seeking American tourists from up north (Nijman 2011). In 1896, the first train pulled into Miami, and the city’s population and economy grew rapidly from that point onwards (Nijman 2011; Alonso 2007; Bachin 2006; George 1981; Buchanan 1978). In addition to increasing its accessibility, Flagler contributed to the area’s development in a number of other ways – he designed street plans; implemented basic infrastructure such as roads, waterworks and an electric plant; opened a luxury hotel; financed the city’s first newspaper; and helped fund the construction of churches, schools and hospitals (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011; George 1981).

During the early 1900s, the nearby barrier island of Miami Beach started being developed as well, through the efforts of landholders including John Collins, Carl Fisher and the Lummus Brothers. In 1913, the first bridge connecting Miami Beach to the mainland was completed (Nijman 2011; Bachin 2006; Lavender 2002). Over the next several years, Collins and Fisher initiated projects to clear the mangroves, construct roads, dredge Biscayne Bay, and increase Miami Beach’s total area using landfill (Nijman 2011; Lavender 2002). Fisher, in particular, was instrumental in

97 The railway was originally meant to end at West Palm Beach, north of Miami (Nijman 2011).
establishing the island’s tourism industry, contributing large sums of money to develop Miami Beach ‘as a winter-sports playground for the wealthy, with polo, golf, boating, tennis, ladies’ horseback riding, deep-sea fishing, and seaplane flying’ (Lavender 2002, p. 15).

The Miami area grew rapidly during the 1920s. The first half of the decade saw a huge real estate boom, attracting outsider investment and an increasing resident population (Jarvis 2011; Nijman 2011). Miami Beach alone expanded from a population of 644 in 1920 to an estimated 6,500 in 1930 (Nijman 2011). Unlike other major US cities at the time, whose economies were based on being trade ports for raw or manufactured materials, the key driving forces behind Miami’s growth were the leisure, tourism and real estate industries (Nijman 2011; Bush 1999). City boosters, particularly developers like Flagler and Fisher, as well as the Miami Chamber of Commerce, cultivated powerful myths about Miami to appeal to tourists (Alonso 2007). In promotional material, the region was portrayed as an exclusive tropical paradise with spectacular beaches, palm trees, exotic Mediterranean Revival architecture and all the best attractions – golf courses, casinos, luxury hotels, yacht clubs, racetracks and star-studded parties (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011; Alonso 2007; Bush 1999). This drew elites and celebrities from the northern American states, especially in winter – during the 1920s, Miami Beach’s winter population would swell to an estimated 40,000, meaning tourists considerably outnumbered residents at these times (Nijman 2011).

With Miami successfully attracting upmarket clientele, in popular imaginaries it became closely associated with glitz, glamour, decadence, spectacle and celebrity (Revels 2011). At the same time, it garnered a reputation for being ‘depraved’, immoral and transgressive (Revels 2011). Illegal gambling rooms were common throughout Miami, and Prohibition laws were scarcely enforced for fear that it would harm tourism (Revels 2011). Organised crime began to flourish due to alcohol smuggling, the establishment of moonshine distilleries, and the presence of infamous gangsters like Al Capone, who owned vacation homes in the area (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011).

By the second half of the 1920s, there was a downturn in tourism. In addition to the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Miami also suffered from the end of its real estate boom in 1925 and a devastating hurricane that hit in 1926 (Revels 2011;
Bachin 2006; Lavender 2002). The hurricane caused hundreds of deaths, and many hotels, casinos and homes were severely damaged or destroyed both in Miami Beach and on the mainland (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011). Following the hurricane, the South Beach area was rebuilt in the Art Deco style that it is famous for today (Alonso 2007). Although Miami entered an economic depression sooner than the rest of the country, it also recovered more quickly, with tourism and population growth picking up again in the 1930s (Nijman 2011; Lavender 2002). Revels (2011) posits that this may be attributed to tourism’s relative durability compared to traditional industries, especially considering Miami’s capacity to appeal to fantasies of escapism during times of hardship.

Tourism experienced another brief lull in the early 1940s during World War II, with over 85 per cent of Miami Beach hotels being temporarily taken over for military use (Revels 2011; Alonso 2007). By the mid-1940s, however, tourism was booming again (Revels 2011). During the 1950s, South Beach and its Art Deco district started to decay as tourists moved further north in Miami Beach (Alonso 2007), where several new major luxury hotels were being constructed (in Miami Modern or ‘MiMo’ style), including the now-iconic Fontainebleau (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Nijman 2011; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). Although these establishments catered to the celebrities and wealthy elites for which Miami was famous, their success was hampered by the increasing diversification of Miami’s tourist markets (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011). Particularly towards the end of the 1950s, the area began attracting more middle-class tourists and college-aged Spring Breakers (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Nijman 2011; Revels 2011; Zukin 1991). In addition, as Rose (2015) observes, ‘Miami’s reputation as a tourist paradise for “Whites Only” experienced a transformation as the number of Spanish-speaking tourists from Latin America and the Caribbean increased’ (p. 171). The demographic transformation was compounded by the large numbers of Cuban exiles settling in Miami at this time (Rose 2015; Nijman 2011) as a consequence of the communist uprising, and the eventual success of Castro’s revolution (1953–59).

Tourism in Miami was stagnant in the 1960s and declined throughout the 1970s (Nijman 2011; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). More affordable and extensive air travel networks meant Miami’s usual visitors could now also reach farther off, more exotic destinations like the Caribbean, Hawaii and Europe with greater ease than
ever before (Alonso 2007; Bush 1999; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). Further, the opening of Disney World in 1972 drew tourists’ attention away from southern Florida to central Florida (Gross 1997; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). At the same time that tourists were heading elsewhere, Miami’s facilities were becoming dated, and several hotels went bankrupt while several more were demolished (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). Miami Beach’s residents and visitors were ageing as well – in 1970, the median age of residents was over 65 (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Gross 1997); by 1975, 64 per cent of vacationers were over 50 (Dombrink & Thompson 1990). A far cry from its former image as a glamorous destination for the nation’s elite, Miami Beach became known as ‘God’s waiting room’, populated by poor Jewish98 retirees and Cuban immigrants (Nijman 2011; Gross 1997). These elderly people and immigrants lived in dilapidated South Beach hotels that had been converted into apartments (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Alonso 2007).

By the early 1980s, Miami’s reputation had worsened. It had the highest crime rate and murder rate in the nation, and the news media had branded it America’s drug capital (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Nijman 2011; Alonso 2007).99 Additionally, there was significant news coverage of Miami’s racial tensions due to the Liberty City riots of 1980 and conflicting responses to the arrival of Haitian refugees (Nijman 2011; Revels 2011; Alonso 2007). In Alonso’s (2007) words:

Images of sunny beaches were eclipsed by images of Cuban refugees living in a tent city under Interstate highway 95, Haitian refugees arriving ashore in homemade rafts, Liberty City smouldering during the riots, and drug shootouts on the streets of Miami. (p. 173)

In the mid-1980s, however, the tide was turning once again. The recovery of Miami’s tourism industry is often attributed in part to the internationally popular television series *Miami Vice* (1984–1989). Despite its focus on crime, drugs and corruption, the series’ shots of the Art Deco district, mansions, beaches and high-rises made Miami seem cool and sexy again (Nijman 2011; Avraham & Ketter 2008; Alonso 2007; Bush 1999; Gross 1997). Much of this Art Deco architecture was now listed on the National Register of Historic Places thanks to a successful 1979

---

98 In 1970, 85 per cent of Miami Beach’s population were Jewish (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011).
99 With its expansive coastline and close proximity to South America, Miami became a hotspot for international drug trafficking (Dombrink & Thompson 1990).
campaign by the Miami Design Preservation League (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Bachin 2006; Gross 1997). Local tourism boosters, including the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, strategically focused on promoting the Art Deco district in an attempt to rejuvenate Miami’s image (Alonso 2007).

Towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, South Beach’s gentrification was well under way, and the poor and elderly residents of previous years were being displaced (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Gross 1997). The area became trendy, with affluent families, artists and a significant LGBT community moving in (Desrosiers-Lauzon 2011; Gross 1997). The 1990s saw Miami Beach regain its glitzy image and celebrity clientele, as well as evolving into a premier LGBT destination (Kanai & Kenttamaa-Squires 2015; Revels 2011; Gross 1997).

**Present context**

In contemporary imaginaries, Miami still carries associations from the past – as a winter playground, as a retiree’s paradise, as a drug and crime capital, as a glamorous holiday destination – but it has evolved as well. Over recent decades, Miami has developed from being a quintessential resort town into a burgeoning global city, with Downtown becoming a major centre for international trade and banking (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015; Alonso 2007; Portes & Stepick 1993; Sassen & Portes 1993; Zukin 1991; Dombrink & Thompson 1990). Although its economy has been increasingly diversifying, tourism remains one of Miami’s most important industries.

Miami’s tourist arrivals continue to grow, albeit not as rapidly as emerging resort destinations (see Figure 59). In 2015, Miami received a record high of 15.5 million overnight visitors contributing $24.4 billion in expenditure (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Of these visitors, roughly half are international and half are domestic. As has been the case since Miami’s beginnings as a tourism destination, the majority (48 per cent) of domestic visitors are from the northeastern US, especially New York (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Most international visitors are from Latin America (69 per cent), with Europe and Canada being smaller, but still important, markets (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Overall, the top international markets are Brazil, Canada, Colombia and Argentina (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). A far
cry from the elderly tourist base in the 1970s, Miami now attracts mostly young people – only 14.4 per cent of vacationers in 2015 were over the age of 55 (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). Visitor numbers are fairly consistent throughout the year, peaking in December, January and March.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>12,604,100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13,444,200</td>
<td>+6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>13,908,600</td>
<td>+3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14,218,900</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>14,536,200</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>15,496,300</td>
<td>+6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 59: Visitors to Miami, 2010–2015
Source: Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (2016)

When I arrived at Miami’s airport, one of the first things I saw was a promotional poster with the tagline ‘It’s So Miami’ over an image of some hip-looking people appreciating street art (see Figure 60). The first thing that struck me about it was the tagline’s similarities to the Gold Coast’s ‘Very GC’ campaign. Such taglines imply that the accompanying images are emblematic of these places, representing what makes them unique and distinctive. As such, I was confused because the image on the poster at Miami airport did not seem ‘so Miami’ to me at all – but before visiting Miami, I knew little of its arts and cultural scene.

The ‘It’s So Miami’ campaign, launched in 2012, aims to accentuate Miami’s variety and diversity by showcasing the region’s iconic elements as well as lesser-known aspects of its lived spatiality, such as its cultural life and natural attractions (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2012). Thus, the advertisements depict beaches, clear skies, palm trees, cocktails, shopping, parties, Art Deco and high-rises, but also Wynwood Walls, an airboat ride through the Everglades, and an outdoor viewing of a performance by the New World Symphony. Figure 61 features a slender, bikini-clad blonde woman admiring a piece of art in a gallery, while Figure 62 showcases an expensive sports car (a McLaren MP4-12C) parked outside a shop selling 50 cent Cuban coffees, with patrons including an elderly Hispanic man, a
woman in exercise gear, and a few young men in corporate attire. The use of juxtaposition in these posters clearly sets out to capture Miami’s diversity.\textsuperscript{100}

\textbf{Figure 60: Promotional image of Wynwood Walls for 'It's So Miami' campaign}

Source: Miami & Beaches (2012c)

\textsuperscript{100} Of course, the latter example also highlights inequalities and disparities of wealth in the city, which is discussed further in Chapter 11.
Figure 61: Promotional image of an art gallery for 'It's So Miami' campaign
Source: Miami & Beaches (2012a)

Figure 62: Promotional image of a Cuban cafe and a sports car for 'It's So Miami' campaign
Source: Miami & Beaches (2012b)
The theme of this campaign carries throughout Miami’s other promotional efforts. The official website, which is responsible for promoting all of Greater Miami, presents the destination in the expected, traditional ways to appeal to mass tourists, while also emphasising alternative attractions. The banners on the landing page feature images of sunbeds and umbrellas on the beach (see Figure 63), brightly coloured cocktails advertising ‘Gay Miami’, Ocean Drive’s Art Deco buildings lit up at night, the Alhambra Gate in Coral Gables, and an aerial shot of Miami’s high-rises (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015).

The website describes Miami as the ‘glitzy-glam capital of sparkle and sun’, offering popular activities, sights and attractions such as exclusive nightlife, shopping, restaurants, ‘picturesque’ weather, South Beach’s Art Deco district, spas, water activities (sailing, snorkeling, fishing, etc.), golf courses and casinos (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015, 2016). Despite the success and broad appeal of these familiar facets of Miami’s tourism industry, promotional material from both unofficial and official tourism organisations highlights what else the region has to offer:

Miami is so many things, but to most visitors, it’s mainly glamour, condensed into urban form. They’re right. The archaic definition of ‘glamour’ is a kind of spell that mystifies a victim. Well, they call Miami the Magic City. And it is mystifying. In its beauty, certainly: the clack of a model’s high heels on Lincoln Rd, the teal sweep of Biscayne Bay, flowing cool into the wide South Florida sky; the blood-orange fire of the sunset,
setting the downtown skyline aflame. Then there’s less-conventional beauty: a poetry slam in a converted warehouse, or a Venezuelan singing Metallica en español in a Coral Gables karaoke bar, or the passing shalom/buenas dias traded between Orthodox Jews and Cuban exiles. Miami is so many things. All glamorous, in every sense of the word. You could spend a fun lifetime trying to escape her spell. (Lonely Planet 2015b)

Miami is intoxicatingly beautiful, with palm trees swaying in the breeze and South Beach’s famous Art Deco buildings glowing in the warm sunlight. Even so, it’s the people – not the climate, the landscape or the cash – that make it so noteworthy. Two-thirds of the two-million-plus population are Hispanic, the majority of them Cuban, and Spanish is spoken here almost as often as English. Miami has a range of districts that mirror its variegated cultural, economic and social divisions. (Rough Guides 2015a)

Though destinations often are said to offer something for everyone, the Miami area offers multiple enticements for everyone: The trendy nightlife of South Beach, bejeweled by the eye candy of the Art Deco district. The bustle of Calle Ocho and the highly caffeinated energy of Little Havana. The plush hotels of Miami Beach and the historic hideaways of Coral Gables. Seemingly endless shopping opportunities in modern, sprawling malls and the quiet, personal attention offered by the family-owned shops of Coconut Grove and many other corners of the region. The lures of deep-sea fishing and golf and tennis. Major league football, basketball, hockey and baseball. Boat shows and auto racing. Art festivals and outdoor food and wine extravaganzas. An international airport and the world’s busiest cruise port. The Miami area offers all of this – and so much more. (Visit Florida 2015)

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (2015) aims to capitalise on Greater Miami’s size and diversity by positioning it as ‘a paradise of interconnected oceanfront cities, urban hubs, charming villages and tropical parks’. Beyond Miami Beach (which attracts 48 per cent of overnight visitors [Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016]), visitors can also choose to explore numerous other beaches and neighbourhoods like Coconut Grove, Coral Gables, the Design District, Key Biscayne, Little Haiti, Little Havana, Overtown, Aventura and Wynwood. These other neighbourhoods are sold to the consumer as providing something different from what Miami Beach can offer, with unique historical, cultural and natural attractions.

Miami has a long history of playing on its ‘exotic’ cultural and natural assets, turning them into spectacle for touristic consumption (Bush 1999). This is most readily observable in the marketing of the beaches and weather, but also in the
promotion of less popular attractions like the Everglades, botanical gardens, alligator farms, aquariums and zoos. Cultural tourism attractions include museums, such as Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, the Children’s Museum and the World Erotic Art Museum; historic architecture, not only in South Beach, but in Coconut Grove and Coral Gables; a holocaust memorial; the Miami City Ballet; music, such as the New World Symphony and Florida Grand Opera; art galleries and art walks; film festivals; and theatres.

However, as is clear in the descriptions above, the local people are one of Miami’s main selling points. In stark contrast to the rest of Florida, more than half of the population of Miami-Dade County are foreign-born, with significant numbers of Cubans, Haitians, Colombians, Jamaicans, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans (United States Census Bureau 2015b; Nijman 2011; Portes & Stepick 1993). Hispanic and Latino peoples account for more than 65 per cent of the county, with another 19 per cent being black and only 15.2 per cent being non-Hispanic white (United States Census Bureau 2015b). This, along with its geographic centrality in the Americas, has earned Miami the title of ‘capital of Latin America’ in the media (Rose 2015; Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015; Alonso 2007). In addition to its Hispanic and Caribbean cultures, Miami also promotes its Native American, African American and Jewish heritage (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015).

These different cultural groups have formed particular enclaves in the region, giving tourists the option to ‘experience’ each culture and its history by visiting these places. For example, Overtown (previously Colored Town) is the formerly segregated neighbourhood next to Downtown Miami, established in the Jim Crow era to house the Africans who worked in the area. Today, it is advertised as ‘Historic Overtown’, with tourist attractions including murals, the Lyric Theatre and soul food restaurants (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015). Another neighbourhood, Little Haiti, is marketed as offering ‘sincerity and authenticity’ which can be experienced through ethnic food, art galleries, book stores, theatrical

---

101 Only 19.4 per cent of people in Florida are foreign-born, and 59.4 per cent are non-Hispanic white (United States Census Bureau 2015b).
102 2013 figures. Other groups in the overall ethnic mix of Miami-Dade County include 1.7 per cent Asian, 0.3 per cent American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1.2 per cent designated as two or more races (United States Census Bureau 2015b). The profile is very different in Miami Beach, with 40 per cent of the population being non-Hispanic white (United States Census Bureau 2015a).
performances, furniture stores and a thriving indie music scene (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015).

The official website also features a series of ‘insider’s guides’ (much like the ‘inside stories’ on the Gold Coast’s tourism website) to many of Miami’s neighbourhoods in the form of short videos narrated by residents of the areas. For instance, the video on Coconut Grove features a local woman describing the neighbourhood as laid back, outdoorsy, artsy and bohemian, and outlining some of the things locals do there – going paddle boarding, hanging out in parks by Biscayne Bay, bike riding, going to ‘eclectic’, quirky bars and cafes – and some of the popular tourist attractions, like Vizcaya Museum, the Barnacle State Park, boutique stores and art galleries. The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (2015) also identifies residents as a key target market, recognising that local patronage is vital to sustaining tourism services and attractions during seasonal lows. The website urges locals to remember that ‘you live where they vacation’ – that is, in a ‘paradise’ and ‘vacation playground’ – and encourages them to break out of their routines in order to experience Miami like a tourist.

**Initial impressions**

*Figure 64: Washington Avenue, Miami Beach*
Flying into Miami from Cancún, I marveled at how similar the skyline was to the Gold Coast – a long strip of high-rises on the oceanfront. In the taxi from the airport to Miami Beach along Julia Tuttle Causeway, I saw expanses of sparkling blue water, palm trees and mansions, again reminding me of home. I had booked a stylish apartment in South Beach through Airbnb since hotels were obscenely expensive at the time. I couldn’t fathom how all the people my age I saw partying on their Ocean Drive hotel balconies could afford to stay there.

Nevertheless, my accommodation offered peace and quiet while still only being a few blocks from the beach.

My apartment was just off Washington Avenue, one of the main strips running parallel to the beach, the other two being Collins Avenue and Ocean Drive (see Figure 65: Map of South Beach).

At the time of my visit, the exchange rate was about AU$1.00 to US$0.90. Thus, the high price of hotels indicated an affordability issue rather than one of currency exchange.
Washington and Collins Avenues were lined with palm trees, retail outlets, restaurants, convenience stores and bars on either side, with a few Art Deco hotels along Collins as well. Ocean Drive (which I described to people back home as ‘the Cavill Avenue of Miami’) had low- to mid-rise Art Deco facades housing hotels, bars and restaurants on one side, with the neatly landscaped Lummus Park on the other, and the beach beyond that. I was surprised at the lack of high-rises here, perhaps because on the Gold Coast the tourist hub is where high-rises are concentrated. I had not realised that most of the tall buildings that I had seen when flying in (and also seen in aerial photographs) are in fact located further north in Miami Beach and in Downtown Miami. Due to its historic architecture, most of the portion of South Beach in which I stayed has been protected from the rampant, large-scale development characteristic of most contemporary resorts.\textsuperscript{104}

As with Cancún, I was in Miami during Spring Break. South Beach, and Ocean Drive in particular, had a distinct party vibe – the people I saw were mainly rowdy young adults dressed in beachwear, the majority of whom were black or Hispanic. There were a few older couples and groups, and very few families with small children. Below is an excerpt from my field journal, which captures something of the rhythms one late afternoon to early evening when I was out in South Beach:

I’m at the corner of Washington Avenue and 13th Street, and four girls in bikinis just walked past me holding huge, colourful plastic cups filled with what I can reasonably assume is alcohol. One girl laughs ‘I can’t believe how drunk I am right now’, her friends run across the road and another shouts ‘I hope we don’t get arrested!’ I see numerous other people drinking from these cups – where do they get them from? I can’t tell if they’ve bought them from a bar, or mixed them in their hotels and taken them out with them. In any case, they seem pretty cavalier about drinking in public in broad daylight.\textsuperscript{105}

Ocean Drive is teeming with people. The sun is setting, but most are still in beachwear, board shorts, swimsuits, sarongs. People are dancing and drinking on their balconies, watching the street below.

\textsuperscript{104} In contrast to the other resorts in my study, this historic architecture in Miami closely resembles the aesthetic of old world resorts such as Nice, France.

\textsuperscript{105} On the Gold Coast, drinking in public (such as in the streets and on the beach) in this way is illegal, and my interviewees informed me that it was the same in Miami, but that law enforcement often turned a blind eye to it.
Dance music is blaring from the different bars, filling the streets, and every few minutes a car drives by blasting a rap song, throwing its own tune into the mix. They drive past very slowly, of course, because the street is ridiculously congested with fancy cars – convertibles, SUVs, Lamborghinis, Jaguars, Aston Martins, Ferraris and Porsches, all with their windows down playing hip hop or rap. It’s literally every second or third car, which I find bizarre. I can’t imagine it’s an efficient route to take. But by the looks of the cars, I feel like half of these people are just driving here to be seen in them.
From the footpath along Ocean Drive, I cut across the grass to see what's going on at the paved boardwalk in Lummus Park. It's busy here too. People are walking and jogging along, riding their bikes, others are standing in groups chatting. Where the sand starts I see people playing volleyball. Further down the beach, I stop to join a crowd of spectators – we're watching athletic, attractive, half-naked people performing chin-ups and other displays of athleticism. A few of them start to do gymnastic tricks and pole dance moves, which garners more attention and praise from the crowd. Normally I'd feel weird stopping here to watch and take photos, but everyone else is doing it – these informal performers are creating a spectacle for us to enjoy, and the voyeuristic aspect seems to be normalised and invited. (Field journal, 15 March 2014)
The early evening period, as described above, was the busiest time of day around Ocean Drive. In the morning it was considerably quieter, with people out jogging, on bicycles, Segways or roller skates, or going to breakfast. From noon onwards, the number of people increased before peaking in the evening. Once it was dark, the strip became progressively quieter along the pathways, although the bars and restaurants remained consistently full. Late at night, activity was most intensified around nightclubs, which are scattered in clusters of two or three across Miami Beach and into Downtown Miami.

Figure 70: People riding bicycles and jogging through Lummus Park, South Beach

Figure 71: Art Deco buildings along Ocean Drive, South Beach at night
Away from Ocean Drive, Miami Beach felt surprisingly laid back, with quiet streets, mid-rise apartment blocks (many in Art Deco or MiMo style), grocery stores, parks, shopping strips like Lincoln Road, dining precincts like Espanola Way (see Figure 72), and a beautiful historic City Hall, now used to house organisations like the Miami Beach Cinematheque, the LGBT Visitor Center and the Miami-Dade Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. Although I was expecting Miami to be a lot like the Gold Coast – and, indeed, it did remind me a lot of home – exploring these surrounding streets, these lived spaces, revealed to me many of the particularities and idiosyncrasies that make Miami unique.

Figure 72: Espanola Way, Miami Beach

Conclusion

As the most mature (and perhaps the most famous) destination in this study, it is no surprise that traces of Miami can be found in the other resorts. These traces are most obvious on the Gold Coast, a place that has long defined its identity in terms of comparisons to Miami. My expectations of Miami, informed by popular imaginaries, popular cultural representations and their associated narratives, were at times reaffirmed but at other times unsettled through my experiences of the city's lived spaces. I took pleasure in encountering things that were routine back home, but that I have rarely seen in more ‘normal’, conventional cities – palm trees lining the streets, waterfront mansions on artificial islands, and an intense focus on voyeurism.
regarding bodies: on the beach, on hotel balconies and in luxury cars. However, I was also taken by Miami’s distinctive elements – the preservation of its Art Deco buildings, the influence of Latin and LGBT cultures, and the thriving arts scene. Like the Gold Coast, Miami is in the process of evolving from a resort destination to a diverse, vibrant urban milieu.
Blessed with a striking rocky coastline, scenic beaches and a warm climate, it is no surprise that Ibiza has become one of Europe's most popular summertime vacation spots. Its claim to fame, however, is its reputation as the clubbing capital of the world. Ibiza is known as a youthful destination which caters less to tourists focused on relaxation or family holidays, and more to those seeking partying, drugs, sex and indulgence in sensuous pleasures. Ibiza is also an important and unique site for built heritage, although this is often missing from popular imaginaries and overshadowed by more dominant narratives.

Ibiza is an island in the western Mediterranean, located just off the east coast of mainland Spain (see Figure 74). It is the third largest island in the Balearic Islands archipelago, one of Spain's autonomous communities. At 572 square kilometres, Ibiza is roughly the same size as Phuket Province, but has a population of only 140,271\textsuperscript{106} (Institut d'Estadística de les Illes Balears 2015). Tourism has been the

\textsuperscript{106} 2014 figure.
most significant driving force in the development and growth of the Balearic Islands (Pons et al 2014; Batle 2000). Now dominating the economy, it is responsible for more than 80 per cent of GDP (Briggs 2013; D’Andrea 2007; Garín-Muñoz & Montero-Martín 2007). Ibiza, in particular, has reaped substantial economic benefits from tourism, boasting one of Spain’s highest income rates per capita (Briggs 2013; D’Andrea 2006, 2007).

Figure 74: Map of Spain (Google 2017)

Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza and Formentera are the largest islands in the Balearic Islands archipelago.

Urban development in Ibiza has been primarily focused along the coastline, with several smaller towns scattered across the inland. Tourism development is most concentrated in the following areas: Eivissa\(^{107}\) (Ibiza in Spanish, also commonly referred to as Ibiza Town), the largest city and historic old town; Sant Antoni de Portmany (San Antonio), the most mature and most iconic tourist hub on the island, known for its popularity among young British tourists; the airport and surrounding

\(^{107}\) In the Balearic Islands, as in some of Spain’s other autonomous communities, Catalan and Spanish are both official languages, and thus, towns/beaches on the island may be referred to by their names in either language. Among tourists, it is more common to use the Spanish names – Ibiza, San Antonio, etc. – but most signage and ‘official’ institutional websites and documents use Catalan – Eivissa, Sant Antoni, etc.
beaches (such as Platja d’en Bossa/Playa d’en Bossa) in the Sant Josep de sa Talaia municipality; and to a lesser extent, Santa Eulària des Riu (see Figure 75). Other areas of the island also have some tourism infrastructure but are less popular destinations for visitors to stay in. The village of Sant Rafel de sa Creu (San Rafeal), for example, is home to two of the island’s biggest nightclubs, Amnesia and Privilege, but offers little in the way of accommodation options. It is clear that the term ‘Ibiza’ is used among tourists as a catch-all term that may refer to any number of these different areas, much as ‘Thailand’ tends to stand for a collection of resorts in popular discourse.

---

**Figure 75: Map of Ibiza** (Google 2017)

**History**

Tourism infrastructure and facilities started to develop in the Balearic Islands during the 1920s to mid-1930s, supported by pro-tourism regional government policies and capital from investors within the Balearics and from Northern Europe.

---

As such, club patrons usually arrive by bus or taxi.
who were interested in cashing in on the success of other nearby Mediterranean resorts, specifically those along the French Rivera (Pons et al 2014; Bardolet & Sheldon 2008). Although these efforts were predominantly focused on the Balearics' largest island, Mallorca (Majorca), Ibiza benefited as well (Pons et al 2014). From the 1930s to 1950s, Ibiza consistently attracted small numbers of visitors, primarily middle class Europeans, and some cultural and artistic figures – Walter Benjamin now being one of the most famous examples (Pons et al 2014; Briggs 2013; Polo & Valle 2008; Taussig 2006).

Briggs (2013) notes that many of these early visitors were (like Benjamin) more like long stay visitors than short-term tourists, with Germans, Italians and other Spaniards seeking temporary escape from the fascist political regimes in their own countries. Similarly, from the late 1950s into the 1960s and early 1970s, Ibiza became popular among bohemians, beatniks and hippies. This contributed to imaginaries and myths of the island as an escapist paradise, with the hippie associations bringing an increasing emphasis on expressions of hedonism, sexuality and liberation (Briggs 2013; D’Andrea 2007). With the full advent of mass tourism, however, Ibiza quickly transformed from a quiet, alternative retreat into an international destination for packaged holidays (Pons et al 2014; Briggs 2013; Bennett 2004; Diken & Laustsen 2004). As a result, seaside resort towns throughout Ibiza grew rapidly over the following decades (Fortuny, Soler, Cánovas & Sánchez 2008; Serra Cantallops 2004).

One of the most important aspects of Ibiza's evolution as a tourism destination has been the popularity of its nightlife since the 1980s (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Bennett 2004). The rise of club culture in Ibiza was fuelled by the burgeoning electronic dance music scene and its links to the use of the party drug ecstasy (Sandvoss 2014; Wilson 2006; Bellis, Hale, Bennett, Chaudry & Kilfoyle 2000). DJs in Ibiza at this time mixed electronic dance music styles originating elsewhere – house music from Chicago and New York City and techno from Detroit, along with reggae, rock and Euro pop influences – to create a distinct style known as ‘Balearic Beat’ (Goulding & Shankar 2011; D’Andrea 2007; Wilson 2006; Bennett 2001, 2004; Melechi 1993). This style was exported to the UK by DJs and British youth (one of Ibiza’s largest tourist markets), playing a pivotal role in the emergence of acid house music and rave culture in the late 1980s (Wilson 2006).
Subsequently, Ibiza earned a certain cachet derived from its historical importance in the development of dance music, and it is now often considered one of the birthplaces of rave and the ‘spiritual home’ (Sandvoss 2014, p. 116) of electronic dance music (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Wilson 2006; Bennett 2004). Ibiza became and remains a main node in the international clubbing circuit and a highly influential site of innovation for contemporary dance music (D'Andrea 2007; Bennett 2004). Over the years, however, Ibiza’s clubbing milieu has transformed from alternative and countercultural to commercialised and mainstream (D'Andrea 2007; Wilson 2006; Bennett 1999). As D'Andrea (2006) argues, ‘[c]apitalist interests have largely undermined nightclubs’ organic connections with hippie, gay and bohemian countercultures, integrating such venues into the island’s tourism industry and its logic of predatory profiteering’ (p. 62). While the mainstream popularity of Ibiza’s nightlife provided a major boost to the island’s economy, the associated behaviours – binge drinking, illicit drug use, increased incidences of violence and rowdy, disorderly conduct – tarnished the island’s image (Briggs 2013; NME 2001).

Issues with Ibiza’s tourism industry were not restricted to its club culture. During the 1990s, it became apparent to Ibiza officials and residents that the island’s tourism model was having damaging effects that threatened the long-term sustainability of the industry and the environment. Serra Cantallops (2004) observes that this model had become ‘... based on volume, price competition, standardisation of the holiday experience ... mainly focused on sun, sand and sea’ (p. 41). Until this point tourism development in Ibiza had been largely unregulated and poorly planned, leading to problems such as overcrowding, extreme pressure on natural resources, high levels of waste production and water consumption, and the deterioration of beaches and rocky coastal areas (Briggs 2013; Aguiló et al 2005; Serra Cantallops 2004). These issues were compounded by Ibiza’s underdeveloped public infrastructure and tourist facilities that were quickly becoming obsolete (Aguiló et al 2005). Further, tourism had also become progressively more seasonal: tour operators focused their business on the lucrative summer months, resulting in excessive demands on resources during those times, seasonal unemployment, and a decline in the proportion of more mature visitors who preferred to visit in the winter months (Briggs 2013; D'Andrea 2007).
In response to this situation, Ibiza’s local government set out to dismantle assumptions that the island offered little more than sun, sand and sex (Jarvie & Lusher 2001), and to transform their tourism model into one that favoured quality over quantity. That is, rather than attempting to attract as many tourists as possible, the aim was to attract the right kind of tourists – those who spent more money, stayed longer, were more environmentally-conscious, and interested in a range of activities and attractions (beyond only beaches and nightlife). Regulations were passed during the 1990s to limit urban growth and limit carrying capacity by restricting the construction of additional hotel beds (Pons et al 2014; Bardolet & Sheldon 2008; Serra Cantallops 2004). Measures to increase competitiveness were also introduced, such as encouraging the modernisation of existing tourism accommodation and facilities and requiring all new hotels to be at least a four-star rating (Serra Cantallops 2004). To mitigate seasonal demand and alleviate overcrowding in specific tourist hubs, strategies have been undertaken to diversify the industry (Bardolet & Sheldon 2008; Serra Cantallops 2004). For example, in recent years there has been a concerted effort to promote convention/conference tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and cultural/heritage tourism (Anderson, W 2009b; Bardolet & Sheldon 2008; Robbins 2007; NME 2001; Jarvie & Lusher 2001).

In 2001, the government of the Balearics introduced a tourism tax, the Ecotax, aimed at generating funds to gradually change the dominant model for tourism in order to make the industry more sustainable; support host communities and improve their quality of life; protect against further environmental damage; and preserve cultural heritage (Serra Cantallops 2004). The policy was welcomed by residents, but strongly opposed by the tourism industry, particularly the large hotel companies and tour operators who lobbied against it (Serra Cantallops 2004). Consequently, the Ecotax was short-lived – it was enforced from 2002, but abolished in 2003 following the election of a new regional government (Serra Cantallops 2004). In 2016, a similar tax was re-introduced, again with negative media coverage and opposition from the tourism industry (see Calder 2016; Salmon 2016; Sobot 2016).

---

109 These funds were to go directly to the Tourist and Natural Areas Restoration Fund to ensure the money would be used as intended (Serra Cantallops 2004).
Present context

Despite these measures, tourism in Ibiza has not yet experienced significant changes. It is still a global clubbing mecca closely associated with dance music, partying, drugs, sex, sun and sand (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Briggs & Turner 2012; Briggs, Tutenges, Armitage & Panchev 2011; Bennett 2004). As a consequence, tourism continues to be very seasonal (significantly more so than any of the other destinations included in this study) due to the importance of a warm, sunny climate for beach activities, and because nightclubs are only open during the summer (marked by ‘opening parties’ from late May to mid-June and ‘closing parties’ from mid-September to early October). As can be seen in Figure 76, May to September are by far the most popular months (especially for international tourists from Britain, Italy and Germany), with 85 per cent of the total annual visitors staying during this time. In winter months, the majority of tourists are Spanish (domestic). Visitor numbers are still increasing, with Ibiza receiving more than 2.7 million visitors in 2014 (see Figure 77).

Figure 76: Visitors to Ibiza by month, 2014
Source: Institut d'Estadística de les Illes Balears (2016)
Ibiza’s reputation as a hedonistic clubbing capital, and sun and sand destination, persists because of how it is continuously represented by popular media and lived by the tourists who visit it. The associated imaginaries of Ibiza are shaped and reinforced by international news media, current affairs programs, documentaries, films like *Kevin & Perry Go Large* (2000) and *It’s All Gone Pete Tong* (2004), dance/house music compilations and song lyrics, travel websites and publications, and, perhaps most significantly, the stories and myths circulated online and in person by those who have visited the island. In the case of Ibiza, these unofficial narratives significantly override the official tourism narratives produced by the local government, which position the destination in an entirely different way.

The landing page of Ibiza’s official tourism website features images advertising Dalt Vila (the historic old town of Ibiza), excursions/tours by bicycle and kayak, Ibicean gastronomy, sports, activities for family fun, and activities for the 55+ market (Consell d’Eivissa 2014). Beside this are links to read more about the villages, sailing, shopping, sports, conference venues and a calendar of events. Although the website advertises a range of attractions and activities such as water sports, diving, hiking, golfing, cycling, horse riding, fishing, national parks, beaches and spas, the main focus is on Ibiza’s cultural heritage and historical structures (Consell d’Eivissa 2014). Since 1999, Ibiza has been a part of UNESCO’s World Heritage List due to its highly valued cultural and natural assets, including several

---

**Visitors in recent years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,378,967</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,334,692</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,447,575</td>
<td>+4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,733,558</td>
<td>+11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 77: Visitors to Ibiza (Eivissa), 2011–2014*

Source: Institut d’Estadística de les Illes Balears (2016)

---

110 While I have included annual visitor numbers for 2010–2015 in each other resort overview, there are only complete statistics available for Ibiza from 2011–2014 (at the time of writing, 2010 statistics were only available from July to December, while 2015 statistics were only available from January to September).

111 Both of these films are centred on Ibiza’s nightlife scene, prominently featuring several famous nightclubs and many popular house music tracks.

112 Songs like ‘I Took A Pill In Ibiza’ (Seeb Remix) by Mike Posner (2016) and ‘Miami 2 Ibiza’ (feat. Tinnie Tempah) by Swedish House Mafia (2010).
archaeological sites, Renaissance era military architecture found in Ibiza Town (see Figure 79), and unique marine ecosystems (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2015; Consell d'Eivissa 2014). The official tourism website describes the island as 'steeped in history' with 'a rich archaeological, historical, artistic and ethnological heritage', and provides extensive lists of sites (particularly churches) and museums for tourists to visit.

Figure 78: Official Ibiza tourism website  
Source: Consell d’Eivissa (2014)

Figure 79: Dalt Vila, Ibiza Town
The local council promotes these alternative attractions and activities to highlight that ‘Ibiza is more than just sun and sand, and more than mere nightlife’ (Consell d’Eivissa 2014). Online travel websites also mention alternatives, but it is nightlife that is nonetheless foregrounded:

The all-night raver, the boho-cool hippie chick, the sexiest babe on the beach – Ibiza is all this and more to those who have a soft spot for the party-loving sister of the Balearics. The cream of Europe’s DJs (David Guetta, Luciano, Sven Väth et al) makes the island holy ground for clubbers … But there’s more to this sun-kissed, beach-bejewelled, pine-clad island than meets the bleary eye. Step off the beaten track for a spell in a rural hotel, a hilltop hamlet or on a secluded north-coast cove to discover Ibiza’s surprisingly peaceful side. Or roam the ramparts of Ibiza City’s Unesco-listed Dalt Vila to immerse yourself in the island’s rich heritage. (Lonely Planet 2015a)

Ibiza: Old Spanish for ‘party ’til you drop.’ Perhaps not literally, but this is definitely one of Europe’s favourite nightlife playgrounds. Ibiza boasts more than 100 miles of coastline with some 50 beaches, plus plenty of restaurants, bars, and water sports – and clubs, of course. Fit in a little culture and visit Ibiza’s UNESCO-designated old town. (TripAdvisor 2016)

Despite its popularity, and its overwhelming presence in the lived spaces of the tourist hubs, nightlife is purposely obscured in official promotional material. The official website features a single page on nightlife, with a list of eight clubs and two casinos and some brief text describing the elaborate clubs, DJs and celebrity patrons. Even the official guide to Ibiza (downloadable on the website) makes no mention of nightlife. Of course, Ibiza’s club culture is so famous that the island’s local government need not necessarily waste its resources promoting it (in any case, the nightclubs and hoteliers can do this). Nonetheless, considering the above discussion of Ibiza’s tourism model, it seems that the decision to downplay nightlife’s prominence is more of a strategic manoeuvre as part of the desire to diversify the tourist market and attract higher quality, higher spending visitors. Ibiza positions itself as being able to cater to discerning cultural tourists, families and retirees (rather than just young partyers). These are people who are likely to be seeking peaceful yet enjoyable vacations at any time of year (rather than only in summer).

Initial impressions

I visited Ibiza in mid-July 2014, at the peak of the clubbing season. When planning my trip, I was tossing up between which of the three major tourist hubs I should stay
in – San Antonio, Playa d’en Bossa or Ibiza Town. I ended up choosing Playa d’en Bossa since it was close to some famous nightclubs (Space and Ushuaia) and only a short drive from Ibiza Town.

![Map of Playa d’en Bossa](image)

**Figure 80: Map of Playa d’en Bossa (Google 2017)**

Having been to Paris and Barcelona in the two weeks prior to arriving in Ibiza, I could understand the appeal of the island for Europeans. The weather was sunny, warm and dry; the water was bright blue, clean and still (making the ocean much more inviting for inexperienced swimmers); and each day there were spectacular sunrises and sunsets. The streets of Playa d’en Bossa were, by comparison, quite insipid, although interesting in terms of my research. Below is an excerpt from my field journal outlining some of my observations along the main road on which my hotel was situated (Carretera Playa d’en Bossa):

Playa d’en Bossa seems completely geared to the clubbing crowd, and I can’t see how any other type of tourist would want to be here. Right next to my hotel is Ushuaia (a hotel and open air club playing house music all day long) and across the road from that is Space (one of the biggest and most famous nightclubs here). On both sides, the main road is covered in billboards and posters promoting club nights – at Space, Amnesia, Pacha, Privilege – and DJs – David Guetta, Alesso, Hardwell, Avicii, Armin Van Buuren, Tinie Tempah, Pete Tong and more.
It seems much less built up here than the other resorts I’ve been to. The side of the road closer to the beach has a row of small, single-storey shops, mainly restaurants/cafes, convenience stores, nightclub merchandise stores and souvenir shops. There’s a ‘hippie’ store and ‘hippie’ market area, which seem to be commodified throwbacks to the destination’s bohemian days. The souvenir shops are just like the ones in Thailand – tacky fluro singlets and other clothing with phrases like ‘I <3 Ibiza’, ‘What happens in Ibiza stays in Ibiza’, ‘Ibiza All Star’, ‘You Only Live Once – Ibiza’, ‘I’m in Ibiza Bitch’ (a reference to LMFAO’s song ‘I’m in Miami Bitch’) and ‘Sexy Bitch’ (a David Guetta song).

Many of these shops and eateries are blasting dance music. I can’t seem to escape it – it’s in my hotel, in the streets, in cafes, and even in the corner store where I’m trying to buy milk and Jamon.

These shops are all covered in nightclub posters, too. Out the front of every couple of shops there’s vendors selling ‘disco tickets’ (entry to
specific events at nightclubs). They’re all calling out club names to me and the other passersby – 'Ushuaia, Ushuaia, Ushuaia!', ‘Space, Space, Space!' – it reminds me of hearing ‘Taxi!’ called out to me every 30 seconds when I was walking around Thailand.

Apart from the vendors and other workers, there are little signs of everyday local life here. All of the people in the streets seem to be tourists. There’s groups of guys walking around in shorts, loose singlets and sunnies, and groups of tanned girls in bikinis, short shorts and crop tops (some in high heels, which seems impractical at best). I feel really out of place, especially because I’m alone.

A lot of them are wearing the souvenir-style Ibiza shirts and club merch – shirts branded with Space, Sankeys, Pacha and ‘F*** Me I’m Famous!’ (the name of David Guetta’s club night at Pacha) … I imagine the appeal of buying these must be to wear them back home as a status symbol, to let everyone know you’ve been to Ibiza, that you’re a part of that scene, to bolster your subcultural capital. (Field journal, 15 July 2014)
Playa d'en Bossa had a distinct party atmosphere, reminiscent of Haad Rin in Koh Phangan and the Gold Coast during Schoolies. The rhythms of the area reflected this. Throughout the night, the streets were swarming with young people, peaking at around midnight with the end of the DJ sets at Ushuaia and the opening of Space across the street. Crowds of people then lined up for ‘Disco Buses’ (public transport infrastructure devoted to taking tourists to nightclubs around the island) to get them to other venues and hotels. Numerous food outlets stayed open late, serving up in-demand foods like pizza to satisfy intoxicated clubbers. The quietest period was in the morning (around 6 am to 10 am) – the streets and beaches were almost completely empty at this time, and finding anywhere that served breakfast before midday was a challenge. The volume of people increased throughout the day, with hungover tourists slowly emerging from their hotel rooms to sunbake or grab something to eat.

Figure 85: Tourists walking around in Playa d'en Bossa

I found the leisure-dominated rhythms and atmosphere in Playa d'en Bossa were considerably different to those in the island’s other tourist hubs. Both Ibiza Town and San Antonio were much quieter, with rhythms more closely approaching ‘normal’ everyday life than what I observed in Playa d'en Bossa.
Ibiza Town, for example, resembled Barcelona in terms of architecture, being more built up, with clean, narrow streets lined with older, mid-rise buildings with shopfronts on the ground level and residents living above (indicated by flags, towels and pot plants on balconies, among other personal touches). The centrepiece of the area is the historic old town (Dalt Vila), featuring a castle, cathedral, museums and cobblestone walkways. The tourists here were radically different from those of Playa d’en Bossa – older couples and families with DSLR cameras, clearly interested in the cultural attractions of the town. There were no ‘Disco Ticket’ vendors on the streets, house music didn’t follow me everywhere I went, and promotional material for nightclubs was scarce, save for a few club merchandise stores. Overall, there seemed to be more of a sense that everyday lives of residents were being carried out here – there were elderly people out for walks, young mothers pushing prams, and local businesses and services.

Figure 86: Mid-rise apartment building in Ibiza Town
Conclusion

Much like Koh Phangan, Ibiza’s popular imaginaries are dominated by associations with youthful transgression, hedonism and partying. The regional and local
governments of Ibiza, however, are making a concerted effort to change the island’s image and promote a more sustainable tourism model, as demonstrated by official tourism narratives and recent policy initiatives. In particular, there is a strong focus on attracting a more diverse range of visitors, and an emphasis on quality over quantity (similar to Phuket’s current objectives). As outlined in Chapter 2, alternative tourists are deemed to be ‘good’ tourists, and as such, Ibiza’s official tourism narratives are attempting to appeal primarily to cultural tourists and ecotourists. Thus, unlike the other resorts in this study, Ibiza’s governments are doing very little to appeal to the island’s traditional mass market.\footnote{In any case, there is little to be done in this respect – trying to re-position the nightlife scene as more upmarket, for example, would be futile as Ibiza’s nightclubs and hotels are already expensive.} This is a somewhat precarious strategy considering not only Ibiza’s reputation, but the multitude of other culture- and nature-oriented destinations in Europe with which it must compete. As far as my observations of Ibiza’s rhythms could indicate, this strategy has only been marginally successful as yet – there are, indeed, a few cultural tourists present in Ibiza Town and near other historical sites on the island, but Playa d’en Bossa and San Antonio remain occupied by sun, sand and sex tourists. Clearly, in Ibiza, there are significant and various tensions between the desires of the tourists, the tourism industry, and the local and regional governments, and great disparities in how the destination is imagined, represented and lived.
Section conclusion

Throughout this section, a number of commonalities among these resorts have emerged. Each place is an example of tourism urbanisation in Mullins’ (1992) terms – its development has been instigated and sustained primarily by tourism and leisure industries. Despite other types of economic activity existing early on (such as farming), these places did not start to thrive until they became holiday destinations (Weaver 2011). In contrast to more conventional cities, which have their roots in producing and/or trading commodities, the growth of these resorts has relied on consumption, on selling *themselves* as commodities.

Each resort has loosely followed the phases of tourist area development outlined by Butler (1980, 2006) and Prideaux (2004), evolving from a small-scale local destination to a large-scale international destination. This evolution has been more rapid in some resorts than in others, with Cancún in particular moving through the initial phases very quickly. Whether development was spearheaded by governments, entrepreneurs or foreign investors, each resort started out as a relaxed beachside getaway, often for alternative tourists or travellers looking for ‘authentic’ experiences. As discussed in Chapter 2, while these initial visitors may have been motivated by the search for hidden, ‘untouched’ destinations, their actions functioned to situate these places on the mainstream tourism circuit (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Coleman & Crang 2002; Brown 1996). Through the very presence of alternative tourists, these places became ‘cool’, gradually attracting more visitors and prompting tourism boosters to capitalise on their emerging popularity. As accessibility, visitor numbers and tourism services and facilities increased, they became known as sites for Fordist-style mass tourism, losing their initial cachet and earning negative reputations for being ‘overdeveloped’ or ‘touristy’ (sharing similarities with Butler’s [1980, 2006] consolidation and stagnation phases). Consequently, while these resorts are still generally experiencing growth in tourist arrivals, this has been punctuated by brief periods of stagnation and decline caused by natural disasters, regional or global economic crises, outdated facilities, competition from nearby destinations, or a tarnished image.
The success of these resorts is due to a combination of factors, including the natural landscape and climate, a supportive government and/or enthusiastic entrepreneurs and developers, a carefully crafted image, and a commitment to catering to the needs and desires of tourists. Although they all offer a particular brand of sun, sand and sex mass tourism, they each receive different types of visitors – different proportions of domestic and international visitors, and of different origins, and with different motivations – and have different struggles – for example, Ibiza’s problem with highly seasonal tourism, or Miami’s challenge to continually reinvent itself and stay trendy.

Most of these places lack a traditional centre or CBD, with the exception of Miami’s downtown. Even then, its downtown is not as easily recognisable or distinguished as one would expect, with the high-rise residential and holiday apartments located beyond it nevertheless dominating the city’s skyline. Indeed, the tourist hubs – or recreational business districts – are the most developed and the busiest areas of each place. Although, as noted in resort morphology literature, development is centred on proximity to the coastline, how this manifests is different in each place – the Gold Coast is a series of linear strips, Ibiza and Thailand have hubs spread across the islands, and Miami and Cancún have multiple centres. Although still reliant on tourism, some of these places (namely Miami and the Gold Coast) are evolving into more cosmopolitan, ‘serious’ cities with diverse economies and vibrant cultural scenes.\(^\text{114}\)

Perhaps in an attempt to rejuvenate themselves and prevent decline, these resorts are attempting to expand their offerings, moving away from solely promoting beach tourism and adopting more of a post-Fordist approach, incorporating alternatives like cultural tourism and ecotourism. Although often considered to be mutually exclusive, mass tourism and alternative tourism co-exist in these sites (Kontogeorgopoulos 2004a, 2004b, 2009; Torres 2002). The growing interest in alternative tourism may be in response to the negative effects associated with mass tourism, which progressively puts more pressure on mature destinations – for example, a perceived increase in crime (particularly drug trafficking and prostitution), traffic congestion, stress on infrastructure, pollution, environmental

\(^{114}\) This is discussed further in Chapters 10 and 11.
degredation, and, as a result, disgruntled residents. Promoting alternative, niche tourism sectors attracts types of tourists who are seen as higher-spending, more respectful, and more likely to occupy areas outside of the most intensified tourism districts (in which the aforementioned problems are at their worst). In the process, resorts are capitalising on lesser known elements of their local distinctiveness and expanding imaginaries of what exactly these places are like (Agarwal 2002). Advertising a variety of experiences can remedy periods of stagnation and decline by making a destination more competitive in the global market. These changes signify an interest in the long-term sustainability and growth of the tourism industry, but not necessarily any great concern for environmental sustainability. That is, strategies for sustainable tourism, rather than sustainable development, are the primary concern (Kontogeorgopoulos 1999).

The above commonalities comprise some of the characteristics and processes which have come to mark resorts as distinct kinds of urban milieux. In the following chapter, I continue to discuss and analyse these shared aspects, focusing particularly on their popular imaginaries, and how this is reflected and manifested both representationally – as dominant narratives of resort identity – and materially – as dominant rhythms.

---

115 These issues are the focus of Chapter 11.
116 This point is contested – Meethan (2001) suggests that greater disparity of wealth between hosts and (upmarket) guests causes more tensions between the two.
Section 3: Insights, perspectives and possibilities

Chapter 9: Popular imaginaries and representations

Resorts are constituted as much by the symbolic as by the material, and how they are imagined shapes how they are lived. Through representations, interactions with others and subjective experiences, tourists develop mental images of destinations, which influence not only their expectations of what the place will be like, but what kinds of holidays they will have and what memories they will make. These imaginaries inform social relations and spatial practices in resorts to a significant extent, working to construct and sustain particular rhythms based on touristic consumption.

There are a number of commonalities in how each of the places in my study is imagined, and these shared imaginaries are part of what makes resorts distinct kinds of urban milieux. Additionally, the most popular elements of these imaginaries become implicated in the dominant (meta)narratives of identity for each place. In this chapter I explore the most prominent of these imagined resort characteristics, and how they manifest similarly and differently in lived spaces. Specifically, I consider resorts as escapist, extraordinary, paradisiacal fantasy worlds; as liminal, carnivalesque sites of liberation, hedonism and excessive consumption; and as sexualised, transgressive, risky, seedy and unsafe. In the second half of the chapter, I examine these themes through the example of youth tourism and nightlife.

It is important to note that while these narratives and imaginaries have arisen out of tourism, they do not exist only in the media and in the minds of tourists. On the contrary, since tourism is so pervasive in these places, touristic imaginaries, myths, behaviours and rhythms are also bound up in local experiences and understandings of space (see Chapter 11).

‘Elsewhere’ and ‘nowhere’: escapism, fantasy, spectacle and the tourist gaze

Distinctions between home and away, familiar and unfamiliar, everyday and exotic, and mundane and extraordinary are central to tourism (Urry 2002; Edensor 2000).
Tourists desire spaces and experiences that are, to some degree, different from those of their everyday lives\(^\text{117}\) (Urry 1995, 1999, 2002; Desforges 1998). Urry (2006) observes that tourists derive pleasure ‘from the connoisseurship of difference’ (p. vii). In the case of resorts, visitors may be drawn by the weather, natural landscape, local culture, atmosphere or ‘vibe’, landmarks, attractions or special events. People from colder climates flock to Miami and Ibiza to escape the winter chill; visitors to Cancún explore archaeological sites; and young people embark on journeys to Koh Phangan to attend the epic Full Moon Parties.

Existing outside of the routines and responsibilities that dominate their everyday lives, tourists imagine resorts as spatially, socially and temporally ‘elsewhere’. They are places to which to escape (Ryan 2002a, 2002b; Winchester et al 1999; Dann 1996; Symes 1997), enabling a sense of pleasurable, temporary dislocation (Wise 2006; Rojek & Urry 1997) or displacement (Minca & Oakes 2006). Resorts capitalise on this by positioning themselves in official tourism narratives as sites of fantasy – as exotic, hedonistic, playful and spectacular. This is captured by the frequent description of them in scholarly literature, tourist promotion and news media as ‘paradise’\(^\text{118}\) (Potts et al 2013; Stockwell 2011; Malam 2008; Torres & Momsen 2006; Sheller 2004; Sheller & Urry 2004; George 1981) which implies that they are idyllic, utopian and unreal. Such myths ignore the complex histories, social identities and community dynamics associated with these places, instead suggesting that they are timeless or dehistoricised spaces (Brown 2013; Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento 2010; Wise 2006). In other words, they are simultaneously imagined and portrayed as ‘elsewhere’ and ‘nowhere’.

Cultivating and sustaining this imaginary entails the commodification of culture and nature, people and places, as spectacles for the tourist gaze. Sightseeing is an integral practice to tourism (Meethan 2001) and tourism spaces are therefore produced in ways that support visual consumption (Zukin 1991, 1995). Since tourists want to see things that are out of the ordinary (Urry 2002), the task of the tourism industry is to ‘transform places of the humdrum and ordinary into the apparently spectacular and exotic’ (Bærenholdt et al 2004, p. 2). Even where

\(^{117}\) At the same time, tourists expect varying degrees of familiarity, as is discussed further in the next chapter.

\(^{118}\) See also Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
attractions (for example, nightclubs) are similar to those that can be found at home, they are expected to be bigger, better and more extravagant (Urry 2002).

Spectacle in resorts is ubiquitous and takes many forms. The natural landscape is one of the most obvious objects of the gaze in resorts, with a particular focus on beaches and forests. For example, Miami’s nearby Everglades have been commodified as spectacle through the establishment of themed activities and attractions such as alligator farms, airboat rides, a ‘safari park’ and the Miccosukee Indian Village (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015a; Bush 1999). Bush (1999) describes this as the city ‘exploiting the exoticism of the surroundings’ (p. 157).

Figure 89: Maya Bay, Koh Phi Phi Leh

Maya Bay, a beach on the island of Koh Phi Phi Leh off the coast of Phuket in Thailand, provides another interesting example. Made famous by the film The Beach (2000), Maya Bay continues to be an enormously popular day trip destination for tourists wanting a photograph in front of its iconic clear blue water, limestone cliffs and long-tail boats (see Figure 89). My motivation for going there in the first place was based on how often I had seen it on social media – Maya Bay seemed to be the most popular backdrop for the quintessential Thailand travel photo, which
functions as a material artefact of memory for the self at the same time as it signifies ‘coolness’, worldliness and increased cultural capital to others. While there, a considerable amount of my time was spent watching people pose, taking photos of others at their request, and trying to get my own shot to post to Instagram (I was, after all, simultaneously researcher and tourist). This highlights the significance of visual consumption in every stage of the tourism experience (Urry 2002; Rojek & Urry 1997) – in planning and anticipating holidays, in being there first-hand, and in creating memories and cultivating individual narratives of identity.

Figure 90: Art Deco building in Miami Beach

The built environments of resorts add another dimension to the tourism spectacle, although this is secondary to the allure of the natural environment. That is, visitors to the places in my study are typically not drawn primarily by an interest in architecture or monuments.119 The exception to this may be visitors to Thailand

---

119 For instance, in 2015 visitors to Miami reported that their favourite features of the destinations were (in order): the beaches, weather, South Beach/Ocean Drive, shopping, restaurants, nightlife, ‘attractions’ (a vague category encompassing both paid and unpaid attractions), and then the Art Deco Area, followed by some other categories with smaller amounts of votes (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016). For comparison, 58.6 per cent of visitors rated beaches as one of their favourite attractions, while only 22.2 per cent of visitors voted for the Art Deco Area (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau 2016).
and Cancún, although even then their engagement with historic sites is often only an aside to an itinerary focused largely on beach activities and partying. Nevertheless, architecture does indeed contribute significantly to the experience of consumption for each of the resorts in this study, and to the sense of fantasy on which they rely. Oversized shopping malls and grand hotels emphasise the dominance of leisure, and being among Miami’s colourful Art Deco facades or the Gold Coast’s contemporary ultra-high-rises fosters a distinct feeling of being elsewhere. As Baker, Bennett and Wise (2012) observe, buildings like high-rise hotels also further encourage the consumption of nature by placing a premium on rooms with ‘sweeping views’ of the ocean or the hinterland.

In addition to places, people are made part of the tourism spectacle. In non-Western destinations like Cancún and Thailand, the locals – or ‘natives’, as they are sometimes referred to in tourism literature (Castellanos 2010b; Dann 1996; Cohen 1972, 1982) – are positioned in marketing material as the primitive, servile, exotic Other (Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento 2010; Sheller 2004). That is, they are objectified by an orientalist, neo-colonial tourist gaze as cultural markers signifying the authenticity of the place and of the tourist experience (Bandyopadhyay & Nascimento 2010; Law et al 2007; Dann 1996). In the Western destinations (Miami, Gold Coast and Ibiza), the locals are notably absent from most tourism promotion, save for their inclusion as bodies on the beach or smiling hotel and restaurant workers.

However, it is not only the hosts who are part of the spectacle – tourists also become objects of the tourist gaze. It is not enough for there to be sunny beaches, mega-malls or extravagant theme parks – these spaces must be lived social spaces, occupied by other tourists engaging in similar kinds of consumption, actively contributing to the desired atmosphere (Urry 1995). Thus, resorts are sites where the ‘collective gaze’ (Urry 2002) predominates, marked by the touristic equivalent of audience participation and conscious enjoyment of group experience. As Urry (2002) puts it:

... what I call the collective tourist gaze involves conviviality. Other people also viewing the site are necessary to give liveliness or a sense of carnival or movement. Large numbers of people that are present can indicate that

---

120 Even then, one can only assume that some of these people are locals.
The collective gaze operates most obviously in sites of mass tourism: on crowded beaches; in nightclubs, bars and restaurants; and at theme parks. For Urry, this is juxtaposed to the 'romantic gaze', which is auratic, contemplative, solitary and elitist, and thus more readily associated with sites of cultural tourism, ecotourism or other forms of alternative tourism. In its most desirable form, the romantic gaze is characterised by the absence of people – ‘the deserted beach, the empty hilltop, the uninhabited forest, the uncontaminated mountain stream …’ (Urry 2002, p. 150). The appeal and the purpose of sites of the collective gaze, on the other hand, depend entirely on the presence of a crowd; on congregation, interaction and consumption (Torres 2002, p. 99). When resorts lose their popularity, events are over or theme parks close, they transform into ‘sites of a lost collective gaze’ (Urry 2002, p. 150). Clearly, then, these tourist gazes, and the different styles of tourism that cater to and underpin them, are intrinsically tied to particular rhythms – to the presence of large numbers of people constituting a convivial rhythm in the case of mass tourism, and to the relative absence of people constituting a quieter, more solitary rhythm (conducive to contemplation) in the case of alternative tourism.

Sites of the tourist gaze can also be understood as ‘temporal heterotopias’ in Foucault’s (1986) terms. These are spaces that are linked to disturbances in time – on the one hand, an accumulation of time, such as with museums and libraries, or on the other hand, time as fleeting and transitory, such as with theme parks and festivals (Soja 1996; Foucault 1986). Resorts and their leisure spaces (including nightclubs, beaches, and main streets like Ocean Road in Miami, Cavill Avenue on the Gold Coast, and Bangla Road in Phuket) are temporal heterotopias. The nightclubs of Ibiza, for instance, only open during the summer months when the island is filled with young tourists, and the space of the nightclub only takes on its characteristic atmosphere when occupied by people undertaking the expected practices – dancing, drinking, shouting and laughing. Tourists, then, are anything but

---

121 The romantic and collective gazes are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and mass tourism frequently involves both. I explore the role of the romantic gaze in more detail in the next chapter.
passive consumers. They in fact play an important role in the performance of space and the production of spatial rhythms and spectacle.

**Liminality and the carnivalesque**

Resorts can be conceptualised as liminal spaces in terms of sociality, spatiality and temporality. Shields (1991) describes liminality as ‘moments of discontinuity in the social fabric, in social space, and in history... moments of “in-between-ness”, of a loss of social coordinates’ (p. 83). Liminality involves ‘a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life’ (Shields 1991, p. 84). Since ‘the experience of liminality is a socially unifying one’ (Shields 1991, p. 89), liminal spaces enable the collective enactment of transgressive behaviours. As a concept, liminality has often referred to religious experiences like pilgrimages, or to rites of passage marking transitions from one life stage to the next (Shields 1991; van Gennep 1977 [1960]; Turner 1973, 1974 [1969]). Drawing on Victor Turner’s (1973, 1974) work on pilgrimage and *rites de passage*, Urry (2002) outlines that they involve:

… first, social and spatial separation from the normal place of residence and conventional social ties; second, liminality, where ... conventional social ties are suspended, an intensive bonding ‘communitas’ is experienced, and there is direct experience of the sacred or supernatural; and third, reintegration, where the individual is reintegrated with the previous social group, usually at a higher social status. (p. 11)

Tourism in resorts shares some similarities with these experiences – tourists temporarily escape from home, work and routine; they engage in collective consumption of fantasy and spectacle; and upon returning home, they have accumulated meaningful life experiences and increased their cultural capital. Additionally, resorts can act as settings for contemporary rites of passage, such as Schoolies on the Gold Coast, which is discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Beaches and islands have long been considered geographically liminal (Shaw & Williams 2004; Sharpley 2004; Ryan 2002a; Urry 2002; Shields 1991). The seashore itself is an in-between, the margin between land and sea (Preston-Whyte 2004; Ryan 2002b; Winchester et al 1999). Resorts constitute what Turner and Ash (1976) call the ‘pleasure periphery’: the collection of peripheral sites (usually warm and sunny) that act as places for escape for people from urban centres. This is echoed in
Selwyn's (1996) argument that ‘tourism may be said to be both an outcome and an expression of the relation between centres and peripheries’ (p. 10) in political, economic, cultural, social and spatial senses.

Due in part to this spatial marginality, beaches and islands have become strongly associated with leisure and pleasure (Shaw & Williams 2004; Sharpley 2004; Urry 2002; Winchester et al 1999; Shields 1991). As Ryan (2002a) suggests, ‘beaches are one of the few areas where it is socially tolerated for adults to have fun as distinct from leisure’ (p. 157). Resorts are purposeful extensions of the beach’s ‘territorialized hedonism’ (Crang 2014, p. 69). They are often described as ‘playgrounds’, implying an atmosphere of playfulness, youthfulness, relaxation and ‘social irresponsibility’ (Ryan 2002b, p. 4). For most adults, this is in stark contrast to their everyday life experiences. Australian writer Matthew Condon (2014) captures this effectively in his description of the Gold Coast: ‘If southeast Queensland were a body, Brisbane was the brain and the Gold Coast a cluster of erogenous zones largely below the waist’. Dominated by leisure industries and pleasurable pursuits, places like resorts are readily perceived as they are positioned: as distinct and removed from the tourist’s mundane world of work, rules and obligations that take place in more conventional places (Edensor 2007; Diken & Laustsen 2004; Meethan 1996, 2001; Symes 1997).

During a holiday, the normative performances, routines, constraints and rules of everyday life are believed to be temporarily suspended, transcended and/or inverted (Edensor 2007; Urry 2002; Craik 1997; Shields 1991). Thus, resorts function very effectively as liminal spaces for collective, socially sanctioned transgression, hedonism and excess (Edensor 2007; Ryan 2002b). This behaviour can be understood in relation to Bakhtin’s (1984) concept of the carnivalesque, which clearly shares features with liminality and rites of passage:

... carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (p. 10)

In short, carnival is marked by the subversion of dominant moral codes and norms of propriety (Shields 1991; Winchester et al 1999). Bakhtin (1984) proposes that it is a kind of lived spectacle, a participatory and deeply affective experience (much
like Urry’s collective gaze). During carnival, it feels as if ‘there is no other life outside it’ (Bakhtin 1984, p. 7), producing a sense of spatial, temporal and existential detachment from normal life.

Yet despite the usefulness of concepts of liminality and carnival, resorts do not exist entirely outside of the everyday. They are in some ways spectacular, and in other ways banal (Pons et al 2009). Aside from the facts that resorts are everyday spaces for those who live in them, and that all holidays inevitably involve the enactment of routine daily tasks, tourism also necessarily requires a degree of control, regulation and routine (Edensor 2007; Shields 1992a). The behaviours, aesthetics and norms characteristic of liminal resort spaces are an ‘extension of ... home environments’ (Shaw & Williams 2004, p. 152). That is, they are sites for intensified expressions of the conventional values and consumption practices enshrined by capitalism. For example, tourists might drink alcohol at home, but may drink excessively on holiday; they might shop at home, but spend more while on vacation, and so on. As the term ‘pleasure periphery’ suggests, resorts are not completely outside of the centre (symbolic of the realm of mundane working life, dominant cultural values/norms and traditional city spaces) but on the margin, in between inside and outside. Resorts are carnivalesque, blurring boundaries between order and disorder, freedom and constraint, home and away, and familiar and unfamiliar. It is also important to acknowledge, however, that what we conceptualise as the ‘centre’ is contested and problematic in itself. What is a ‘normal’, ‘conventional’ or ‘serious’ city? No place can ever be completely representative of a dominant Western culture, since all places are, like resorts, to greater or lesser extents liminal, hybrid, fragmented and heterogeneous.

Transgression and excess: sensuous encounters and sexualised spaces

Tourism is a sensuous experience (Edensor 2006; Degen 2004; Bærenholdt et al 2004; Crouch & Desforges 2003; Crouch 2002; Urry 1999, 2002). Places are not only seen or gazed upon, but also touched, heard, smelt and tasted (Edensor 2006; Selänniemi 2003; Crouch 2002; Coleman & Crang 2002; Saldanha 2002; Urry 2002; Tucker 1997). Tourists do not simply view space, they sense it, engage with it and perform it through their embodied encounters (Crouch & Desforges 2003; Coleman
& Crang 2002; Urry 2002; Edensor 2000). Although tourists are able to see visual representations of destinations prior to their holiday – through the internet, TV, film, brochures, and photos taken by family and friends – there are certain things they can only experience by travelling to the place itself, by being immersed in its lived spaces and caught up in its rhythms. As Crang (2014) illustrates:

Tourists do not simply go to ‘see’ even when they are sightseers. On the beach we go to also feel the sun, and we feel the discomfort of the too-hot sand, sand inside clothes, or pebbles on tender flesh. The smell of sun cream is deeply evocative, as much as foods and beverages that seem so delicious on vacation yet which are strangely lacking in appeal at home. (p. 73)

Tourism is, then, a fundamentally embodied experience (Coleman & Crang 2002; Crouch 2002). Tourists in resorts are particularly preoccupied with bodily pleasures more so than cultural or intellectual pursuits. Sensual desires underpin and drive typical resort activities like sunbathing, swimming and surfing at the beach; dining on local cuisine at restaurants; listening to music, dancing, drinking and/or drug-taking in bars and nightclubs; hiking through humid rainforests; enjoying the fear and exhilaration of theme park rides or water sports; and indulging in spa treatments. This observation about embodiment also encompasses less pleasurable feelings, which are nonetheless a key part of the experience – sore feet from walking around all day, sunburn from spending too long at the beach, and hangovers from partying too hard. The tourist gaze remains important, as seeing people engage in similar ways normalises all of these socio-spatial practices and contributes to the expected atmosphere of collectively performed hedonism, indulgence and relaxation.

Many resort activities can be interpreted as performances of the undisciplined, excessive, ‘grotesque’ body, another concept closely connected to the carnivalesque (Shields 1991; Bakhtin 1984). In the context of resorts, Shields (1991) relates the grotesque body to that which is exposed on the beach, invades the personal space of others and transgresses norms of morality. This culture of bodily display is, in part, how resorts have come to be associated with ‘sex’ as much as ‘sun, sand and sea’ (Carson 2013; Shaw & Williams 2004; Rojek 1993). Resorts are imagined as sexualised spaces, a perception that is informed and reinforced by broader associations with pleasure, liminality, spectacle and voyeurism.
For example, this sexualised imaginary is so entrenched in the Gold Coast’s identity that in 2012 the city’s own art gallery curated a major exhibition entitled ‘Sexualising the City: Imaging Desire and Gold Coast Identity’ to document this motif throughout its history. The city has long been known to violate what is considered proper and tasteful. It is marketed as the place ‘where the “bikini” was born’ (Tourism Australia 2014), but as early as the 1920s, well before that icon of beach culture appeared, visitors to the Gold Coast tested the limits of modesty with their bathing suits by revealing considerably more flesh than was deemed appropriate at the time (Longhurst 1995; McRobbie 1984). Today, common sights in Surfers Paradise include scantily clad Meter Maids, even more scantily clad people sunbaking on the beach, and athletic bodies in the surf and jogging down The Esplanade. A Gold Coast holiday invites tourists to gaze voyeuristically on the beach, in the street and from their high-rise balconies (Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2012). After the sun goes down, bodies continue to be on display in the highly sexualised spaces of nightclubs and strip clubs (Cantillon 2015a).

Similar dynamics between bodies and voyeurism exist in each of the resorts I focus on. Walking through Playa d’en Bossa in Ibiza, it was clear that appearances were important – although dressed in bikinis, women commonly wore heavy make up, and while the men’s shorts and loose singlets were not as revealing as their beachwear might be, they nevertheless dressed for display. The popularity of nightclub-branded clothing was clearly intended to exhibit a degree of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) for the wearer. It seemed that people were self-aware of the fact that they would be gazed upon by others, and were thus performing in ways that allowed them to be deemed ‘cool’ or attractive by peers (or, at the very least, rendered them ‘normal’ enough to fit in, to feel a sense of belonging). I became aware of this because I felt like I did not fit in: I wasn’t with a group of friends, I wasn’t tanned, I wasn’t wearing much make up, my clothes covered more skin, and I’m not a house music fanatic. In other words, I was not demonstrating subcultural competence.

Miami Beach also had its share of image-conscious ‘beautiful’ people. As I discussed in my overview of Miami, the tourist hub was crowded with (though not completely dominated by) tanned, toned, barely dressed young people. This closely approximated my expectations of Miami, informed by TV shows, films, popular
cultural references and other cultural phenomena like the South Beach Diet (which metonymically associates the place with a particular lifestyle and aesthetic). Of all the places I visited, whether resorts or not, Miami had the most blatantly sexualised atmosphere. During my fieldwork there, I observed many instances of flirtatious banter between strangers on the street, as well as several instances of sexual harassment. For example, I heard men speak to women as they walked by, or shout from afar, things such as: ‘hey sexy’, ‘you’re adorable’, ‘you’re so beautiful’, ‘who you texting? You should be texting me!’, ‘where are you going, pretty lady?’, and ‘where you going? Want a ride?’ (shouted from his car as he slowly drove by). This sexualised atmosphere is markedly different from that which I had experienced in other major urban centres, except for resorts, in which a similar kind of sociality is present, albeit to less intensified degrees. What I am referring to is a more open, permissive sociality – the normalisation of superficial (and often sexually charged) interactions between strangers (even if unwanted), and a momentary reduction of the sense of anonymity or invisibility so frequently attributed to city spaces (Tonkiss 2005).

Locals can also become objects of the gaze in these sexualised resort spaces (Sheller 2004). This is particularly prominent in non-Western destinations like Thailand, where sex tourism is a major niche market and prostitution is a growing social issue (Berger 2007). Perceived as the exotic, erotic Other, Thai women (and to a lesser extent, men) are fetishised and sexualised as tourism commodities. In popular imaginaries and unofficial tourism narratives, Thailand is well known for its ‘massage parlours’ offering ‘happy endings’. While there are many legitimate businesses offering Thai massages, I came across several shops in Phuket and Koh Samui which were clearly offering sexual services – those with young Thai women waiting out the front dressed in skimpy clothing and high heels (clearly not the attire of a traditional, professional masseuse), and those who only spoke to lone men who walked by.

Sexual encounters are just one of the many ways in which tourists can ‘indulge’ while on vacation. As previously mentioned, other hedonistic experiences – drinking, partying, eating, shopping and so on – are in themselves ordinary, everyday activities, but in the context of resorts they are undertaken in excess, and are thus transformed to be more intensified and spectacular. In terms of both their
imaginaries and their materiality resorts share an emphasis on what are core attributes of the carnivalesque for Bakhtin (1984): excess, hyperbole and indulgence. Wise (2012) highlights this in relation to the Gold Coast:

In the national imagination, the Gold Coast equates with very bright sunlight, very long sandy beaches, very good waves, very high buildings, very big shopping malls, very active night life and very exciting theme parks. It equates with excess in the consumption of sun, surf, sex, shopping and the sensational. (p. 99)

In Cancún, excess is particularly exemplified in its multiple all-inclusive hotels. My hotel, for instance, had several large buffets with a range of cuisines (for example, Mexican, Italian and American as staples, with French and Japanese themed nights), some operating 24 hours per day, in addition to five restaurants available by booking. My room included features like a ‘mini’ bar with full size bottles of tequila, rum, vodka and brandy, which could be restocked at any time upon request. Guests were offered mimosas at breakfast, cocktails by the pool, and tequila at lunch and dinner. Excessive consumption of food and alcohol was expected and encouraged.

The all-inclusive model allows guests to stay in the confines of their hotel for the majority of their stay, limiting their zone of experience to specific spaces. Days are spent by the pool, on the hotel’s own stretch of beach, and in the buffet restaurants. At night, guests can venture out to the nearby clubs (which also include unlimited drinks in their entry fee) before heading back to the hotel for a late night/early morning meal. Shaw and Williams (2004) argue that these practices are typical of contemporary beach resorts:

For many tourists attracted to such holidays, the holiday experience is reduced to a relatively limited set of practices on the beach and at the poolside in the day-time, complemented by extensive night-life practices – often dominated by drink, music and the promise of sexual encounters. This is, in part, a reinvention of the seaside resort, in that it marks out a new form of tourist space, where extreme forms of consumption and behaviour can be experienced. (pp. 224–225)

For tourists, these excessive, hedonistic practices not only function to provide pleasure, but also to signify social status. That is, as ‘agent[s] of capitalism’ (Brown 122 As stated in the Cancún overview, these are hotels that include all food and drinks in the room rate.)
tourists engage in *conspicuous* consumption (Brown 2013; Meethan 1996, 2001). Holidays are seen as liberating, with the potential to free oneself not only from everyday routines and responsibilities, but from everyday identities as well (Briggs 2013; Diken & Laustsen 2004; Boissevain 1996). Doing tourism involves becoming deterritorialised (Delueze & Guattari 2004) in that it quite literally displaces subjects from their home territories, relocating them (temporarily) to other spatial contexts. In the process, the tourists are transformed, as are their destinations of choice (during the holiday) and their localities (upon returning home). For the individual, transformation can occur through touristic consumption, with self-identity being playfully (re)constructed and performed. In the liminal space-time of a resort holiday, tourists can live out the fantasy of temporarily reinventing themselves and elevating their socio-economic status (Wise 2010; Boissevain 1996; Dann 1996). For a short period they can experience and display a more luxurious lifestyle than they are accustomed to at home – staying in opulent accommodation; eating lavish meals; devoting each day to leisure; driving fancy rental cars (such as the case in Miami Beach); mingling with the youthful, beautiful and (presumably) wealthy; and being served by hotel staff, cleaners, chefs and spa workers. Tourists consume excessively, enjoy the spectacle of other people’s consumption, and capture and disseminate this shared sense of conspicuous consumption through social media. Such experiences, although temporary, have lasting effects on a tourist’s sense of self in that they constitute the kinds of memories that come to shape one’s life narratives.

**The risky, the illicit and illegal**

The transgressive excess and indulgence characteristic of resorts also gives rise to risky behaviours and acts of ‘deviance’ that may be avoided in other contexts, and especially in the home environment. For example, people are less inhibited about partaking in illegal and/or potentially dangerous activities like public drunkenness, drug taking and hiring prostitutes, all of which appear to be contextually sanctioned. While such practices are obscured from official tourism narratives for obvious reasons, they have nonetheless become firmly entrenched in the popular imaginaries of resorts, due in large part to the unofficial narratives of place

---

123 These processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation are discussed further in Chapter 11.
disseminated by the media. These are further reinforced by how often the social
media sites of young tourists convey representations of illegal and/or risky
behaviours. It can readily seem as if such activities are expected, particularly in
resorts associated with clubbing and partying.

On Thailand’s island of Koh Phangan, for example, it is not uncommon for tourists
to ride motorbikes while intoxicated, without helmets and without a motorbike
licence, even though the winding roads can be dangerous and difficult to navigate
when sober. Further, at Full Moon Parties, tourists may use illegal substances like
magic mushrooms, marijuana, or unidentified hallucinogenic pills, and participate
in risky activities like skipping a burning rope or limbo dancing under a burning
pole.

**Figure 91: Revellers watch and take photos as someone limbos under a burning pole at the Full Moon Party**

Despite the potentially severe consequences (e.g. serious injury, fines or jail time),
these acts of transgression are normalised as typical parts of the tourism ritual
which offer opportunities to ‘let loose’. This has, in part, contributed to a strong
association between resorts and crime.\(^{124}\) Stories about drink spiking, alcohol-fuelled violence, drug trafficking, drug overdoses and sexual assaults occurring in

\(^{124}\) This link between beach resorts and a reputation for criminality has been raised in
scholarly work on other destinations as well, including Brighton (Shields 1991), Ayia Napa
(Sharpley 2004) and the Caribbean (Sheller 2004).
tourist hubs are mainstays in national and international news media. Tourists may be portrayed as a nuisance – as noisy, inconsiderate, out-of-control trouble makers; or, alternatively, as the victims – as vulnerable to local scam artists or drug dealers. Ibiza’s tourists, for example, are often represented from both angles, as being potential victims of and potential perpetrators of crimes like sexual assault (see Alexander 2014) and drug dealing (see Couzens 2015; Reidy 2013).

In Western media, it is especially common for Thailand to be portrayed as dangerous. In addition to reporting on motorbike accidents, drug overdoses, rapes and murders, online news articles warn of an unsympathetic police force, ‘bag-snatchers’, drink spiking and the local ‘mafia’ (the ‘tuk tuk mafia’, as my interviewees called it) run by taxi drivers and jet ski operators who are notorious for scamming and assaulting tourists (Daniel 2013; Paris 2013). Not surprisingly, these articles, written for a Western audience and expressing a fear of the Other, fail to reflect on how these crimes impact on the local population and their sense of safety.

In the case of Cancún, associations with crime pertain mostly to the drug trade and related cartel activity (Castellanos 2010b). However, perhaps due to the enclavic nature of Cancún’s hotel zone, this kind of criminal activity tends to occur on the city’s outskirts (see, for instance, Whitelocks 2015), thus not significantly damaging its tourism image. Miami is also associated with drugs. As I outlined in the previous section, the ebb and flow of Miami’s popularity over the years has to some extent correlated with the region’s crime rates, or at least the perception that crime rates were elevated. Miami is not necessarily seen as a dangerous place, but a seemingly glitzy, glamorous place with a seedy underbelly, a place where excessive pleasure and pushing boundaries easily slips into more serious transgression and risk. This image has been reinforced in popular cultural representations like the documentary Cocaine Cowboys (2006) and fictional films Bad Boys (1995), Bad Boys II (2003), Blow (2001) and 2 Fast 2 Furious (2003), all of which have stories based on Miami’s drug trade. Other neo-noir texts like the film Body Heat (2001) and the television series Dexter (2006–2013) and Miami Vice (1984–1989) depict violence and crime more broadly. Each of these texts stylistically plays on the juxtaposition between the idyllic tropical setting of the city and its gritty underworld.

Much like Miami, most film and television set on the Gold Coast has crime-related themes (Baker et al 2012; Stockwell 2011) – for example, the short-lived police
drama television series *The Strip* (2008), the reality television series *Gold Coast Cops* (2014–2015), and the animated sitcom television series *Pacific Heat* (2016–present). Due in part to sensationalist media reporting, the Gold Coast has earned labels such as Australia’s ‘crime capital’ (Larkins 2013; Malkin 2011; Smail 2011; Stockwell 2011), ‘fraud capital’ (Butler 2013) and ‘sin city’ (Potts et al. 2013; Griffin 1998). In particular, media reporting focuses on organised crime controlled by ‘bikies’ (motorcycle gangs), armed robberies, drug trafficking and rare, but highly publicised, cases of shootings and stabbings (Kane & Young 2013; Malkin 2011; Sharwood 2011; Smail 2011; Stockwell 2011).

Surfers Paradise is seen as a hotspot for dodgy deals and criminal activity on the Gold Coast. Bars and nightclubs have long been rumoured to be the main site for drug trafficking in the city, involving local bikie gangs and corruption among lower-level police officers (McKenna 2010). Recently, a multi-million-dollar drug bust exposed the connections between several prominent Surfers Paradise nightclub owners and the trafficking of cocaine and amphetamines (Fineran & Stigwood 2014; Stolz, Pierce & Laughlin 2014). In addition to the drugs, ‘millions of dollars in alleged drug assets including luxury homes, cars, boats and jewellery’ were seized in the operation (Fineran & Stigwood 2014). Thus, drug trafficking was ‘proven’ to be deeply implicated in both the sex and sleaze of Surfers Paradise and the extravagance of the Gold Coast’s perceived luxury lifestyle.

**Nightlife: an example**

In this subsection, I focus on the nightlife of resorts to provide an example of how the common elements outlined above – spectacle, gazing, escapism, hedonism, excess, liminality, embodiment, transgression and risk – converge and manifest socially and spatially. While the marketing of resorts tends to emphasise the beaches and warm, sunny weather of the dayscape, the sexualised clubs, bars and parties of the nightscape are equally important aspects of the tourist experience. In addition to conventional resort facilities such as restaurants and gambling venues, nightlife in the resorts I have focused on caters especially to the lucrative youth tourism (Knox 2009; Shaw & Williams 2004) and party tourism (Diken & Laustsen 2004) markets. These resorts act as nodes in a shifting transnational network (Bennett 2004) of hot spots which constitute a globalised mainstream club culture. This is evident, for example, in the famous events to which these places play host, and with
which they have become synonymous: Full Moon Parties in Thailand; Spring Break in Miami and Cancún; the summertime opening and closing parties of nightclubs in Ibiza; and Schoolies on the Gold Coast.

In each of these cases, hedonistic transgression and ‘risky’ behaviours like binge drinking, taking drugs and pursuing casual sexual encounters are considered to be the norm (Kelly, Hughes & Bellis 2014; Tutenges 2012; Goulding & Shankar 2011). Such aspects of the resort experience are frequently scrutinised in the literature – see, for example, studies on risk, sex, alcohol consumption and/or drug use during Spring Break (Lewis, Patrick, Mittmann & Kaysen 2014; Ragsdale, Porter, Zamboanga, St Lawrence, Read-Wahidi & White 2011; Patrick, Morgan, Maggs & Lefkowitz 2010; Sönmez, Apostolopoulos, Yu, Yang, Mattila & Yu 2006; Josiam, Hobson, Dietrich & Smeaton 1998), Schoolies (Lawton & Weaver 2015; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold & Oppermann 2003; Zinkiewicz, Davey & Curd 1999; Smith & Rosenthal 1997) and in Ibiza (Kelly et al 2014; Briggs 2013; Briggs & Turner 2011; Briggs, Turner, David & De Courcey 2011; Briggs et al 2011; Bellis, Hughes, Thomson & Bennett 2004; Bellis et al 2000).125 Transgressive practices vary for each event in that they have different meanings attached to them, and participants have different motivations and purposes for seeking them out. However, the key commonality is the spatial context (Briggs & Turner 2012; Litvin 2009; Sönmez et al 2006; Josiam et al 1998). Resorts offer themselves as spaces with a heightened sense of anonymity and also as spaces for socially sanctioned transgression and regulated expressions of disorder.

Full Moon Parties, Schoolies and Spring Break

The island resort of Koh Phangan, for instance, provides an exotic, marginal setting for its infamous Full Moon Parties. As mentioned in the previous section, the Full Moon Parties attract tens of thousands of tourists from around the world each month. Having been born out of the emergence of rave culture (Malam 2008; Westerhausen 2002), the events crystalise some of the most distinctive elements of the contemporary house music milieu. Young party-goers wearing fluorescent

125 Many of these studies are quantitative and take an approach which aims to measure risk and motivations for partaking in risky behaviours. They offer potential ‘solutions’ and recommendations to minimise risk and deter young people from doing these things. Thus, the studies further reinforce the ‘youth as problem’ narrative mentioned later in this section.
clothes and glow-in-the-dark face and body paint dance to house music, have conversations with strangers, eat junk food, throw up and hook up. Of course, instead of a dance floor, all of this takes place on the sand, and there is limited (if any) security or official regulation. Beachside stalls sell the iconic oversized 'bucket' drinks (filled with ice, alcohol and a mixer), and party drugs like ecstasy, LSD and magic mushrooms are easily accessible. The Full Moon Party has a carnivalesque atmosphere (Malam 2008, 2004) that has been mythologised in popular culture and mainstream youth tourism narratives, promising participants a ‘wild’, ‘authentic’, once-in-a-lifetime experience. The reality of this experience, of course, also involves serious risks associated with taking drugs of unknown origin and composition, engaging in potentially unsafe sexual activity with strangers (thus exposing oneself to STIs and STDs), and/or injury resulting from participation in dangerous activities while intoxicated (such as the aforementioned motorbike riding).

Figure 92: Revellers dance at the Full Moon Party, Koh Phangan

In Australia, a similar ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experience for young people is Schoolies – the two-week period each November when Australian teenagers go on vacation to celebrate the end of their final exams and the completion of high school. The most popular Schoolies destination is overwhelmingly the Gold Coast, attracting upwards of 40,000 school leavers each year (Red Frogs 2014; Ironside 2014). The
event is distinctly youthful, with participants normally being 17 to 18 years of age. Colloquially and in the news media, older people who attempt to participate are branded as ‘toolies’ (from the derogatory term ‘tool’). Toolies are assumed to be undertaking various kinds of predatory behaviour, such as providing or selling alcohol to underage Schoolies, supplying them with drugs, or trying to engage with them sexually.

A collectively enacted rite of passage, Schoolies marks the transition out of secondary school and into the next stage of life, loosely defined as ‘adulthood’, but incorporating many different paths (Lawton & Weaver 2015; Winchester et al 1999; Zinkiewicz et al 1999). The school leavers temporarily escape to the liminal space of the Gold Coast, liberating themselves from their everyday responsibilities and from parental supervision for a period of relaxation, partying and bonding with friends. Practices such as excessive alcohol consumption, drug use and sexual displays (including flirting, hook ups and sex) are commonplace during Schoolies (Maticka-Tyndale et al 2003; Winchester et al 1999; Zinkiewicz et al 1999). As Winchester et al (1999) observe, the experience is one of disorder: ‘The Schoolies phenomenon is highly focused on intense embodied experiences in which the physical senses are stimulated through an inversion of the normatively controlled body to become the out-of-control body’ (p. 68).

Each year, before and during the event, there are highly publicised (although not necessarily common) incidences of rape, drink spiking, accidental death, physical assault and the destruction of public and private property. This reporting reinforces a traditional ‘youth as problem’ narrative, fuelling moral panic over the threat of young people in public spaces participating in risky behaviours (Baker et al 2012; Nilan, Julian & Germov 2007; Griffin 1998; Wyn & White 1997; Thornton 1995). These media representations may serve as either a deterrent or a motivator to participate in Schoolies. For example, while I chose not to ‘do’ Schoolies out of concern for my own safety (as well as having insufficient economic capital to justify

---

126 In Queensland, people completing the final year of high school currently average 17 years old but can be as young as 16 or as old as 18 (if transferring from another state). A recent change involving the addition of a year at the start of schooling will bring Queensland school leavers into line with the other states with an average age of 18.
the expense), many of my friends at the time were keen to have the risky, ‘out-of-control’ experiences depicted in the media, intentionally seeking out what I feared.

Due to the carnivalesque disorder characteristic of the Schoolies ritual and the resulting moral panic, in recent years the Gold Coast event has become highly regulated. Schoolies now has ‘official’ events staged in Surfers Paradise (featuring DJs and an outdoor cinema) with entry only permitted to those with a wristband (The State of Queensland 2016). These are only provided to those with a valid grade 12 student ID, thus excluding ‘toolies’ from events. Other techniques of regulation and surveillance include a strong police presence, strict nightclub security and door policies (making it near impossible for underage patrons to gain entry) and numerous volunteer groups providing assistance to young people on the ground, such as Red Frogs, Christian Youth Council, Crime Stoppers Queensland, Drug Arm Australasia, Gold Coast Youth Service, Rosies Youth Mission, and State Emergency Services (The State of Queensland 2016). Of course, these measures are largely limited to public space and have less capacity to influence the realm of private accommodation where activities like binge drinking, taking drugs and hooking up are most likely to take place. Consequently, acts of transgression persist despite increasing forms of regulation.

Spring Break may be considered the North American equivalent of Schoolies in that it involves large numbers of young people travelling to resorts at a specific time each year. Spring Break is a week-long break from North American university classes, usually falling in February or March (depending on the university). According to Lewis et al (2014), roughly 38 per cent of college students take trips away from campus during this time, travelling to Spring Break destinations. In addition to Cancún and Miami, other popular sites are Fort Lauderdale and Panama City Beach, Florida, USA; South Padre Island, Texas, USA; Nassau, Bahamas; and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Unlike Schoolies, Spring Break may be experienced several times (each year during university) and does not necessarily

---

127 Although older people are not allowed entry into the official events, they can still easily interact with Schoolies in the surrounding streets and, for those interstate participants over 18, in nightclubs and bars.

128 By providing chill out zones, free water, first aid and counselling, as well as accompanying Schoolies back to their accommodation, cooking for them and cleaning their rooms.
Mark a transition\textsuperscript{129} so much as a temporary escape in the same vein as a traditional vacation. Further, although Spring Breakers are typically older (18–22+) than Schoolies (17–18), both events feature a mixture of underage and legally sanctioned drinking due to different legal drinking ages of 18 in Australia, 21 in most US states and 18 in Canada, and 18 in popular Spring Break destinations like Mexico, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas.

Over the years, Spring Break has become ‘firmly entrenched in the college imaginary’ (Ribeiro & Yarnal 2008, p. 353) and cemented itself as a core ritual in the typical, clichéd college experience for North American youth. This myth has been perpetuated not only through word-of-mouth (the narratives of current and former college students who participated first-hand), but through pervasive media representations depicting young students in swimwear partying all day long, exemplified by MTV’s annual coverage of Spring Break parties (Litvin 2009; Ribeiro & Yarnal 2008; Josiam et al 1998). Students seek to escape the winter chill and ‘let loose’, travelling with friends to sunny resorts to be preoccupied with leisure and play rather than study and work. This is perceived as a time of liberation from the supervision of teachers and parents (Patrick et al 2010; Litvin 2009), and thus a time for transgression and indulgence.

Although some studies have found that students are more likely while on Spring Break to participate in risky behaviours such as casual sex, drug use and/or binge drinking (Patrick et al 2010; Sönmez et al 2006; Josiam et al 1998), others have found that there is no difference between the levels of risk displayed in a Spring Break vacation than back at home (Litvin 2009; Ribeiro & Yarnal 2008). However, even if increased levels risk-taking do not occur (which is debatable), it is clear that the expectation of these activities nevertheless remains a significant motivating factor in taking a Spring Break vacation (Patrick et al 2010; Ribeiro & Yarnal 2008).

\textit{Nightclubs and the clubbing milieu}

As well as special events like those outlined above, the more familiar spaces of nightclubs and bars also play an important role in the nightlife of resorts. The built

\textsuperscript{129} The first Spring Break vacation one embarks on, however, may function as a rite of passage or a ritual of initiation into ‘college life’, a conceptual life stage marked by a series of quintessential, stereotypical college experiences (as perpetuated by popular cultural representations and people’s own storytelling of what their college days entailed).
environment provides ample evidence of nightlife’s prominence in resorts. This is illustrated in the maps below (see Figure 93, Figure 94, Figure 95), even with the different distribution of nightclubs throughout each place – variably in clusters/hubs or scattered at greater distances. For example, Surfers Paradise, the bigger of the two clubbing districts on the Gold Coast, has eight nightclubs, three strip clubs and a number of bars, the great majority of which are located within 500 metres of each other, primarily on the main clubbing strip of Orchid Avenue. Due to the high density of clubs in Surfers, the sociality characteristic of nightclubs also pervades the public areas of Orchid and Cavill Avenues (Cantillon 2015a, 2015b). As the night takes over, young people are everywhere on the sidewalks, streets and pedestrian mall, shouting, smoking, stumbling, crying, eating fast food and vomiting in the very same spaces that are predominantly occupied by holidaying families, strolling couples and tour groups during the daytime.

Figure 93: Locations of nightclubs in Surfers Paradise (Google 2017)

---

130 The other being Broadbeach, about a 10-minute drive south of Surfers. At the time of writing, Broadbeach had four nightclubs – Platinum, East, Love, and Envy.
131 At the time of writing, these were Shooters, SinCity, The Bedroom, Melbas, Cocktails & Dreams, Underground, Elsewhere, and Escape.
132 At the time of writing, the strip clubs were Hollywood Showgirls, Toybox Showgirls and Players Showgirls.
Figure 94: Locations of nightclubs in Ibiza (Google 2017)

Figure 95: Locations of nightclubs in Miami Beach (Google 2017)
As sites of mass tourism, it is unsurprising that resort nightlife is dominated by mainstream venues, with alternative spaces being marginalised (Gallan 2015; Chatterton & Hollands 2002). Nightlife in resorts caters to the perceived desires and expectations of tourists, and is based on a series of elements that mark nightclubs as distinct social spaces with particular kinds of mainstream leisure experiences attached. Thus, resort nightlife venues are ‘largely standardised, sanitised and non-local’ (Chatterton & Hollands 2002, p. 102). In Surfers Paradise, of the eight nightclubs there is only one gay club (Escape) and one ‘alternative’ club (Elsewhere), with the rest being mainstream clubs. These mainstream venues share standardised designs, spatial arrangements and aesthetics, along with social conventions and behavioural codes which are part of a globalised club culture. Some of the most notable shared characteristics among mainstream clubs are: the music, which is usually electronic dance music (including trance, house and techno) and ‘top 40’ hits (usually a mixture of pop, hip hop and rap); spatial signifiers and aesthetic elements, such as being dimly lit with flashing strobe lights, brightly coloured neon lights and smoke machines; and similar kinds of dress and behaviour codes among patrons.

Of all the resorts considered in this thesis, Ibiza is the most indelibly connected to nightlife. Since Ibiza is the global mecca of dance music, and arguably the birthplace of contemporary mainstream club culture (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Wilson 2006), I expected the nightlife to be a more intensified, more spectacular version of what I observed at home. That is, I expected Ibiza to be a ‘spectacle of excess’ (Diken & Laustsen 2004, p. 100). In some ways this proved true (e.g. similar club designs but in larger venues, similar behaviours but with larger crowds), but the Ibiza clubbing milieu had differences as well, and was not entirely ‘non-local’ (Chatterton & Hollands 2002, p. 102). To be specific, I had expected young tourists to be primarily motivated to go to Ibiza to party and have fun with friends (through activities like drinking, taking drugs, going clubbing, meeting new people), so I was

---

133 What constitutes an ‘alternative’ club is difficult to define, but is usually marked by its differences to mainstream venues even though it is a heteronormative space. For instance, the Gold Coast’s only alternative club, Elsewhere, is different in that it does not play top 40 hits, does not have a design aimed at appearing glitzy or opulent (rather, its aesthetic incorporates an eclectic mix of retro, industrial and gritty elements), and attracts patrons with more varied senses of style (e.g. more ‘hipster’ clientele).
surprised by the extent to which the music seemed to play a central role in their experiences.

As a site of innovation for electronic dance music, Ibiza attracts dance music fans and famous DJs from around the world (Sandvoss 2014; Goulding & Shankar 2011; Bennett 2004). Ibiza nightclubs act as spaces for the coming together of affective communities based on a shared taste in music (Thornton 1995; Shields 1992b), which may be characterised by fleeting, neo-tribal associations (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Bennett 2001, 2004; Malbon 1998, 1999) or more lasting and meaningful senses of affinity (Sandvoss 2014). In this context, DJs are key figures in tourism promotion strategies. Their faces are plastered across Ibiza’s tourist hubs on billboards and promotional posters, and their names are shouted to you by club ticket vendors on the streets – Steve Aoki, David Guetta, Afrojack, Calvin Harris, and more. As Bennett (2001) argues, this reflects the position of the DJ as the dance music equivalent of the more traditional ‘rock star’ archetype, attributing them with similar privileges of status and prestige.

Figure 96: Billboards advertising resident DJs at particular nightclubs in Ibiza

When I visited Ibiza in July 2014, one of the events I attended was Aoki’s Playhouse, his weekly Wednesday night residency at Pacha nightclub in Ibiza Town. Outside the club, there was a huge, illuminated silhouette of Aoki’s head with trademark long hair and beard (see Figure 97). Inside, more of these silhouettes hung from the ceiling (see Figure 98). The DJ booth was positioned in a central part of the club, elevated above the crowd. Patrons were densely packed in front of the
booth, all facing the DJ, as if worshipping (see also Briggs & Turner 2012; Goulding & Shankar 2011). It was far too crowded for any kind of dancing apart from some head nodding and fist pumping. Young women at the front climbed onto their friends’ shoulders to try to get selfies with Aoki in the background. He engaged with the audience constantly – hopping up on the booth to dance, speaking to us through the microphone, and singing along to songs with everyone. At one point, Aoki selected some eager audience members to have cream pies thrown at them, a trademark of his shows (see Figure 98).

Figure 97: Neon silhouette of Aoki’s head outside of Pacha Nightclub, Ibiza

Figure 98: DJs Steve Aoki and Afrojack at Pacha Nightclub, Ibiza
Immediately after he finished his set, there was a mass exodus from the club. It was clear that everyone at Pacha that night was there for Aoki. For me, this experience was more akin to that of a music festival or live gig than a nightclub. On the Gold Coast, the appeal of going to nightclubs centres much less on the music and much more on opportunities to socialise with friends and interact with new people. The DJ is largely inconsequential, aside from the rare occasions when international acts come. The music is part of the backdrop, and you dance to dance with people, often in a highly sexualised manner, and not necessarily as a means to appreciate the beat of the music or the performance of the DJ. Thus, the gaze is focused on other clubbers rather than on the DJ.

Despite such differences, there are nonetheless many other similarities in the experience of clubbing, and these tend to parallel quite closely aspects of the broader tourist experience of resorts. Clubbing is a highly sensuous activity with a strong emphasis on affective and corporeal engagements – letting go, feeling the bass, dancing to the beat, touching other bodies – often heightened by the effects of drugs and/or alcohol (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Malbon 1998). As a site of the collective gaze, the presence of other clubbers engaging in similar ways is essential to creating the expected atmosphere and spectacle. Collectively experienced and performed, the nightclub can be interpreted as fostering a sense of social solidarity or communitas that is characteristic of liminal, carnivalesque spaces (Shields 1991).

Goulding and Shankar (2011) describe communitas among clubbers as a feeling of togetherness and equality, the disintegration of everyday structures and the emergence of a group ethos and identity that temporarily overrides the individual's (see also Malbon 1998). This is based on affinities arising out of shared practices and performances (Malbon 1998), and a shared desire for escapism and pleasure. The emphasis on collectivity combined with a perceived liberation from everyday life underpins the argument that the clubbing experience facilitates the momentary transcendence of normative identities and social hierarchies (Wang 1999; Shields 1991). That is, it can be argued that the carnivalesque sociality of clubs breaks down traditional divisions of class, ethnicity and gender (Goulding & Shankar 2011; Wilson 2006; Bennett 2004; Malbon 1998; Thornton 1995; Shields 1991). This ‘loss’ of identity is particularly intensified by the relative sense of anonymity enabled by nightclubs (Briggs 2013; Jaimangal-Jones, Pritchard & Morgan 2010; Bennett 2004;
Malbon 1999; Thornton 1995). In Melechi’s (1993) terms, the nightclub affords individuals the opportunity to experience the ‘ecstasy of disappearance’ (p. 32). This is especially the case in places with transient populations like resorts.

Of course, despite this apparent *communitas* and liberation, the social dynamics of the mainstream clubbing milieu are nonetheless fraught with inequalities (Anderson, TL 2009a; Chatterton & Hollands 2002). This is not to say that the previous arguments are invalid, but rather that there is more going on. The experience of clubbing can oscillate between feelings of immersion, togetherness, anonymity, inhibition *and* feelings of detachment, individualism, self-reflexivity, anxiety. In his analysis of nightclubs, Malbon (1999) describes a similar shift:

... the experiencing of these crowds can provide pleasurable sensations of ‘in-betweenness’ – or *exstasis* – as crowd members flux between awareness and sensations of their own identities on the one hand and the identifications and belongings achievable through the crowd on the other. (p. 71)

Within clubs, hierarchies exist which are contingent on the local context but often based on status, style, beauty and how much one does or does not fit in, how ‘authentic’ one is, or how ‘cool’ one might be considered to be (Thornton 1995). As mentioned previously, this is what Thornton (1995) terms ‘subcultural capital’. Clubbers develop specific cultural knowledges surrounding things like music and drugs, and ways of dressing, dancing, talking and interacting (Sandvoss 2014; Saldanha 2002; Wilson 2006; Malbon 1999). Individuals are then gazed upon and assessed on their subcultural competence by others in the club, which necessitates a degree of self-awareness and reflexivity on behalf of the club-goer. Individuals may deploy impression management strategies (Grazian 2008; Goffman 1969 [1956]) to ensure their performances of self are more closely aligned with the expectations of the space. Therefore, nightclubs not only encourage feelings of solidarity and sensuous embodiment, but also competitiveness, conflict and hyper-performativity (Grazian 2008; Malbon 1998). As Grazian (2009) observes, ‘for many participants, such places aren’t even that much fun, much less sanctuaries for social inclusion’ (p. 910).

Intersecting with these subcultural hierarchies are more traditional forms of stratification based on gender, age, race, ethnicity and class. For instance, since mainstream nightclubs are sites for (hetero)sexual pursuit and performances of
hegemonic ideals of gender, unequal power dynamics are strongly present (Cantillon 2015a; Grazian 2008, 2009). Men are encouraged to demonstrate modes of masculinity that suggest their sexual prowess, while women's displays of sexual agency are constrained by cultural norms (such as good girl/bad girl or Madonna/whore binaries) and associated potential social sanctions (such as being called a ‘slut’ or a ‘prude’) (Cantillon 2015a).

Nightclubs have also been known to use discriminatory door policies, which can operate to deselect people of certain races and ethnicities. In his work on North American nightclubs, Grazian (2009) observes that African Americans are frequently denied entry to clubs on the basis of dress codes which target fashion trends popular among black youth (e.g. baggy pants, sports jerseys, etc.).

Further, while it has been argued that association with mainstream dance cultures is not class-based as with traditional subcultures (Bennett 2004), it is evident that class and wealth remain powerful barriers to participation. A certain amount of economic capital is required to go out clubbing and/or to visit resort destinations, with costs including nightclub entry, drinks, transportation, meals, accommodation and flights. In Ibiza, my hotel was AU$2,554 for seven nights, tickets to see DJs were about 50 euros (AU$75) and drinks were between 16 and 18 euros (AU$23.50–$26.50) each. One may opt for cheaper accommodation, of course, but this tends to mean being further away from the action (nightclubs, restaurants, bars and bus stops).

Economic capital as a precondition for participation highlights the ways in which the clubbing experience can be marked more by exclusivity than by equality (Anderson, TL 2009a). I encountered an especially striking example of this at LIV nightclub in Miami Beach, one of the most famous and highest grossing nightclubs in the United States (Bein 2015; Gonzalez 2013). Before going to LIV, I had read online and been informed by some of my interviewees that the club was notoriously difficult to get into – prospective patrons will have their best chance if they are women, attractive, well-dressed and entering either with a man or as part of a small group of women. Failing that, entry could be guaranteed by reserving a table with bottle service for upwards of US$1,000. Unwilling and unable to use the latter...

---

134 This no doubt occurs in relation to other ethnic groups in venues in other cities.
method, I chose to try my luck at the door one Saturday night with a male friend who was visiting Miami from Tennessee for his Spring Break vacation.

On arrival at LIV, I noticed that there was no queue, but rather a disorganised mass of people. Unlike what I was used to, gaining entry did not follow a ‘first in, first served’ process – it all appeared to be based on a hierarchy of desirability in terms of subcultural capital, as determined by the bouncers and promoters. We worked our way between the crowd to where the club staff could see us, and after waiting for about 20 minutes, one of them unhooked the rope to let us through, despite the fact that at least 50 other people who had arrived before us were still waiting.\textsuperscript{135} We then paid our gendered entry fee of US$60 for me and US$100 for my male friend. Inside, we paid US$39 for two standard scotch and sodas and went to look for somewhere to sit, but every seat was roped off for VIPs and guarded by bouncers. The majority of patrons were in these areas. We could not identify a clearly defined dance floor that was accessible to us, and it seemed the only spot to hang out was next to the bars and on the stairs. LIV was so segregated by wealth, class and subcultural cachet that it hindered the kind of mixing and mingling that I had believed was a typical part of the clubbing experience.

Despite the qualities of nightclubs and of resorts that indicate that they are spaces for the suspension and transcendence of everyday life, they are, in fact, also spaces in which very ‘everyday’, normative social structures, dynamics and inequalities are enacted and perpetuated. Resorts, with their associated daytime activities and nightlife venues, may present as enabling people to be temporarily free from familiar social hierarchies, but markers of difference such as class, wealth, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, style, beauty, ‘coolness’ and so on, continue to operate in the spatiality, sociality and modes of consumption that these sites make available. Further, while mass tourists may be motivated by fantasies of escapism and temporarily abandoning their everyday roles, experiences of travelling and engaging in the kind of lifestyle offered by resorts are powerful modes through which to negotiate/renegotiate one’s ‘everyday’ self. Through anticipation, memory

\textsuperscript{135} I assume this was because we were only two people, and perhaps because we were white, young, thin and dressed appropriately.
and storytelling, these experiences shape self-identity and consequently become very much implicated in the mundane lives of individuals.

Conclusion

Popular imaginaries of places are, clearly, multiple, varied and contradictory, yet interconnected. Some myths are supported by official tourism discourses, some are sustained by sensationalised media reporting and popular cultural representations, and some are circulated through informal networks online and among acquaintances. Some imaginaries derive from the lived spatiality of resorts, while others are carefully engineered and imposed. Whatever the case, how we think about resorts – about what kinds of places they are, what they look like, what goes on there, and who occupies them – plays a powerful role in determining how we act within them. Imaginaries and representations shape social and spatial practices, and these practices in turn shape imaginaries and representations, dynamically producing the lived spatiality of resorts. While a focus on nightlife has provided some particularly intensified examples of these interactions, there is no question that they operate across the resort experience.

Resorts are characteristically liminal, being at once everyday and exotic, standardised and spectacular, ordered and disordered. Spatially marginal and socially peripheral, they are defined and experienced differently from more conventional cities, which are associated with an elusive, conceptual ‘centre’. While it is important to avoid a definitional binary, since all cities are sites of heterogeneity and difference and each is unique, it is nevertheless the case that this distinction between resorts and conventional cities, peripheries and centres, matters. Pleasure and escapism are core to the rationale for the existence of resorts. Tourists are escaping one kind of space for another kind of space with different experiences attached. To freely enjoy themselves, and to detach from their everyday lives, they must resort to other places. Resort destinations, then, are designed to cater to the needs and expectations of the people visiting them, and thus the self and its comforts and desires are key to the whole idea of resorts (this is discussed further in the following chapter in relation to the dynamics between familiarity and difference).

Dominated by tourism and leisure, and perceived as dehistoricised, carnivalesque ‘elsewheres’ or ‘nowheres’, resorts easily offer a striking, desirable
contrast to conventional cities. However, it is far too simplistic to assume that resorts are therefore superficial, depthless and homogenous (while ‘real cities’ have depth, power, cultural worth, etc.). On the contrary, a great deal exists beyond the most popular imaginaries, dominant narratives of identity and tourist-centric rhythms of resorts. Although frequently positioned as peripheral in relation to any ‘serious’ global flows of wealth, people and meaning, resorts have unique, complex local cultures and histories. This is the focus of the next two chapters.
Chapter 10: Culture and hybridity

So far, the thesis has focused primarily on the dominant touristic narratives of resorts – that is, their identities and imaginaries in terms of their existence as long-standing sites for mass tourism and party tourism. As this discussion revealed, resorts are perceived and lived (to an extent) as liminal, carnivalesque places that predominantly attract tourists seeking escapist, hedonistic, sensuous experiences through vacations centred on excessive consumption in spaces like hotels, beaches, shopping malls, theme parks or nightclubs. While this narrative is powerful and highly influential, there are numerous other narratives shaping the spatiality of resorts.

In this chapter, I shift my focus to some of the emerging narratives implicated in resorts’ increasingly diverse tourism offerings. As Section 2 made clear, each of these resorts is attempting to move beyond its sun, sand and sex reputation to attract a broader range of visitors seeking alternative experiences, particularly those related to an interest in heritage, nature and/or culture. These types of tourists are often assumed to be motivated primarily by a desire for intellectual (rather than bodily) pleasures and to have ‘authentic’ experiences through encountering sites like landmarks, museums, galleries or urban precincts.

Below, I explore the role of cultural tourism in resorts. In particular, I consider how cultural tourism initiatives play out in spaces which are saturated by mass tourism and, thus, often assumed to be antithetical to the tastes and principles of high culture. Despite having long supported tourism narratives which portray them as the opposite – as ‘elsewhere’, ‘nowhere’ or ‘anywhere’ – resorts are now striving to capitalise on their local specificity and distinctiveness. In this context, culture and heritage are being staged in the face of pervasive stereotypes of resorts as ahistorical, inauthentic, depthless, transient, superficial, fake and homogenous (stereotypes which themselves constitute another dominant narrative of resort

---

136 This distinction reinforces a false Cartesian (mind/body) split – in reality, all tourist experiences involve the sensuous (body) and the imaginary (mind) in different ways.
137 For the purposes of this thesis, ‘cultural tourism’ refers to the consumption of both material and symbolic, and past and present, aspects of culture (Meethan 2001).
138 That is, spaces that have traditionally catered for the collective gaze rather than the romantic gaze (Urry 2002).
identity and spatiality). These stereotypes stem from wider discourses regarding the influence of globalising processes – like tourism – on local cultures. Throughout this chapter, I aim to critique the assumptions underpinning such stereotypes by destabilising binaries of real/fake, authentic/inauthentic, difference/familiarity and local/global.

**Culture, capitalism and the symbolic economy**

Culture and capitalism have traditionally been conceived as counterposed ideas (Zukin 1995). Culture is often associated with ‘high arts, literature, music, theatre’ and the ‘social exclusivity and superior knowledge’ that these interests may afford (Meethan 2001, p. 115). Similarly, cultural heritage is typically understood as artistic forms, architecture, landmarks, traditions and customs that originate from a ‘distant past’ (Weaver 2011, p. 249). ‘Culture’ is thus concerned with what is unique, singular, authentic and/or intellectual (Meethan 2001). Capitalism is seen to threaten these qualities – it is associated with the cycles of mass production and consumption that give rise to popular culture, which ‘provides commodified, unsophisticated, throwaway instant gratification’ and is ‘neither elitist, nor does it require [the] development of a highly refined aesthetic sensibility’ (Meethan 2001, p. 116). Clearly, the term culture is used interchangeably with what we can more accurately designate as high culture.\(^{139}\) This lack of specificity is indicative of how popular/mass culture is often conceptualised as existing outside of the realm of culture or, at most, on its margins. It is unsurprising, then, that the highly capitalistic spaces of resorts are frequently misunderstood as lacking culture.

However, as Sharon Zukin argues in *The Cultures of Cities* (1995), culture and capital are very much entwined in contemporary cities. Tourism, for example, necessarily involves the commodification and packaging of a place’s culture – its histories, architecture, rituals, festivals, traditional cuisine, lifestyles – for capitalistic ends (Shaw & Williams 2004; Chhabra et al 2003; Cohen 1988). Zukin (1995) posits that this process is part of what produces a city’s ‘symbolic economy’. She observes that with the decline of manufacturing and the intermittent instability of government and financial industries, ‘culture is more and more the business of

\(^{139}\) ‘High’ culture and ‘mass’ do not actually exist in a binary, but they are perceived as such, and thus high culture is regarded as the privileged term.
cities’ (Zukin 1995, p. 2). Cities are increasingly mobilising their local distinctiveness (Salazar 2011) – their history, arts scene, cultural enclaves or other forms of symbolic capital – as a means to sell themselves (Alonso 2007; Zukin 1995). Through urban tourism sites such as historic buildings, art galleries, museums, opera theatres and upmarket dining precincts, culture is used to revitalise derelict city districts and attract visitors to bolster the regional economy (Meethan 2001; Zukin 1995). Just as more conventional cities are cultivating their symbolic economies through tourism, so too are resorts.

Desire for the ‘real’

Many tourists have grown dissatisfied with the standardised, generic, Fordist-style mass tourism conventionally exemplified by resorts, and are increasingly interested in post-Fordist, niche tourism experiences (Boissevain 1996; MacCannell 2001). As Boissevain (1996) puts it:

More and more [tourists] are seeking holidays that cater to their desire for learning, nostalgia, heritage, make-believe, action, and a closer look at the Other. Not sun, sand, and sea, but culture, nature, and ‘traditional’ rural life have become the objects of the postmodern tourist. (p. 3)

Those occupied by such pursuits can be loosely defined as cultural tourists. In the literature, it is often claimed that cultural tourists (and, likewise, academic researchers) are seeking to experience the ‘real’ through their engagements with the cultures and landscapes of other places (Minca & Oakes 2006; Fainstein & Judd 1999; MacCannell 1999; Desforges 1998). That is, some tourists want ‘to share in the real life of the places visited, or at least to see that life as it is really lived’ (MacCannell 1999, p. 96) as typified by the wish to travel ‘off the beaten path’ or ‘get in with the natives’ (p. 97). In Urry’s (2002) terms, these tourists are after sites of the romantic gaze – that which is auratic, solitary, elitist and free of mass tourists. In other words, cultural tourists apparently seek the ‘authentic’.

Although authenticity is a highly contested concept, it is nonetheless useful to my discussion because of its significance for tourists as a framing device for how they perceive particular tourism spaces, objects and experiences. As Zukin (2010) points out, the matter of whether or not authenticity actually exists is less important than how authenticity ‘becomes a tool of power’ (p. 3). Much like high culture (as described above), authenticity is commonly defined in terms of uniqueness,
tradition, a sense of continuity and the appearance of stasis. Consequently, authenticity has been more closely associated with ‘primitive’ cultures, while modern cultures are perceived as inauthentic and alienating (Buchanan 2005; Meethan 2001; MacCannell 1999).

It follows, then, that the modern cultural tourist must find authenticity elsewhere than home. In Meethan’s (2001) words, ‘Modernity is dystopia and tourism the search for utopia’ (p. 91). Tourists who seek the real are motivated by a search for authentic experiences of authentic places and objects, and a desire for self-improvement (e.g. acquiring knowledge, cultural capital and life experience) (Meethan 2001; MacCannell 1973). In their quest for finding out what a place is ‘really’ like, these tourists (and, to some degree, all tourists) compare different destinations and different sites within the same destination to make assessments about what is real and what is fake, or hyperreal (Minca & Oakes 2006; Baudrillard 1994). For example, I chose to stay in accommodation booked through Airbnb rather than hotels in some of my fieldwork sites. Being a tourist (not only a researcher), I wanted to feel as if I was living like a local for a week by staying in an ‘authentic’ apartment on a ‘normal’ residential street rather than in the contrived space of a hotel or tourist-centric strip.

Cultural tourists – those who actively seek authenticity – are typically regarded as being preferable to mass tourists (Crang 2014; Boissevain 1996), with supposedly superior taste, greater respect for the host culture and more ‘honourable’ aims. Thus, destinations like resorts attempt to cater to the needs of both types of tourist. As Fainstein and Judd (1999) observe:

... tourists do not always want to be humoured or amused. Instead, they often seek immersion in the daily, ordinary, authentic life of a culture or place that is not their own. Thus, the tourism industry is preoccupied with shaping and responding to the desire for carnival-like diversion, on the one hand, and a yearning for extraordinary, but ‘real,’ experience on the other. (p. 7, original emphasis)

---

140 See also Chapter 2.
141 Such as seeking insight, knowledge, self-realisation and/or self-improvement rather than only seeking pleasure.
Cultural tourism and mass tourism, then, occupy the same spaces. One of my interviewees in Thailand (an expatriate who previously lived on the Gold Coast) reflected on this in relation to his town of residence near Phuket’s Patong Beach:

**Jakub:** Look, there are tourists who just live on the beach and that’s all they come here for – sun, sand and surf, or sea. But there are tourists who try and get a feel for the place ... There are people who come here, enclose themselves in 5-star hotels or some beautiful villas with services, maids, cleaners, chefs and live in the paradise situation, but are not really touching or getting involved in Thai life. On the other hand, you see tourists who come to the market in my village who look around and try the different foods. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Further, in contemporary resorts, tourists have the option to experience both of these in the same vacation. Despite what the apparent dualism implies, individual tourists can possess the qualities and motivations of both cultural and mass tourists, and in varying combinations.

The challenge for resorts is that, unlike urban tourism destinations, their visitors have traditionally expressed more interest in consuming the destination’s beaches and purpose-built tourism facilities than experiencing its local cultures. This varies somewhat among the resorts I focus on – the local cultures of Thailand and Cancún are a more prominent feature in their tourism imagery (even if only to evoke a sense of the exotic for the Western traveller), while the local cultures of Miami, Ibiza and the Gold Coast are almost completely obscured in tourism discourses and are largely inconsequential to one’s vacation. As such, they may be less appealing to cultural tourists seeking the real in the conventional sense, and are commonly stereotyped as being fake or hyperreal.

**Staged authenticity**

As a result, the real is *staged* in resorts. That is, tourist spaces are carefully constructed and manipulated to provide visitors (especially cultural tourists) with the sense of authenticity that they demand. This is what MacCannell (1973, 1999) calls ‘staged authenticity’, a concept he develops in terms of Goffman’s (1969) work on dramaturgy. MacCannell (1999) proposes that tourist sites are like sets or stages with front and back regions featuring different social performances. Front regions are those designed specifically for tourism purposes and are occupied by both hosts and guests – for instance, hotel lobbies, restaurants or theme parks (MacCannell
Back regions, on the other hand, are dominated by the hosts, and can range from spaces like kitchens or back offices (which keep the front regions running smoothly) to residential areas predominantly occupied by local lives and activities.

The existence of back regions suggests to tourists that ‘there is something more than meets the eye’ (MacCannell 1999, p. 93) or that there is ‘a hidden realness somewhere just out of view’ (Minca & Oakes 2006, p. 8). Thus, front regions are viewed as contrived, performative and false, whereas back regions are viewed as organic, intimate and real (MacCannell 1999). However, the distinctions ‘between false fronts and intimate reality’ (MacCannell 1999, p. 95) are not as clear-cut as they may seem. MacCannell (1973, 1999) contends that there is, rather, a front-back continuum rather than a dichotomy, and that ‘front’ and ‘back’ function most effectively as conceptual tools if they are treated as ‘ideal poles of touristic experience’ (MacCannell 1999, p. 101) which do not manifest in their pure form. MacCannell (1973) identifies six stages on the continuum to illustrate that different dynamics between front and back (or staged and real) may be present; for instance:

Stage 2: a touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some of its particulars, like a back region: a seafood restaurant with a fish net hanging on the wall; a meat counter in a supermarket with three-dimensional plastic replicas of cheeses and bolognas hanging against the wall. Functionally, this stage (two) is entirely a front region, and it always has been, but it is cosmetically decorated with reminders of back-region activities: mementos, not taken seriously, called ‘atmosphere’. (p. 598)

This example details how front regions can be endowed with qualities of difference and authenticity, but back regions can be staged as well. The practice of making sites and cultures available for tourist consumption always requires them to be organised, manipulated, represented and packaged in some way (Salazar 2009; Urry 2002; Selwyn 1996; Cohen 1972). As tourists increasingly expect the spectacular, it is no longer enough for a culture, tourist site or product to be real, it must also act real, it must perform authenticity (MacCannell 1999; Rojek & Urry 1997; Cohen 1988). Further, it does not even have to be real if it can masquerade as such and create the experience of authenticity (Zukin 2010; Wang 1999). It is my contention that this subjective experience of authenticity is more important to an analysis of tourism than any kind of objective notion of authenticity. Material objects and places cannot be essentialised as authentic or inauthentic in themselves – what matters is how they are perceived differently by different people in relation to these concepts.
In short, authenticity is a fluid, dynamic and contextually-contingent concept (Meethan 2001; Wang 1999; Craik 1997). If something seems real, then it is real. Wang (1999) calls this ‘symbolic authenticity’ – that is, authenticity as socially constructed. Wang (1999) explains that from this perspective:

... the experience of authenticity is pluralistic, relative to each tourist type who may have their own way of definition, experience, and interpretation of authenticity ... In this sense, if mass tourists empathically experience the toured objects as authentic, then, their viewpoints are real in their own right, no matter whether experts may propose an opposite view from an objective perspective. (p. 355)

What researchers and experts might view as deceptive, superficial or inauthentic might be experienced by the tourist as real, meaningful and authentic (Shaw & Williams 2004; Cohen 1988). Further, what is authentic to one tourist might be inauthentic to another; what is authentic to a tourist might be inauthentic to a local, and so on. These differing judgments are inevitable considering the varied and multiple preconceptions, expectations, imaginaries, tastes, ideologies and motivations that inform each individual’s encounter with the same site or object (Wang 1999).

**Resorts and cultural tourism**

The types of cultural tourism attractions in each resort vary quite substantially because they have different histories, geographies and cultural backgrounds. Thailand, Ibiza and Cancún have quite conventional cultural attractions – namely, very old, tangible, officially recognised heritage in the form of architectural structures protected by bodies like the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Miami, on the other hand, promotes more recent forms of heritage, including its preserved Art Deco facades and the rich cultural history and diversity of its local people. Additionally, Miami has a flourishing arts scene, with cultural attractions such as ballets, theatres, museums and galleries, particularly centred around Downtown Miami and the Wynwood\(^{142}\) and Design District/Buena Vista neighbourhoods (rather than in the tourist hub of Miami Beach itself). The Gold Coast is altogether different to these other resorts in that over the course of its history as a tourism destination, the city has invested little energy in mobilising its culture and heritage

\(^{142}\) Wynwood’s gentrification and arts scene is discussed further in the next chapter.
as potential attractions. Below, I discuss cultural tourism in both Cancún and the Gold Coast as disparate examples that nonetheless share some important commonalities.

*Cancún: an example*

Being a relatively ‘new’ city in terms of its Western development, Cancún itself has little in the way of cultural activities like galleries, museums or theatres, but it is located within two and a half hours drive of major Maya archaeological sites like Chichén Itzá, Tulum and Cobá. The destination is also close to several eco-archaeological theme parks, such as Xcaret and Xel-Ha, which are built around Maya ruins and offer additional activities like water sports, animal encounters and Mexican and Maya cultural experiences. These attractions fuse the interests of cultural tourism and ecotourism with the packaged, full service model characteristic of mass tourism (Torres 2002).

Torres and Momsen (2006) argue that cultural tourists interested in learning about Maya cultural heritage are unlikely to stay in mass tourism destinations like Cancún. Although ‘genuine’ cultural tourists (or travellers) may not be drawn to the resort, many of its mass tourists nonetheless choose to punctuate their sun, sand and sex holidays with cultural activities. Indeed, visiting sites like Chichén Itzá has become almost an imperative to undertaking a ‘proper’ Cancún holiday, by virtue of its promotion as a ‘must see’ icon (Evans 2005), a famous UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the ‘New Seven Wonders of the World’ (Cancún Convention & Visitors Bureau 2015).

Tour operators offer day trips to the nearby archaeological sites, with each marketed somewhat differently. I booked a day trip to Chichén Itzá and one to

---

143 A term equally as problematic as ‘authentic’, but in this context, I am referring to those who are emphatically disinterested in mass tourism and do not seek experiences that fuse cultural tourism and mass tourism (even if they may not be able to completely avoid such hybrid forms).

144 In much the same way that visitors to destinations like Paris ‘must’ see iconic attractions like the Eiffel Tower or The Louvre in order to have ‘properly’ experienced the city.

145 This initiative, organised by the privately-funded ‘New7Wonders Foundation’, aimed to promote a different set of monuments than those of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Decided by popular vote, the monuments selected included The Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal and Machu Picchu.
Cobá on the recommendation of one of my interviewees, Felipe. He informed me that Chichén Itzá is the most popular to tour, but that I might also like the more authentic experience of visiting Cobá. As he put it, Cobá was popular among European tourists, who he thought showed more interest in history and culture than Americans. Unlike Chichén Itzá, Cobá is not on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and is thus less populated by tourists and less strictly regulated. This allows greater access to the ruins, with visitors being permitted to climb the pyramids. By doing so, they are able to feel that they have had an opportunity to have a more authentic, intimate engagement with the site, but they are also demonstrating disregard for how their practices may be compromising the integrity of the built heritage. In effect, this renders them no different to mass tourists (and certainly no more respectful or ‘sound’ in their tourism decisions).

Capitalising on this desire for authentic cultural experiences, tours to Cobá often also include a visit to a Maya community. For example, the company Alltournative (whose website offers ‘ecoarchaeological adventures’ and features the phone number 1800 GO NATIVE) advertises a ‘Maya encounter’ including traditional Maya food and an authentic Maya blessing ceremony performed by a shaman (Alltournative 2016). Tourists can get a sense that they are experiencing a back region, a glimpse of how Mexico’s indigenous people really live. Of course, it is actually a series of staged, superficial displays packaged for touristic consumption, emphasising a selection of what might seem to be the most exotic elements of Maya culture. This can satisfy the tourists’ desire to experience difference by making it available to them in a manner that is not onerous, inconvenient or uncomfortable.

My day trip to Chichén Itzá was similar in many ways, providing a breadth of experiences without any depth of education. The journey there was in itself a kind of tourism spectacle – immediately after leaving the modernised city limits of Cancún, we drove through seemingly more ‘real’ rural areas, taking photos of the rustic homes and churches (a stark contrast to the polished, opulent hotels in which we stayed). Our first stop was the city of Valladolid, where our tour guide instructed

---

146 I was unfortunately unable to go on the tour to Cobá, however, as the day prior (the day of my Chichén Itzá tour) I became very ill.

147 An obvious reference to ‘alternative’ rather than mainstream tourism experiences.
us to take note of the Spanish-style architecture (see Figure 99) as he elaborated on Mexico’s colonial history.

![Figure 99: Valladolid, Mexico](image)

Back on the bus, the tour guide prepared us for our next stop, a nearby cenote (a sinkhole). Of course, it was not just a cenote, but a more elaborate, staged tourist attraction with numerous activities and services, including a tequila distillery and a Western buffet. The guide informed us that at the cenote we could find authentic Maya crafts like jewellery representing ancient Maya glyphs or trinkets made of obsidian (a type of black rock traditionally used by Maya people). On arrival, we walked through a maze-like gift shop featuring these items. As we exited the shop, the staff stopped each of us to take a photo, which we later found is printed onto the label of a bottle of liquor and sold to us on the tour bus as a novelty item. The cenote itself featured the usual juxtaposition of natural wonders and manmade additions – visitors can go inside the cenote and swim in the water, but there are queues to maintain order, and railings and life jackets for safety (see Figure 100). At the entrance to the cenote there were two men dressed as traditional Maya warriors, stationed there to pose for photos with tourists (see Figure 101).
Figure 100: Tourists swimming at the cenote

Figure 101: Men dressed as Maya warriors at the cenote

Chichén Itzá was a similar kind of experience, featuring the spectacle of the ruins of an ancient Maya city, roped off to protect them from visitors and set among landscaped grounds to facilitate gazing. Even the ruins themselves are staged in the sense that they have been excavated and restored. The space was occupied by tour groups with guides repeating the same historical narratives; tourists taking selfies with Chichén Itzá’s iconic pyramid (see Figure 102); and local Mexican and Maya people lining each pathway selling souvenirs (see Figure 103), shouting things like
‘one dollar! Just one dollar!’ or ‘almost free!’ as we walked by. These vendors touted items like miniature versions of the monuments (commodified representations of their own cultural heritage), wood carved ornaments, painted plates, musical instruments, jewellery, shirts and sombreros. Whether they were handmade or mass produced, made locally or elsewhere, was unclear – presumably, what mattered most for the buyer was the memorialising of the experience and the *feeling* of authenticity (regardless of the item’s origins).

Figure 102: The El Castillo pyramid at Chichén Itzá

Figure 103: Souvenir vendors at Chichén Itzá
Clearly, the symbolic economy of places like Chichén Itzá and the cenote rely on the commodification of Maya culture, catering to a desire for the exotic and the ancient. Sites like these exhibit an awareness of the importance of souvenirs – however staged, kitschy or inauthentic – to the tourist experience. They are sought out, collected and treasured by tourists: back home such items become material resources for the representation of cultural capital and the cultivation of autobiographical narratives through reminiscing and retelling holiday memories.

Gold Coast: an example

Unlike Cancún, the Gold Coast area has few major cultural attractions. If the built environment is one of ‘the most obvious manifestations of heritage’ (Chhabra et al 2003, p. 704), this is where the Gold Coast is sorely lacking. The city has a habit of continually transforming and reinventing itself, knocking down older buildings rather than preserving them, and rebuilding with taller and more stylish structures. Skyscrapers, theme parks and shopping centres are the closest equivalents to any kind of architectural landmarks. The material past is treated as disposable and, as a result, the Gold Coast is often assumed to be bereft of history in a conventional sense (Wise 2012; Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2006; Symes 1997).

The Gold Coast is also often disparaged – both colloquially and in the media – as a ‘cultural desert’ (Blackman 2013; Baker et al 2012; Ditton 2010; Wise 2006, 2010). Despite Indigenous Australians having a long history in the area, there are few attractions focusing on this aspect of the region’s heritage. In Surfers Paradise, the only symbols of this history that are present are an Indigenous busker playing the didgeridoo (see Figure 104), cultural objects and artworks that have been commodified for sale in souvenir shops, and a single Indigenous art gallery (which sells typical Australian souvenirs like stuffed koalas, opals and UGG boots in addition to its certified artworks). Further, visitors have typically expressed little interest in the city’s back regions or engaging with everyday local life. Beesley (2005) suggests that the inattention to both cultural heritage and contemporary local cultures on the Gold Coast may be due to the city’s primarily domestic, and especially regional, tourism market. International visitors, for whom the city is somewhat foreign and exotic, are more likely to want to experience the Gold Coast’s culture and learn about its history.
Residents lament the apparent lack of culture, internalising popular discourses about the city, and attributing this to the tourist-centric nature of development, which has tended to be geared towards catering to the needs of mass tourists. This is not to say that cultural activities or an active arts scene do not exist, but rather that these have conventionally been dislocated, undervalued and underfunded on the Gold Coast (Ditton 2010; Beesley 2005). Some current examples of cultural events and spaces active in the city include: the Swell Sculpture Festival, held each year since 2003 along the beach in Currumbin, about a 35-minute drive south of Surfers Paradise; Bleach* Festival, held annually since 2012, taking place in a variety of locations across the Gold Coast, and featuring art exhibitions, interactive workshops and film screenings as well as theatre, dance, circus and musical performances; and Miami Marketta (formerly Rabbit + Cocoon, a creative precinct which offered art studios and collaborative spaces), a popular venue among locals that hosts live music performances and street food events several times per week.

In the lead up to the 2018 Commonwealth Games, the Gold Coast’s city council has recently been attempting to support more of these kinds of cultural initiatives – and to stage authenticity. For instance, in an effort to create a more comprehensive, spectacular cultural attraction, a new cultural precinct is being constructed as an expansion of the relatively small, outdated Arts Centre located across the Nerang
River to the west of Surfers Paradise. Further, just north of Surfers Paradise in Southport, the city has recently imposed a Chinatown on two streets that were previously occupied by Western, Japanese, Korean and Thai (rather than Chinese) businesses.148 Whereas in a conventional urban centre a Chinatown may emerge organically, on the Gold Coast it is blatantly staged to infer cultural diversity. Given the patterns of development in the area, there is also every chance that the precinct will now develop as a ‘real’ Chinatown in the more familiar sense.

![Figure 105: Chinatown, Southport](image)

Notions of cultural identity and heritage on the Gold Coast are deeply implicated in the city's history as a tourism destination. Thus, among the few things the city does preserve are narratives and artefacts relating to its development alongside the tourism industry (Wise & Breen 2004). This is what Weaver (2011) calls ‘contemporary tourism heritage’ – the history of mass tourism as a legitimate form of heritage that can be mobilised for further touristic consumption. After all, this heritage is what makes the Gold Coast unique. The city's symbolic economy capitalises on its position as an icon of Australia's much valued beach culture (Davidson & Spearritt 2000).

---

148 Since being branded as Chinatown, several Chinese restaurants have opened there.
Although there is no museum devoted to contemporary tourism heritage, the city is home to sites like Surf World, a museum displaying a collection of surfboards and other surfing memorabilia, photographs and oral histories (Surf World Gold Coast 2016). The Gold Coast City Art Gallery has held several exhibitions documenting the city’s history in terms of tourism – for example, as discussed in the previous chapter, ‘Sexualising the City’ (2012) focused on the city’s narratives of identity in relation to sex, bikinis and bare bodies; ‘Learning from Surfers Paradise’ (2013) compared one photographer’s shots of the same spots taken in 1973 and again in 2013 to illustrate the tourist hub’s rapid development; while ‘Flesh: Gold Coast in the 60s, 70s and 80s’ (2014) provided a look back at Australian beach holidays through the photographs of Graham Burstow taken on his own annual family vacations. Such exhibitions have also featured kitsch ephemera including postcards, promotional posters, swimwear and photographs of locally iconic figures like Meter Maids and lifesavers (Wise 2006, 2010). The Meter Maids are in themselves a form of living heritage – no longer topping up parking meters as they initially did, they persist solely as mainstays in the visual spectacle of Surfers Paradise, chatting to passers-by and selling merchandise.

Figure 106: Items on display at the Sexualising the City exhibition
In terms of built heritage listed on the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register, some are tourism facilities like the Main Beach Pavilion (constructed in 1934); Southport Surf Lifesaving Club (constructed in 1936); the first high-rise hotel, Kinkabool (constructed 1959–1960); and the Pink Poodle Motel signs (constructed in the mid-1960s, with the neon sign replaced in 1987 and relocated in 2011 [see Figure 107]) (Gold Coast City Council 2013a, 2013b). These are seen to symbolise particularly significant trends in the evolution of the city’s tourism industry. The latter two examples, for instance, are positioned as emblematic of the influence of American styles and standards on regional architecture, aesthetics and consumer tastes. In the case of the Pink Poodle, the motel was demolished in 2003 yet the iconic signs were retained as a symbol of ‘the Gold Coast fun and fantasy phase’ (Gold Coast City Council 2013b, p. 98). In typical postmodern fashion, the city opted to preserve traces of its material past rather than the substance of it, appealing to local and touristic desires for heritage without compromising the opportunity for more modern developments on the same site.¹⁴⁹

![Figure 107: Pink Poodle Motel neon sign](image)

The redevelopment several years ago of the pedestrian walkway along The Esplanade, bordering the beach in Surfers Paradise, included the addition of old photographs of the area on display boards and on the sides of public toilet buildings. These nostalgic images (primarily from the 1930s–1960s) feature women in bikinis, ¹⁴⁹ Thus, simultaneously appealing to the touristic desire for up-to-date facilities.
men with surfboards, Meter Maids and surf lifesavers, functioning to impose a sense of heritage on the contemporary built environment. This kind of initiative, which stages tourism culture as heritage, signals a growing recognition of the advantages that may be provided by historicising place for tourists. In particular, it offers the sense of authenticity that places like resorts are so frequently purported to lack.

Figure 108: Billboard with a retro photograph in Surfers Paradise

Figure 109: Public bathrooms in Surfers Paradise featuring a photograph of men with surfboards
Permanence and transience

As the examples above highlight, resorts are perceived as disembedded (Featherstone & Lash 1995; Giddens 1990) from the historical and cultural contexts in which they actually exist. Even a city like Cancún, which has numerous conventional cultural tourism sites available nearby, is still perceived as a banal tourist trap, disconnected from the authenticity and ‘real’ lives which saturate its surrounds. Through producing (and reproducing) a metanarrative that promotes them as escapist, liminal spaces that are dislocated from the mundane nature of everyday life, resorts have positioned themselves as dehistoricised spaces (Wise 2006; Wise & Breen 2004). As Wise and Breen (2004) explain in relation to the Gold Coast:

This is not to say there are not histories, but from the time of its spectacular expansion, the most obvious characteristic of the Gold Coast was that it imagined its main purpose as somewhere that others came to enjoy, and leave. Its project has been to give visitors respite from their own historically located and determined daily lives. That is, its project has been to be outside history. (p. 164)

This dehistoricisation is further heightened by the impermanence characteristic of resorts (Revels 2011; Wise & Breen 2004). Being mature destinations dependent
on mass tourism, resorts are perpetually changing and rejuvenating themselves, staving off or reducing periods of decline by adapting to global trends and consumer demands. This is true of both their materiality – ensuring tourism facilities and attractions are modern and well maintained – and their imaginaries – altering, managing and diversifying their official tourism narratives. Thus, very little stays the same for very long. Whether tourists or residents, people tend to be transient, as do social spaces and senses of belonging (Baker et al 2012; Nijman 2011; Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2008). This lack of continuity is assumed to produce inauthenticity, since the authentic is generally considered as that which emerges organically, remains stable and ‘accumulate[s] the patina of age’ (Zukin 2010, p. 2).

In a contradictory movement, the only sense of continuity or permanence in resorts is to be found in their transience, and in ongoing, unpredictable shifts and transformations – not only in the built environment, but in lifestyles, identities, imaginaries, narratives and rhythms. Even their spectacular natural landscapes – the core reason for their presence as tourism destinations – are subject to constant change from the impacts of weather, tides, seasons and human use.

**Simulacra and hyperreality**

Due to the staged nature of both cultural and mass tourism, resorts can be read as hyperreal spaces composed of simulacra. The need to cater to a touristic demand for the real and the exotic has required destinations to package their local distinctiveness for mass consumption, which raises questions regarding the dynamics between genuine and false, representation and reality. According to Baudrillard (1994), under postmodernism the real is progressively being replaced by simulations of the real – what he calls ‘the precession of simulacra’. Simulacra are signs, symbols or copies with no referent or original counterpart. Simulacra do not *hide* the truth, because there is no truth (Baudrillard 1994). With the proliferation of simulacra, Baudrillard (1994) argues, the postmodern world is increasingly becoming hyperreal – a ‘desert of the real’ (p. 1).

Common examples of the hyperreal include spaces like theme parks and shopping malls, and cultural products like advertising and reality television (Soja 2000; Belk 1996; Eco 1986). It can also be argued that simulacra have become so pervasive that they now permeate our everyday lives. As Soja (1996) observes, ‘Now you do not just choose to visit these hyperreality factories at your leisure,
*hyperreality visits you* every day wherever you choose to be’ (p. 251, original emphasis). Even some cities can be conceptualised as hyperreal environments. Soja (1996, 2000) considers this specifically in terms of urban formations like the exopolis,\(^{150}\) which he posits are ‘spin-doctored “scamscapes”’ (1996, p. 9) constituted by ‘thick layers of simulations’ (2000, p. 343), much like theme parks. Similarly, Hannigan’s (1998) concept of the ‘fantasy city’ suggests that urban precincts are being progressively redeveloped to function as intensively branded, themed, eclectic and hyperreal enclaves for entertainment consumption. Much like the fantasy city and the exopolis, resorts can also be understood as hyperreal, although this is more of an appropriate description of the tourist hubs specifically. Indeed, Surfers Paradise is blatantly marketed as such, recently adopting a tourism campaign that brands it as the Gold Coast’s sixth theme park (see Figure 111) (Surfers Paradise Alliance 2015).

\(^{150}\) An urban formation lacking a singular, distinct centre, such as the Gold Coast or Los Angeles.
While some aspects of Baudrillard’s theories are problematic – particularly the suggestion that a romanticised notion of the real once existed, but has now been eroded under postmodernism – they are nonetheless useful for understanding certain aspects of what is occurring in resorts. I am less concerned with the disappearance of the real than with the emerging recognition that representations, signs, spectacle and imaginaries are themselves dimensions of the real (Olalquiaga 1992). This is reflected in Baudrillard’s example of maps – the map is supposedly only a representation of the real territory, but in hyperreality this distinction has disintegrated to the point where the map is real (Soja 2000; Baudrillard 1994). In Baudrillard’s (1994) words, ‘It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real’ (p. 2).

For the purposes of this project, then, I am most interested in how hyperreality collapses the distinctions between real and imaginary (Soja 1996, 2000), original and copy, fact and fiction, authentic and inauthentic, front and back (MacCannell 1973, 1999). One of the most obvious ways this plays out in resorts is in the dynamics between reality and representation and, similarly, the material and the imagined. A key conceptual strand shaping this thesis is the mutually defining nature of relations between dualisms like these. That is, how places like resort are imagined and represented is informed by reality, and, in a reciprocal loop, imaginaries and representations inform reality and materiality as well (e.g. through providing cues as to what expected or normalised spatial practices are).

Representations of resorts – in tourism brochures, travel websites, film and television, news media, photographs and stories on social media, and so on – are assumed by tourists to be representing reality (even if only partially), and these inform popular imaginaries and myths of place as well as more personalised fantasies of individual vacations. Further, by taking their own photographs and accumulating souvenirs to signify their real, material, lived experiences of the destination, multiple layers of simulacra proliferate for tourists. Thus, in the hyperreal spaces of resorts, reality – what is actually going on there, spatially and socially – cannot be separated from fantasy, imaginary or representation, which have transformed into aspects of the real themselves.
Hyperreality confuses the boundaries between front and back regions, and authenticity and inauthenticity, as evidenced in the above discussion of Cancún and the Gold Coast. Certain tourists may seek out authentic back regions and experiences – a concealed reality – and in doing so they may be met with staged, contrived spaces, performances, objects and other simulacra. Nevertheless, these may feel real to the tourist, and thus cannot be considered completely fake. In relation to these touristic simulacra, it is important to make a distinction, too, between the fake or staged that purports to be real (a front region masquerading as a back region, for instance) and that which makes no such claims. Chichén Itzá would be an example of the former, whereas the Gold Coast’s theme parks are an example of the latter – sites like theme parks are blatantly artificial, exaggerated, kitschy and hyperreal (Symes 1995; Olalquiaga 1992), and thus are authentic in the sense that they are not feigning to be anything else.

Simulacra exist in resorts with the purpose of creating the experience of authenticity. Sites, peoples and objects are manipulated and staged to feel more real than the ‘original’ – that is, to more closely approximate the tourist’s expectations and fantasies of what the real is (Urry 2002; Eco 1986). As MacCannell (1999) suggests, ‘Settings are often not merely copies or replicas of real-life situations but copies that are presented as disclosing more about the real thing than the real thing itself discloses’ (p. 102). For example, Thailand’s Maya Bay (which I introduced in the previous chapter) was carefully landscaped for the film The Beach (2000), involving the replacement of native vegetation with palm trees to make the beach look more like a tropical paradise as imagined by Westerners (Law et al 2007). Similarly, Miami and the Gold Coast have transformed their swamplands/wetlands into exclusive islands and canal estates, creating a landscape of spectacle which spatially extends the appeal of the beach and, despite appearing natural, is actually a manufactured, more ideal version of the real (Shaw & Williams 2004; Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2004). Thus, the real in resorts is often hyperreal.

It is important also to remember that not all tourists are necessarily seeking the real – indeed, some desire the kitsch, the inauthentic and the simulacral (Torres 2002; Rojek & Urry 1997; Ritzer & Liska 1997; Feifer 1985). These types of visitors are most commonly referred to as post-tourists (Feifer 1985), although any kind of tourist may exhibit these desires. As outlined in Chapter 2, qualities associated with
post-tourists are reflexivity, eclecticism and playfulness (Shaw & Williams 2004; Rojek 1993; Feifer 1985), epitomising the postmodern consumer (Fahmi 2008). They are aware of the constructed nature of tourism and their role within it – they know that marketing material is illusory, that culture has been packaged and commodified, that hyperreal environments have been staged, and that their experience will be as much about travel delays, queues and schedules as about fun and escapism (Urry 2002; Rojek 1993; Feifer 1985). In the literature, post-tourists are associated more with self-conscious detachment than with the naïve immersion that is supposedly characteristic of mass tourists and cultural tourists. As Feifer (1985) puts it:

Above all, though, the post-tourist knows that he [sic] is a tourist: not a time traveller when he goes somewhere historic; not an instant noble savage when he stays on a tropical beach; not an invisible observer when he visits a native compound. Resolutely ‘realistic’, he cannot evade his condition of an outsider. (p. 271)

Instead of resenting this position, as many mass or cultural tourists might, post-tourists embrace it, delighting in the inauthenticity of tourism (Torres 2002; Urry 1995; Rojek 1993). Post-tourists can enjoy a diversity of experiences, from visiting museums and gazing on ancient ruins to visiting theme parks, purchasing tacky souvenirs and people-watching (Rojek 1993). They are more concerned with having fleeting pleasurable experiences than any kind of quest for authenticity or self-realisation (Rojek 1993).

Although post-tourists may be less interested than others in encountering authentic places, people and things (in the objective, conventional sense) this is not to say they do not experience authenticity while travelling. In addition to symbolic authenticity, which is socially constructed as described above, Wang (1999) also outlines several other types of non-objective authenticity which may be experienced by the post-tourist, or by any tourist. Existential authenticity, for instance, refers to the ways in which tourism is implicated in the cultivation of self-identity, autobiographical narratives and memories through experiencing one’s ‘true’ or ‘real’ self (whatever that may be to the individual) (Wang 1999). This is especially intensified by the sensuous, liminal experiences and spaces that tourism offers

\footnote{However, as previously stated, any kind of tourist can experience both immersion and detachment.}
In destinations like resorts, tourists experience very real feelings of pleasure, desire, excitement, relaxation, anxiety and disappointment, as well as engaging sensuously with sights, sounds, smells, tastes, other bodies and atmospheres – what Wang (1999) terms intra-personal authenticity. As Sheller and Urry (2004) observe, ‘If tourism sometimes feels “unreal”, it nevertheless still mobilizes bodies in sensuous encounters with the physical world’ (p. 4). When travelling with family and friends, vacations can also be authentic on an inter-personal level through providing opportunities for meaningful bonding experiences (Wang 1999). What these varying interpretations highlight is that the real, and authenticity, can be a part of any tourism experience or tourism site, even those that are disparaged as staged, fake or hyperreal.

**Stereotyping resorts**

As apparently escapist, disembedded, impermanent, transient and hyperreal places, resorts are frequently deemed to be postmodern cities (Nijman 2011; Ditton 2010; Symes 1997). As Gladstone (1998) remarks, ‘tourist cities and their attractions [are] often held out as the apotheosis of postmodernity’ (p. 4). Specifically, they are frequently derided as epitomising the ‘worst’ characteristics of postmodernism. This relates to the high culture/popular culture binary outlined earlier – resorts are products of capitalist-driven tourism urbanisation, and are thus intensified sites for manifestations of popular culture, mass consumption and spectacle in excess. Far from being seen as sophisticated or elitist, tourism destinations like resorts are stereotyped as banal, tacky, trashy and tasteless, which problematically equates mass culture with ‘bad’ taste and high culture with ‘good’ taste (a dichotomy undone by the very nature of postmodernism).

Further, because of the pervasiveness of staged, hyperreal tourism spaces and experiences, resorts are often labelled as manufactured or engineered, artificial, illusionary and phony (Revels 2011; Ditton 2010; Shaw & Williams 2004; Goad 1997; Eco 1986). By extension, the people living in resorts are perceived as fake as well (see, for example, Colagrande 2014). As a Gold Coast local, this apparent artificiality is something I have heard my friends (and others) express great disdain

---

152 Of course, this is not all they are – it is one aspect of the spatiality of resorts, and there are many others which contest this kind of reading. This is discussed further in the next chapter.
for over the years. My interviewees communicated similar sentiments, referring to both the people and the landscape:

**Zelmarie: So what don’t you like about the Gold Coast?**

**Alyssa:** GC guys and girls – you know what I mean – the fake bimbos ... the girls with the fake orange tan and the bleach blonde hair and the fake tits and their fake personalities. And the guys are always trying to assert their masculinity and dominance or something. It’s just like – you walk into any club on the GC and you would know what I mean. That’s what I don’t like. (Gold Coast, 24 September 2014)

**Zelmarie: How do you feel about Miami’s tourism presence and the tourism industry?**

**Luciana:** Well, I feel it makes Miami fake. Just because Miami thrives on the tourism and they kind of built the city around tourism. I mean knowing a little bit of history about Miami, it used to be nothing but swampland. Well not necessarily swampland, but just an area where there really wasn’t anything here. And they, you know, imported the sand. Everything’s fake to me, but they need it. They need it. That’s what brings the money. I mean it’s nice, but I always think about how it’s not real. (Miami, 13 March 2014)

These sentiments reflect dissatisfaction with what is felt to be an excessive concern for money, appearances, surfaces and spectacle, with regard to spaces, people’s values and their bodies. This echoes yet another set of interrelated stereotypes of resorts as being superficial and depthless (Ditton 2010; Wise 2010; Alom Lovell Marquis-Kyle, Henshall Hansen Associates, Context, HJM & Staddon Consulting 1997), a critique also associated with postmodernism itself (Savage et al 2005; Buchanan 2005; Rojek 1993).

**Globalisation, generic spaces and non-places**

As the preceding discussion makes clear, tourism can be interpreted as a destructive force that contaminates cultures and erodes authenticity (Crang 2014; Malam 2008; Crang 2006; Shaw & Williams 2004; Coleman & Crang 2002; Meethan 2001; Abram & Waldren 1997; Cohen 1988). This is seen to occur, for example, through the commodification of places and cultures for touristic consumption (Shaw & Williams 2004; Meethan 2001) – an undertaking which necessarily involves complex assemblages being simplified, manipulated and staged. Crang (2014) observes that it is often tourists (rather than larger forces like local governments or developers) who are blamed for this, being seen as ‘agents of anticulture that destroys culture with which it comes into contact’ (p. 66).
As a result, one of the main perceived impacts of tourism on places like resorts is the homogenisation of local cultures (Crang 2014; Relph 2008; Macleod 2004; Shaw & Williams 2004; Meethan 2001; Belk 1996). This idea is implicated in a broader series of debates, in which globalisation has frequently been theorised as producing homogenising effects or cultural convergence more broadly\(^\text{153}\) (Guillén 2010; Augé 2008 [1995]; Robertson 1992). Such perspectives argue that the world is becoming increasingly uniform, with local cultures being threatened by a world culture or global monoculture (Guillén 2010; Lechner & Boli 2005, 2010; Massey 1994, 2007; Holmes 2001; Belk 1996). As Belk (1996) asserts:

Music is increasingly becoming world music. Food is increasingly succumbing to an international cuisine. Clothing styles are becoming a pastiche of worldwide influences. Our heroes are decreasingly likely to be local and increasingly likely to be selected from around the globe. Our shopping malls, franchise outlets, hotels, airports, banks, and gambling casinos are quickly becoming indistinguishable, whether they are in Australia, Europe, Asia, or the Americas. (p. 27)

Tourism is one mode through which world culture is manifested and proliferated, and is often considered to contribute to cultural homogenisation as both a process and a product of it (Hopkins & Becken 2014; Shaw & Williams 2004). In tourist-centric places like resorts, for example, there is a high concentration of multinational hotel chains, international fast food chains, retail stores for global brands, restaurants serving cuisine from a range of other nations, and a pastiche of architectural styles from around the world (Wise 2012; Shaw & Williams 2004). Zukin (2010) observes that these expressions of standardisation in development are often met with hostility. They are seen to mark a loss or destruction of local distinctiveness, which is replaced by supposedly depthless, globalised signs.

Scott Lash (2002) refers to sites marked by such characteristics as ‘generic spaces’ – those which are ‘a-contextual’ (p. 4), lacking a distinct identity, and interchangeable with other spaces around the globe. That is, disembedded or ‘lifted out’ from their social, historical and spatial contexts, they could, theoretically, be anywhere (Lash 2002, p. 161; Urry 1995). Generic spaces are thus characterised by a degree of placelessness (Relph 2008; Lash 2002). Another term used to refer to a similar spatiality is ‘non-place’ (Augé 2008). Examples of non-places include

\(^{153}\) Other common perspectives in the literature are that globalisation may produce cultural divergence/difference and/or cultural hybridity (Pieterse 2010a), as is discussed below.
transient spaces like airports, shopping malls and hotels (Augé 2008; Buchanan 2005; Buchanan & Lambert 2005; Savage et al 2005), all of which are sites associated with tourism.\textsuperscript{154} Like generic spaces, non-places are disembedded and ‘cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity’ in the same way that ‘places’ are (Augé 2008, p. 63).\textsuperscript{155} As Augé (2008) explains it, ‘There is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment’ (p. 83). He argues that, consequently, occupants of non-places experience ‘the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing’ (2008, p. 83) that these kinds of ahistorical, acontextual, identity-less spaces afford. There are clear parallels, then, between such generic non-places and the liminal, carnivalesque spaces of resorts (see Chapter 9).

Shaw and Williams (2004) suggest that one of the impacts of globalisation on pleasure periphery resorts has been the espousal of this sense of placelessness. By routinely obscuring or reducing, until quite recently, the prominence of their local cultures in tourism promotion, resorts have been able to disconnect (to an extent) the fantasy world of the tourist hubs from their other ‘real’ spaces and the less-than-utopian aspects of everyday local lives (e.g. visible social problems and inequalities, as discussed in the next chapter). In other words, resorts have, historically, disembedded themselves in order to facilitate the escapist, hedonistic experiences that tourists seek out. However, as this thesis has highlighted, resorts are no longer officially being sold as anywhere or generic. Rather, resorts actively ‘expend effort on creating ideas of places’ (Coleman & Crang 2002, p. 4) through tourism promotions that emphasise local specificity and cultural and historical activities. As such, analyses stressing how globalisation and tourism engender cultural homogeneity and placelessness do not adequately attend to other opposing forces and processes that are clearly at work in the lived spaces of resorts.

\textsuperscript{154} Similarly, Relph (2008) suggests that tourism spaces are prime examples of placelessness.

\textsuperscript{155} Augé (2008) also notes that concepts of ‘place’ and ‘non-place’ do not exist in pure form. In his words, ‘Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed ...’ (p. 64).
Americanisation and Westernisation

In addition to the perceived threats of globalisation to places and cultures, the literature frequently debates specific concerns related to Westernisation and Americanisation. These concepts refer to processes of homogenisation by way of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism – that is, that nations around the world are becoming more like the West (particularly America) (Lechner & Boli 2010; Pieterse 2010a; Berger 2002; Appadurai 1996; Featherstone 1993). The American influence is particularly obvious in resorts like Cancún which attract visitors predominantly from the United States (see Torres & Momsen 2006 for a more detailed exploration of this influence). However, even an English-speaking Western city like the Gold Coast can be read as Americanised – it is habitually compared to locations in the US, such as Las Vegas, California and Florida (Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2004, 2005, 2006, 2012; Davidson & Spearritt 2000; Griffin 1998; Symes 1995, 1997; Goad 1997; Longhurst 1995; Jones 1986). Americanised features are also evident in, for example, aesthetics – a landscape of high-rises, canal estates and theme parks made famous by cities like Miami and Orlando – and nomenclature – with suburbs and neighbourhoods named things like Miami, Miami Keys, Florida Gardens, Palm Beach and Santa Barbara.

Figure 112: An Australian restaurant/bar and a McDonald's in Patong Beach, Phuket
Since international resorts typically attract mostly Western visitors, they must provide amenities that cater to Western needs and expectations (Cohen 1972), including convenient packaged tours and familiar brands, aesthetics, interactions, infrastructure and services. For example, Patong Beach in Phuket has McDonald’s, KFC, Subway, Starbucks and Coffee Club, along with a number of Australian- and American-themed bars. In Cancún you can eat at Hooters, Hard Rock Café, Chilli’s and Applebee’s; shop at Calvin Klein, Coach, Guess and Zara; speak to almost anyone in English; and use American currency instead of the Mexican Peso. Across all of my chosen resorts, you can find Best Westerns, Holiday Inns, Hard Rock Hotels and Hiltons offering standard Western comforts – from the basics like electricity and running water to more bourgeois facilities like air conditioning, mini bars, room service,156 free WiFi, flat screen televisions, fresh linens and towels, pillow menus and concierges to demystify any confusion about the locality. Thus, mass tourism in resorts has been interpreted as increasingly standardised, homogenised and predictable (Minca & Oakes 2006).

**McDonaldisation**

This movement towards a packaged, ‘sterilized, sanitized’ (Belk 1996, p. 23) consumption experience is often referred to in the literature as McDonaldisation (Ritzer 2011). As a particular form of Americanisation, the theory of McDonaldisation claims that social practices and institutions around the world are increasingly modelled on the principles of American corporations (namely, McDonald’s) (Ritzer 2011; Pieterse 2010a; Waters 2006). That is, they are becoming more efficient, calculable, predictable and controlled (Ritzer 2011; Ritzer & Liska 1997). Ritzer (2011) argues that these fast food chain principles have come to shape a range of different sectors including education, religion, politics and health care systems. In terms of tourism, this means that many tourists supposedly still desire Fordist-style vacations (Waters 2006): efficiency provided by travel agents and tours (e.g. Contiki) that fit as many activities and sights as possible in short periods of time; calculability offered by value-for-money package deals and all-inclusive options; predictability from stringently organised itineraries and chains that

---

156 Often with American staples like cheeseburgers and Caesar salads.
promise consistency across international locations; and control via orderly lines and well-trained staff (Ritzer & Liska 1997).

McDonaldisation ‘is not an all-or-nothing process’, but is expressed to different degrees in different sites (Ritzer 2011). Perhaps the most obvious examples of McDonaldised tourism spaces are theme parks (Bryman 2006; Ritzer & Liska 1997; Zukin 1995). These attractions are highly regulated, exemplifying the McDonaldised characteristics outlined above, as well as being highly stylised and sanitised to be hyperreal (Belk 1996). As Zukin (1995) observes:

Disney World ... uses a visual strategy that makes unpleasant things – like garbage removal, building maintenance, and pushing and shoving – invisible. Disney World uses compression and condensation, flattening out experience to an easily digestible narrative and limiting visualization to a selective sample of symbols. Despite all the rides and thrills, Disney World relies on facades. (p. 64, original emphasis)

McDonaldised tourism sites like theme parks are, then, ‘a sanitized version of reality, cleansed of strife, world problems, dirt, prejudice, exploitation, or other problems of everyday life’ (Belk 1996, p. 29). As discussed above, this phenomenon is evident in resorts more broadly as their touristic narratives attempt to position them as safe, pristine, carefree fantasy worlds. This manifests spatially through the emergence of tourism enclaves (Edensor 2000) or tourism bubbles (Craik 1997). These types of spaces involve the subdivision of destinations into micro and macroenvironments (Cohen 1972), with the former being the disembedded, staged tourism hubs and the latter being the wider socio-spatial context of the city, region or nation. This segregation between tourist and local is perhaps most striking in Cancún, with its clearly demarcated ‘Hotel Zone’. Insulated from the alien environment, the tourist enclave is purposely controlled and monitored to meet tourists’ expectations and ensure safety, familiarity and reliability, and to minimise risk or any undesirable realities, including unwanted sights, smells and sounds (Edensor 2000, 2007; Shaw & Williams 2004; Fainstein & Judd 1999; Cohen 1972).

---

157 A parallel concept to McDonaldisation is ‘Disneyisation’ or ‘Disneyification’, which has developed based on the notion that the principles that dominate theme parks have spread to other spaces as well (Relph 2008; Bryman 2006; Rojek & Urry 1997).
Familiarity and difference

Ritzer and Liska (1997) observe that McDonaldisation processes undermine the central purpose of tourism. That is, travelling for leisure is usually motivated by a desire to escape one’s mundane life and experience the ‘variety, novelty, and strangeness’ of other places and cultures (Cohen 1972, p. 172). Paradoxically, due to globalisation, destinations are in some ways exhibiting greater uniformity and standardisation to the point where the places to which tourists travel are not all that unlike home (Shaw & Williams 2004; Urry 2002; Fainstein & Judd 1999; Cohen 1972). Further, demand for predictability and control undercuts motivations for escaping routine. In this sense, contemporary tourism blurs distinctions between home and away, and our travel experiences have the potential to be increasingly more like our everyday lives (Holmes 2001; Ritzer & Liska 1997; Rojek & Urry 1997; Rojek 1993).

This is not to say that difference no longer exists or matters, or that a sense of familiarity is privileged over difference. Even if a site like Chichén Itzá is staged and sanitised, it is nonetheless uniquely Mexican and something one can only experience first-hand by physically travelling to the Yucatán. Tourists still desire novelty – even if only in climate, landscape, cuisine or superficial symbolism – and this is clear in the ways resort destinations are marketed. As Belk (1996) illustrates, elements of local distinctiveness are fundamental to touristic place-myths, which are in themselves caricatures of the destination:

... there is little to draw the European tourist to South America if the sights and services there are totally indistinguishable from those at home. Rather, the culture that represents Brazil or Peru in the European's mind is likely to be stylized, exaggerated, and subtly Europeanized. Brazil thus becomes year-round Carnival and samba, while Peru becomes Inca-land and the Andes. (p. 32)

Clearly, whether these aspects of local specificity are real or staged is less important than the feeling of authenticity, or the resort’s ability to ‘offer the illusion or fantasy of otherness’ (Craik 1997, p. 114). Thus, contemporary tourism seems to be less about the desire for either difference or familiarity, and more about the pleasure derived from the tensions between them. This will vary depending on individual
tourists and their cultural backgrounds, needs, desires and motivations, as well as the particular temporal and spatial context of the holiday. Some tourists (usually assumed to be mass tourists) want a high degree of predictability, safety and comfort, or to ‘observe without actually experiencing’ the host culture (Cohen 1972, p. 169). Others (such as cultural tourists) may be actively seeking difference and adventure and avoiding complete immersion in tourist enclaves, but could also want ‘McDonaldized stops along the way, and to retreat to at the end of the day’ (Ritzer & Liska 1997, p. 101). The business of the tourism industry, then, is to attempt to stage ‘ordered disorder’ (Minca & Oakes 2006, p. 11) or ‘riskless risk’ (Hannigan 1998, p. 71) for visitors.

Localisation, hybridity and complexity

Just as difference is not being replaced by familiarity, so too is the local not being destroyed by the global. Such dystopian arguments operate on the problematic assumption that cultures (more specifically regarded as non-Western cultures) are geographically bounded, static, homogenous, ‘coherent and closed systems of meaning’ (Coleman & Crang 2002, p. 1; see also Crang 2014; Lechner & Boli 2010; Hannerz 2010a; Pons et al 2009; Meethan 2001; Appadurai 1996). On the contrary, cultures are produced through interactions with other regions, nations and people (Huddart 2006). Just like money, ideas, information and images, cultures are also mobile and travel across the globe, adapting and transforming over time through various fluid processes and networks (Rojek & Urry 1997). That is, cultures are always already hybrid (Pieterse 2010a; Huddart 2006; Massey 1998), characterised as much by shared experiences, continuity and unity as by differences, transience and ruptures (Hall 2006; Savage et al 2005). The same is true of places more generally. Since space is already multiple and contested, and produced through a series of flows, interconnections and relations (often involving that which exists ‘outside’ of them), it is never really homogenous, bounded or closed either (Pons et al 2009; Massey 1994, 2005). Thus, places and cultures being toured cannot necessarily be ‘contaminated’ since they were never ‘pure’ to begin with. Similarly,

---

158 That is, what is ‘familiar’ and what is ‘different’ will be different for each tourist since they come from different localities, speak different languages, and so on.
159 These flows and networks have also enabled the formation (and/or strengthening) of other cultures and affinities, including those of transnational and imagined communities.
tourism cannot eliminate culture since it is one of the forces actively producing and re-producing culture (Crang 2014).

Urry (2003) observes that there is no ‘single centre of global power’ (p. 93) exerting a universal influence. Any kind of world culture that has emerged exists in tandem with, and interacts with, other cultures (Lechner & Boli 2005, 2010). Further, this world culture is distinct (Lechner & Boli 2005, 2010) and not necessarily only American or Western. As Appadurai (1996) points out, ‘the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes’ (p. 31). While Americanisation and McDonaldisation are very real phenomena, they are only two processes – among many – that are occurring (Ritzer 2011; Lechner & Boli 2010; Bryman 2006; Appadurai 1996). Non-Western cultures can, and do, influence Western cultures as well as other non-Western cultures (Pieterse 2010b), so we must acknowledge that beyond Americanisation there is also Easternisation, Japanisation, and so on (Appadurai 1996; Featherstone & Lash 1995). On the Gold Coast, for example, the impact of a steady flow of international visitors from Asia (previously mostly Japanese and now mostly Chinese) is evident in the increasing number of tourism providers and shopping and dining precincts catering specifically to them (Prideaux 2004). Miami, on the other hand, has been influenced quite significantly by processes of Latinisation as a result of its geographic location and patterns of migration (both forced and elective) over the past several decades (Rose 2015; Olalquiaga 1992).

If there is no single dominant culture, then globalisation (or any of its sub-processes) cannot be conceptualised as having a set of uniform, linear, predictable effects like cultural homogenisation (Hannerz 2010a; Robertson 2010; Urry 1995, 2003). It is far too simplistic to argue that places around the world are becoming more alike, or more like America (or any other nation), since what is ‘global’ or ‘American’ does not signify something unified and uncontested – it is hybrid, fragmented, heterogeneous and constituted by a wide range of cultural influences and competing discourses. Berger (2002) illustrates this well:

... Western ‘culture wars’ are exported as part and parcel of the globalization process. Thus a Hungarian, for instance, looking west for cultural inspiration, comes on free market ideology versus environmentalism, freedom of speech versus ‘politically correct’ speech
codes, Hollywood machismo versus feminism, American junk food versus American health foods, and so on. In other words, ‘the West’ is hardly a homogenous cultural identity, and its conflict-laden heterogeneity is carried along by its globalization. (p. 15)

The same is true for the cultures and places that globalisation is said to be influencing. Since all places have their own particularities, ideological conflicts, trajectories and spatial specificity, global trends will manifest differently in these different contexts (Robertson 2010; Massey 1998, 2005). Moreover, global elements are not merely imposed on and passively absorbed by cultures – they can also be resisted, rejected, embraced, reappropriated and reassembled in idiosyncratic ways (Huddart 2006; Minca & Oakes 2006; Berger 2002; Meethan 2001; Belk 1996; Bhabha 1994) and these responses may vary between different groups within a place or culture (Urry 1995). Following Massey’s (1994) approach towards a progressive or global sense of place, one that is more ‘outward-looking’ (p. 14), we can therefore notice that local specificity is something produced in interaction with the global, with internal and external forces.

These complex, uneven engagements also mean that the global becomes localised or indigenised (Savage et al 2005; Tucker 2003; Wahab & Cooper 2001; Appadurai 1996; Belk 1996). Even a global fast food chain like McDonald’s has different practices and meanings in different places (Watson 2006; Meethan 2001). Not only are their menus adapted to cater to local tastes, but the spaces of their restaurants vary in use (Watson 2006). In East Asia, for example, the value of efficiency in the dining experience is subverted because many customers prefer to linger (Watson 2006; Berger 2002). Additionally, no two restaurants can be the same because each is situated in a different spatial, historical, political and social context, and is run by staff who are connected to and live out these differences. Far from being ‘non-people’ occupying ‘non-places’ (Ritzer 2003), those working at McDonald’s can have meaningful engagements with it as an integral space in their everyday lives in which they construct their identities, develop skills, build social relationships and/or engage in conflict. Supposedly generic spaces, then, can never really be disembedded, and multi-national corporations like McDonald’s can only exercise a limited degree of control in maintaining standardisation and uniformity: local particularities inevitably assert themselves and disrupt these ideals. The global, therefore, does not abolish the local (Lefebvre 1991), and can even provide opportunities for local distinctiveness to be reaffirmed (Meethan 2001; Soja 2000;
Urry 1995). Indeed, heritage and cultural tourism may provide one such means of differentiation (Meethan 2001).

These various local manifestations also influence how global elements evolve (Massey 1998, 2007). This is unsurprising considering that what comes to be designated as 'global' originates in local contexts (Urry 1995; Massey 2007) and is circulated around the world through practices like tourism. As Urry (2003) explains:

... while people know little about the global connections or implications of their particular actions, these local actions nevertheless do not remain local. They are captured, represented, transported, marketed and generalized elsewhere. They get carried along the scapes and flows of the emerging global world, mobilizing ideas, people, images, moneys and technologies to potentially everywhere. (p. 80)

Clearly, the global and the local cannot be treated as a binary opposition (Salazar 2011; Robertson 2010; Massey 2007). Local cultures are indeed shaped by global trends and flows, but these are always already being adapted, altered and formed in local contexts. Like products of *bricolage*, resorts are heterotopic spaces that represent and juxtapose several globalised sites and symbols while simultaneously recontextualising and inverting them (Foucault 1986). They are unique, localised singularities that are nonetheless connected to the globalised totality.

Globalisation and localisation are mutually constitutive (Salazar 2011; Savage et al 2005) and mutually transformative, and neither can be easily distinguished let alone privileged as more powerful. Consequently, the effects of globalisation cannot be assumed to be as straightforward as cultural homogenisation. Nothing can become completely the same, nor can anything be totally staged, fake or McDonaldised – disorder, difference and the messiness of the real will always emerge, disrupting any attempt at standardisation and control. Instead of deploying hierarchical either/or logics, it is more productive to consider interconnections (Massey 1994, 1998, 2005; Urry 1995), exchanges and multiplicities – the *movements between* the conceptual (not actual) poles of fake and real, familiarity and difference, global and local, homogeneity and heterogeneity, universal and particular.\(^\text{160}\) These dynamics lead to processes of hybridisation – the synthesis of

---

\(^{160}\) See also the relations between arborescent and rhizomatic processes discussed in Chapter 1.
global and local\textsuperscript{161} – rather than domination and erasure (Pieterse 2010b; Fahmi 2008; Huddart 2006; Berger 2002; Meethan 2001). Through creating these hybrid forms, globalisation can be understood as generative of diversity more than sameness (Guillén 2010; Lechner & Boli 2010; Meethan 2001; Featherstone 1993). Resorts, then, cannot simply be read as impermanent, transient or depthless – they are always hybrid and in a perpetual state of becoming, marked by complex, shifting arrangements of fluidity and stasis, difference and sameness, local and global.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter, I have problematised the parallel dichotomies of culture/capitalism, real/staged, authentic/fake, different/familiar and local/global, which have long framed scholarly and popular discourses surrounding tourism destinations, especially mass tourism destinations. In each of these dichotomies, the former terms – culture, real, authentic, different, local – have been privileged as being meaningful, valuable, organic, diverse and heterogeneous. The latter terms – capitalism, staged, fake, familiar, global – have been perceived as devoid of these qualities, instead being characterised as depthless, empty, superficial, contrived and homogeneous. Places like resorts, as sites for intensified expressions of capitalist processes, values and mass consumption practices, have thus been negatively stereotyped as representing all that is apparently bad about globalisation, and all that is threatening to a romanticised, idealistic notion of culture and authenticity.

As the above discussion makes clear, such distinctions become blurred when considering the lived spatiality of resorts. All of these concepts are inter-implicated and mutually constitutive – one cannot eradicate the other, nor can any exist in pure form. Tourists may indeed seek the ‘real’ or the ‘authentic’, but what this means will vary greatly among individual visitors. Thus, people – tourists and locals alike – can have very real, meaningful, significant life experiences in supposedly ‘fake’ or hyperreal settings. Similarly, sites, objects and practices widely considered to be authentic in the traditional sense may also be staged and packaged to facilitate touristic consumption. All tourism attractions, then, combine aspects of the exotic and the familiar in various ways to cultivate the experience of authenticity.

\textsuperscript{161} This is also often referred to as glocalisation (Salazar 2011; Roberston 1992, 2010; Thornton 2010; Ritzer 2003).
Further, globalisation and capitalism are not necessarily at odds with culture. Cities around the world, including resorts, are increasingly relying on their natural and cultural assets – their local distinctiveness – to sell themselves, to capitalise on their symbolic economies. As my examples of Cancún and the Gold Coast showed, this may be through the marketing of culture in a traditional, modern sense (high culture and heritage in the form of ancient ruins and the continued existence of ancient cultures) or in a more unconventional, postmodern sense (heritage commemorating contemporary mass consumption of beach culture). The existence of distinct cultural forms in each resort highlights that they can never truly be disembedded, placeless or generic anywheres. Just like any other place, resorts have complex, multiple, heterogeneous imaginaries, narratives of identity, histories, communities, everyday practices and lived local experiences, which is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 11: Local perspectives: experiences and impacts

It is easy to imagine resorts only in terms of tourism. Due to the industry’s prominence, resorts are often perceived as merely ‘destinations’ – places that one goes to, temporarily\textsuperscript{162} – and not ‘real’ or ‘serious’ cities (Dedekorkut-Howes & Bosman 2015) where everyday lives, routines and non-touristic commercial and cultural endeavours take place. On the contrary, resorts have been localities, neighbourhoods, hometowns for as long they have been destinations, and much longer for those indigenous to the areas. They are places to play, but also places to live and work (Sheller 2004). As they have grown more populated, attracting residents drawn by the lifestyle and landscape as much as by job opportunities, the local cultures of resorts have become increasingly rich, complex and varied. Far from being only tourism sites, these places are also constituted by a range of other communities, activities, spaces and services.

Up until this point, I have focused on how resorts are represented, imagined and experienced by ‘outsiders’ – tourists, the media and academics. In this chapter, I aim to create a more holistic understanding of resorts by focusing on local perspectives and experiences. Drawing on interviews conducted with locals in various resorts, I discuss some of the impacts of tourism on these people and places. In particular, I consider how locals engage with and feel about tourism, and how it has come to influence their socio-spatial practices, everyday routines, social mobility, and senses of community and belonging.

I acknowledge that ‘local’ can be an ambiguous concept given that people’s attachments to place can be complicated, pluralistic, and in the case of resorts, often fraught with ambivalence. Some residents have lived in a particular resort their entire lives; some migrated from elsewhere for job opportunities; some are exiles whose family fled political persecution (as with Cubans in Miami [Nijman 2007]) or refugees from various other forms of conflict; some are higher education students, seeing themselves as people who will only stay for a few years and then leave again; some are expatriates; some desperately want to move elsewhere; some want to ‘settle down’ there; and so on. Each of these kinds of people have varying

\textsuperscript{162} Something that the chosen nomenclature of ‘resort’ also implies.
understandings of what ‘home’ is, where they feel they belong, which places they have a sense of ownership over, and how invested they are in where they live. What they all have in common, and what I see as defining them as locals, is that they carry out much of their everyday lives in the social and spatial contexts of resorts. They are immersed in the particular material and symbolic life-worlds of these places, and this comes to shape their biographical narratives and their habitus (Rojek 2007; Savage et al 2005).

**Getting beyond the metanarrative**

As this thesis has argued, the urban identities of resorts have been largely defined by how they are imagined by – and how they have been represented for – tourists. To recap, they are typically imagined and represented as exotic, escapist, excessive, hedonistic and carnivalesque places in which to relax, indulge, have fun and push boundaries. Simultaneously, and in response to this official touristic narrative, there are other unofficial, but still dominant, narratives which position resorts similarly, but also as sexualised, risky, hyperreal, culturally depthless, tacky, Americanised and homogenous. These popular imaginaries and stereotypes constitute the metanarrative of resort identity, which functions to make the illegible city legible, regulate complexity and dispel ‘the exceptional and the wayward’ rhythms (Highmore 2005, p. 7).

Despite its totalising implications, the most familiar metanarrative is only one facet of resort identity. Beyond this, there are a multiplicity of other localised experiences, rhythms, communities and narratives of identity which have often been marginalised by ‘louder’ expressions. The tourist hubs – Surfers Paradise, Miami Beach, Cancún’s Hotel Zone, Playa d’en Bossa, Patong, Haad Rin – are only small, specialised spaces within large, diverse urban formations, and cannot reasonably be taken to represent a resort in its entirety. Outside these zones, there are universities, hospitals, parks, libraries, grocery stores, banks, welfare offices, corporations and industries, and many neighbourhoods/suburbs with different built environments, social relations, spatial usages, historical contexts and reputations. Many of my interviewees, like Jakub, stressed to me that there was much more to their localities than just tourism:
**Jakub:** ... Patong, Karon, Kata – totally touristy, there’s nothing else happening there, right? If you move out [inland] – like I live in Kamala, which is a village in the next bay, there is also normal life – like not touristy life, where people have other businesses, do other things ... there is a city called Phuket Town which has nothing to do with tourism. It's a normal city functioning with its own life, it has universities, it has schools, hospitals, shopping centres, business – it is totally normal life. Tourism is very important, but it’s not everything. And if you drive up north to the other side of the island, you will see fishermen, you will see rubber tree plantations, you will see other things that happen which are not tourist-dependent. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

This heterogeneity is something that can be readily observed when one ventures away from the tourist hub of any resort.

The major failing of the resort metanarrative is that it focuses on how resorts are represented and imagined, largely ignoring how they are *lived*. The livedness of these places unsettles any coherent myths or narratives of place and transforms not only how we perceive them, but how we act within them. That is, we are responsive to the materiality of space. At many points during my fieldwork, *in situ*, I experienced moments of surprise when I encountered things for which the myths, tourism marketing and my own research had not prepared me. I did not expect to see small shrines to the king along the streets in Patong, nor abandoned hotels in Cancún, nor all of the diverse neighbourhoods located inland from Miami Beach. This even happened in my own locality, given that I was surprised at how many women among the tourists in Surfers Paradise were wearing hijabs. The unexpected encompassed more than the visual as well, with other sensorial particularities contributing to the overall atmosphere of place, something that representations could not capture (Pile 1999), and that could only fully be grasped through embodied experience.

I am not arguing that the metanarrative is a facade that conceals the ‘reality’ of a resort, or a somehow more authentic identity hidden beneath the surface. Even the most contrived narrative can nonetheless become internalised, made concrete through spatial practice and repeatedly enacted to become a ‘natural’ city rhythm. Tourism (and all of its associated subjects, groups, spaces, imaginaries, representations, repercussions, and so on) is integral to resorts, seeping into and affecting every part of their lived existence, and thus many local formations, experiences and understandings are mediated by or engage with tourism in some way, as is explored below. Conversely, symbolic and material aspects of local
cultures have recently been incorporated into the dominant tourism narratives, as discussed in the previous chapter. The touristic and the local, the dominant and the marginal, the official and the unofficial, and everything in between, shape the lived spatiality of resorts.

Polyrhythmia and arrhythmia

Cory: I think Miami in general has the perception around the world, and not just the US, of being like a sexy, glamorous place – on one hand. But also kind of like a dangerous, crime-ridden place. (Miami, 14 March 2014)

Like conventional cities, resorts are assemblages constituted by multiplicities, difference and eclecticism, which creates contrasts, juxtapositions and conflicting narratives (Potts et al 2013; Hillier 2007; Massey 2005; de Certeau 2002; Allen 1999; Massey et al 1999; Pile 1999). Pile (1999) describes this aspect of cities in terms of paradox:

... what is characteristically urban is that it is paradoxical; paradoxical, both in the sense that it embodies elements that are seemingly opposed at one and the same time, and in the sense that the seemingly opposed elements are brought together, intensified and concentrated in the city.

(p. 45)

How these differences overlap and intersect can be understood in terms of Elspeth Probyn’s (1996) description of the heterotopic as ‘the coexistence of different orders of space, the materiality of different forms of social relations and modes of belonging’ (p. 10). In traditional urban formations, this produces what Robert E Park (1967) calls ‘moral regions’, ‘moral milieux’ or ‘social worlds’, which compose a mapping of the city as ‘a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate’ (p. 40). These somewhat segregated areas, which can never be fully cohesive or pure, and which are occupied by particular social milieu, do indeed exist in resorts, but much more common are spaces of mixture, bricolage and hybridity.

As previously stated, resorts are at once home and away, everyday and exotic, familiar and unfamiliar, for tourists and locals alike. Their landscapes combine the artificial and the natural, with high-rises and mega malls set against the vast ocean and lush forests. They are positioned as family-friendly, fun-in-the-sun destinations,

---

163 Such as cultural enclaves like Little Haiti and Little Havana in Miami.
but are simultaneously famous for partying, transgression and crime. They are sites for liberation, hedonism and *communitas*, but are also highly regulated and exclusionary. McDonald’s restaurants sit side-by-side with opulent five-star hotels, and the excessive displays of wealth and conspicuous consumption characteristic of the tourist hubs stand in stark contrast to the poverty and low-income residential areas frequently found on the fringes of these places. Sexy and sleazy slide together, spectacle has a tendency to appear tacky or banal, and there is a fine line between adventurous and out-of-control. Resorts undermine binaries, always being both, being in-between, being hybrid, being liminal.

These competing discourses manifest spatially in resorts as polyrhythmia (Lefebvre 1991) – multiple rhythms which may co-exist harmoniously, interplay and/or clash. For instance, in resorts, there are local rhythms – people travelling to and from work each day, dropping their kids off at school, going to the grocery store, and engaging in leisure practices in their free time; and there are tourist rhythms – the seasonal flows of visitors, daily tours to popular sites and attractions, and the shifts in activity from day to night in entertainment zones. While local rhythms dominate the suburbs and residential areas further inland, tourist and local rhythms often intermingle in more urbanised areas. In the tourist hubs, for instance, the dominant rhythm is composed of tourists (and to a lesser extent residents) shopping, eating, sightseeing and going to the beach, and this converges with the less noticeable rhythms of locals undertaking paid labour servicing the tourists.

*Surfers Paradise: an example*

In Surfers Paradise, for example, there are several distinct rhythms related to contrasting narratives of identity. During the daytime and into the early evening, Surfers is predominantly occupied by tourists swimming, surfing and sunbaking on the beach, or strolling up and down Cavill Mall, shopping, eating ice cream, taking family photos and being entertained by buskers. This dominant rhythm is closely aligned with the Gold Coast’s official tourism discourses, which have branded the city as a family-friendly beach holiday destination. In the past, the city (along with real estate developers) has also attempted to position itself as a fashionable, upmarket destination characterised by luxury and glamour, as exemplified by the Very GC campaign. While Surfers does have a number of five-star hotels (including the Hilton, Marriott, Soul, Crown Plaza Gold Tower and QT), there are also a number
of high-end retailers (such as Louis Vuitton and Prada) that have closed their Surfers locations at the very same time that chain stores, novelty shops and cheap souvenir shops are thriving. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the upmarket narrative failed to attract significantly greater numbers of the desired visitors, and also did not resonate with the largest segment of the existing mass tourism market. This is an example of a narrative that was imposed on the city, but did not cohere effectively with the imaginaries (both touristic and local) already associated with it, and thus did not produce the anticipated rhythm.

Figure 113: Shops along Surfers Paradise Boulevard

Residents, on the other hand, overwhelmingly view Surfers as tacky, sexualised, seedy and crime-ridden. Obviously, this is not a narrative supported by the city in an official capacity as it dually undermines family-friendly and upmarket sentiments. Instead, this narrative has developed out of local engagements with Surfers Paradise nightlife and events (including Schoolies) and how the area is frequently portrayed in regional and national news media. As Seth points out, locals are strongly aware of the disparate ways in which Surfers is perceived:

Seth: ... being a local, the way that the media talks to me about Surfers Paradise is not the same way that the media would talk to tourists about Surfers Paradise. Like, to me it’s dangerous, seedy, dirty. And then to tourists it would be safe, beaches, fun in the sun, family. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)
These contrasting narratives and imaginaries lead to contested understandings as to how spaces are to be used, by whom, and when. Since the aforementioned narratives clash ideologically, disjunctions in spatial practice begin to emerge. That is, the different rhythms (informed by different narratives) overlap and interrupt each other’s sequences, resulting in arrhythmia (Lefebvre 2004). Arrhythmic moments in Surfers are most visible in transitions from day to night, as elements of the dayscape and nightscape bleed into one another. Meter Maids and young men touting club crawls represent an element of Surfers’ seediness, typically associated with the nighttime, creeping into the daytime. In the early morning, a similar contrast occurs as drunk stragglers still out from the night before linger on the beach at the same time as others go for their morning jogs or learn to surf. There are also times when seediness becomes the dominating rhythm of the dayscape, as with Schoolies, when drunken, rowdy partyers conspicuously occupy the same spaces as relaxed tourists and families.

Figure 114: Meter Maids chat to a police officer in Surfers Paradise

The rhythms typically associated with the daytime also assert themselves at night. When the streets of Surfers Paradise become increasingly occupied by young people dressed for a night out, heading to bars and clubs, there are still always families with young children and infants in prams ambling around Cavill Avenue and Orchid Avenue as late as 11.30 pm, a time at which the dominating rhythm is
undoubtedly that of the intoxicated, disorderly clubbers (see Figure 115 and Figure 116). As young Gold Coast locals, my friends and I frequently comment on how bizarre and awkward this seems to us. My interviewees expressed similar sentiments:

**Alyssa:** ... if I wanna come out to, like, Surfers Paradise at 9 o’clock on a Saturday night, or not even that early – even 11 o’clock on a Saturday night, there’ll be like little kids running around, and it’s weird! ... Like, that’s not appropriate in a clubbing district where there’s fucking people getting thrown out of club windows and, I don’t know, people humping each other in the street ... Surfers Paradise is like, associated with getting drunk and being slutty, basically. I would not bring my children here. (Gold Coast, 24 September 2014)

**Seth:** Where the tourists go has nothing to do with family. Local families don’t take their kids out in prams at 10 o’clock at night and push them around an area where there’s people spewing up because they’ve just walked out of a nightclub. That’s completely not where locals go. Locals don’t go to Surfers Paradise unless they’re looking to go out and get drunk – they definitely don’t go there for the restaurants. They might go to Broadbeach or go to Burleigh. But even in Broadbeach, you have a shopping centre that has a Coles and a Woolworths and a Coffee Club and things like that, where there’s predominantly old people going there, and families going there, and then you have a carousel and a kid’s play area, and then directly opposite you have two nightclubs with drunk people out the front. So it’s very weird ... I think that the [family] tourists, to me, always seemed out of place. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)

Figure 115: Young people outside of a nightclub on Orchid Avenue, Surfers Paradise
What this demonstrates is a discontinuity between how young locals, like myself and my interviewees, imagine and experience the Gold Coast, and how visitors imagine and experience the Gold Coast. This is common across all of the resorts in my study. Despite official attempts to regulate and control the activities within and beyond tourist hubs by pushing particular touristic narratives, local uses of space as well as subversive tourist performances always have the potential to disrupt any sense of coherence (Minca & Oakes 2006; Degen 2004). Lefebvre (2004) indicates that these relations are characteristic of polyrhythmia and the conflicting narratives that give rise to it:

Polyrhythmia always results from a contradiction, but also from a resistance to this contradiction – resistance to a relation of force and an eventual conflict. Such a contradictory relation can be defined as the struggle between two tendencies: the tendency towards homogenisation and that towards diversity. (p. 99)

The resort metanarrative can be seen as trying to homogenise or purify (Massey 2005) space, fostering particular kinds of spatial practice and producing a dominant rhythm. However, this is always destabilised and complicated by opposing narratives and marginalised rhythms. As Edensor (2010) argues, attempts at ordering city space through dominant or ‘normative’ rhythms are ‘always only ever partial and susceptible to disordering by counter rhythms and arrhythmia’ (p. 102).
In Foucault’s (1990 [1978], 1991) terms, a form of power or discursive domination invariably produces resistance. As he observes, ‘discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’ (Foucault 1990, p. 101). In resorts, the movements, practices and expressions of locals can be one such subversive force.

**Tourism impacts**

There is, then, much more to resorts than simply tourism. To understand resorts more fully and conceptualise them as distinct urban formations it is crucial to consider local perspectives, experiences and practices, which are frequently marginalised by the touristic metanarrative. The remainder of this chapter elucidates some of these local experiences, focusing particularly on how residents are affected by, respond to, engage with and feel about tourism in their localities. In the literature, a range of economic, social, political, environmental and geological impacts of tourism in various resorts have been well documented. Here, I briefly outline some of the most pressing issues common to this project’s destinations before shifting my focus to my own observations and what emerged from my interviews.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the commodification of cultures is seen to be one of the major social changes instigated by tourism development (Hall & Lew 2009; Boissevain 1996). This can be viewed negatively, as with the assumption that commodification inevitably leads to homogenisation or Westernisation. For instance, Castellanos (2010b) describes how Maya communities living around Cancún express fears that the modernised, ‘vulgar’ (p. 255), excessive consumerist culture of the resort will threaten their traditional rural lifestyle. In contrast, commodification can also be perceived as potentially positive – preserving and protecting cultural and natural heritage, for example, can renew interest and pride in local (or regional, or national) practices, traditions and landmarks, and thus

---

164 While I am only outlining issues that have been specifically identified as occurring in the resorts on which I focus, there have been a number of other studies analysing the impacts of tourism on other destinations. See, for example: Hall and Lew (2009) on the various social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism; Connell and Rugendyke (2008 [eds]) on tourism in the Asia-Pacific region; Pattullo (2005 [1996]) on Caribbean resorts; Waldren (1997) on tourism in Mallorca; Boissevain (1996 [ed]) on European mass tourism destinations; and Hernandez and Cohen (1996) on a Puerto Rican resort enclave.
(re)shape and strengthen collectively shared identities, histories and attachments to place (Salazar 2009; Boissevain 1996; Cohen 1988). In other words, commodification may work to reaffirm local specificity and difference rather diminish it (Meethan 2001).

Although tourism has proved to be a successful route to economic prosperity for the resorts in this study, it has also led to: increased costs of living and property prices (Bosman 2016; Sakolnakorn et al 2013; Tourism and Events Queensland 2013b; D’Andrea 2007; Murray 2007; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Boissevain 1996); higher crime rates, gang activity, drug trafficking and acts of delinquency, especially in Cancún (Sakolnakorn et al 2013; Tourism and Events Queensland 2013b; Castellanos 2010b; Mugerauer 2004; Minca 2000; Jones 1986); problems associated with prostitution and sex tourism, especially in Thailand (Hobbs, Pattalung & Chandler 2011; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Hall & Lew 2009; Berger 2007; Henkel et al 2006; Mugerauer 2004); and overcrowding of public spaces and traffic congestion across all resorts, but with particular intensity in seasonal destinations like Ibiza (Sakolnakorn et al 2013; McDowall & Choi 2010; D’Andrea 2007; Boissevain 1996; Smith 1991; Jones 1986).

In terms of infrastructure and resources, some of these destinations – notably Cancún, Phuket, Koh Phangan and Ibiza – have experienced overwhelming demands on energy and fresh water, as well as extreme pressures on waste management and disposal methods (which has further contributed to pollution) (Sakolnakorn et al 2013; Córdoba Azcárate 2011; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Anderson, W 2009b; Fortuny et al 2008; Murray 2007; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Boissevain 1996). As with overcrowding and traffic, these problems are exacerbated in seasonal destinations, those with small resident populations (as compared to tourism arrivals), and those with rapidly expanding resident populations, since local infrastructure is typically not designed to keep up with the highest volume of users. Consequently, residents can be disadvantaged and inconvenienced during peak times.

Environmental and ecological impacts due to unconstrained development have been multiple and severe, including damage to coral reefs from over-fishing, water sports and boat anchors (Córdoba Azcárate 2011; McDowall & Wang 2009; Murray 2007; Agarwal & Shaw 2007); deforestation, the clearing of mangroves and the destruction of sand dunes to make way for tourism facilities in prime coastal
locations (Sakolnakorn et al. 2013; Cohen 2008; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Kontogeorgopoulou 2004a, 2009; Murray 2007; Mugerauer 2004; Smith 1991); the degradation of natural ecosystems, which has threatened local plant and animal life (Murray 2007; Agarwal & Shaw 2007); and air and water pollution (McDowall & Choi 2010; Hall & Lew 2009; McDowall & Wang 2009; Cohen 2008; D’Andrea 2007; Murray 2007; Henkel et al. 2006; Smith 1991). These ongoing issues are evidence of the ways in which supporting rapid development and generating tourism revenue has too often been privileged over long-term environmental sustainability. This can cause resentment among locals by damaging the natural assets that attracted them to live there in the first place (McDowall & Choi 2010; Mugerauer 2004). Beyond this, it can also harm the long-term sustainability of the tourism industries themselves, since the appeal and successful operation of resorts principally relies on the natural landscape and its resources. Koh Phi Phi’s Maya Bay, for example, seems much less like ‘paradise’ with garbage strewn across the beach and the stench of fuel emanating from hordes of jet skis and tour boats.

While many of the impacts listed here are undoubtedly negative, and certainly require intervention, my aim is not simply to make judgments regarding whether tourism is good or bad – a ‘blight’ or a ‘blessing’ (Smith 2001, p. 109; Poon 1993, p. 287) – for these places. The effects of tourism on resort destinations are in fact varied and complex, which is why my interest here is predominantly in how resort residents feel about living among those effects. That is, I have set out to glean something of their micro-level perspectives on macro-level influences, as well as their responses and/or resistances to them. As stressed in the Methodology chapter, the findings I discuss here are examples, and are not intended to be representative of all possible attitudes. Rather, I draw on my personal experiences and observations along with those of my interviewees, to speak to the ways in which residing in a resort may create unique circumstances for particular ways of living, belonging and engaging.

The resort lifestyle

Living in a resort myself, what I hear most often from other locals are complaints – that tourists are ‘so annoying’, that the city has ‘no culture’, and that all anyone cares about is looks and money. In my eight years of residing on the Gold Coast, I have seldom stopped to ask myself – or others – what it is that people actually like about
living here. If so many of us express such disdain for the city, why are we even here? And why do we choose to stay? When I put these questions to my interviewees in different locations, their answers were, not unexpectedly, varied: for the job opportunities, to attend university, and, most commonly, because of ties to family and friends.

Regardless of what brought them to these places, all of my interviewees expressed some degree of appreciation for what their locality has to offer them. They frequently mentioned the weather as the best part about living in a resort – even if only because it lets their clothes dry faster on the washing line – along with the beaches and the wide variety of dining options. Most significantly, however, was the 'lifestyle', something that almost every participant cited as their favourite thing about where they live. This lifestyle is seen to be relaxed and connected to nature:

**Nicole:** I love the beach and the water, I’m a water person ... And the fact that there is that outdoor kind of culture of being able to have a barbeque and stuff ... That aspect, and the relaxed kind of nature of our city. So it’s a city but it’s not like Sydney where you feel like you’re gonna get run over by people on the street with their briefcases because it’s so busy. (Gold Coast, 4 November 2014)

**Alyssa:** It’s hard to put into words. I don’t even know how to explain it. Like the atmosphere, the vibe – this is the good part – it’s like, more relaxed, I guess, and it’s sort of got the beach vibe to it. It’s like really chill, whereas – the only other place I’d move is Brisbane or Melbourne and it’s sort of busy, and big cities don’t have that same sort of relaxed, chill thing. (Gold Coast, 24 September 2014)

**Seth:** I think after travelling a bit, I’ve decided that I like the lifestyle here. Not the typical lifestyle, but I like the fact that it’s – there’s not a lot of people here, it’s not like when you go to somewhere like Japan, and after 10 days you want to come home because you can’t breathe because there’s so many people. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)

Thus, what residents like about the Gold Coast is not dissimilar to what tourists like. As Baker et al (2012) observe, locals’ strong identification with lifestyle unsettles conventional notions of belonging characterised by citizenship or community in that it is shaped to a large extent by tourism representations aimed at outsiders. Wise (2010) expands on this: ‘The discourses of leisure and ‘lifestyle’ so pervade the milieux of ordinary life – through media, social interaction and retail engagements – that they constitute the most available vocabulary to express local belonging’ (p. 2). Resorts are seen as not governed by the same corporate, fast-paced
rhythms as conventional cities, which reinforces their liminal status. Further, they have a feeling of spatial openness: since their aesthetic is so dependent on providing expansive views of the beaches, buildings are spread out rather than densely packed together as in a traditional CBD. Seth elaborated on this theme further, explaining that he appreciates that the Gold Coast has a small town feel but with all the amenities of a big city:

**Seth:** ... it’s big enough that it has everything that I need, you know? I like small towns but the thing they lack is employment and jobs and some of the luxuries that we have here. You know, there’s at least one of everything here. And not like it is in a city where there’s a hundred of it. So I like that there might be a local shop that I can go to just down the street, but then if I need to I can go to somewhere like Pacific Fair or Robina and there’s a lot of the things that I want to get access to ... It’s just the right size, the right amount of population. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)

The fact that a relaxed lifestyle is something that residents value reinforces the importance of managing issues like overcrowding, overdevelopment and environmental degradation to ensure that this way of life can be maintained.

For residents of Miami, lifestyle is also bound up in the city’s cultural diversity. My interviewees there each expressed a deep fondness for this aspect of the city, which, to them, sets it apart from the state (which is predominantly white) and the nation:

**Damla:** I did my undergrad in Pennsylvania and I was very unhappy and very disappointed [laughs]. It was very – at least where I was, where I went to college – was very homogenous and not much diversity. And so I definitely like that about here – the diversity. (Miami, 11 March 2014)

**Luciana:** ... I like the diversity of it, there’s a lot of Caribbean people, and back home [San Francisco] we have a different kind of diversity. Here it’s very Caribbean or Latin American people, so it’s really interesting all these different restaurants and different foods. I like that – trying all the different foods. (Miami, 13 March 2014)

**Emilio:** What I like about the city is there is some diversity. There is a sense of diversity, at least for me as an insider. I have close friends from all over Latin America, and you know, for a white person up north, that might mean it’s all full of Hispanics, but you know, we’re all different in one way or another. There’s good food from everywhere, good access to music, and literature and arts from all over Latin America. So we are well connected to all these other trends, and I truly love that about Miami ... (Miami, 12 March 2014)
Miguel: ... The plastic, materialistic image gets pushed more than the diversity. I know a lot of people who were born and raised in Miami as well, parents born outside of the United States, and they say that Miami lacks culture. I had a particular friend of mine who just moved back to New Jersey and she claimed that New Jersey has more culture than Miami, yet she’s Cuban, her boy’s Irish–Puerto Rican, the boy next door’s Ecuadorian. I’m like, hello? How’s there no culture here? ... I think the diversity is really the best, at least from my experience living here for 21 years. It’s the diversity, because that allows you opportunity to see everybody’s perspective, you know? Whether they come from Cuba, whether they come from Nicaragua, whether they come from Turkey, whether they come from Brazil – anywhere. (Miami, 11 March 2014)

Miami’s diversity was something I noticed and appreciated as well, as an outsider visiting temporarily. One day, for instance, I went from my apartment to a fieldwork site and then to meet an interviewee, and along the way saw young Spring Breakers and Art Deco architecture in South Beach; people in corporate wear waiting in line for Cuban take away in downtown; hipsters among warehouses covered in street art in Wynwood; families walking down the streets of the predominantly black neighbourhood of Little Haiti; and streets lined with leafy trees and small Mediterranean- and Spanish-style homes in Buena Vista. Although cultural diversity was not explicitly mentioned by interviewees in other resorts, it is clearly present in each place. Being sites for continuous flows of transient visitors from around the world, and appealing places for others to migrate to, resorts are becoming increasingly hybrid, heterogeneous and eclectic, transforming and adapting as different groups of people come into contact with them and territorialise them (whether briefly or longer term).

In places like Phuket, for my white expatriate interviewees, the concept of lifestyle also encompasses a perceived relaxation of the rules and regulations characteristic of everyday life in the West. Despite a narrow participant pool in the Thai resorts, I nevertheless found this interview data useful as it highlighted the unique perspectives and imaginaries that evolve when one switches from being a tourist to a resident. For Jakub and Jeff, the decision to live in Phuket stemmed from a desire to make the carefree, permissive elements of the resort vacation a permanent part of their everyday lives:

Jakub: Phuket itself, it’s beautiful. Great weather all year round, excellent food. And probably one of the things I would mention more importantly is the people’s freestyle attitude. People don’t judge – well, if they judge they don’t express it – there is no judgment as such, there is no
aggressiveness, there is ... people live and let live, basically. It's a very, very tolerant society in many, many areas, so that's part of the big attraction for me. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Jeff [on why he moved from Australia to Thailand]: I got a bit tired of all the rules and regulations and taxes and the cameras, and I can't say this and I can't say that ... I got sick of paying 58 cents on the dollar of tax, I got sick of cameras watching everything I was doing, I got sick of being not able to tell a joke and it might offend someone. All the bullshit started to get to me ... Here, it's different, the pace is relaxed. When I arrived I was quite highly strung and stressed out, I wasn't a happy person ... But here, I don't need to keep 9 to 5 type hours. I like the pace of life. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

More specifically, they both related stories to explain why they perceive normalised ‘corruption’ (as defined from a Western perspective) as allowing for greater freedom and flexibility:

Jeff: ... if something happens, you can fix it just with a smile, a sorry, sometimes 100 baht under the table ... In Australia if I had a problem I'd call my lawyer at 600 dollars an hour, I'd be in court for 2 years. Look, sometimes I'd rather just go bang, it's fixed, and it's fixed instantly ... Like, we're sitting here having a drink. If we had two of these in my country [Australia], I wouldn't be allowed to drive the car. Not that it's a good thing, but I could have 10 of them sitting here and I wouldn't think twice about it, because no one's going to do anything to me. And even if they do, even on the million in one chance that some policeman says 'have you had something to drink?', my answer would be 'okay, yeah, but what's it gonna cost to fix this?', and that's our rules ... Doesn't mean you behave like an idiot, no, of course you don't. But it's still nice to know that it's a bit more flexible, a bit more freedom with things like that ... Every rule here is deliberately ambiguous to allow for flexibility and allow for negotiation. Most of the government workers are so underpaid that it's an accepted part of society here, that if you're a policeman, or if you're some sort of authority somewhere, that you expect to make some money on something on the way through. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

What this points to is not so much a lack of rules, but a different set of rules. Individuals are still accountable for their actions, but in less official, less conventional ways than in the West. Similarly, local businesses and vendors in Phuket may not have to be as concerned about meeting standards and regulations set by government authorities, but they are still overseen by, and at the mercy of, what my interviewees called the ‘beach mafia’ or ‘tuk tuk mafia’ – the notorious group known to run tourist scams and restrict the activities of other tourism operators.
These systems based on bribery are far more advantageous for those who have the economic capital necessary to offer bribes on a regular basis. As such, wealthy expatriate and Thai elites may enjoy this flexibility more than the lower and working class locals, for whom this system may be disproportionately unreliable and unjust. Further, as Jakub explained, not having conventional bureaucratic policies has a downside for all residents as well:

**Jakub:** … because of the free lifestyle, they don’t plan too much ahead. So sometimes in my village we will have blackout because they need some repairs for electrical cables, but they will never announce it, so you’ll be sitting at home and suddenly there’s no power for six hours or so. There is not enough communication about things which may affect you, from the public authorities … on the Gold Coast, as far as I can recall, you wouldn’t see one beach vendor, no restaurants, nothing is on the beach … here, there are no lifeguards or there are few and far apart; safety is your own problem. The whole system here in Thailand is based on – you take care of yourself, the government doesn’t take care of you. There is no social security or hardly any. Medical help is very minimum, or a very low level if it’s the public health system. In Australia you have – you pay, and you get. Here nobody pays, and you get nothing. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Again, this would have far greater negative impacts for the poorest locals. Clearly, the capacity to which lifestyle can appeal to residents is mediated by the extent to which they are afforded infrastructural and employment opportunities in their daily lives.

**Living in the sites of leisure: frustrations and tensions**

Despite generally liking where they live, most of my interviewees expressed some negative attitudes towards tourists and tourism. In addition to identifying specific inconveniences like traffic congestion, noise and over-crowding, interviewees also revealed general feelings of resentment, frustration and annoyance. These kinds of attitudes, which signify prolonged tensions between tourists and locals, are typical of sites of intensive development like mature destinations (Lawton 2005; Minca 2000). Asking my interviewees ‘how do you feel about the tourist presence?’ elicited responses such as these:

**Alyssa:** It’s annoying as shit. (Gold Coast, 24 September 2014)

**Jakub:** Well, in low season, it’s peaceful, it’s ours. In high season, the tourists … they take over, and also then the locals, I mean Thai people who live here – everybody gets really … I wouldn’t say stressed, but
grabby, pushy for business, hassling, etcetera etcetera, especially in areas like Patong … Patong is hell. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Jeff: ... when you live here, it [high season] gets annoying too, because the roads are full, the restaurants are full, you can't see the beach. I mean in 3 months time, you look up that beach, you won't see one umbrella. You'll just see sand ... And there's a lot of meatheads here at the time, basically, especially the Russians, but Australians too ... They're uneducated, they don't have social skills, they're just annoying people ... they get drunk a lot, they start fights, they treat the girls badly. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Nicole: I accept that it's there, but I don't like it, because I've suffered from it most of my life. Because I've lived in high-rises most of my life, and those high-rises have all been half residential, half tourist – there's only one in Main Beach that was all residential, and most of them were retired rich yachting people ... they [the tourists] have this perception that no one actually lives here, everyone that's here is on holiday. So they're completely astounded that I live here, that I'm a resident, and that I'm not on holiday. As a result of that, because they do have this misconception that we're on holidays, they're loud, they're noisy, they overtake the space and they don't respect that we have our day-to-day lives that we go about ... there's only so much Marco-Polo you can deal with, especially when, like at the moment, sometimes I work from home ... and I'm trying to concentrate and people are being really loud. Or they're coming home from going out partying in the middle of the week because they're on holidays, and they're slamming doors and yelling in the lift, or they park in your parking space, or they park across the driveway ... They're like, 'We're all on holiday, so you've got plenty of time for me to move my car because you're going nowhere' – no, I'm going to work, get out of my fucking driveway ... So I do feel suffocated around tourist time. It's a burden. (Gold Coast, 4 November 2014)

Obviously, residents see tourists as noisy, rowdy, messy, rude, inconsiderate and overbearing. Just as tourists objectify, essentialise and stereotype local people, so too do locals do this to tourists, viewing them as a homogenous mass with shared characteristics and behaviours. Castellanos (2010b) argues that this is the function of the ‘native gaze’, which encompasses ‘the universalizing ways local people “see” tourism and tourists and construct them as other’ (p. 242). These perceptions are shaped by individual encounters with tourists and reinforced in the media (Shaw & Williams 2004). Importantly, although resentment is usually directed at tourists and their behaviours, there are a range of other groups, policies and processes (e.g. local governments and their marketing strategies and tourism development policies) implicated in the production of how tourists understand and use space. Thus, frustrations with ‘tourists’ reflect problems with the tourism industry’s presence more broadly, rather than the individual visitors themselves.
One of the major sources of tension, as the above quotes demonstrate, arises when tourists interfere with the everyday socio-spatial practices of residents – in other words, when tourist rhythms and local rhythms clash. Given that residents and visitors can often occupy the same spaces within resorts, whether because of leisure, labour or mixed use residences, these clashes are inevitable. The discontent this causes is, I suspect, further aggravated by the fact that tourists are perceived as having a sense of entitlement – as one of my interviewees put it, ‘they think that they own the place’ (Jakub, Phuket, 9 December 2013). Mass tourists, in particular, are renowned for behaving carelessly and disrespectfully towards these places – places to which residents, to varying degrees, have affective attachments. Such tourists often behave as if resorts really are disembedded, hyperreal fantasy lands with no rules and no restrictions.

As a consequence of these strained relations, residents of resorts actively avoid the tourist hubs as much as they can. Thus, the presence of tourists, and tourism sites and activities, significantly shapes how locals perceive and use space in their own localities. Along with the overcrowding and congestion noted above, residents deplore tourist hubs for being fake, tacky,165 overpriced and low in quality.166 Instead, locals head for quieter beaches and trendy cafes away from the tourist hubs. On the Gold Coast, we often say ‘locals don’t go to Surfers Paradise’. This is not exactly true, of course – while many of us make a concerted effort to stay away, opting for more local beaches and dining precincts, many others still work in Surfers (e.g. in retail and hospitality). Further, since nightlife scarcely exists outside of tourist hubs, many of us find ourselves there for specific social events at bars, restaurants or nightclubs. However, these leisure spaces are designed to appeal to the tastes of mass tourists, and thus do not cater for the many locals who prefer alternative or subcultural experiences.

165 As epitomised by numerous chain stores, souvenir shops and street vendors selling gimmicky toys.
166 For example, (with a few exceptions) restaurants in places like Surfers Paradise and South Beach are notorious among locals for providing poor customer service and poor quality food at exorbitant prices. These establishments need not rely on loyal, regular customers, instead surviving by virtue of their convenient locations for transient visitors.
My interviewees shared similar observations, noting that they usually only go to these areas to entertain visitors, thus enacting their position as ‘host’ on a micro level:

**Jeff:** … look, Patong, we still go there sometimes. Of course, whenever I have visitors here they always want to go check it out, so I go and show them the girly bars and the ladyboy bars, and blah blah blah. They all wanna see it. I don’t really enjoy my time there, but I’ve had some fun there as well … (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

**Emilio:** It’s easy to get lost on a weekend in South Beach, and whatever that means – drugs and sex and alcohol and party, and that still attracts some of us as much as we dislike it … But we do understand that it’s superficial and annoying, so when we go it’s either because there’s something really good happening or because we are taking a family member to like, see the city. But not as often. I rarely go to the beach anymore … even when we go to the beach with friends, we usually end up going to areas of the beach that are more secluded. (Miami, 12 March 2014)

**Miguel:** … If somebody comes, we’re going to take them to South Beach, of course. The beach or the club or the bars, you know. And again, the locals live a little bit more inland. There’s cool stuff to do there too, but where’s the go-to place you’re gonna take your family or friends to show them a good time? It’s down here. (Miami, 11 March 2014)

**Luciana:** It’s interesting because [with] my boyfriend … I’m always like ‘let’s do touristy things, let’s do this and do that’. I told him in January ‘let’s go to the beach’ and he’s like ‘that’s when all the tourists go’. It was interesting to see his perception of it – he doesn’t really like all of the tourists coming in all the time and he doesn’t like to do touristy things, he stays away from it. He likes the different side of Miami, where the tourists aren’t at. I was like, oh, that’s interesting, because I’m the opposite … I love South Beach. Even though it’s fake and everything, I still love it … I like that the beach is right there. So when our friends come to visit, of course, [we] have to take them to South Beach and to the clubs there … I kind of consider myself in a sense a tourist here because I’m not from here, so I’m kind of drawn to touristy areas. But even then I sort of think about it, like, oh, this is so fake, it’s not even real, or a lot of these plants and things aren’t even native to Florida. It kind of ruins it. (Miami, 13 March 2014)

**Jakub:** … the life of the expats or the locals has shifted from, let’s say, Patong – if you wanted to go out the only place was Patong, but now we all go out in this area here [Kamala Beach] because the tourists or – let’s say, I don’t mean it bad, but the white trash – doesn’t come here … This beach here, the locals go out here. Patong? Never, never, never. It’s a big brothel, basically … when I used to live in Runaway Bay [a northern Gold Coast suburb] – I would never, ever, ever go to Surfers. I lived there for 16 years. If I wanted to go to the beach, I’d go to Main Beach or further north, The Spit, or I would take my boat and go out to South Stradbroke
Island or whatever. I never go to Surfers ... Surfers itself is like Patong here, basically. It’s sacrificed to the business ... (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

Nicole: ... honestly I can count on my hand in the last three or four years the amount of times I’ve been to Surfers Paradise. I don’t go there. We don’t really go there. If I go out to dinner I go to Broadbeach or somewhere else, so – it’s only if there’s something specific, like Ben & Jerry’s that I can’t get anywhere else – then I will go. (Gold Coast, 4 November 2014)

Not surprisingly, the desire to avoid the tourist hubs is strongest during peak seasons and major events, when tourist-local tensions are at their highest. This includes those discussed in Chapter 9 – Full Moon Parties, Spring Break, Schoolies, summertime in Ibiza – as well as times around festivals, public holidays and school holidays. During these busy periods, locals alter their everyday routines to avoid the tourist hubs by driving different routes from usual, opting to only go to restaurants in more local areas, and so on. On the Gold Coast, if we must go into Surfers at these times, the experience is usually not a good one, fraught with discomfort, irritation and frustration. This is particularly bad for those who live in or nearby to tourist hubs, since avoidance is not an option. Nicole and Seth explained to me their experiences of living around Surfers during ‘Indy’ (the former, and still colloquial, term for an annual car race now named the Gold Coast 600):

Nicole: ... I lived on the Indy track in Main Beach, from when I was age, say, 14 to 20, 21. And at one stage we were right on the track and that was full on. Its loud, there’s drunk bogans ... I think it just ruins the landscape. There’s beautiful beaches and then like ‘vroom’ [car noise] and concrete barriers and they put fences on the beach – it’s shit ... But then we moved to the other side of Main Beach, and while we didn’t have the cars going past, it still sounded like they did, and you still had to have a pass to get in and out of your driveway, and if you didn’t leave by 7 am, then you couldn’t get your car out, so you had to park your car in Fisherman’s Wharf. It’s just a pain in the fucking ass. And you’re not compensated for it, you don’t get free tickets to the Indy or anything like that. (Gold Coast, 4 November 2014)

Seth: I definitely didn’t like living at Budd’s Beach [a small riverside area in Surfers] while Indy was on. That was really, really bad ... when Schoolies or Indy was on, it impacted the people that lived locally, severely. But you didn’t really feel as though once that finished the council or whoever’s in charge went back to trying make that place better for you. It wasn’t like a case of ‘hey, we know you guys live here, sorry we’re gonna need to basically take your local area over for the next two weeks and do all these things to service all these tourists, but once they go away we’ll do some nice things for you, like put in a park for your kids
to play at’ or whatever. It didn’t feel like that. It feels very, very weighted towards whatever can be done to create the most amount of money, based on tourism, and probably spend the least amount of money on locals ... if they’re gonna fix up the roads, they’re doing it for tourist buses, they’re not fixing it up for the local people that live there. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)

Besides the obvious disruption caused by the road closures and noise, residents also resent not being compensated for these inconveniences. They are made to feel that tourists have more of a right to city space than they do, and that their needs as residents are secondary to satisfying tourists and generating revenue.

In Miami, similar tensions are present. According to Emilio, the crowds of Spring Break were nothing compared to Urban Beach Week. A highly contentious event, Urban Beach Week is an unofficial hip hop music festival that takes place over the Memorial Day weekend each year in South Beach. It attracts up to 250,000 attendees over five days (de Leon 2016; Smiley 2012), providing a sizeable boost to Miami’s tourism industry, especially for hotels and prominent nightclubs. It is also notorious for bad traffic, road closures, public drunkenness, violent incidents, and clashes between police and party-goers (Flechas 2016; Benn 2013; Smiley 2012). Not surprisingly, this causes great disruption for the residents of South Beach, many of whom are known to flee the area for that weekend (Alvarez 2012). The discontent has spread to local businesses as well, with some – such as upmarket restaurants and smaller nightclubs – purposely closing over the weekend to avoid dealing with the disorderly crowds, who also deter patronage from their usual customer base (Pajot 2014; Alvarez 2012; Smiley 2012). As a result, there have been calls to end, or at least extensively regulate, Urban Beach Week (Abdill 2011). Since the event is organised through informal networks like social media, and is not sponsored by the city, there is little that authorities can do to change the event’s reputation, parameters or participants (Veiga 2016; Alvarez 2012). In recent years, the city has, however, increased regulation through surveillance techniques including a significant police presence, the implementation of watch towers, DUI checkpoints and license plate checks on the causeways leading over to Miami Beach (de Leon 2016; Veiga 2016; Alvarez 2012). These measures have been criticised as racist for unfairly assuming that the event’s participants (the majority of whom are black) are more likely to be engaging in criminal activities than Miami’s usual throng of tourists (de Leon 2016; Veiga 2016; Smiley 2012).
During our interview, Luciana raised another example of a touristic event with strong local resistance – Ultra Music Festival, an outdoor music festival held each March in Downtown Miami:

**Luciana:** ... Last year they actually had it [Ultra] two weekends and people from all over come for that festival. So I remember how it was like a big deal, how they wanted to get it shut down, how they didn't want it here, you know, but they're like, well it brings us a lot of money and we need it. And people were fighting back and forth. At one point they almost cancelled one of the weekends of the festival. But then they ended up having the two weekends ... But this year they reduced it back to one weekend.

**Zelmarie:** So why was there such opposition to it?

**Luciana:** ... they complained a lot about the kind of people, like a lot of young people, probably going to be using drugs, or the music being super loud, and the traffic because they block off certain areas over there. So that's what they were complaining about, and they were like 'no', but they were like 'it's gonna bring us a lot of money'. (Miami, 13 March 2014)

The Miami commissioner at the time, Marc Sarnoff, opposed the addition of a second weekend to the festival, citing concerns over the disruption to local businesses and residents due to noise, disorderly behaviour, drug use and traffic (Duran 2013). His resolution did not pass, with the City Commission voting that the second weekend would go forward, but with a stipulation that Ultra would only take place over one weekend in the future (Tregoning 2013). Only one year later, the mayor called for the end of the event after a security guard was trampled and severely injured by gate-crashers (Fagenson 2014). Nevertheless, Ultra continues to be held in Miami, attracting upwards of 165,000 festival-goers and generating an estimated US$79 million for the county each year (Gonzalez 2012).

**Privileging tourists, marginalising locals**

The above examples highlight how tourists are often privileged over locals. In the resorts I have focused on, it was clear from a range of examples that despite opposition, resistance and complaints from residents, little has been done to curtail the negative effects of tourism or compensate for them. Further, residents often get the feeling that their cities – the local government, businesses and other institutions – function to service the needs and desires of transient visitors rather than those
who live out their everyday lives there (Meethan 2001). When I asked my interviewees ‘do you think the city caters more to tourism than to the needs of locals?’, they all confirmed that they feel that it does:

**Emilio**: A hundred per cent, yes. (Miami, 12 March 2014)

**Luciana**: I think definitely more for tourism. I feel that Miami is very underdeveloped for the amount of people that live here. Public transportation sucks, the roads are horrible. So instead of focusing on things like that, they’re kind of like, investing in areas like this [downtown]. They just focus on the touristy areas. (Miami, 13 March 2014)

**Nicole**: To tourists. I think it’s getting a little better … I’d say it’d be like, 70/30. 70 towards tourists, 30 to locals. They wanna build a casino in my front yard at the moment, it’s completely fucked. (Gold Coast, 4 November 2014)

**Cory**: … they spend tons of money promoting tourism and business, and certainly residents here feel like they do that at the expense of residents and their needs. (Miami, 14 March 2014)

**Seth**: I’d say that’s probably the fundamental thing about the Gold Coast, that all decisions made are made based on a tourist need before they’re made based on the locals or the homeless … the way I felt living in Surfers was that I was essentially invisible – all my needs as a local were invisible to the people that were in charge, like the council, or even a lot of times the police … And it’s maybe starting to cater to locals a little more now … but only because now there’s so many more locals that they can’t ignore us anymore. (Gold Coast, 24 November 2014)

**Jeff**: It’s very seasonal, so the businesses cater to different people at different times of the year. Look, a large part of the year, it’s the locals that keep these places going. If it wasn’t for us, they’d make no money … but come high season, particularly places along here [the beach], I think they forget about us … they forget that we keep them going all year. We get treated a little bit like second class citizens … (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

**Felipe**: … they just look after the tourism … They don’t care what they do, as long as they do something for tourism to make money. They don’t care if they destroy the environment, like the Lagoon. This Lagoon is dead because they filled it with land to build in some shopping malls, so they have no circulation. So it used to be full of fish and full of animals and wildlife, now they’re dying, or dead. (Cancún, 4 March 2014)

---

167 This is not to say that this is necessarily accurate, but the fact that residents feel this way is in itself significant.
Clearly, the decision makers in resorts – whether government or corporate – are assumed to be motivated by a capitalistic ‘dollar-worshipping ethic’ (Jones 1986, p. 1) that trumps considerations of community, heritage or environmental preservation (unless these can be strategically packaged for tourist consumption). On the Gold Coast, for instance, with ongoing construction ensuring that tourists have the modern, luxurious facilities that they expect, there is little opportunity for buildings to become old enough to be considered local heritage in the future. This perpetual development is harmful to the environment as well, threatening the integrity of the landscape that so many residents love. Perhaps the most notable and controversial contemporary example of this on the Gold Coast is the proposal for a cruise ship terminal with accompanying casino, hotels and other facilities. Proposed sites have included The Spit (a sand spit with beaches and parks, north of Surfers Paradise), a popular location among locals for fishing, surfing, swimming and beachside picnics, as well as nearby Wave Break Island, a favourite spot for boaters.

![Map of Wave Break Island and The Spit, Gold Coast](Google 2017)

Since the first proposals for development in the early 2000s, there has been strong local resistance to the project, spearheaded by the community action group,
the Save Our Spit Alliance (SOSA). The Alliance has based its opposition on numerous potential impacts, particularly that the development will take away a treasured recreational public space from locals, and that it will have irreversible environmental consequences (Save Our Spit Alliance 2016). The Alliance was successful in applying pressure to quash the original plans, and the Queensland State Government (who first proposed the idea) no longer supports the project (Kane & Rafferty 2016; Potts 2015). Despite the lack of public and state government support, local media continue to report that the city is losing millions of dollars in tourism revenue every year that it does not have a cruise ship terminal (see Emery 2016; Pierce 2015), and the city council continues to commission feasibility studies and entertain new proposals (Kane & Rafferty 2016).

While there is an apparent overemphasis on developing tourism facilities in resorts, often not enough attention is paid to developing infrastructure for locals. This is most clearly observable in Cancún – buildings, roads and vegetation in the Hotel Zone are fairly well-maintained (save for a few abandoned hotels), but the further you travel from this area, the more you see dilapidated buildings, potholes, cracked sidewalks and unkempt gardens. Maintaining adequate infrastructure and public services in Cancún has been particularly challenging due to its rapid population growth and insufficient levels of ongoing urban planning,168 which have led to the creation of squatter settlements that lack basic amenities like street lights, potable water or sewerage systems (Córdoba Azcárate 2011; Castellanos 2010a; Agarwal & Shaw 2007; Mugerauer 2004; Clancy 2001). One interviewee, Felipe, attributed this failing to what he perceives as a corrupt government: ‘they don’t spend the money in the right way … Locally, federal, state – you name it. It’s just a bunch of thieves’ (Cancún, 4 March 2014).

An example of how infrastructure is geared towards tourists in resorts can be seen in their public transport systems. The bus system in Ibiza, for instance, predominantly features routes connecting beaches and other tourist areas, and during summer there are additional ‘Discobus’ services implemented specifically to shuttle tourists between nightclubs across the island. Without a rental car, this makes it almost impossible to venture beyond the tourist hubs to the rural local

168 That is, although the city was well planned prior to its development, the ongoing management of its growth has been less carefully considered.
areas. Conversely, this also means that it would be very difficult for locals – especially those without the economic capital necessary to own or operate a car – to access more built up zones of the island.

![South Beach Local bus route](image)

**Figure 118: South Beach Local bus route**

Source: Lincoln Road Mall (2017)

In Miami, all of my interviewees expressed strong dissatisfaction with the public transport system, often listing it as one of their least favourite things about living there. When I was staying in Miami, I regularly took the 'SoBe Local', a bus route that loops around South Beach and costs only a quarter (US$0.25) per trip (see Figure 118). Travelling further inland proved considerably less convenient and less affordable – a bus trip to Downtown Miami cost me nine times as much, at a flat fare of US$2.25 each way; and getting to nearby residential suburbs like Brickell or Coral Gables by public transport took three times longer than driving, and required at least one change to another bus or train. There is, however, a free rail service, the Metromover, servicing downtown areas northwards to Omni and southwards to the
financial district, stopping at landmarks and attractions like Freedom Tower, the American Airlines Arena, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, the Pérez Art Museum Miami and the Miami Riverwalk, among others (see Figure 119). Nonetheless, travelling to and from areas like Miami Beach and Downtown Miami becomes increasingly difficult the further away one lives from the tourist hubs. This is a significant problem considering Miami’s dispersed, sprawling urban formation, in which the poorest residents – those who may be most reliant on public transport – are located on the margins. Thus, the system privileges the interests of tourism, making it easy for visitors to travel within desired zones at the same time that it isolates residents. This gearing of transport systems towards tourism is one of many ways in which tourist hubs like Miami Beach operate as exclusionary spaces.

Figure 119: Miami Metromover route
Source: Miami-Dade County (2017)
Tourism: a necessary evil

Local attitudes towards tourists and tourism are, of course, more complex than straightforward dissatisfaction. Residents of resorts are, as Revels (2011) puts it, ‘... trained ... to love and hate tourists in relatively equal measure’ (p. 3). There exists an ambivalent dynamic of frustration and tolerance, disdain and appreciation, as was evident in my discussions with locals:

**Jeff:** ... I get annoyed a bit sometimes, but again, you just have to take a reality check. Just let it go. You can't win ... if they weren't here, we wouldn't have anything to do here either, there'd be no money. So I realise that it has to be here ... It depends on tourism. It’s a tourist island and we need tourists here. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

**Emilio:** We don’t like tourists in Miami. That’s how I see it – we don’t like tourists. And yet we live off of tourism. Highly ironic. (Miami, 12 March 2014)

**Jakub:** I much rather the low season than the high season because of the more peaceful life. But that said, the tourists are the lifeblood of this island, so if there was no tourism it wouldn’t be what it is. In the sense of, it’s like a necessary evil, let’s put it that way. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

**Brett:** ... Look, it’s a necessary evil. Without tourism, I wouldn’t have this job [beach club manager], we wouldn’t be here talking right now. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

**Zelmarie:** Our version of South Beach, Surfers Paradise – we all hate going there because it’s full of tourists and we all hate that, it’s a bit strange.

**Damla:** I feel like that about my hometown in Turkey [also a resort], and actually everybody, like all my friends from there, will be like – I mean it’s kind of a double standard, because obviously people make money, a lot of people don’t work all winter, they only make money within those three, four months, right? But then they’ll talk shit about tourists, like ‘oh we’re waiting for October to come so that all these people can leave’. (Miami, 11 March 2014)

Other people I spoke to informally – like transfer drivers, hotel staff and restaurant waiters – echoed these sentiments. Tourism is accepted as something necessary, as vital to a resort’s economic prosperity. This is true in many ways, particularly from a macroeconomic perspective – tourism creates and supports jobs in hospitality, retail and construction industries; produces revenue for related businesses through tourism expenditure; incentivises the upkeep and development of infrastructure and public leisure spaces; and so on. However, this does not mean that all residents
benefit from tourism, whether directly or indirectly, with income generated by tourism often distributed unequally in resorts (Cohen 2008).

Multi-national corporations, foreign investors and land owners reap the largest economic rewards of tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead 2008; Wilson 2008; Murray 2007; Mugerauer 2004). Even locally owned and operated businesses may not benefit as much from the tourist presence as might be assumed. In Cancún, for instance, the popular all-inclusive style of accommodation means that tourists are less likely to venture beyond their hotels for a meal or for entertainment. This is also similar in Thailand due to the popularity of packaged tourism deals:

**Jeff:** ... why the Thais get annoyed is basically because they [Russians] don’t spend any money either, because they pay for everything before they come – they pay the travel agent. Breakfast is in the hotel; lunch is in the hotel. They don’t really come here and get out in the shops and spend. (Phuket, 9 December 2013)

In addition, among the workforce, opportunities and income can be stratified according to class and ethnicity. As Felipe explained:

**Felipe:** It is more competitive and it’s less paid than it used to be before ... Now to have a job in the tourism industry, you have to have a degree, a college degree, to make good money; speak at least three languages – at least. (Cancún, 4 March 2014)

As a result, more prestigious, higher-paying positions like managerial, supervisory and front-of-house roles are often held by educated, English-speaking workers from overseas or elsewhere in the country (Mugerauer 2004). At my hotel in Koh Samui, for example, I was surprised to find that most of the English-speaking staff at the front desk were not Thai, but Filipino. Similarly, many of the front desk workers at my hotel in Cancún had migrated there from other regions in Mexico. Low-paying, low-status, low-skilled jobs with limited advancement opportunities like janitor, cleaner or kitchen hand, then, are more likely to be occupied by indigenous local people who are less formally skilled and/or who do not speak English (Castellanos 2010a). As Zukin (1995) observes, this labour force hierarchy is typical in places where the symbolic economy reigns:

---

169 The Philippines has a significantly larger English-speaking population than Thailand.
In the symbolic economy, employers hire a work force with cultural capital and higher education to do productive labor and provide a labor-intensive service called fun. Because of language requirements, business establishments use ‘European’ employees in front regions in direct contact with customers and ‘minority’ employees in the back. (p. 74)

If minorities or indigenous people are involved in front regions, this may be a strategic decision motivated (on behalf of management and other higher-ups in the industry) by a desire to present tourists with the kinds of exoticised bodies they expect.

Therefore, although tourism is often seen as a mechanism for modernising underdeveloped regions and raising standards of living, it may actually function to further marginalise, objectify and exclude local people (Castellanos 2010a, 2010b; Kontogeorgopoulos 2009; Wilson 2008; Mugerauer 2004; Pi-Sunyer et al 2001; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). Not only are the poorest locals restricted in their opportunities for upward mobility, they also have little power in terms of how their heritage is represented and sold (Evans 2005). As Agarwal and Shaw (2007) point out, despite Cancún’s success, ‘the Maya people are some of the most economically and socially marginalised people in Mexico’ (p. 228), with higher rates of poverty in the Yucatán Peninsula than the rest of Mexico. Thus, tourism – this ‘necessary evil’ – reproduces the kinds of inequalities of wealth that are characteristic of contemporary global capitalism (Wilson 2008), cutting off the most disadvantaged people from its benefits.

Stratification, gentrification and ghettoisation

In resorts, as elsewhere, stratification is spatialised (Massey 1994). Unequal power relations contribute to uneven development, creating hierarchical and segregated spaces, and centres and margins (Brown 2013; Massey 1994, 1998). Brown (2013) explains the effects of this in places like resorts:

The evolution of tourist spaces in conjunction with the escalating scale of the tourist enterprise eventually leads to spatial enclosure, heightening the segregation and separation between spaces of leisure and those of work, spaces of consumption and those of production, spaces of the wealthy and those of the poor, spaces of the foreigner and those of the local. This process of dispossession and displacement parallels spatial strategies of settler colonization ... (p. 193)
This pattern can be found in each resort, to varying extents. Cancún provides the most obvious example, having been developed with three distinct zones – a tourist enclave on the barrier island, a downtown with local services on the mainland’s coast, and a residential area built around the edges with room to sprawl inland. Miami has a similar arrangement, with tourists and local elites located in Miami Beach, major businesses in and around downtown on the coast, and suburbia and local services spreading outwards from there. The general trend in resorts is that visitors and wealthy residents are located in or close to tourist hubs (the ‘centre’, in an ideological rather than geographical sense) and middle to lower class residents occupy the spaces extending centrifugally from there (the margins), with the poorest locals situated the furthest away. Of course, the existence of such arborescent patterns from a macro perspective does not mean that each zone is coherent or homogenous, nor are they completely segregated – they are interconnected, have shifting boundaries, can bleed into one another, and there are always anomalies and exceptions. Despite the efforts of tourism officials and city planners, tourist and local rhythms inevitably intersect and intermingle rhizomatically.

Nevertheless, the exclusionary nature of tourist hubs keeps them relatively segregated from local lives and movements. The fact that they are expensive and sometimes difficult to access (as discussed above) means that locals do not always avoid them by choice, or simply out of distaste – for many residents, particularly those who are poor, isolated or otherwise disadvantaged, participating in touristic leisure spaces is not a feasible option. As Jakub explained, most local Thai people who work in tourism and hospitality in Phuket cannot afford to go to the same leisure spaces as tourists: ‘They are not going to buy a mojito or whatever you buy, it costs you 200 baht, 300 baht, I’m not sure what, it’s a crazy price. They don’t even earn half of it on a daily salary’ (Phuket, 9 December 2013). The tourism industries of resorts benefit from the exclusion of particular locals – hiding the messiness of everyday life, and the social blights of inequality and poverty, helps to maintain the utopian, hyperreal, glamorous imaginaries on which the touristic appeal of resorts depends. In other words, exclusionary techniques ensure that the tourism bubble remains – to an extent – ‘a cocooned, sanitized, affluent, and gated space’ (Córdoba Azcárate 2011, p. 187).
With tourists increasingly seeking affordable accommodation outside of tourist hubs, the ‘centre’ is expanding, encroaching on local areas, raising costs of living and pushing the poor further out (Brown 2013; Torres & Momsen 2006; Mugerauer 2004). This is compounded by processes of gentrification, which, while beneficial to middle and upper class residents (at least in the short-term, before becoming popular with tourists), work to displace the poor and migrant communities living in the areas being revitalised (Zukin 2010; Minca 2000). One notable case of this is in Miami’s Wynwood neighbourhood. Formerly a working class area populated by Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrants and the site of garment factories and warehouses, Wynwood began to transform in the mid-2000s. Today, Wynwood oozes ‘hipster charm’ (Zukin 2010, p. 8) with the spectacle of colourful, elaborate street art covering its warehouses and streets, complemented by numerous trendy bars, coffee shops and art galleries.

Figure 120: Street art on buildings in Wynwood, Miami

170 This is a problem that stems from alternative forms of tourism (e.g. backpacker tourism, ecotourism, and so on) as much as mass tourism. Alternative accommodations options like Airbnb probably also contribute to this trend in that apartments and houses advertised by hosts are most often located in more local areas.
Figure 121: A man rides a bicycle through Wynwood, Miami

Figure 122: Painted crosswalks in Wynwood, Miami

As the resident of a resort, I found myself wishing there was a place like this on the Gold Coast – an ‘authentic’ leisure space, positioned away from the tourist hub, that focuses on (high) culture and creativity. Of course, this is because I could afford to go to such a place, and because the ‘new’ spatiality of Wynwood largely conceals
any negative effects its transformation has had. During our interview, which took place in Wynwood, Emilio gave me a brief history of the neighbourhood and insight into how its gentrification, initiated by private individuals, satisfied a larger, more sinister civic agenda:

**Emilio:** ... the people that bought the art galleries at first, they bought blocks, entire blocks ... I can't remember his name right now,\(^\text{171}\) it'll come to me – they bought massive amounts of property here in Wynwood and in the Design District in the late 90s and early 2000s. 'They' as in him, his investors, his family. And then they started renting them out to local, but mostly New York, galleries, art collectors, to house their collections at a cheap rate and to also open them for exhibition and things like that. And so what that created was a movement toward, basically, them driving the message and the discourse and the policy of what should happen in the neighbourhood, right? And so, like, paving this street is something that took place fairly easily after they moved in ... whereas residents have been trying to pave this street for like 15 years and nothing was getting done ... So the history of Wynwood is incredibly interesting in that you see all the Cuban cafeterias or the Puerto Rican cafeterias that were in the neighbourhood beginning to disappear slowly – rents were driven up, and now this kind of coffeehouse [where the interview took place] are the norm rather than the Cuban-owned cafeterias that were here prior to the galleries ... Now it's the bar owners that are beginning to drive the policy ... When you look at it historically, the city of Miami has, historically since the 1950s, late 50s, tried to drive out the lower income communities of Wynwood and Overtown. But specifically through policy. And they have not always been successful at it. At least from city efforts, right? But now when this happens more ‘organically’ [uses air quotes] – there's nothing really organic about it, but it seems like the change is happening from within – rather than the city being the ones that are sort of like driving the policy that is moving people out, it's really the business owners now in these communities which are doing the work for them.

**Zelmarie:** ... And is it supported by local government policy?

**Emilio:** Yeah, and so it plays right into the city’s long fight with trying to get rid of these lower income communities out of the city of Miami. (Miami, 12 March 2014)

Later in the interview, Emilio remarked that he expects the area will not stay very cool for long, and that soon chain stores and high-end retailers would move in, displacing the locally-run coffee shops and galleries. This would follow the typical trajectory of gentrification that Zukin (2010) outlines: ‘... artists and gentrifiers move into old immigrant areas, praising the working-class bars and take-out joints

\(^{171}\) It is likely that Emilio was referring to Tony Goldman, who, along with his family, bought many of Wynwood’s warehouses and pioneered the popular Wynwood Walls art project.
but overwhelming them with new cafés and boutiques, which are soon followed by brand-name chain stores’ (pp. 1–2).

By displacing working class, poor and/or homeless locals, gentrification can impel ghettoisation, a process which ‘position[s] social marginality at a safe or insulated and bounded distance’ (Grosz 2002, p. 302). That is, as lower class residents are forced to relocate away from revitalised areas due to rising costs of living, they are relegated to living in ‘ghettos’ with high rates of poverty and crime (Gladstone 1998), and often underdeveloped public services and infrastructure. In Cancún, these ghettos have manifested as shantytowns on the outskirts of the city, which are rife with gang activity (Castellanos 2010a, 2010b; Torres & Momsen 2006). As Torres and Momsen (2006) argue, ghettoisation is not necessarily a major concern for city officials as long as the ghettos are hidden from tourists (something that becomes increasingly difficult as tourists venture away from the tourist hubs). This is why Cancún was designed to have segregated zones in the first place – to ‘avoid Acapulquización, in which ghettos and their waste-flows intermingle with beach-side resort hotels, resulting in a loss of exclusivity for the resort’172 (Torres & Momsen 2006, p. 59).

In the case of Miami, while some ghettos are embraced and positioned as tourist attractions (such as Overtown), official measures are still in place to sanitise other spaces. Downtown Miami, for instance, features a number of signs warning that it is a ‘no panhandling zone’ (see Figure 123), signifying official attempts to regulate the presence and behaviours of homeless people and beggars in the area. In recent years, this zone has been expanded to include the streets surrounding popular attractions such as the American Airlines Arena and the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (Garcia-Roberts 2010; Mazzei 2010). According to the City of Miami (2010), panhandling ‘damages otherwise positive experiences for tourists and general public visiting the area’ (p. 1), causing them not to return. As such, the justification for these laws is that they will preserve the ‘economic vitality’ of the

---

172 This refers to the mistakes in the urban planning of Acapulco, one of Mexico’s older major resorts. Acapulco’s development was predominantly focused on constructing tourism facilities, and did not adequately account for the local infrastructure that would be needed to support the influx of workers needed to run the resort (Sackett 2010; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999). As a result, Acapulco suffered due to pollution, hyperinflation, poverty and the rapid growth of shantytowns (Mugerauer 2004; Clancy 2001; Hiernaux-Nicolas 1999).
designated areas and ‘protect the safety of the general public and protect citizens from ... fear, harassment, and intimidation ...’ (City of Miami 2010, p. 1).

Figure 123: 'No panhandling zone' sign in Downtown Miami

When the City speaks of ‘citizens’ and the ‘general public’, the homeless are excluded from this rhetoric. These statements, and this legislation, reveal a power structure in which ‘residents of the street’ (Emilio, Miami, 12 March 2014) are clearly not regarded as residents at all, and not worthy of representation and advocacy in local government. The well-being and experiences of tourists are privileged over those of the homeless, and they are treated as if they have more of a right to occupy city space than the people who actually live there. The homeless, then, are seen as little more than an eyesore and an annoyance that erodes the facade of the tourism bubble, disrupts tourist expectations and exposes America’s social ills and political failings.173 Rather than focusing on strategies that might help the homeless, the emphasis is on policy that limits their interactions with others,

173 This was particularly noticeable to me as the Gold Coast has very little in the way of visible homelessness, and that which is visible is dispersed rather than intensified in particular districts. Thus, I was surprised to see so many people sleeping rough and panhandling in each of the major US cities I visited. As someone from a country with a more equitable (yet still inadequate) social welfare system, and with a liveable minimum wage, the issue of homelessness in Miami seemed to me to be a representation of deeper structural problems to do with social policy and politics in a neoliberal era. This does not necessarily mean that Australia does not suffer from similar problems, but rather that they are not of anything like the same extent, and that the Gold Coast is able to conceal any such problems more effectively.
and that makes them less visible by forcing them to relocate to ghettos where they are ‘allowed’ to live. In the interests of tourism, the homeless are criminalised and dispossessed, further entrenching their social isolation.

**Whose city?**

Taking into account the examples and experiences presented throughout this chapter, it is clear that the interests of tourists (as well as developers and businesses associated with tourism) are often privileged over the needs, desires and well-being of locals. For me, the most significant questions raised by this phenomenon are those that were also raised by one of my interviewees: ‘... whose city is this? Who has rights to the city?’ (Emilio, Miami, 12 March 2014), or, in Sharon Zukin’s (1995) words, ‘... whose city ... whose culture?’ (p. 47). These questions echo the sentiments of Lefebvre’s (1974, 1996b) work on ‘the right to the city’, and the literature that has stemmed from it (see, for example, Purcell 2014; Shields 2013; Harvey 2003, 2008; Mitchell 2003). The right to the city is not so much about individual accessibility to spaces and resources, but about the capacity to exercise power, to transform our localities collectively in line with our needs and uses (Harvey 2003, 2008). Typically, one would assume a city ‘belongs’ to its residents, which include those who comprise local government and local businesses, and that via democratic processes, residents exert the greatest level of influence and control over how the city functions and evolves. It is often the case, however, that the interests of capitalism and the state have dispossessed this right (Purcell 2014; Harvey 2008). In resorts, for instance, residents have limited control over processes of urbanisation (Harvey 2008), with outside influences so prominent that any definitive assumptions about local ownership and belonging would be naïve or at least too simple.

There are multiple processes of territorialisation (Deleuze & Guattari 2004) occurring in resort assemblages. Surin (2011) observes that places, or territories, are ‘more than just spaces: they have a stake, a claim, they express (my house, their ranch, his bench, her friends)’ (pp. 92–93). Our homes, our cities, are spaces that we territorialise, that we make our own – we form affective attachments to the landscape, we take comfort in going to our regular hang outs, and we develop bonds

---

174 Purcell (2014) notes, for instance, that policy and legislation tend to favour property owners (whether local, foreign or otherwise) over city dwellers.
with others who live out their everyday lives in these spaces as well. As we territorialise space, we seek to create a sense of harmony, uniformity and fixity (Hillier 2007), such as through notions of cultural identity and community. This is never necessarily achieved, however, with other forces inevitably disrupting anything approaching stability or coherence. In resorts, attempts by some residents to territorialise space are undercut by other local (and sometimes foreign) entities with competing interests, such as regional governments, entrepreneurs and developers. These groups aim to territorialise space differently, to create uniform, regulated tourism hubs, which also inevitably experience disruption. In Surin’s (2011) words, ‘[t]erritories are not fixed for all time, but are always being made and unmade, reterritorializing and deterritorializing’ (p. 93).

If territorialisation refers to processes of ordering, connecting and controlling, deterritorialisation is that which destabilises this, sparking ruptures, disjunctures and changes in nature (Deleuze & Guattari 2004; Colebrook 2002). Flows of tourists and other mobilities can deterritorialise local city spaces, temporarily passing through or occupying them, and transforming them as they do so. Brown (2013) argues that this makes the tourist an ‘unwitting colonizer’ (p. 186) who brings to bear his or her culturally distinct tastes, expectations, behaviours and practices on other places. This means, for example, that the significant presence of American tourists in Cancún has transformed the city through the establishment of facilities and services that cater to the desires of American visitors (rather than only Mexican or Maya locals). The same is true for Chinese (and previously, Japanese) tourists on the Gold Coast, British tourists in Ibiza, and so on.

Thus, deterritorialisation introduces new influences, new lines of flight, engendering hybridity in resorts. The presence of tourists in particular areas has impelled the development of hotels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, retail stores, airport shuttles and tour companies (which are also temporary in the sense that they can only survive so long as the area remains ‘cool’, iconic or otherwise desirable to visit). Hyperreal spaces like theme parks or packaged heritage sites may provide the most obvious instances of touristic deterritorialisation – the former rely on fantasy, on a sense of detachment from territorial contexts, whereas the latter involve the re-working and manipulation of territorial culture and history (Xie 2015).
landscape and the lifestyle for locals in resorts, as demonstrated by the impacts of tourism outlined throughout this chapter.

Tourists, then, can be understood as having reterritorialised some spaces in resorts, particularly the tourism hubs and other entertainment zones. These areas are no longer considered by residents as ‘local’ spaces, but have been reappropriated as sites that predominantly service tourists. Locals, however, also have the capacity to deterritorialise and reterritorialise these city spaces. This may manifest as: resistances to de/reterritorialisation, such as with the opposition to the Gold Coast’s cruise ship terminal; initiatives to reclaim or revitalise portions of space for local use, such as out-of-the-way, quirky bars in the tourist hubs; and the implementation of specific opportunities and events where local identity can be re-asserted and senses of community can be strengthened, such as arts and cultural festivals. Therefore, spatiality and belonging in resorts is constructed by ongoing movements between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, mobility and fixity – like the wasp and the orchid, tourists and locals form a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 2004). These relations, as the above discussion made clear, are not equal – those individuals and groups with the greatest amounts of financial and cultural power (Zukin 2010) have the greatest capacity to impose order and provoke change.

The effects of these processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation on local lives are multiple. In addition to – and in response to – macro-level consequences, such as the stratification of wealth and the inadequacies of public infrastructure outlined above, there are also more subtle, affective, micro-level impacts of tourism’s pervasiveness, such as on residents’ subjectivities and belongings. Marginalised by tourism, locals can experience displacement, dispossession and disconnection, feeling like strangers in their own city (Revels 2011; Zukin 2010; Homes 2001; Allen 1999). The experience of being a local in a resort is a liminal one, caught between insider and outsider.

These feelings, while individual and specific, nevertheless have wider implications, particularly in relation to senses of community, civic responsibility and

\[175\] For example, Kill Your Idol in Miami Beach and Black Coffee Lyrics in Surfers Paradise.
\[176\] For example, events on the Gold Coast like the Swell Sculpture Festival (Currumbin) and Bleach* Festival (various locations across the city) and arts spaces like Dust Temple (Currumbin).
social cohesion. Residents may find it challenging to be invested, as citizens, in their localities when they are so often neglected by their elected governments, excluded from decision-making processes surrounding tourism’s future developments (Pi-Sunyer et al 2001), and made to feel that they are politically disempowered to instigate any change. Beyond identifications with lifestyle (and the subsequent appreciation of particular landscapes and leisure activities), there is little sense of a cohesive, city-wide collective identity or community in resorts. This fragmentation is not unusual for contemporary urban formations due to their characteristically large populations, cultural and ethnic diversity, structural inequalities and geographic dispersion. However, as Nijman (2011) points out, social capital ‘may be scarce in a society at large while abundant within certain smaller social enclaves’ (p. 124). This is true in some respects – such as through the existence of family ties and friendships; and in the case of some resorts – such as with Little Havana, Little Haiti and other cultural enclaves in Miami – but not others.

On the Gold Coast, for example, young people often feel that it can be difficult to connect with others who share certain identities and affinities based on sexuality, taste in music, style, hobbies, and so on. The city’s local cultures are multiple and diverse, but are often ignored or marginalised by those in power in favour of focusing on what appeals to, and what can be packaged for, tourists. One of my interviewees expressed frustration over the fact that there was ‘no gay scene’ (Alyssa, Gold Coast, 24 September 2014) on the Gold Coast, with only one gay nightclub, making it difficult for her to make friends and meet potential romantic partners. Similarly, another interviewee remarked that there was little in the way of alternative nightclubs or live music venues anymore, reflecting on his youth spent at establishments like The Party (an alternative nightclub in Surfers that played punk, rock and metal music, and attracted patrons who typically dressed in styles associated with these genres) and the Chophouse (a bar in Surfers that featured local live bands and DJs remixing vinyl of alternative bands). The lack of physical spaces available to people seeking non-mainstream, non-touristic experiences can significantly impact on their capacity to build important social networks and communities with like-minded people. This may lead to social isolation, and can

177 This is not to say that communities must be spatially-bounded, but many of us do indeed seek physical spaces for interaction and belonging in addition to participating in imagined and online communities.
also motivate young people to move elsewhere (like Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney) to seek out these connections.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the tourism industries in resorts significantly shape, and constrain, the opportunities, spatial practices, everyday experiences and senses of belonging for residents. The individuals I interviewed expressed an interesting ambivalence towards their localities, embodying a liminal affective position marked simultaneously by appreciation and resentment, acceptance and frustration. Residents, like tourists, enjoy the good weather, the beaches, the lifestyle and the diversity and hybridity that flourishes with ongoing, transnational flows of people, products and trends. At the same time, however, they have to deal with a range of negative social, environmental, political and ecological consequences that they may feel are out of their control. These manifest differently, and with varying degrees of severity, in each resort, contingent on its local specificity.

I have only explored a select few impacts and experiences in this chapter – emphasising those with observable spatial dimensions, such as inequalities of wealth and feelings of displacement – based on what my interviewees communicated to me, as well as my own experiences as a local on the Gold Coast and a researcher in the field. It would be impossible to offer any kind of comprehensive account of what it is like to live in a resort, given that they are infinitely complex, heterogeneous assemblages that are constantly shifting. Instead, my aim in this chapter has been to capture some of the local experiences and narratives that exist beyond the popular imaginary and the touristic metanarrative. It is clear that tourists and locals perceive and use the same spaces in disparate, contested ways, and it is important to recognise that all of these different understandings and practices comprise the unique lived spaces of resorts.
Chapter 12: Final thoughts

I have examined resorts as distinctive kinds of urban assemblages that share a number of commonalities with each other, but nonetheless have their own local particularities. Treated as examples, each resort is interpreted in terms of its singularity as well as its connections to other resorts and to wider social and cultural phenomena, such as the effects of mass tourism and globalisation on urban spatiality. I have analysed how resorts are produced through complex arrangements of material and symbolic elements, including popular imaginaries, narratives of identity, representations, built environments, rhythms, social and spatial practices, and lived experiences. I have stressed that conceptual frameworks informing analyses of complex spatial relations in these (and other) cities need to be based in theoretical understandings that deal with difference, plurality, multiplicity, fluidity and heterogeneity. These understandings tend to sit comfortably with each other because they all refuse simplifying and binarising processes in favour of working with complexity.

Resorts are particularly valuable sites for this kind of research precisely because of the extent of their contradictions, diversity and hybridity. Despite the stereotypes of banality and superficiality attributed to them, attending to the livedness of resort spaces readily reveals their distinctiveness and complexities. Their urban forms have developed to serve quite other purposes to conventional cities, in particular escapism, hedonism, transgression and indulgence. These purposes are easily seen as trivial and assumed to be disconnected from everyday life and normality. Resorts are therefore seen to be inconsequential and disembedded in comparison to the ‘real’ cities from which the majority of tourists originate. The tensions, ambivalences and ironies that are produced by the apparent homogeneity and actual heterogeneity of resorts pose a challenge theoretically and methodologically. In order to address this, researchers must be willing to be attentive to the particularities and contradictions of the places themselves, to consider them on their own terms, and be comfortable with the partial, the impressionistic and the incomplete. Approached thus, resorts can surprise, revealing different ways of being urban and requiring different ways of conceptualising what the urban might be. An approach that treats each urban assemblage on its own terms subtends a
methodological assemblage, constituted by a *bricolage* of strategies and processes which deal with the multiplicities and idiosyncrasies of the field.

In this final chapter, I discuss some of the theoretical and practical implications of my findings, the limitations of the project, and possibilities for alternative approaches and future research. Although this chapter marks the end of my PhD project, the ideas and findings produced in this thesis are, much like the spaces I have examined, essentially open, relational and shifting.

**Conceptualising spatiality: mobilising difference and complexity**

Resorts are unusual urban sites for which conventional understandings of cities, how they develop, how they are arranged and how they work, are only partially able to account. Thus, my interest in these spaces that are characterised more by transience than by sedimentation required that I start with some fundamental questions about how people use them, what they bring to them, how they experience them and what they take from them – that is, how socio-spatial relations occur. During the research process, I came to realise that my project was not driven only by an interest in resorts *per se*, but in how we conceptualise spatiality. As a consequence, this project contributes not only to popular and scholarly discourses on sites of mass tourism, but to understandings of processes of spatialisation and experiences of lived spaces more broadly. Spaces are assemblages that are open, dynamic, unpredictable and heterogeneous, full of multiplicities and perpetually in process. They are shaped by dominant metanarratives and marginalised rhythms, by global trends and localised expressions, by mobilities and settlements, by the material (the real, the perceived) and the symbolic (the imaginary, the conceived), and by the interconnections and disjunctures between and among each of these.

These relations reveal themselves in the experience of lived spaces and their rhythms. When I walk through unfamiliar urban spaces, I notice the architecture, the movements of people, the quality of the air; I am guided by signage, pedestrian crosswalks and the Google Maps application on my smartphone; I compare how it looks and feels ‘in real life’ to the images I saw on television shows, TripAdvisor and Instagram; I reflect on the narratives in my mind of what ‘kind’ of place this is – hip, or dodgy, or romantic, or kitsch, or cultured, or whatever else; I get caught off guard when observing things I did not expect, like homeless people sleeping on benches; I
observe shifts in activity in the transition from day and night and back again; and I continuously interpret what I encounter in terms of what is familiar and common sense to me – my habitus, memories and conceptual mappings of home. This embodied, in situ experience brings to light the ways in which the material and the symbolic are always folded together, the present is always mediated by the past and the future, and the micro and the macro are always inter-implicated.

Conceptualising spatiality in this way can have important theoretical and practical implications. Too often, the material is privileged over the symbolic, and the macro privileged over the micro, or vice versa. However, as my discussion has made clear, this kind of hierarchical, binary logic does not reflect what is actually going on in lived spaces. Rather than trying to regulate and control the messiness of urban spaces (Highmore 2005) or trying to impose coherence on them through overly simplified assessments (e.g. resorts as depthless, hyperreal, homogenous), we must work productively with their complexity and disorder. We must, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) advise, make maps and not tracings, and those maps should always be developed through ‘experimentation in contact with the real’ (p. 13). By taking a cultural studies approach to urban analysis, this thesis demonstrates the value in attending to relationality and liminality, to acknowledging multiplicities and disparities, and to embracing openness, fluidity and partiality. Such an approach allows us to rethink conventional notions of authenticity, culture, belonging and community. In addition to the multidisciplinary nature of cultural studies, this work has been informed throughout by concepts and processes, theories and analytics, taken from urban studies, cultural geography, cultural sociology and tourism studies. In effect the work is as much a product of bricolage conceptually, theoretically and analytically as it is methodologically.

It is vital to establish more open, flexible and nuanced approaches to conceptualising spatiality. All people are spatially located, and our everyday spatial contexts play a significant part in shaping our subjectivities. In turn, all spaces are produced, to a significant extent, by the people who occupy them. The previous chapter demonstrates that locals in resorts are conscious of their own marginalisation, and often feel that the needs and desires of tourists are privileged over those of residents. This raises several key questions that matter for citizens of resorts as much as they do for citizens of conventional cities: who has rights to city
space? *To whom* do cities belong? Is it the residents, or is it the visitors, the property developers, the foreign investors, the business owners? In reality, it is all of these. But *who belongs to* cities? The answer to this is, overwhelmingly, the people whose lives take place there, who feel attachments to the spaces and people they encounter on an everyday basis. For resort residents, however, these senses of belonging are complicated by feelings of displacement and resentment, or at least ambivalence, stemming from the tourist-centric nature of their localities.

These perspectives are useful for urban planners, policy makers, local governments and other bodies involved in tourism development. Too often, the needs, desires, concerns and capacities of residents in relation to their own localities are overridden by the economic and promotional imperatives of tourism and development. This is a problem in any city, but in resorts it is particularly difficult for citizens to resist changes that impact on their quality of life when the counter-argument invariably dwells on how growth and infrastructure for tourism are essential to sustain a regional economy that depends on that tourism. Indeed, virtually all the other sectors – even those apparently unrelated such as education and health services – ultimately depend on the tourism that has driven the urbanisation of the region in the first place and continues to underpin its growth even as the city matures and diversifies its economic base. Similarly, it is equally difficult for citizens to demand improved infrastructure or new public spaces in local areas when their cities are so caught up in sustaining and nurturing tourism for the very same reasons listed above.

There is a need to consider more deeply the impacts of development for residents and the environment, to actively engage residents in decision-making processes (rather than disseminating information about what has already been decided), and to strategise appropriate ways in which to offset the inconvenience caused by touristic events. Further, while residents in resorts understand the extent to which their cities’ and regions’ economies depend on the tourism industry, local governments should not abuse that understanding by taking residents for granted or minimising their needs in the priorities of city governance. Government – whether local, state or federal – can and should support policies and planning with the sole aim of benefitting residents (especially the disadvantaged). Taking steps to protect and enhance the well-being and interests of residents is necessary to
promote social cohesion and civic responsibility, to ensure that the tourism industry remains sustainable as the resident population continues to grow, and to protect the environmental and cultural assets that are both attractions for tourists and central to residents’ perceptions of local distinctiveness and lifestyles.

While over-emphasis on tourism produces particular difficulties for residents of resorts, concerns about misplaced policy priorities are not limited to resorts. Tensions between capitalistic pursuits and the needs of the community and environment are central to social and political discourses surrounding many contemporary places, whether urban, regional, rural or in-between. Similarly, a significant proportion of the major social and cultural phenomena discussed in this thesis are relevant well beyond resorts. For example, the connections between capitalism, tourism, globalisation and postmodernism, and the familiar stereotypes and binaries associated with each, have implications for everyone, wherever they live. As my discussion in Chapter 10 shows, the manifestations and effects of these forces are anything but straightforward or predictable, and thus cannot be regarded simply as destructive or otherwise inherently negative. With such issues, as with most of the matters I have raised, complex challenges that are playing through in sites characterised by difference, plurality, fluidity and multiplicities, require approaches that eschew the over-simplifications that inevitably attend attempts to think in terms of binary oppositions.

Focusing on resorts has enabled me to suggest some of the concepts and processes that are likely to be useful in developing approaches to working with complexity. Not the least of these is a recognition that spatial relations and their productive potentials need to be understood in terms of the singularities and differences that produce distinctiveness, rather than only through the simplifying device of identifying and comparing similarities.

Places across the world are capitalising on their symbolic economies (Zukin 1995), mobilising local distinctiveness and local cultures for monetary gain, as is evident in resort tourism as well as urban tourism, rural tourism, backpacker tourism, cultural tourism and other alternative styles. Tourism and globalisation, then, do not merely erode local cultures, but can transform them and strengthen them, fostering diversity through hybridisation and celebrating difference through cultural attractions. This is, of course, most positive and productive when locals
themselves are involved in the creation of such sites; when they are geared to residents and tourists alike (as opposed to models in which non-locals create attractions for other non-locals); and when they are financially and spatially accessible to residents (such as through affordable, efficient public transport networks). These attractions should be designed as shared spaces which emphasise local specificity and lifestyles, simultaneously reinforcing collective notions of belonging and local identity while offering tourists the unique experiences they desire. Through working productively with difference, emphasising distinctiveness and multiplying ways of appreciating local cultures, environments and experiences, the benefits of tourism can be spread more widely for tourists and residents.

**Productive limitations and future potentials**

The scope of this project had to be continuously, and necessarily, refined and restricted. My findings and methods have, as a consequence, a number of limitations, largely in terms of how comprehensively I could delve into some of the applied and conceptual material with which I was working. However, these limitations can be productive in that they give rise to possibilities for future research projects. Indeed, as I reflected on my choices and project parameters in preparation for writing this chapter, I could not help but think about new lines of inquiry, new questions to be explored.

There could be a perception that this thesis is limited in that it did not develop any kind of universal, overarching model of resorts that can be ‘applied’ to places for planning, development or management purposes. Yet due to the theoretical terrains with which I was working, and the project design that took account of those terrains, this was not appropriate. The complexity of urban assemblages cannot be understood only through models or morphologies. There is no question that such approaches are useful in particular contexts in that they enable planners, policy makers and applied researchers, for example, to ‘map’, identify and analyse patterns and networks in order to manage the development of particular settings. However, such processes – which have much more in common with what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as ‘tracing’ – tend to be limited to the comparison of like with like, and therefore to encourage the ‘discovery’ of more of the same. That is, if not used in conjunction with a range of other methods and concepts, they can function to
reinforce sameness, obscure differences and anomalies, and perpetuate binary logics.

Confronting this problematic in relation to the conventions of post-Enlightenment Western thought and its reliance on processes of ‘either/or’ (‘exclusive disjunction’), Deleuze and Guattari (2004) stress the need to develop ways of thinking in terms of ‘and … and … and’ (‘inclusive disjunction’) (p. 27). My work acknowledges this advice by resisting models or analyses that enforce a sense of sameness, linearity or predictability, instead working with the difference, messiness and idiosyncrasies inherent in the real.

I argue that despite their commonalities, each resort has different trajectories, needs and social dynamics at play. Their local specificities demand policies and processes that are attentive to their particularities and their livedness; that arise from mappings rather than tracings (Deleuze & Guattari 2004). Therefore, the findings are limited in that the evolution and effects of tourism in one locality may not be generalisable to another, but expansive in that they offer more rigorous ways in which to work with both existing models and new approaches.

The resorts I chose to focus on, and the issues I became drawn to, were based very much on my own subjectivity – the media I had consumed throughout my life, my research interests and disciplinary background, my position as a young Australian woman, and my spatial context as a Gold Coast resident and long-time local of south-east Queensland. As such, this project would have been very different coming from other perspectives. Clearly, there are a range of other resorts that could have been included and would have offered their own unique insights, such as the Maldives; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and the Hawaiian Islands, USA. Further, rather than a transnational project, as mine was, the multi-sited approach could also be narrowed to particular regions to illuminate their specific social, political, historical and ecological/environmental conditions. For example, making use of the bodies of literature already existing on these regions, future projects could examine the spatiality of resorts in the Mediterranean (such as Nice, France; Majorca, Spain; Santorini, Greece; and Dubrovnik, Croatia); Southeast Asia (such as Bali, Indonesia; Boracay, Philippines; and Pattaya, Thailand); or the Caribbean (such as the islands of Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Aruba and the Dominican Republic). Sites could also be selected for comparative studies based on certain common factors identified
by the researcher(s), like current phase of development (e.g. burgeoning domestic destinations or international destinations experiencing decline), spatial formations (e.g. cities or islands), representations in specific forms of media (e.g. in literature or film), or experiences of and responses to various issues (e.g. environmental degradation, sex tourism, relations between ethnicities or genders).

My choice of applied methods significantly shaped the discussion in this thesis as well, and different methodological decisions would have yielded different results. As I set out to take a comparative, multi-sited approach, the amount of time I could spend in each place was limited. I decided to visit each place during its peak season and stay in the main tourist hubs, but given more time and financial resources, my research would have benefited from being able to experience these places during the quiet seasons as well, and by also staying in more local areas. I would have liked to interview more locals (and achieve a more even spread across resorts, especially those with predominantly non-English speaking residents) and perhaps some fellow tourists (asking them not only about their motivations for travelling and their history with it, but how these relate to their experiences of home). Thus, although it was not appropriate for my PhD project – partly due to financial and time constraints, but also because my particular aims and theoretical interests required the multiple methods I used – similar studies of resorts in the future could productively take a more ethnographic approach.

Specifically, I think there would be value in ethnographic studies that focus on imaginaries of place (and how these influence, and are influenced by, materiality and spatial practice). For instance, in terms of tourists, I am interested in how their uses of photography and social media create representations that feed into particular imaginaries of destinations, and how these practices are informed by existing spatial arrangements, representations and imaginaries. Similarly, in terms of residents, it seems it would be useful to investigate more thoroughly their imaginaries and conceptual mappings of their own localities, taking into account particular points of intensity for various affects (pleasure, frustration, anxiety) and how this may influence city rhythms and senses of belonging. In both of these cases, an approach using visual ethnography would be likely to provide meaningful insights.
As the resorts covered by my study continue to develop and change, there is no doubt that the findings in this thesis will lend themselves to being extended and adapted in the future. Some resorts will decline, while others will grow and diversify, perhaps evolving into quite different urban formations altogether. In any case, these changes will involve different and unpredictable social, cultural, political and environmental effects that will be worthy of further interrogation.

Conclusion

Clearly, like the resorts I analysed, this thesis is inevitably connected to what exists beyond it – from the places, experiences and concepts that inspired the research, to its potential implications, future projects and adaptions, and its contribution to broader theoretical, methodological and disciplinary terrains. I have conceptualised resorts in terms of their shared characteristics and their own local specificities, and examined how their spatiality is produced, reproduced and transformed through myriad material and symbolic factors. Treating resorts as examples – occupying the liminal space between universal and particular – my analysis contributes to wider understandings of tourism, globalisation and spatialisation, reimagining how these processes unfold in complex, heterogeneous lived spaces.
Appendix

Appendix A: Confirmation of ethical clearance

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

18-

Jun-2013

Dear Associate Professor Wise

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: Becoming adult in resort cities: youth, identity and leisure spaces" (GU Ref No: HUM/28/13/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Dr Kristie Westerlaken
Policy Officer
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: +61 (0)7 373 58043
fax: +61 (07) 373 57994
email: k.westerlaken@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Code%20for%20the%20Responsible%20Conduct%20-of-Research.pdf

PRIVILEGED, PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of the addressee(s) and may contain information which is confidential or privileged. If you receive this email and you are not the addressee(s) [or responsible for delivery of the email to the addressee(s)], please disregard the contents of the email, delete the email and notify the author immediately.
Appendix B: Interview information sheet

PhD Research
Becoming-adult in resort cities: youth, identity and leisure spaces
INFORMATION SHEET

Chief Investigator/Principal Supervisor
Associate Professor Patricia Wise
School of Humanities
Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus
+61 7 55528620
p.wise@griffith.edu.au

PhD Researcher
Zelmarie Cantillon
School of Humanities
+61431356402
z.cantillon@griffith.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?
This research is a part of Zelmarie Cantillon’s PhD candidature in the School of Humanities, Griffith University. Her supervisors and the academics taking responsibility for her work are Associate Professor Patricia Wise (Principal Supervisor) and Associate Professor Sarah Baker (Associate Supervisor).

The project examines the experiences of tourists and residents in international resort cities. Zelmarie is interested in the uses and meanings of space (particularly nightlife spaces) and how urban experience informs senses of identity and belonging. The purpose of interviews is to gain insight into the experiences of locals in these cities.

What you will be asked to do
If you choose to be a participant in the research, you will engage in a voice-recorded interview with Zelmarie for approximately 20 minutes. This will take the form of a semi-structured conversation in which you will be invited to discuss topics such as your engagements with and experiences of the city’s nightlife, your feelings towards tourists and the tourism industry, and your senses of community and belonging in your city.

How participants will be selected
Participants will all be young adults residing in the cities being studied. You may have been identified as a potential participant in one of the following ways:
- As a HDR student or researcher associated with one of Griffith University’s partner institutions in or near one of the cities in question;
- As a young local encountered during the fieldwork in one of the cities in question; or
- Referred through a contact from one of the above participant pools.

The expected benefits of the research
The research will provide valuable insights into:
The disparate experiences of locals and tourists in the cities in question;

The extent to which these cities cater to the needs of locals as they cater to the demands and expectations of tourists; and

How being immersed in tourist-centric cityspaces and metanarratives impacts on senses of identity, belonging and community for young locals.

Your confidentiality
Participants will not be identifiable and are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. All files will be securely stored and de-identified after transcription. Voice recordings will be stored in locked digital files and will be destroyed at the end of the project. Under Ethics requirements, transcripts will be kept for five years after the end of the project, in a locked file in the care of the Chief Investigator, and will be destroyed at the end of that period. Pseudonyms will be allocated for the purposes of reporting outcomes in the dissertation and in any subsequent publications that make use of the data.

Your participation is voluntary
You are assured that your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the process at any stage. Your withdrawal will have no adverse impact on your relationship with Griffith University or any of its partner institutions.

Questions / further information
For further information or questions, contact the Principal Researcher (see above). If you have concerns you would prefer to discuss with an academic staff member, please contact Associate Professor Patricia Wise on +617 5552 8620 or p.wise@griffith.edu.au.

The ethical conduct of this research
The research for this project is conducted in accordance with Griffith University Ethical Guidelines and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on +617 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you
A brief summary report of the emergent themes and outcomes resulting from the research will be emailed to you at your request. You can request this summary by emailing Zelmarie Cantillon on z.cantillon@griffith.edu.au or Associate Professor Patricia Wise on p.wise@griffith.edu.au.

Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/privacy-plan or telephone +61 7 3735 4375.
Appendix C: Interview consent form

PhD Research
Becoming-adult in resort cities: youth, identity and leisure spaces
CONSENT FORM

Chief Investigator/Principal Supervisor
Associate Professor Patricia Wise
School of Humanities
Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus
+61 7 55528620
p.wise@griffith.edu.au

PhD Researcher
Zelmarie Cantillon
School of Humanities
+61431356402
z.cantillon@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include a brief, voice-recorded interview;
- I understand that I will remain anonymous;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that there are no risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the PhD Researcher or her academic supervisor;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 7 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference list

2 Fast 2 Furious 2003, motion picture, Universal Pictures, Universal City.


Bad Boys 1995, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, Culver City.

Bad Boys II 2003, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, Culver City.


The Beach 2000, motion picture, 20th Century Fox, Los Angeles.

Beesley, L 2005, The potential role of cultural tourism on the Gold Coast, CRC for Sustainable Tourism, Gold Coast.


Bhabha, HK 1994, The Location of Culture, Routledge, London.

Blackman, A 2013, If Only I Had a Heart: A history of the Gold Coast and its economy from 1823 to 2013, Griffith Business School, Southport.


Briggs, D 2013, Deviance and Risk on Holiday: An Ethnography of British Tourists in Ibiza, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.


Buchanan, I 2005, 'Space in the Age of Non-Place', in I Buchanan & G Lambert (eds), Deleuze and Space, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, pp. 16–35.


Burstow, G 2014, Flesh: The Gold Coast in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.


Castellanos, MB 2010a, *A return to servitude: Maya migration and the tourist trade in Cancún*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.


*Cocaine Cowboys* 2006, motion picture, Magnolia Pictures, Dallas and New York City.


Department of Provincial Administration 2015a, *Report: Demographics and Houses, Year 2557 – Koh Phangan* [translated], viewed 27 July 2015,


of-miami-to-vote-on-resolution-disapproving-of-second-festival-weekend-6448643>.


**Edensor, T (ed) 2010, Geographies of rhythm: nature, place, mobilities and bodies, Ashgate, Farnham,**

**Edendor, T 2011, ‘Commuter: Mobility, Rhythm and Commuting’, in T Cresswell & P Merriman (eds), Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Subjects, Spaces, Ashgate, Farnham, pp. 189–204.**


Garcia Sastre, MA, Alemany Hormaeche, M & Villar, MT 2015, ‘Are regional political decisions the key element in reducing seasonal variation in tourism? The


*Geordie Shore* 2011–present, television series, MTV (UK and Ireland), London.


Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2004, *All that Glitters ... Contemporary Visions of the Gold Coast*, exhibition catalogue, 7 February–21 March, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, QLD.

Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2005, *The content of these paintings is secret, known only to the people of Surfers Paradise*, exhibition catalogue, 25 June–7 August, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, QLD.

Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2006, *Sold! The Gold Coast Real Estate Dream*, exhibition catalogue, 22 July–10 September, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, QLD.


Gold Coast City Art Gallery 2012, *Sexualising the City: Imaging Desire and Gold Coast Identity*, exhibition catalogue, 20 October–2 December, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, QLD.


*Gold Coast Cops* 2014–2015, television series, Network Ten, Prymont.


Institut d’Estadística de les Illes Balears 2015, Padró (xifres de població): Dades anuals, viewed 28 September 2015,


It’s All Gone Pete Tong 2004, motion picture, Matson Films, San Francisco.


Kevin & Perry Go Large 2000, motion picture, Icon Film Distribution, Los Angeles.


Massey, D 1994, *Space, Place, and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.


Meethan, K 2001, Tourism in Global Society: Place, Culture, Consumption, Palgrave, Basingstoke.


O’Connor, J & Wynne, D 1996, From the margins to the centre: Cultural production and consumption in the post-industrial city, Arena, Aldershot.

Olalquiaga, C 1992, Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.


Pajot, S 2014, 'South Beach Clubs Closing for Urban Beach Week, Miami New Times, 21 May, viewed 17 September 2016,


*The Real World: Cancun* 2009, television series, MTV, New York City.


Tonkiss, F 2005, Space, the City and Social Theory, Polity Press, Cambridge.


354


