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Dossier

Islands, Research and Concepts

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Despair of a migrant in the Island of Malta

Lava flow - Mount Etna volcano (Sicily) - photo by Claude Grandpey

East of the island of Easter Island

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Book Review

For some years now there has been a genuine boom in the public interest for Island issues. One of the reasons, for, a capital one indeed, but less perceived perhaps, is the recent swift development of the information society together with its information and communication technologies. A move which has strongly contributed to accentuate the islands visibility bringing in all homes connected with internet features, news images at an unprecedented pace.

Sad news also are promptly circulated. Hurricanes, tsunamis, climatic changes and sea level rise have consistently shaped public awareness on Islands vulnerability. The travel industry, increasingly attracted by island destinations was not left behind in opening windows on the Island world.

As usual, academic debates have simultaneously followed and anticipated this wavy movement of public interest. Recently it has focused on « insularity, research and concepts ». Insula, our journal took of course the ball at the rebound opening its pages to a bunch of fine authors reflecting, such a polyhedral mirror, the present questioning about insularity. Insularity as a concept, as an existential condition, a point of view or as a metaphor.

The questioning could nevertheless proceed further focusing for instance on the insular space as a laboratory to investigate complexity. There is in fact no way to know an Island within a mono-disciplinary approach nor exercise upon a sound governance, from a sectorial point of view.

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On Islands and Isolation

By Abraham Moses

"Il y a entre l'homme et les lieux un rapport subjectif extrêmement puissant, réel mais aussi révé contre lequel se brisent toutes les tentatives de réduction à une explication purement rationnelle et objective, en particulier du type économique." J. Bonnemaison

The very existence of islands is disrespect to the authority of the state. The power and the majesty of states are by essence continuous variables. Uniform on the area of their respective territories and the meaning of them does not suffer that there be any disruption between their regalian value and the places where it has to manifest itself.

Islands do not comply with this condition. The essence of the State is continuity, it reigns over the whole of a territory. This "essence" undergoes a sharp discontinuity over the invariable extension of waters that surround the island. Nevertheless, there are large states in large islands: England has been a famous example, Japan or Australia still are; here shores and borders are confounded. But, in themselves the small islands, right in the middle of the sea and isolated by nature, are severed from the chief territory, they never belonged to the unity of the whole; they have their unity of their own, they are different.

An island is the most simple, the most natural expression of a topological division in the uniformity of space, it is a break in continuity, it is a topological scandal for the social power. Islands are "morphological anarchists" and the people who live in them do participate --whether they accept it or not-- from this permanent questioning of the "central" power. For sure, there are many types of islands: large or small, remote or close, sunny or foggy, poor or rich, and the concept of "isolation" applies very differently to all these categories. But it is clear that the social system is, by essence, continuous in its nature (its gradient) up to the well delimited borders and that any material cleft in the space appears as being an hindrance to its functioning.

When a German sovereign makes his capital in an island inside a lake, his deviation from the rule complicates the practice of it (Herren-Chiemsee).

Remember the famous quotation of John Donne: "No man is an Island, intire of it self; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main: is a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontorie were, as well as if a manor of thy Friends or of Thine owne were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind: and therefore never send to know from whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Should we deliberately misinterpret it, should we, on the contrary, replace the words of the humanist by the assumptions of the psychologist: every man is an island entire of itself: all of us are distinct from the others, are pieces of an archipelago, separate atoms of a whole: if an islet is taken over by a tide, the archipelago stays the same, as if it were a city where only some friends are singled out. The death of any man does not change me, for I am not involved in the whole mankind. And therefore do not come to ask: "for whom the bell tolls?" For it tolls, only for your friend.

Cultural ecology would be the interaction of different species of culture within a limited area or territory that encloses a limited amount of resources. In an island, resources of any kind are obviously limited: the ecological principle applies quite necessarily as a regulatory factor to any exchange as well as to all forms of transactions.

The German definition of islands (in Brockhaus) includes not only the conventional idea "a part of land which is surrounded by water on all sides", but also the idea that water, and especially the sea, permeates the whole of the island, -at least the major part of it-, that the island is submitted to some kind of marine condition. This would exclude, in a rather imprecise but clear, way, places like Australia or Greenland which, definitely, do not fulfill this condition.

What is thence the effect of sea, of surrounding water, on the land? It is one of these latent factors that contingent and at
The “island” is another archetype, a minor one, because statistically islanders together with the overall area of islands is restricted versus the immense areas of the continental shapes. Islands –especially small islands, as we shall justify later, being “rare archetypes”, are loaded with psychological value. Should we say that they escape the average standard of living for the mankind? They are exceptional, and a privilege for the anthropologist, precisely because they are exceptional. Out of the 8 300.000km² of islands existing on earth (excluding Australia and Greenland) the 22 largest islands make 55% of the area and 45%, i.e. 3.750.000 are representing the thousands and ten thousands of small islands. This justifies the fact that the true archetype of islands is the small island, the one we never lose the concept of shore, and of sea in our mental landscape.

The islands have thus a value by themselves and this value appears on the market of transactions. There is a market for islands, and the existence of such a market is one of the most concrete evidence of the existence of a “value”, also in the economical sense. Drawing this remark a little forward, we should logically be led to consider a new division of the nations of the world, the ones which have islands (many of them) and the ones which have not (or rather scarcely). The political geographer would be induced to consider with Montesquieu that this has implied in the past history of these nations quite different ways of government (how do revolutions start in a country which is basically composed of many islands, of roughly equivalent size?). More geographically, we would say that, for the former type of countries, the statistical distribution of islands according to their size (or their population?) would be an important feature of the national temperament and of its way to conduct affairs, just as the distribution of towns according to their importance is. To sum up, an island is a treasure, maybe a poor treasure indeed when it is made of some emerging rocks scattered around on the sea danger for the ships, without drinkable water, may be without resources of any kind. At least it can be used for naturalist colonies (Sylt) or concentration camps (Pag or Alcatraz).

It seems that this essential difference in their size, which had been ignored by the scientist, the geographer and the psychologist until now could become more pertinent when a new factor appears in human geography: the growth of absolute number of population of the world (“the Earth is full”), that reinforces the pertinent contrast existing between different parts of the world with different features.

Dossier: “Islands, Research and Concepts”

Random at short distance play such a large role at long range, the beach or the rocks by the sea can be hidden by nearly nothing: by the line of the trees, by the curve of the track, by the hedge along the cliff. However there is a subtle change in the background in the way of living, and orienting oneself, the presence of the sea is part of the mental map. Here is a task specifically for the geographer to ascertain and to gauge these effects without apparent causes which are so obvious when we circulate on a road or an highway in a landscape: the free water appears nowhere but is so close nevertheless. What may be the small deviations of behaviour that bias the mind of the countryman, of the resident, of the tourist, of the inhabitant, a very small bias indeed but always present as a landscape beyond the landscape, a potential landscape, hidden to the eye, present to the mind, a “genius loci” (Norberg Schulze) of the shores extending from their location inside the land.

In short, islands are treasures: by themselves they compare for instance Greece and Paraguay. After all, in most European countries, the law makes the state owner of all the land which can be covered at highest tide (the custom’s trail) but it leaves free for edifices, everything which is across it, enabling the private citizen to build on it. It will not be long before the real estate enterprises speculate on these possibilities. A bare rock, deprived of any facilities, is endowed of an intrinsic value, at the age where technology can provide all the amenities necessary to life, if only one wants to pay for them.

Thus, islands are privileged subcategories of lands, precisely because of their isolation, of the fact that man must land or fly off from them: a feature which was, up to now, a drawback could very well turn into the concretization of a “dream of” barrier: as the immaterial moat or wall of the symbolical castle, i.e. expresses the territorial imperative.

Psychological geography, a new discipline in the making, sets to list and to categorize objectively the subjective effects of the form of space on the behavior of people. Islands are privileged cases for this, a type of topological fact, that had been arbitrarily expelled from geography by abusively “rational” scientists. Where is then, the treasure since it is not buried on the beach? Is it a general manner their shape and their size in relationship to man as their major character (Island of Scin in Brittany). Who are the tourists in Helgoland? What do they come for on this desolated cliff which has been so attractive for battleships?

It may be there is a general drive for tourists to “go to places” dreary of sunny, pleasant or unpleasant, where, sometimes in history, something has taken place. And a rather convincing proof of this fact might be that tourism agencies do include these places in their tours when they have the logistic possibility to do it. For going on a foggy or windy day to the isle of Aran, the patron of the tour should have some grain of Schadenfreude. Fortunately,
the scheduled time for staying there is short; it is a contrafunctional duration in the musical opera of tourism.

At the opposite, there are these islands shiny and radiating of sunlight which possess plenty of the Four S (See, Sun, Sand, and Sex) which propose, so evidently the image of paradise was Gan Eden an island instead of being described a Garden of Orange Garden? The Hebrew word for paradise was very "continental" and ignored this possibility. On the contrary, other cultures, a large number of them, have seen the island as a state of bliss guaranteed by the sea from the IIs of the continent (Yi Fu Tuan). Logically, if the world formed out a watery chaos, land when it appears was of necessity an island and, naturally, kept the innocence of the birth. Elysium was another concept of paradise; it was an island of fruits, located in the heaven and to be entered by the west according to the Polynesian mythology; the Fortunate Isles, of which Tahiti was a picture, were close approximations to the Blessed Island which appears as a recurrent archetype in Celtic Greek Polynesian and Irish cultures "...where no tempest reveals, where for nourishment, one inhales the perfume of flowers from paradise..." But the immense majority of tourists (a new God, at least from the economical point of view) remains convinced of this eventuality; in a testing survey it would vote quite conclusively for it: paradise is an island. Nietzsche has told us very clearly, Holderlin said that "Islands are daughters of divinity".

Yes, this analysis is very biased; it bears the mark of the Mediterranean sea or the Caribbeans and it could not be transferred without cautions to the desolated islands of Arabia, or to the jails of Andaman Islands. But one can legitimately contend that these obvious restrictions do not deprive it of its pertinence, at least for no other reason than the fact that "the tourists" if they are not gods, are certainly kings, who exert their power in a dictatorial manner.

We encounter here one of the most basic problems of what can be called nissologia, the science of islands.

The economic problem of the sale of beauty is that, if, anywhere in the consumer market society, there is a "good": a thing endowed with value, a place desirable to go, desirable to enjoy, the tourists as consumers of pleasure and of beauty are entitled with an inalienable right: to go there (to the extent they have the money for it), in order to enjoy the place, to consume beauty which transcends all its visceral forms (images, movie pictures etc.) this is one of the most general truth of a society, has, with technical mobility, which has invented to put on the market every thing which exists in the world. Some ancient moralists would say that the tourist is the cancer of the planet, more specifically than man himself, as Julien Huxley affirmed it. Because enjoying or consuming is also, even to a small extend, to gorge oneself sensorially, consuming is properly taking what is outside for making it part of one's inside and, through this fact, the world is a little poorer.

It has required time to grasp the full bearing of this socio-aesthetic fact, and to acknowledge the wisdom of ancient cultures - Semitic in particular- that said that a snapshot taken is really not only metaphorically, pinching a small morsel of the thing which is photographed, ginding a tiny part of the landscape: landscapes are consumable, and they are, indeed, consumed by the tourists, not that much because they are physically destroyed by the careless foot prints of people, but much more, because they get cannibalized, trivialized, they insert into the common knowledge of all and lose their precious originality for the one in particular.

This is a new aetical principle: "a thing of beauty" is not "a joy forever" (Keats), it is part of a treasure of novelty, an acknowledged part of the prior unknown, and being acknowledged it is repertoried, it enters the common baggage of culture. The gaze of the people do consume the "things of beauty", it follows that they are irrevocably bound to disappear as such. This is the major sources of pleasre, by their very uniqueness they shall desegregate through the tiny clicks of Kodak and the timier glimpses of people, for endowing the common property of humanity called mass culture. But, by this very step, they withdraw from the precious realm of the discoverer, of the man who in the philosophical sense has encountered them.

The work of Nature, just like the work of Art, wears out under the gaze of people who look at it. If mankind did not understand it at the time of Kant's aesthetics, this is simply because, at that age, the contemplators were few and their small degradation remained insensible on the whole.

Thermodynamics of communication and the transference of its laws (the tepid death) from the material world to the one of messages, has drawn the attention on this fact by delineating the dialectics of originality and banality and the gradual shifting of the original to the banal, through an irrevocable (but slow) entropic process.

Let us put this thing in simpler words by reverting to the problem of islands as specific archetypes of the space...
enon, whether causing beauty or ugliness, whether attractive or repulsive, has a minimal threshold of action; to put it more bluntly, the presence of a few people, small and scattered in a vast territory, do not change substantially the landscape in itself: the features of the place. Consequently, the concept of landscape, as spatial, topological, structure of beauty, is not at once deteriotiated by their presence. In other words, any place, any landscape, vs. any island, has a built in tolerance which can be called “capacity of absorption”. If this threshold is not trespassed, the presence of spectators does not react on its intrinsic value. It is up to the owners of the islands, the owners of the landscapes, the managers of the Nation, to examine the practical consequence of these considerations.

To conclude these randomized reflections on the subject of islands in general, it appears profitable to explicit their latent content, justified by various arguments in the above text. The image emerges of what could be called the “ideal island”: i.e. a geometrical object that would gather the maximal consensus on what an island “should be”, for average people with average means, average money and average culture. In his reflexions, Paul Valery refers to these people among the leading figures of (at least) our occidental culture. Using Max Weber’s terms, this would be the ideal type, the “island type” collecting the whole of its features. This latter might be, in a world invaded by consumers ethics and consumers markets, the mental form of the islands which are mostly soughted for by the tourists, as basic consuming society. These tourists are requiring from the “managers of the social system” (those called “political leaders” in the ancient times), such types of islands, the one they would like to buy – or at least to rent, or anyway to visit and to stay.

If, as is true in a large number of newly developed societies, the ministry of tourism is progressively becoming one of the largest responsible for the happiness of people, balanced by an increasing gross national income, then these ministries – whether in each nation, or in a congregation of nation-, should be led by an intensive research activity for “inventing”, i.e. discovering, islands of such types. At the limit they would be led to consider “building” them if they are not enough already in the world; a futuristic view that might, at least partially, become true.

In any case, this description implies a “book of specification” (cahier des charges) for discovering, inventing or managing islands, these “tracts of land surrounded by water in all directions”, that make an alternative to the continental areas.

I- Islands must be of “average” size, in consideration with normal capacities of man to circulate of wander in them within normal periods of time.

II- Making the tour of the island in about one day is one of the experience that must be provided to the visitor of to the inhabitant.

III- Islands must be inhabited with a rather low density <25hab/sqkm, sometimes not at all, or rather scarcely.

IV- The population must be rather irregular, including one or two centers of concentrations: the “capitals” of the island, and the rest being half wind, half cultivated.

V- Island must be in semi-tropical or Mediterranean climates with not too frequent winds but accidental tornadoes. “when the sky is grey” in the capitals of the world, people must get away to encounter the sea, the sun and the sand, possibly with sex which should be provided by some, easy, technical management.

VI- Islands must have the largest possible diversity of landscapes closely knitted with each other by networks of rather complicated roads or paths, not too much upgraded, that keep some amount of secret for each of the respective sites to be considered.

VII- Island must be rather difficult of access, preferably by slow ways of transportation, e.g. ferry-boat or motor-boat. These should start from some appropriate place on the continent which is some kind of “conjugated point” of the island harbor establishing in this way the existence of “focus” provided by the island.

VIII- Island must be cultivated with fruits, wine, olives, oranges, or other tropical fruits. Cities and villages must have markets or corner shops, with extensive time of opening to the public the models of which are provided by Arabian souks, small Mediterranean market places, sleepy in the day, active in the morning and at night. Islanders must practice the “siesta”, or the median nap, providing a regular rhythm or irregularity, that visitors can contradict only at the price of a personal effort.

IX- Islands must have consequently some way for controlling their capacity of receiving people. This is a delicate matter because it should not rely on legal constraints, but should be preferably based on material hindrances – carefully controlled for coping with not too many customers- and initiating this dissuasion process already on the continent and quite in advance. The irregularity of boats, of private lines, of means of transportation in itself, the rarity of absence of airplanes belong to the elements for insuring a correct management of the flow of incoming visitors.

X- The ideal island must have large irregularities of level and of the relief. Good islands must have some hills or mountains, preferably of difficult access, and ideally with a volcano or dangerous pits of boiling water.

XI- The mountain or the chain of hills in the center of the island, should have caves, or gorges. Some strange people must live there, talking a different linguo. In the ancient times there must have been a god in the island or on the slopes of the volcano. Ermites should still live in the most remote places quite distant from the central harbor or market (Kardiner, J. Verme).

XII- The shores of the island should be complicated, irregular, and very contrasted, with a limited number of conventional sand, beaches, but dangerous cliffs or rocky capes with caves. In past centuries there must have been pirates there, that have attacked the coasts of the continent or of other islands.

Abraham Moles (1920-1992) was a specialist of electrical engineering and aesthetics, an expert of physics and philosophy. He is known as the father of "nissology". This article was written for the conference "Island2000" held in Giardini-Naxos (Sicily) in 1992 and organized by Insula.
Studying Islands
On whose Terms?

By Godfrey Baldacchino

Introduction: A Debilitating Discourse

Grant McCall (1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c), defined Nissology as the study of islands on their own terms. The concluding phrase - "on their own terms" - suggests a process of empowerment, a reclaiming of one's histories and cultures, particularly for those islands which have endured many decades of colonialism. After all, “[C]ontinents covet islands”, McCall reminds us, while “[i]slanders themselves and their way of seeing things is not much appreciated” (McCall, 1996a: 1, 2). It is, therefore, time for a change, also in the interests of political correctness. And yet, the opening segment of that same definition - “the study of islands” - marks an uncomfortable relationship, intimating that the process of inquiry may still be directed by outside forces, although presumably more well-meaning ones. ‘Island studies’ is explained not as a pursuit by islands, or with them, not even for them, but of them.

Islands cover some 7% of the Earth’s land surface; they are home to some 10% of the world’s population. And while their contribution to endemic life and culture is recognized and celebrated, it is often outsiders - rather than insiders - who discover, investigate and proclaim such endemism and diversity to the rest of the world. The problematique of island inquiry is that there will always be epistemological and methodological challenges associated with studying islands, because we are grappling with the impact, conditioning and paradigmatic effects of the hybrid identity and ‘location’ of subjects (islanders, natives, settlers, tourists, second home owners), as well as those who would study them - who may be locals as well as outsiders (mainlanders, continental dwellers) - looking in.

So many island-related sites on the internet, and island-related literature, are run, or scripted, by non-islanders. The newly set-up Islands Commission of the International Geographical Union has 12 members, including academics based in mainland France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden and USA. The ‘island studies reader’ which I edited in 2007 has around half of its content penned by mainlanders - Americans, Australians, Canadians, French, Swiss, Swedes - none of whom, as far as I can tell, reside on islands - in spite of a deliberate attempt by the editor to “provide platforms to other contributors” (Baldacchino, 2007a: 2). Embarrassingly, there are indeed “… few indigenous islanders in the line-up of this book” (Helu Thaman, 2007: 519).

Like other borderlands - the ocean depths, outer space, increasingly the Arctic – islands are treated as fair game for mainland subjugation and organization. The smaller, poorer or less populated the island gets, the more likely it is that its web or text content is dictated and penned by ‘others’. All too often, we are faced with a situation where our subject matter - the island, the islander, the islanders - becomes object matter: a “looked at” reference group; stages for the enactment of processes dictated from elsewhere; the props of various ‘deus ex machina’, who would have been mainly explorers, missioners and traders in the past, and replaced by other observers in more recent times. And, lest I be accused of attributing islanders to some pseudo-purist stock or pedigree, the “looked at” reference group would easily include others - such as members of the diaspora, visitors, short term residents - who will disturb the distinction between local and global, and so make research into island life messier.
Already in the 1950s, when American anthropologist Robert Manners set off to conduct field research on the Caribbean island of St John, in the Virgin Islands, he soon realized that it was impossible to properly analyze the economy of that island by restricting the analysis to what was just happening on the island. He observed that "the traditional unit of research" - be it an individual, a household or a nation - was no longer co-terminous with "the unit of analysis" - the island of St John proper (Manners, 1965: 182). The island and its people, whether they are physically present or absent, have already been effectively globalized. McCall's realization that emigration is such a central component of island life leads him to suggest islands as the original post-modern societies, sites and peoples that defy territoriality (McCall, 1996c: 8). Reductionism is appealing, and the myth of the 'pure island race' on which it is based is equally beguiling; but these representations must be resisted because they do not match the stark facts.

Following his first contact with the natives of Polynesia, anthropologist Raymond Firth had nonchalantly described them as "turbulent human material ... to be induced to submit to scientific study" (Firth, 1936: 1). This amounts to a removal of agency, cheating islanders of the possibility of defining themselves and of articulating their own concerns and interests. Political correctness may have brought to an end those explicit, at times even contradictory, references to "savages": be they noble, lethargic, lustful, uncultured or virtuous. Yet, islanders continue today to suffer as the passive and unwitting "objects of the gaze" of others, and persist as perennial targets of new 'civilizing missions': not only of academics and social researchers, but also of consultants, investors, journalists, film-makers, conservationists, novelists and tourists (e.g. Urry, 1990: 9). Island stuff is often either banalized and subsumed within a paradigm of structural deficiency (Hau'ofa, 1994); or else romanced, rendered as coy subject matter; glimpsed fleetingly through rose-tinted glasses (Smansfield, 1993: 29):

"Might it not be possible, on this forbidden island, to avoid the cankers, minimize the nippings, and make the individual blooms more beautiful?" (Huxley, 1962: 128).

The reference to islands as 'small' reinforces this exercise in objectification. Why indeed should we continue to refer to small islands, or small island developing states (SIDS)? Why should we have an International Small Islands Studies Association (ISIS)? I would much prefer using the word "smaller" rather than "small", resurrecting a usage preferred by Burton Benedict (1966, 1967) and Gerald Berreman (1978), in order to draw attention to a tendency in the literature - driven primarily by US-based political scientists - to equate large jurisdictions and territories as 'normal'. This, however, could not be further from the truth: out of 237 jurisdictions listed in the CIA World Factbook (CIA, 2006), only 23 have populations of over 50 million; while 158 have populations of less than 10 million (of which 41 with a population of up to 100,000). There are also some 21,000 'islands' in the world with a land area larger than 1 km², but less than 300 with a land area larger than 1,000 km²: this latter batch of 'islands' includes Eurasia, America, Africa and Australia (Dahl & Depraetere, 2007: 67). Clearly, the so-called 'small state' or 'small island' - whether in land area of resident population - is the typical size. In contrast, the large is the quirk and anomaly.

The same can be said about the 'warm water' island.
Western) enduring dreams of the ideal world. They are: the forest, the shore, the valley and the island. Combinations of these — such as the island shore — become even more powerful imaginaries and reference points. A recent full-page advert lists “Visit an Uninhabited Island” as one of twenty-one “[T]hings to do while you’re alive”.

**Making Sense**

How do islanders ‘make sense’ and derive meaning out of them being at the receiving end of a powerful cultural, financial and technological regime (which we could refer to as deep globalization) that they cannot control, and which chooses to type and cast them in very specific ways, all reminiscent of smug subordination? There are various theoretical founts of inspiration that can provide answers to this question. A structural functionalist approach, as pioneered by Robert Merton (1968), would classify their responses to this onslaught as likely to deal with choosing or not choosing to subscribe to the goals of those in power, and/or to subscribe to the methods seen as necessary to achieve those same goals. The conformists would uphold both goals and means, manifesting loyalty and pursuing similar material and status goods as their erstwhile imperial/continental masters — hence the ‘bicycle societies with Cadillac tastes’ of the Caribbean; the rebellious would discard both, and seek an overthrow of the status quo, or to follow an alternative conceptualization of development (as may be the case of contemporary Cuba or the Samoan way of life); the ritualists would go through the motions but meaninglessly; in a hollow and empty manner; the retreatists would have nothing to do with the process of globalization and seek to disengage, as with McCall’s description of the subsistence economy on Kiribati (1996c: 6), while the innovators would seek to tweak the process, often intra-preferentially.

**Alternative social theories grounded in Marxist thought** present individuals who are seen to respond positively but strategically in their actions to both proffered goals and means, while however questioning the legitimacy of the process, sensing that they operate from the periphery, and so at the receiving end of a fundamental, structural, power-unequal relationship (e.g., Knights & Willmott, 1989). They would thus exercise compliance rather than commitment, identifying that it is coercive power, and not consensual authority, which is dictating how they should behave. This is a fair analysis of typical islander behaviour in relation to tourists, where a hospital and “welcoming society” (e.g., Husbands, 1983) is a lingering myth, but which even most islanders acknowledge as quite essential for the industry to exist.

**Fleshing Out the Theories**

How are these theoretical observations fleshed out in practice in island life? How do islanders confront island texts so often crafted by non-islanders, where they are Lilliputians who only exist through the eyes, and texts, of a somewhat nonchalant Gulliver, and whose interest in island matters is fleeting and superficial (e.g. Baldacchino 2004: 278)? Of course, most islanders will not even bother with the industry of their representation, perhaps feeling bemused and perplexed with how they continue to survive while continental scholarship has condemned them because of, first, ‘the death of race’ (e.g. Edmond, 2007), then ‘non-viability’ (e.g. Pilschke, 1977), and later still ‘chronic vulnerability’ (e.g., Bruguglio, 1995). Some islanders may be just as confused as how they are seen and objectified as ‘paradises’ by mainlanders, while they may struggle at home against under-employment, aid dependency, loss of talent, waste mountains, eutrophied coasts and lagoons, sewage overflows, drug running, money laundering, HIV/AIDS, soil erosion, potable water shortage, depopulation or overpopulation. Others will accept the obsession to claim, objectify and render into beguiling metaphor as a necessary mythology to be endured, even refreshed and encouraged - perpetrated by their very own local branding and imposed by external dominant powers and cultures... even if hybridity is the outcome (Bhabha, 1995).

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the sheer disjuncture between western/continental ideas and island life. Here, the mainlanders who wish to "do development" are not amused. The exaggerated actions of Dolittle, an Australian "overseas expert", are a case in point: he is hired to "look into the feasibility of making the islanders of Ti'ko work on weekends" but desairs after speaking with a VIP who fritters away the office hours by playing cards with his secretary (Hau‘ofa, 1983).

One wonders whether, or to what extent, such a parody is true and whether it even remotely captures the basic contradiction of 'doing' development top-down ... yet, even if it did, it would be naïve to expect any islander to make a clean breast of it, and especially in writing. It should not be surprising that the formal disclosure of "the small conflicts and petty rivalries of parish pump politics in goldfish bowl societies" (Lillis, 1993: 6) is usually a task undertaken by non-islanders, non-participant observers who can afford to make such revelations because they are not dependent on information management to survive, operate and flex their social power. 1, for one, am not surprised that the most insightful written commentaries about social network practices in my home island country of Malta, and their links with political party activism, have been developed by foreigners, especially European anthropologists (e.g. Boissevain, 1974; Mitchell, 2002), even if it is somewhat too stylized a fashion.

Outsiders, then, spared from being party to the divisions of personal anomies of their looked-at-sub-set, could provide valid and insightful commentaries on island life. But this is not to say that Maltese islanders are oblivious to the implications of their channiness — hardly! Island citizens who grow up in "a streetjacket of community surveillance" (Weale, 1992: 9) know the value of networks, and of the value of information about networks. This is precisely why they do not readily disclose such information; and if, when they do, they do so orally/orally, in the relative protection afforded by their own language or dialect, and with a view to score points, while carefully not revealing their vital sources. Idioms from small islands are replete with advice about how absolutely vital it is to protect one's sources of information. In such cases, island(er) agency is demonstrated via strategic inaction: a culture of silence and baited breath. This may explain why the Maltese at school ask so few questions (Boissevain, 1990 [1969]). As Prince Edward Island historian Edward MacDonald puts it: "The clenched fist cannot be shaken" (quoted in Weale, 2002).

Islanders are:

"[A] very careful people, much given to evasion and slyness. The fear of giving or receiving offence fosters tentativeness. Forthrightness of speech and boldness of action become all but impossible" (Weale, 2002).

Five Dilemmas

The richness of literary and cultural islanding could be so obtrusive and pervasive that it could actually threaten and dismiss the physicality of islands as 'real lived-in places'. Hay (2006: 30) argues emphatically:

"So powerful is the metaphorical idea of the island that it can be deployed in the absence of even the slightest reference to the reality of islands. Those who live real lives on islands are entitled to resent this."

One could say that the epistemology of the objectification of islands would be reached when the island metaphor thrives on its own, as a simulacrum, without any trace of its physical referent. That would once again render islands as victims, this time of hyper-reality, a form of reality by proxy. Bill Holm (2000: 59-82) tells us that his piano is an island.

And so, ironically enough, while the island figures prominently in the human psyche, and lurched from utopia to dystopia, from precise reference to banality, from a convenient (albeit exotic) laboratory setting to a platform for the observation of the dynamics of "amplification by compression" (e.g. Percy et al., 2007: 193), the islanders themselves are hard put to reflect openly on their predicament.

Do islanders react at all to the slippage in the analysis of their condition, where they continue to be ritually "aesthetized, sanitized and anaesthetized" (Connell, 2000a: 568)? How do they perform as conscripted actors in a play about island life 'that they do not control? How do they behave when they are targets of an incessant regimen of construction, which would have them behave this way and that, in ways that fulfill the desires and dreams of all, for all seasons and for all tastes? Resentment, as Hay puts it, is only one of a variety of ways in which islanders can 'react'. There are various other ways. Islanders can and do (re)act to the interest - including their own - in the study of islands. In so doing, at least five dilemmas - and there may very well be others - are discussed and problematized. (1) that of the pursuit of extended colonial relationships by various island jurisdictions; (2) that of revealing - and so risk offending - island sensitivities, and the possible consequences of such disclosure; (3) the choice of language and communication format; (4) the exploitation of one's own island predicament as an unfortunate victim of environmental disaster; and (5) the realization that, deep down, we are probably all guilty of imperialism.

Each of these issues will be reviewed in turn below.

The first dilemma is that of the enduring 'cultures of loyalty' (Dodds, 2007) of many island peoples to metropolitan powers and former imperial heartlands sit uneasily with the mantra of sovereignty as an intrinsically laudable and almost historically unavailable, evolutionary route. Thus, "postcolonialism research ... still finds it easier to pick on, and grapple with, Algeria rather than Mayotte, India rather than Bermuda, and Indonesia rather than Aruba" (Baldacchino, 2007b). The expectation that islanders show abject resentment to the colonial experience may often itself be the outcome of an unconscious, mainlander dogmatism. Post-colonial theorization and international relations are both slowly coming round to acknowledge that there is no obligation for all colonized territories to secure full independence, certainly in the short to medium term (e.g. Edmond & Smith, 2003: 5-6; Baldacchino & Milne, forthcoming). Especially for small islands, there is quite a compelling case to be made today for autonomy without sovereignty. After all:

"In an uncertain world, a substantial degree of autonomy, where culture and identity are respected and protected, reasonable access to employment and services exists, and security is guaranteed, has weakened the strength of the claim to independence." (Connell, 2003b: 141).

What about those who choose nevertheless to articulate the not-so-paradisiacal intricacies of island life? Where islanders script contemporary island life, they may still go for relatively 'soft' thematics - like the power of gossip, the resilience of family, the lure of migration - which are not likely to meet the dismissal or wrath of fellow islanders. Many commentators on sensitive island affairs re-
main foreigners; but - and here emerges the second dilemma - of those islanders amongst this grouping, the large majority would be commenting from a safe distance, as emigrants, as members of island diasporas, as transnationals relatively disengaged from the society they are analyzing, and exposing. Or, for the others who are brave (or foolish?) enough to attempt revelations from within, they may find that they fall victim to the 'crab in the barrel' syndrome (Baldacchino, 1997: 118): become effectively blacklisted, humoured, belittled, cut down to size or somehow marginalized in their own land - in which case, physical or psychological exis(s)e may again kick in. To what extent can the 'island as prison' afford its inmates to comment about internal happenings? As Samoan novelist Sia Figuel (1996:131) wryly observes: "I come from a very small island - it's closed in - in a sense that everyone knows everyone ... it can be very confining".

Note that the above is not written in Samoan. A third dilemma that presents itself in the practice of Nisology deals with both the language and form of communication. In societies where indigenous speech may never have existed - such as in territories which had been uninhabited before the European Age of Discovery - or where indigenous speech (and its speakers) have been resoundingly lost or exterminated and replaced by metropolitan languages, the dilemma is non-existent the language of resistance and the language of oppression are but one and the same. Thus, in the imperially manufactured societies of the contemporary Caribbean, as Naipaul (1973:275) describes them, creole is often celebrated as a subaltern medium, while at the same time it can be followed, with differential levels of difficulty, by speakers of the regular language (Bongie, 1998). It is perhaps therefore not surprising that the French and English Caribbean are amongst the best known producers of island scripts; island stories on their own terms.

Where multiple languages exist, however, as in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, or the Mediterranean basin, the dilemma emerges starkly. Using the vernacular appears more appropriate as a medium for local commentary - historically, such languages were used, and seen, as natural tools and drivers of resistance - but this option would automatically limit readership and distribution to the speakers or readers of that language. Unless translated, or somehow reported or paraphrased, into a language of international currency, external readers would remain largely oblivious to such texts and their messages. Even the very form of a text - such as a novel, a poem, or a play - betrays an embedded and often uncritical relationship to western technologies of representation (e.g. Jameson, 1986: 69). Whereas, for a Faroese or Greenlander to write a thesis in Danish, for a New Caledonian or Seychellois to write a poem in French, for an Aruban or a Sint Maartiner to compose the lyrics of a song in Dutch, or for a Samoan or Ni-Vanuatu to write a novel in English, opens up much larger potential markets, many more publishing options, and possible a much wider, even international, acclaim. The choice of language is an issue that cannot be avoided for such island authors; some would seek to write the same, or different, texts in different languages, even if just to prove to themselves that they can articulate their ideas equally well to different media, and hopefully satisfy complimentary markets and audiences.

There is also some attempt by islanders to generate regional and international interest in the condition of their islands, especially that of low lying island states at the risk of sea level rise. Yet, paradoxically, where are those who would love islands when called upon to take actions that mitigate global warming?

Indeed, Farbotko (2005) has shown, in her gripping analysis of the representation of Tuvaluans in the Sydney Morning Herald, that these islanders are portrayed in the Australian metropolitan press as victims of tragic circumstances beyond their control, fitting easily into stereotypes of vulnerability and 'paradise in peril' which the rest of the world can watch - absolved of any responsibility - as they unfold, almost like a slow-motion movie, and presumably from a safe vantage point. For those who want a closer experience, certain island states - like Tuvalu, and the Maldives - have actually started marketing their tourist industry with a dark twist: appealing to those who wish to visit paradise "before it is too late" (Farbotko, 2005: 285). Herewith the fourth dilemma: it is quite disheartening and unsettling to discover that the interests of the first world in island life can only continue to be held, even if tentatively, when islands and islanders are depicted as threatened exotic curiosa in the grand museum of civilization. Some islanders may be silently thankful that even a perverse interest by the international community is possibly better than no interest at all.

There is finally at least one other, fifth dilemma. Hay (2006: 30) insists that Nisology - the study of islands on their own terms - is "... for islands and for islanders in the times that are here and that are emerging." McCall (1996e: 9) twice exhails "We Islanders" as the experts, owners and stewards of the waters of the planet. But what exactly are islanders? We must confront island roots with island routes (after Clifford, 1997), recognize the almost inevitable urge or need of islanders to escape, to develop 'glocal' identities, to search for a sufficiently distant perch from which to observe one's island and manage the pain, as a condition of island life. Are the members of island diasporas, or even those islanders who spend long periods 'away', disqualified from interpreting island lives? And conversely, by way of example, it is often mainlanders who have secondary homes on islands who are often much more enthusiastic and vociferous than those who were born and raised on islands in defending the 'island way of life' and resisting pressure to connect islands to mainland via such 'fixed links' as bridges, tunnels and causeways (Baldacchino, 2007c).

Moreover, what exactly is an island? Without delving into the fine detail (e.g. Royle, 2007), geographers remind us of the fractal nature of islands. Thus:

"[C]hanging magnification will ... result in typically large but few chunks of mainland plus smaller and more numerous islands (Dahl & Depraetere, 2007: 64). Even Pete Hay's beloved Tas-
mania (as a state within the Commonwealth of Australia) is recognized as having hundreds of accompanying islands, some of which are inhabited, and some of which have their own notorious pasts. Various Tasmanian writers, look beyond their 'mainland', like Richard Flanagan - who comments about life on the penal colony of Sarah Island, off the main island of Tasmania proper, as he does in Gould’s Book of Fish (Flanagan, 2001) - or Danielle Wood, whose protagonist in Alphabet of Light and Dark (Wood, 2003) returns to Bruny Island, another outlier. Does then this stance render these writers usurpers? Are they a lesser form of 'island scholar'? Are Sarah and Bruny Islands re-colonized by being scripted by ‘mainland’ Tasmanians? The inhabitants of even small islands are bound to have even smaller islands that attract their interest; and, in such a case, they are just as likely to behave as mainlanders, as rapacious Gullivers snoopin in, objectifying their subject matter.

Ask the Gozitans about the Maltese, ask the Nevisians about the Kittitians; ask the Tuvaluans about the (ethnically different) I-Kiribati. But it doesn’t stop there: the pattern of uncritical representation can be reversed and the proverbial tables can be turned: the islanders have their own scripted versions of their respective mainlands and mainlanders: chaotic, fast, impersonal, dangerous, distant seats of government, hotbeds of crime and licentiousness, potential founts of much needed investment. The love/hate relationship between island(er) and mainland(er) is as real as the unavoidable bond between them. Turning the tables on the mainland for a change by scripting it - even as one is being scripted by it - sounds like a fine corrective to so much historical subordination. But, surely: two wrongs don’t make a right.

And so it appears that, thanks to the fractal nature of geography, most of us are destined, or blust, with always having someone to colonize. We may just have to live with that humbling remorse.

Conclusion: Islands Fight Back?

To be sure, there is some attempt at reclaiming the island by islanders. Thus, as Konai Helu Thaman, Tongan national and senior academic at the University of the South Pacific, has commented (2007: 520, emphasis in original):

"In our region today, Pacific scholars and researchers are committed to telling their own stories, and preferably in their languages. They are now working on implementing the Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in October 2005, which respects the dignity and protects the integrity of researched individuals and communities. This could greatly impact on the types of research people are allowed to carry out in Pacific island communities, as well as on the processes and products of such research. To this end, I would encourage the trend to devote more time towards researching WITH and FOR communities, rather than detached academic endeavour. The University of the South Pacific is at the forefront of advocating this approach, especially in relation to the types of research our staff are involved in, as well as the way that research is reported and disseminated."

The nissological project is one meant for indigenous geographies; and yet, for all its noble intentions, it remains problematic to operationalize, certainly where islands are concerned. Continental interest in island life - as in the observation of endemic species - will persevere. The tourist fascination with the island utopia remains critical to so many island economies, even if the enthralment is with an island on the verge of submersion. The very act of commenting 'from outside' remains pertinent; since even islanders are obliged to resort to such a positioning in order to be able to disclose.

Yet, moving away from an exclusive mainlander 'gaze', and how it stereotypically positions islanders in tightly predetermind modalities - as Gulliver/Lilliputians, Prospero/Caliban or Robinson Crusoe/Man Friday - is commendable. It is high time to present Nissology as a "sub-altern discourse" (McCall, 1996a: 13); and for the island to "write back" (Garuba, 2001: 65). But: who is going to write, about what, and in what way? There may be no pure islanders ready and waiting to take over the task of (re)construction. McCall's plea is more of a desire for an alternative conceptualization of the world with a view to achieving a more sustainable relationship between humankind and nature, than of a valid field of study in its own right with its own principles, constructs and methodologies. His assumption that islanders make better custodians of their environment may also be premised on aspects of human-nature interactions on islands that no longer exist in the modern world, and - on the basis of archaeological evidence - may not even have ever existed in the pre-modern era (e.g. Fitzpatrick, 2007: 86). Indeed, today we refer to a particular example of non-sustainability as the "Easter Island syndrome" (e.g. Nagarajan, 2006).

One must therefore be vigilant as to how nissologists / 'island scholars' may be reinterpreting 'terms' for islands, but maintaining the same deep structure and its colonizing disposition: while side-lining the narrative away from the perspective of the 'explorer-discoverer-colonist', it may be taken over by the perspective of the 'custodian-steward-
Its proponents, for all their virtuous intent – and I include myself amongst them - cannot escape the accusation of being, in their own way, colonial. These narrators are not necessarily avoiding a romantic essentialization of their research domain (in the guise of Negritude, 'The Pacific Way', enticing tourist brochures, pristine ecosystems, or unadulterated island people). Nor are they necessarily open to exciting new insights or interpretations as may emerge from inductive research. Moreover, so many of these indigenous narratives will remain unacknowledged, unarticulated, unwritten, or else written only in languages, or expressed in voices, that very few of us would understand – and perhaps strategically and intentionally so. Indeed, were 'outsiders' not involved in the (problematic) task of commenting on and about islands, most of us would be facing the dire prospects of an absent script.

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Experience and Representations of Islandness amongst Azorean Undergraduates Living on Mainland Portugal: a Debate on the Insular Condition

By Eduardo Brito Henriques

Introduction

Islands are among the places which throughout history have always exerted the greatest fascination. At least in the space occupied by the civilization which people, to make it simpler, have agreed to call the West. There, from time immemorial, islands have been associated in the inhabitants' imaginary with extraordinary spaces, where now demoniac, now prodigious things can happen (cf. Van Duzer 2006).

The location of islands, the fact that they appear associated with an environment always involving a certain amount of mystery and danger, explains the tendency towards the mythicization of islands, and also that they generate such a complex and ambiguous representation in the collective imaginary. That image seems to have been constructed, as several authors have remarked (Hay 2003 and 2006, Baldacchino 2005, Beer 2003, Péron 2005, inter alia), from two sets of ideas: on the one hand, from the concept of boundedness, exclusion, and confinement, which derives from the objective fact that islands are encircled by water and that their boundaries may be easily outlined; and on the other hand, from an idea of isolation and remoteness, which is a way of interpreting the separation introduced by the water between islands and continents.

From these two ideas of exclusion and remoteness, the West has created a series of images of the islands which alternates between the extremes of horror and of fascination. Robinson Crusoe's lost island, isolated in the vastness of the ocean, cut off from the world, sums up this ambiguity of feelings concerning a place either seen as a 'refuge', or as a 'prison'. The same exclusion or confinement that sets bounds and restrictions, turning islands into places of austerity, is also what, somewhat paradoxically, converts them into -worlds in reduction- (Péron 2005: 424), feeding the myth of an autonomous, independent and sovereign life. If isolation, on the one hand, transforms islands into almost paradigmatic places of exile, of reclus-
sion or of atonement- (Bernardie-Tahir 2005: 366), it is even so simultaneously the origin of one of the most attractive images of the island in the collective imaginary, as a metaphor of the unspoilt place, virgin and not yet corrupted, and which constitutes in itself a corollary of seclusion, of isolation and of inaccessibility- (ibid.: 367).

This type of representations in West brought into being the appearing and dissemination of many preconceived notions about life on islands and about the character of island people. As a matter of fact, not even the scientific discourse has been completely unaffected by these thoughts. In connection with those ideas of exclusion and of isolation, many of the prejudices described by F. Hay (2003) come to light, associating islands with self-absorbed societies, even somewhat narrow-minded, with little predisposition towards creativity and innovation. Then there are those who believe they can discern in the scarcity of opportunities which (supposedly) characterizes islands the root cause of a tendency among island peoples towards claustrophobia and depression. The perception of remoteness and isolation gives also rise to the not less frequent illusion that islands are to some extent on the edge of the world and 'out' of time, in a kind of suspended situation hovering over the course of history. This is probably why islands and their societies appear linked in the collective imaginary to a certain archaism, which in some cases may appear in the semblance of conservatism tending to perpetuate backward-looking habits, and in others under the more romanticized manifestation of righteous conduct and upright values typical of a state of 'primitive innocence', where even the harsh living conditions and the lack of resources and of opportunities may appear under the guise of a sort of voluntary asceticism.

There can be no doubt that these diverse images, as stereotypes or simplifications of a much more complex and multi-form reality, could hardly reflect what islandness is all about. That is, if we believe, at least partly, that they are in any case images which, in their effort to simplify, still get at the truth. According to some authors, however, the problem with these representations is that not only do they simplify, they do not even faithfully reflect the experience of islandness. McCall (1996 and 1997) has asserted that almost all these preconceived notions reflect erroneous perspectives about islands and islandness, generated not from 'within', from what would be a real or first-hand experience of living on an island, but from 'without', from the perspective of mainlanders. Confinement and isolation, for example, which appear so closely associated with the representations of islands in the collective imaginary, are perceptions which that author denies existing in the 'real' experience of islandness and, therefore, in the representations that islanders have of their own condition. But some go even further and claim that drawing on the island as a metaphor for physical isolation and for exclusion is in fact dangerous: by propagating the idea that these places 'naturally' encloses that type of problems, it eventually conditions attitudes towards islands and, therefore, their chances of development (see Hay 2006).

The purpose of this study consists in ascertaining whether these perceptions of boundedness and of confinement, as well as of remoteness and of isolation, which are usually linked with islands, shape the actual experience of islandness or not, or to what extent they can be deemed valid in order to describe the island life. In other words, it is about trying to find out if that representation of islands and of living on an island is in accordance with the phenomenology of insularity or whether, as critics claim, it reflects more the viewpoint of the outside, generated and fashioned in and by the mainland spaces.

To find out then what other forms of representation of islandness could be those born out of the experience itself of living on an island, or of the 'life-world', as the phenomenological approaches suggest (see e.g., Buttimer & Seamon 1980, eds.), becomes the final objective of this study.

**Methodology and population under study**

The problem and the type of questions I aim to address in this research explain the preference for an existential-phenomenological approach – as defined by, for instance, Seamon (2000) – and for an intensive, qualitative, and in-depth research methodology. In fact, only through this kind of methods does it become possible to capture the meaning of the experience of islandness and to understand how the being-on-an-island moulds the representations that islanders have of their own condition.

This study was based on the statements made by a group of thirty Azorean undergraduates living on mainland Portugal. Therefore, they are young people who, having grown up and lived until fairly recently in an insular context – the Azores archipelago – are now faced with a new experience, that of living on the mainland. The selection of this group was due not only to practical reasons, on account of the interviewees being easy to recruit, but mainly because it seemed interesting to ascertain to what extent that forced change of residence had produced effects on their representations of islandness.

The study group was recruited among the social network of a more restricted original set of young Azoreans with whom I was acquainted, eventually coming up to a total of sixteen girls and fourteen boys whose ages ranged from 21 to 26 years old. Most of the young people whose statements I took were studying in Lisbon but the group also included some students living in provincial cities, namely in Coimbra, Aveiro and Portalegre, enrolled in such diverse courses as Geography, Engineering, Business Administration, Political Sciences, Nutrition, Sports Science, and Medicine.
Research was based on a method that has not been used very frequently until now, but about which there are a few documented experiences in some literature (see Kitchin & Tate 2000), and, in this specific case, it has become quite effective. Instead of face-to-face meetings with the group members, I chose to establish weekly contacts by e-mail for almost three months. Firstly, it seemed an efficient manner of overcoming part of the obstacles involved in scheduling interviews, as well as of avoiding the costs inherent in fieldwork and the subsequent transcription of the tapes. Then, I wanted to explore the virtuality of a means of communication which, besides generating the illusion of anonymity, hence potentially capable of creating an atmosphere leading to more clearness and openness in the participants, also offers the great advantage of being able to take on the appearance of certain types of record closer, for example, to testimony or to memoir.

During the research, I have always tried to prevent statements from being 'contaminated' by the theoretical priority I mentioned earlier. Instead of asking the interviewees loaded questions directly pointing to the propositions whose validity I intended to ascertain, I opted for a type of interaction closer to the informal conversational interview. Out of fear that framing questions overlapping the research topics could shape or lead their answers, I preferred inviting participants to share their personal experiences and to explain (a) 'how it was growing up on an island', and then (b) 'how they had gone through the experience of moving to the mainland'. Only after being given their statements would I embark on more detailed questions, trying to clarify less clear points with each member individually, or then to explore unanticipated issues which sounded particularly meaningful. Without ever disclosing the research purposes entirely (the participants had been informed that it was a study on identity and on the representations of islandness among young Azoreans living on the mainland), I tried to conduct the research by balancing the script of previously selected topics and E-3-4 the new directions which had emerged as work progressed on the statements themselves.

Obviously, the conclusions I arrived at derive partly from specific living conditions in the Azores. I admit that results might not have been exactly the same if we were talking about another insular reality, for instance a less fragmented archipelago — made up of a smaller number of islands and of greater size — or closer to the large continental masses. Anyway, I believe that the essential experiential structures of insularity can be effectively captured by analyzing this particular case.

The Azores archipelago is one of the two insular regions which make up the Portuguese territory. It is the farthest from the mainland, located in the middle of the North Atlantic, more than 1,500 Km from the Portuguese capital, atop the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Thus, it corresponds to a group of volcanic islands which, even today, are still subjected to volcanic-associated events and to an intense seismic activity.

The archipelago is situated at latitude 39° 39' to 36° 55' north and at longitude 25° to 31° 16' west, made up of nine islands, divided into three groups. The Eastern Group (closer to mainland Portugal) comprises two islands, with a distance of over 50 Km (about 31 miles) between them. This group includes the biggest island in the Azores — São Miguel — which is also the most densely populated (in the order of 130,000 inhabitants in 2001, in an area of 744.6 Km2) and boasts the biggest urban centre (Ponta Delgada, with a little over 20,000 inhabitants in the last census, and the seat of regional government).

The Central Group comprehends five islands with areas between 60.7 km2 (Graciosa) and 444.8 km2 (Pico). Therefore, we are talking about islands whose length never reaches 50 Km. Terceira, with about 56,000 inhabitants in 2001, is the second island in the archipelago as far as the population is concerned, and the main urban centre is the historic city of Angra do Heroísmo (with a little over 10,000 inhabitants), which is included on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1983. Terceira and Faial, along with São Miguel, are the only Azorean islands which have managed to avoid demographic losses and where a younger population still thrives. In the other islands, there has been since the 1960s a tendency towards a progressive decline in population and towards an increasingly aging population, brought about mostly by emigration (to mainland Portugal, but even more to the USA and to Canada).

Flores and Corvo constitute the Western Group. Flores Island, with an approximate length of 17 Km (around 10.6 miles) north to south and 12 Km (about 7.46 miles) east to west, did not reach a population of 4,000 inhabitants in 2001. Corvo Island, with just 17.1 km2 had 425 inhabitants according to the last census.

The Azores archipelago is part of the so-called Ultraperipheral Regions of the European Union, a group of regions (all insular) associated with an image of extreme 'periphericity', and which have benefited of specific programs for regional development and supplementary financial aid. With a fragile economy (a GDP per capita of 75% below the European Union average), the
population remains heavily involved in agriculture and animal husbandry (dairy products) and fisheries, as well as the services, which dominate employment, especially the social and administrative services in the public sector.

Smallness and 'maritimity' two fundamental components of the sense of place in Azores

The analysis of several dozens of answers I collected during almost three months of e-mails going back and forth between me and the young Azoreans in my study clearly showed that smallness and maritimity are two essential elements in the representation of insularity among them. Taking into account the recurrence and the centrality of these two topics in their discourse, two 'core categories' emerged right in the 'open coding' stage of the interviews (to shed light on these methodological procedures, see Strauss 1987). References to the size of the islands — and more specifically, to their limited area — were constantly repeated in the statements I collected, and could be found, in one way or another, more or less emphatically, in the answers of nearly all participants in the study. Interestingly enough, this happened no matter where the young people were from, whether from São Miguel, from Terceira or from São Jorge.

Almost the same thing occurred with maritimity. The recurrence of this topic and of related themes in the discourse of the respondents suggests that their relationship with the sea is another structural element of the sense of place. There were hardly any participants who did not mention the sea in their accounts, or who did not lay stress on the importance of that element. The sea seems to shape (almost inevitably) their childhood memories and it emerges as a fundamental element in the construction of their own 'idea of home':

The sound of the waves generally brings me peace: it reminds me of holidays and walks along the beach. The smell brings a bit of everything, memories flooding back, as smells typically do, but mainly a feeling of 'being at home'. (Ana 1)

It is not easy to avoid the temptation to ascribe to that perception of smallness, as well as of maritimity, the origin of the exclusion and of the perception of boundedness and isolation frequently associated to the islands. Péron (2004: 300), for instance, held that 'For island dwellers, the omnipresence of the sea intensifies the feeling of being cut off from the rest of the world', because the author imagined that the maritime border would become in their eyes a barrier 'solid, totalising and domineering' (ibid.). The statements I collected lead me, however, to reason that in that double experience of maritimity and of smallness there is much more at stake. Consequently, they make me align myself more closely with those who believe that islands are more varied, diverse, and complicated places than commonly believed (Terrell 2004: 11).

The relationship with the sea expressed by maritimity is very different from the perception of being lost in the middle of the ocean. The manner in which this relationship is described in the statements I collected shows an intense intimacy with the water element, and an intimacy which bears more resemblance to a happy and peaceful relationship than to an uneasy or anguished one. Instead of revealing discontent or displeasure for what could have been an isolating effect of the ocean, what we can gather from these statements is a feeling of deep affection for the sea, comparable to the one we could have for a lifelong companion, a friend, or a relative.

"The sea is without doubt fundamental in my life. I grew up with it right by my side, wherever I went it was always there. It keeps us company, us, islanders, always and always. (Elísabet). To live in an island surrounded by the sea brings about a very strong connection, it is as if I've belonged to the same family, sometimes I miss the Azores sea more than some of my relatives, it is not nice to say this but it is true. (Miguel)."

That strong relationship with the sea comes at times close to a feeling almost of love. Flávia, one of the female interviewees, told me in one of her first e-mails that the sea was one of her 'great passions'. Another one would confess that 'what [she] missed the most coming to the mainland, besides relatives and friends, was the sea' (Catarina), an absence which another young girl recognized it made her feel 'constricted' and 'nauseated' (Sabrina). The sea seems to take on such essentiality in the being-in-the-world of young Azoreans to the point of acquiring features probably unimaginable for those who have not gone through the experience of growing up in a similar place:

I would not like to live inland. I would miss the sea. [...] In São Miguel I always know on which side the sea is and whether it is the northern or the southern shore, which guides me. [...] the truth is that when I came to Lisbon I felt disoriented and consequently a little insecure because there was no sea to guide me. (Ana 1).

To most of the young people I interviewed, that involvement with the ocean which shapes their sense of place in the Azores does not represent anything comparable to a feeling of imprisonment on the island or of being disconnected from the world. Perhaps, first of all, because the consciousness of being bound by the sea did not constitute an aspect with which they had always been faced throughout their lives. Many of the respondents told me that as children they were not aware of being surrounded by the sea, and that only happened later — 'During childhood I always thought that I lived by the sea, but only in my youth did I realise that I lived in the middle of the sea' [my italics] (Marco). The sea was something which had always defined their living framework, which constituted a constant and familiar presence, but one which they did not actually look at as a perimeter or a fence. Anyway, what also may possibly have contributed to that is the fact that the ocean is not experienced as exterior, that is, as something located beyond their lifeworld, but as an intrinsic part of it. And this comes about because, besides being constantly present in the traditional Azorean family stories and being deeply intertwined with their lives (there usually are fishermen and sailors in the families), the sea operates from very early on as a kind of 'natural' extension of the public space which young people are used to exploring:

"The presence of the sea was a constant while I was growing up. Since I was a child I got used to swimming, diving, running on rocks strewn with sea-weeds, recognizing fish and jellyfish, catching crabs, identifying the tides, etc. (Pedro 1). The sea has always been at the centre of my life since I was very small. At five I could already swim in the sea, and at ten I fished underwater with a 40 cm gun (a rusty Simotal Baby). Well, in the summer holidays you only thought about the sea. I used to spend about ten hours at sea
and I started the holiday season in March/April until October. In winter I dived with a special suit to fish underwater. (Fábio).

I believe that yet another reason why the ocean does not take on the attribute of boundary to most of the young people I interviewed, and why the involvement with it does not signify closing off the rest of the world, is the fact that the sea view is one of the most evocative of spaciousness. That feature, which always appears associated with a wide panorama and scenery of great emptiness, relates to — as Y. Tuan (1977) has remarked — the feeling of ‘being free’. The primordial experience of freedom is the mobility and there is no mobility without space. In sum, the open space is something that implies the future and the unfulfilled, and as a result, it prompts us to go forward, to discover. This may have contributed to the fact that there were plenty of statements mentioning a feeling of freedom and of release experienced by the sea:

“Strangely enough, looking at the horizon and not seeing the blue makes me feel incarcerated and claustrophobic. To look ahead and spot the blue of the water, the horizon, to know that there is much more beyond what the eye can see, gives me a certain feeling of freedom. (Cláudia).”

Although the sea is far from representing to the young Azoreans a cement wall put up before their eyes, a wall which confines or oppresses them, coming across, on the contrary, more like an encouragement to unreservedness, as a matter of fact there are some who regard it as an obstacle. A less common topic in the set of statements I collected, but nevertheless discernible within the category of ‘maritimity’, is precisely the one of the sea as an element interfering with an easier, closer or more frequent relationship with the outside.

Some respondents referred to that by speaking of ‘isolation’. Clearly that ‘isolation’ should not be seen in absolute or narrow terms, that is, as a rupture or a separation as far as the outside world is concerned. It is not in such terms that these young people seem to experience that feeling of isolation. References to insular isolation allude more to a perception of discontinuity and of distance. Therefore, they point to problems of accessibility. This idea of distance arises from the awareness that the sea is a space to be crossed in the interaction with other places, and in a sense it draws them apart.

Concerning the perception of discontinuity, it arises mainly from the fact — the extremely relevant fact — that you cannot travel by land to the outside and that people are essentially dependent on air transport, which is still deemed expensive and not very user-friendly:

“Nowadays the restriction about being an islander is only connected with the fact that when you want to travel you have to do it by air. (Mafalda)

Travelling is still expensive and every Azorean has, no matter how much they deny it, a feeling of isolation. (Flávia).

Even since I was a small girl I have realized that to know what there is beyond our island we have to struggle. Planes are not exactly ideal means of transport. Trips are expensive, we have to book three to a advance and you do not board a plane as you do a bus. To me flying has always been stressful and I have been doing it since I was five. (Elisa-bete)”

As I have already mentioned, smallness is another fundamental dimension to the sense of place in the Azorean context. The analysis of the statements shows that the consciousness of the narrowness of the available space is perhaps as strong as the experience of maritimity for the young people I interviewed. There were very few statements in which I was unable to find references to the small size of the islands, and in which that fact was not cited as a ‘cause’ for several aspects of their daily life and of the insular society.

The existence of a keen and strong consciousness of that physical narrowness does not mean that it automatically translates into — at least not just into — a perception of boundedness. Experiencing smallness seems to be something that acquires specific and more complex characteristics, pointing, not to a feeling of confinement or of imprisonment, but to an experience of scale different from that on mainland spaces: just as by covering a small distance one can go on an island from one environment to another quite different one, particularly due to the relief and to the effect of altitude, it is also true that short distances acquire, relatively speaking and taken into account the small size of these regions, a further dimension, all this causing the insular space to take on the extraordinary appearance of a ‘world in small’.

"I believe that the main difference between a child from São Miguel and a child from the mainland in similar social and economic circumstances is the range of the relationships they establish, of the distances, of space and of time. Although I was born and have lived in Ponta Delgada, from very early on we would go and spend weekends and holidays in Moca, where my mother is originally from. [...] the 45 minutes it took to get there was something we could not afford on a daily basis, it was actually a long and exhausting trip. (Vitória)."

The feelings generated by this consciousness of smallness are contradictory. There is no denying the fact that to it we can associate a series of negative images of life on an island which the young islanders share, and which have mainly to do with perceptions of deprivation (in the sphere of consumption) and of scarcity of opportunities (in the sphere of production). The awareness that the market is too small to justify offering services and rare businesses is wide-
spread. Several respondents mentioned the small diversity of shops and the difficult access to well-known brands as negative aspects of insular life. If we keep in mind the importance of consumption in the social construction of identities in the globalized consumer society in which we live, we can realize to what extent that can be perceived as a disadvantage to the insular condition, and even as an exclusion factor. The other one is employment and career opportunities, where the already mentioned smallness of insular spaces emerges again as a negative factor.

To that smallness, however, one can also associate positive representations, which correspond to what may be described as a perception of concentration and neighbourliness, and which, in the statements under analysis, are much more frequent and significant than any potential feeling of confinement. The essential element of the experience of living on the Azorean islands is not the feeling of 'lack of space', but the sense of having everything on hand, hence closer. As if what is lost in space could somehow be made up for in time — 'time there [in the Azores] seems to have a wider dimension' (Flávia) — and as if those gains in time would also acquire a kind of 'spaciousness', contributing, thus, in their own way, to a feeling of freedom:

"The fact that everything on an island is closer is something which I have always valued and now much more, because I am more aware how important that can be. Here on the mainland we have to plan things very well, because everything is so far E-3-9 away and we cannot decide anything at a moment's notice. Over there is different, in a day we can do a million things without worrying about distances. (Elisabete).

In the Azores we have more time and we can devote it to whom we like best and to the things we love to do. (Marco)"

This narrowness of the available space, on account of the intense experience of concentration and neighbourliness it offers, apparently also adds to the development of a spirit of greater intimacy with the place and with the people inhabiting it. The statements of the young people in my study group frequently suggested exactly that. References to the fact that you know practically everyone by sight are recurrent. As a matter of fact, so are the references to a sense of solidarity and of mutual help. That relation between the physical narrowness and the existence of a keener sense of community is something which young islanders recognize as a given and which appears explicitly identified in several of the statements I analysed:

"I think that on the islands there is, without doubt, a stronger sense of community: people know and help each other more often, and the sense of sharing also prevails (offering vegetables to neighbours, for instance). (Ana).

On the islands there is a stronger sense of community, there is a bond between neighbours [...] it is as if we all belonged to the same family. (Miguel).

The sense of community that we feel on the islands I believe is due to the fact that they are small places and that people end up knowing each other, getting on with each other. (Débora)."

All this familiarity and closeness with the surrounding world implied in the narratives of island life, and which arises from the experience of concentration and neighbourliness I mentioned, ends up lending the islands a domestic, very friendly, almost childish dimension. Many of the features which characterize this essential experience of well-being that Seamon (1979) entitled 'at-homeness', and which has to do with 'feeling within' or 'at home', are clearly present in the accounts that participants give of the island. I am referring specifically to an intense feeling of familiarity with the surrounding world which tends to melt away the perception of risk and of uncertainty; to a sense of great mastery over the territory, founded on a lived experience of the space; but also feeling at ease and without a care in the world which promote the 'freedom to be'; and, finally, to a widespread atmosphere of affection, of attentive caring, of the spirit of help, which is the antithesis of the indifference that one experiences in anonymity, and which contributes substantially to the construction of an idyllic representation of the insular places:

"I grew up surrounded by my family, which is always pleasant, to be able to be at any time close to the ones you love. I went to school only a few metres [feet] from home, a small school, where I formed great friendships, with high-quality learning, because when classes are small, the level of demand is higher and so is the attention. Everything was perfect! Playing was almost always outside, with the green and the sea as backdrop, even when we stayed at home there was always a friend with whom to play, for in a small place we know the neighbours well. (Magda).

Going back as further back as my memory allows, I realize there is no other place where I would rather have spent my childhood. From being able to stay outside playing until late without worrying about safety issues, to having my friends / colleagues only a few minutes away on foot. (Tomás)."

This image of the island as a 'home on a large scale', in a nutshell, is what this is all about, and it is precisely this 'feeling at home' which sums up the experience of islandness for young islanders.

Life 'away' — the need to leave and the experience of exile

Many of the young people in the study group mentioned having started seeing the island with fresh eyes from a certain time in their lives. Almost all of them associated fact with adolescence and described the change they underwent as the appearance of a new feeling of dissatisfaction with life on the island, but which, in any case, would not have lasted long.
Perhaps this can be ascribed to the series of emotional changes which one goes through in adolescence. Growing up always represents, to a greater or lesser degree, beginning not to be content with the known and an overwhelming desire to go further. A new unreservedness impels the youth to look beyond the domestic and family circle. This curiosity, allied to a newfound freedom which is obtained as you get older and as the ability to be independent increases, makes adolescence a stage when young people are acquainted with an increased mobility and when their lifeworld suddenly expands.

Probably that notable unease which adolescence seems to have brought many of the young islanders in my study group has to do with an unconnectedness between, on the one hand, the expectations and the yearning for discovery, and the opportunities offered by the insular space and society, on the other hand. In this 'home on a large scale' that is the island, there may be missing, to some of these young people, the outside space of discovery that they needed. Hence the feeling of 'constriction' and boredom which appear in some statements and which matches the perception that the island had suddenly become too small or that it was not enough for them anymore:

"As I told you in previous e-mails I started feeling tired of always going to the same places, of always meeting the same people, of everybody knowing what was going on in everyone else's life. I started to feel the need to go to new places, to meet new people and to abandon that monotony of daily life. (Joana). The experience of growing up on an island was wonderful until I reached adolescence. [...] In the beginning I already though that the environment I was in did not fit my self-image. I started ... I cannot say hating, but I did not feel well [...] To sum up, if I had left the island in the early stages of adolescence it would have been perfect. (Tomas)."

We can surmise that it is around this time that the awareness of smallness, so fundamental in the Azorean sense of place and in the experience of islandness, takes an exact shape, or becomes clearer. Previously we noticed that for some young people this meant developing feelings of deprivation and scarcity. However, we also saw that this was not true for everybody. The statements I collected show, as I have mentioned, that those feelings are of secondary importance in the experience of islandness. And that is probably because they are dissolved in the shape of a desire to escape, which is another way, a less bitter and more positive one, of dealing on an island with the finitude of the visible earth:

I believe that the other essential pillar structuring the sense of place in the Azores — martyrdom — is a crucial factor to sublimate the discomfort of feeling deprived or enclosed in a desire to escape. The spaciousness of the sea, which nowadays has less to do with sailing than with flying, helps to lessen that feeling, nourishing dreams of travelling which act as an antidote for the constrictions felt in the confrontation with the actual reality of islands:

"I have already read in a book that dreaming of flying means desire for freedom and that Azorean girls dream that 30% more often than the others. The plea in truth is that I have dreams of flying all my life, but I do not know to what extent that has to do with the fact that I am always flying, paragliding, etc. I can say one thing for sure: Azoreans, especially boys, are completely crazy about planes. there is a higher percentage (when compared to the mainland) of boys wanting to be pilots, aeronautical or space engineers, or just simply to work at the airport or to join the Air Force. (Ana)."

Studying on the mainland happened in the lives of most of the respondents as an actual project for the future matching that desire to escape. Several mentioned, using these or words to that effect, that as they got older they started feeling 'a certain eagerness about going to the mainland to study' (Raul), not just as a result of economic need, linked to pursuing their studies and their future employment prospects, but also on a psychological or emotional level, in response to a yearning to escape, to 'go away', to live the experience of leaving and exploring an 'extensive world'. This may correspond to what emigration represented in the life plans of previous generations.

Coming to the mainland was an experience that profoundly shaped the young Azoreans I came into contact with. Almost all mentioned the great difficulties at the beginning, the intense suffering they endured: homesickness, sadness, disorientation, fear, feeling permanently like 'fish out of water', the impossibility of catching their own reflection in the mirror which was the unknown space, feeling dispossessed for not having a 'place of their own'. Despite the flood of overwhelming feelings engendered, one could also detect, however, in some cases, fleeting signs of wonder when faced with the new and the different, and sometimes even fascination exerted by the abundance and the sophistication of the experiences on offer in a big city, from leisure activities to the speed of the underground!

Only a few people in the study group failed to emphasize the fact that coming to the mainland had changed the way they looked at the Azores. Nevertheless, the dominant trend of that transformation was not always the same.

There were some — not many, anyway — who seemed to have noticed, on coming to the mainland, new drawbacks in the island life, developing a bleaker image of islandness. In those cases, what the statements show is that what became obvious were mainly the disadvantages associated with the smallness, leading in some instances to the development of new feelings predicting a decrease in self-esteem:

"when I left the island, the yes, I was faced with many other realities. And then I started to look at the island differently."

Not exactly as a claustrophobic or boring space, but as a place in which there was really a deficiency in many areas. (Bárbara).

The dominant trend of the transformation in the representations of islandness after coming to the mainland was, however, different. Most statements point out, not a sudden awareness of the drawbacks of island life (as if they had 'opened their eyes' or seen 'the light'), but rather to a discovery and appreciation of the particular qualities of which they would not have had a conscious awareness (rationalized) in the daily experience of islandness, when they were 'immersed' in that reality and simply 'felt' it — such as the nearness of the sea, 'the time with time' (Vitória) which arises of the experience of concentration.
This discovery of islandness as an ideal happens at the same time as another process in which practically all young people I came into contact with have become involved. I mean what may be described as an enhancement and a reassembly of the Azorean identity after coming to the mainland. To overcome the strong feeling of being separate and dispossessed which seizes them and which I have described, the young Azoreans living on the mainland use the strategy of meeting preferably with students from the archipelago in similar situations, creating among themselves dense networks of contacts and friendships. It is a sort of little ‘community of exiles’ taking shape. All this does not help to lessen the distance between young Azoreans and mainlanders as fast as it could do, and ends up propagating among them the idea that they share a special and different mentality, or that there are specific facts about them — a way of speaking, for example — which define an identity:

‘At college, the first two people I met and spoke to were from São Miguel, and I ended up staying friends with them from then on. I don’t really know why, but it felt good to find someone from the Azores, even if they were not from São Jorge. It seemed that when we started to talk we already knew each other. (Doris)’

When I arrived in Aveiro to start college, I was faced with a community of about 50 Azoreans, which was extremely close. This group, with students from several islands, got together every Friday to have dinner in the canteen and to hang out all night long. (Pedro 2).

It is much easier to get on with other Azoreans, since we share the same opinions, the same values and we relate to each other, than to go through the experience of being in a huge city, where we don’t know anyone and we have to adapt. Besides, the fact that we are able to speak freely, without having to disguise the accent, to use idioms from back home, having the same memories (some of them went to school with me, some know my friends) makes the friendship easier (Claudia).”

The contact with the young Azoreans in my study group has shown me very clearly that their relationship with the island is established within a framework of permanent, and perhaps insoluble, tension, between the need to leave, on the one hand, and a deep feeling of exile which they experience away from the island, on the other hand, and which always translates into a deep envy to return. Some of the young people I interviewed cherished the dream of a swift return to the Azores, preferably immediately after graduating, especially where there was a promise or a possibility of a romantic attachment with other Azoreans — which is not that rare, because, even on the mainland, they still socialize a lot with other young people from the archipelago.

Others, less optimistically, assumed that probably would not be possible due to the shortage of employment and the lack of career opportunities. None, however, could imagine not going back to the islands someday.

Conclusion

I was wondering when I started this research whether the ideas which are normally associated with the insular condition, namely, the idea of a certain exclusion and confinement, as well as remoteness and isolation, would be appropriate to describe the experience of living on an island. I was wondering above all whether these representations of islands and of life within them would be in accordance with the phenomenology of islandness or, on the contrary, as some authors claim, that they were a misguided reading of that reality, possibly deformed by a ‘mainland gaze’.

The data I collected during the contacts I kept with the young Azorean students in my study group support the beliefs of those who oppose the idea that the experience of islandness may be reduced to a feeling of confinement and isolation. However, they do not deny that similar or related feelings may be present in the ‘insular way of living’, or may even be a constituent part of it.

To that idea that islandness is inextricably associated with the bitter and restrictive perception of being isolated and confined I would oppose another one, according to the data I was able to examine: the experience of living on an island is by nature ambiguous, played off in a permanent tension between the advantages and the disadvantages of being in a small place encompassed by the sea. I am not saying then that the islandness does not imply a perception of deprivation and of shortage. Obviously the experience of that visible narrowness will always arouse, to a greater or lesser degree, such feelings. What I am also saying, however, is that it does not automatically mean confinement or boundedness. In their smallness, islands find a spaciousness of their own and different from that of other places, which arises from the spatial concentration and the neighbourliness, and that is an essential aspect of the insular condition which we do not usually take notice of.

Furthermore, that smallness which may bring problems as far as consumption and employment are concerned has a substantial benefit: a domestic and friendly dimension which helps subjects being ‘settled in a place’ and the atmosphere of a certain feeling of at-homeness.

Rejecting the idea that there is an isolation inherent in the islandness is maybe more problematic. There aren’t obviously doubts on this if we think about isolation in a strict sense, or if we are thinking about shutting off the outside world. The sea is not for the islanders anything close to a perimeter or a fence surrounding and isolating. In fact, it is an extension, a space opening up and that, and that represents the possibility of opening to the outside and to the future being permanently on the horizon. It is also true, nevertheless, that it means a discontinuity concerning land mobility and a distance to be covered, and that — we must acknowledge — seems to lend the insular condition a dimension of exclusion and inaccessibility.

The research I carried out ultimately shows how that the coming of young Azorean to the mainland have changed their perception of islandness, and even their self-awareness. Unlike what we could imagine, that coming to the mainland did not engender a crisis in the representation of the island. On the contrary, a new image of all that, probably more idyllic, seems to have emerged along with the process itself of reassembling their own identity as Azoreans, and consequently, as islanders. 
Off-shore Island Community Empowerment vis-à-vis Globalization: The Case of Matzu, Taiwan

By Yuuc-Jaan Lee and Ching-Ming Huang

Abstract

Capitalism restructuring and technological innovations have led to the development of a network society. The major impact of the network society has been to make the globalized economic process mutually penetrable and dependent, not only contributing to national alienation of power and blur of the political geographical boundaries, but also influencing time-space relationships. Such influence on time-space experiences is the most notable feature of globalization. Examining of spatial development and community empowerment from this perspective clearly differs in terms of experience and essence from previous urbanization processes.

Therefore, this study analyzes the possibility of community empowerment in off-shore island communities in the face of globalization. The context of globalization is examined first, which is used as the bedrock of this study.

The development prospects and problems facing urban and rural areas in Taiwan are then analyzed. Next, the orientation and visualization of community empowerment are investigated from the following perspectives: community context, community empowerment and planning, as well as the role assigned to individuals involved in community empowerment. Additionally, the case example of Matzu is considered from four perspectives, i.e. regional identity and "less-advanced advantages", place of living and landscape on commodification, mapping the terrain and shaping the place, orientation and objective. Possible methods for use in empowering off-shore island communities under globalization are proposed. Finally, community empowerment is re-emphasized with respect to "re-emphasizing place" as the conclusion.

Keywords: Globalization, localization, off-shore islands, community empowerment, community planning

1. Preface

Conceived as an abstract concept, globalization can be a phenomenon or a theory (Lubbers, 1999). However, to the general public, globalization is a complex concept that includes political and economic constructs, as well as environmental changes. Furthermore, globalization also refers to the outcomes resulting from these changes. Globalization thus is generally not considered a "single process" or a dialectical motivation. Economic, political and technological aspects combine to form a concrete model of globalization. Moreover, the continuously increasing interconnection among economics, politics and technologies further depicts the characteristics of globalization.

Analyzing globalization requires more than focusing only on its process. The challenges of globalization and local responses must also be thoroughly understood.

However, the impact of globalization will decrease along with the state's traditional political, social and economic missions. This decrease occurs partially owing to that the state, in accordance with new liberal consciousness, executes numerous activities and adapts to globalization trends in new consciousness regarding freedom and activities conducted to assist in adapting to globalization, which have already transformed their standpoint of the guardian of the new Keynesian Theory of the state's public goods to a global function of the guardian of liberalism of international personal capital (Lubbers, 1999). On the other hand, with the advance of globalization, states are increasingly unable to protect community interests such as in the examples of welfare redistribution and environmental protection. Furthermore, states are increasingly unable to control the power needed to implement missions in relation to international funds, such as in the example of missions such as insuring property rights and ownership, insuring the social order, fighting crime and peacekeeping.

Nevertheless, nation-states generally wish to increase their power via geographical aspects, regional political organizations, and intergovernmental organizations. However, with respect to globalization, the power and inclination of state governance is gradually dissolving. Quality of life and sustainable development are clearly under threat globally, particularly given the following three 'governance deficits': ecological deficit, social deficit, and democratic deficit.

The mutually reinforced strength among the economic globalization, political globalization, and technological globalization has created a new world order. Under this new order, although international cooperation and conventions may reduce military conflicts, globalization has also increased local conflicts and reduced political, economic, and ecological policy choices (United Nations Research Institute for...
Social Development (UNRISD), 1995). Indeed, globalization is widely considered synonymous with homogeneity and uniformity, replacing "space of place" with "space of flow" (Castells, 1992).

Even in the midst of globalization, there have also been strains of localization such as in the examples of the divergence of "global class-culture" and "community culture". Global urban politics involves continuous compromise as part of the competition among local and global domains (Keil, 1996). Responding to the above-mentioned topics, the following three governance deficits are frequently produced: social deficit, ecological deficit and democratic deficit. The development and local responsiveness of these three types of governance deficits are also aspects of globalization. Regarding the resulting governance deficits, the following responses can be observed:

1. Resisting globalization (especially "Western impressions and values") by emphasizing "local rootedness" and "native identification"

2. Resisting international organizations or multinational-scale concentration of governance power via "local division of power" and "regional governance".

3. Coping with the abstract alienation caused by globalization via "communalism".

4. Replacing the "Dominant Social Paradigm" (DSP) by stressing the "New Environmental Paradigm" (NEP).

5. Resisting "lylicism" by stressing "the value of non-lylicism".

These local responses have given the globalization process a possibility of self-dialect. Local responses have, in some places, taken the form of establishing international or transnational organizations, while in other places they have taken the form of establishing regional governments or regional dialogic mechanisms. Furthermore, these local responses claim that the value of materialism has increased its quantity in non-governmental organizations, religious activities, and social public welfare activities. Regarding "local rootedness" and "native identification", community empowerment is the most important aspect of reflecting the globalization challenge. This work first examines how globalization affects the development of rural and urban communities in Taiwan. Furthermore, to respond to the challenge of globalization, Matzu villages are taken as an example for investigating how to provide "reshaping place" regarding community empowerment, through understanding and acknowledging this "place". This work particularly emphasizes the following aspects of community empowerment: conceptual introduction, cognitive comprehension and educational training.

2. Development of Rural and Urban Areas in Taiwan under Globalization

During the 1970s, when the threat of global capitalism emerged and forced capitalist countries to change from the Fordist to a post-Fordist production model, the Taiwanese strategy solidified in terms of outward economic development. Thus, outward economic development assists the state to link with the global economy. Under this development pattern, with regard to space development, besides rapidly increasing the differences between urban and rural areas by upgrading metropolitan areas via industrial production chains, the other key trend has been aggregate these industries within big cities using the global economic system within the global city network using these production chains.

Under global capitalism, Taipei emerged as a significant global city in the 1980s (Friedmann, 1986). Numerous empirical studies have frequently appeared since the 1990s (such as, Beaverstok et al., 1999, 2000; Taylor & Walker, 2001). Such a trend demonstrates that the process of urban polarization is further being promoted - city with the potential of becoming a world city must first face the pressure of competition among transnational cities. To attract transnational capital and investments in internal capital flows, these global cities agglomerate massive development constructions, resources and investment opportunities. However, non-urban land areas lacking opportunities for transnational development are even more detached from economic development. This phenomenon incurs disparity among regions and phenomenal polarization; in Taiwan, combined with the global economic network, the outcome is particularly extreme. Recent studies have assumed that "loss of distance" or "annihilation of space by time" has resulted from this trend of increasing telecommunication mobility (Cresswell, 2004). However, cities will not immediately disappear or die because of the significant face-to-face interactions and the city's economic collections. On the other hand, owing to this trend of "loss of distance", the effect of "new city polarization effects" may be further created, which may help strengthen urban economic aggregation more distinctly in the future (Hall, 1999). No consensus has been reached regarding these discussions. However, Taipei had clearly emerged as the metropolis of Taiwan by the late 1980s. While Taipei cannot compare to great global cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo, politics, administration, economics, culture, and banking and no other city in Taiwan can compare, not even the other major cities such as Kaohsiung and Taichung. Polarization effects are ignored initially. Instead, this study focuses on geographical inequalities in development.

Regarding development problems faced by rural and urban areas in the face of globalization, the phenomenon of urban polarization can already be seen in Taiwan. One aspect of urban polarization effects is to force the primary city to face the challenges from global cities, and strive to be connected to global development trend. However, urban polarization has caused greater anxiety and possible marginalization of local towns and community development. In response to globalization, places must be more open-minded and active.

3. Orientation and Visualization of Community Empowerment

3.1. Meaning of Community

3.1.1. Visualization and Reality of a "Community"

In the early 1990s, "community" dramatically became a dominant paradigm in Taiwan, ultimately becoming a field of research interest. Furthermore, "community" became an emerging topic of political, social, economic, and cultural interest. For over ten years, various discussions, activities, and policies using "community" as a catchword have flourished in Taiwan. Importantly, this concept has not experienced too many challenges. This concept was available for citizens and governments to absorb rapidly, making the interaction between citizens and government an
inseparable platform of society. This phenomenon is clearly visible in the bureau budgets of central and local governments, where the use of communities as treasuries to assist others has already become a normal policy. However, with regard to their citizens, communities have become a field best used for assemblies and integration of different resources, and are considered the foundation for implementing social movement transformation.

From a historical perspective, the emergence of Taiwan’s community issues originated from the collective actions between the state and its citizens. However, the outcomes of “community” in the context of politics must not be neglected. Given the bottom-up process of political decisions stressed by community empowerment, regardless whether the bottom-up process can guarantee the completeness of the empowerment process, the legitimacy and essentiality of citizen rights have already been established, and connects several key concepts related to community and democracy (including grass-roots democracy, empowerment, and publicity), making communities an alternative political decision, permitting the democratization of Taiwan to have another political option. The possibility of establishing grass-root democracy has become a platform of political inefficiency and even un-satisfaction. Community empowerment is a new democratic model; a common consensus process that requires interaction, participation, communication and coordination. Additionally, such empowerment depends on a concrete field to complete, and this field is the community.

However, when these ideal visions form an ambiguous lexical combination of “community empowerment” within the community and government, and through continuous changes and consolidations, a resistant and cooperative relationship can be established between community and countries. Simultaneously, a relationship of dependence and complicity is also created. Consequently, numerous phenomena worthy of reflection have emerged through this process. On the one hand, increasing quantities of resources are only superficially in name of “community” and increased systematization. However, owing to the process of systematization, “community” only becomes a management of a field, and a platform of connecting resources, rather than positive motives and actions which can evoke internal introspection and external reform.

Restated, when the definition of administrative areas has been increasingly regarded as a proper and accustomed definition of community (not conventional categories which are not an organic constitution of particular meaningful contexts), and when community organizations have become just another authority-related operating model resulting in the values of participation and civics more formalized, the question then raised is that: the conception that communities are the collective reflection (Bauman, 2001) is an existence in reality or made-up beliefs?

### 3.1.2. Relationship Connections

**Regarding the contexts of cities and towns, the above question deserves closer examination. Actually, within cities and towns, the accustomed categorization of “community” is a blurred definition. Cities and towns are highly mobile, open, and full of numerous different relationship components (Bauman, 2001). Moreover, citizens within these spatial areas construct different relationships with different segments of cities and towns according to different activities (e.g., commercial, residential, or industrial). However, these relationships within and anonymous cities and towns are generally estranged and insignificant and neglected. Nevertheless, the definition of community can be viewed from a different perspective. A community refers to a group of residents with a general sense of belonging to a specific area. In contrast, urban community concept is only a partial intersection of numerous interrelationships.**

**3.2. Community Empowerment and Community Planning**

Given the development of capitalism and the advent of the information society, relationships among communities and small societies have been progressively weakened. Regarding welfare evaluations, such evaluations are frequently made from the perspective of an individual, not from that of a group. The satisfaction required for the materialistic and social demands of individuals are frequently obtained via marketing mechanisms or public services, which can increasingly be accomplished without group cooperation. For example, upon discovering a specific corner covered with garbage, the village chief or even ordinary individuals can make a telephone call demanding that environmental protection units resolve this problem. If the community wishes to have a park close to their residences, the community will have no difficulty since it has already been designated in urban planning processes. Furthermore, previous community interest in topics such as kitchen waste, resource recycling, and environmental concerns, have already been implemented by government. Furthermore, as another example, when the public art, which meets the democratic process and erects in numerous urban streets and corners, is criticized, no one can ensure the avoidance of good and bad disputes to the arts which are created through community empowerment processes.

Thus, if the functions of cities and towns (consumer markets, public facilities, and public services) can deal with most problems caused by individual demands, the question of why community empowerment is necessary arises. If the personalities, aesthetics and environmental formation of urban spaces have their own logic for existence, then the question of whether community empowerment becomes an ideological principle rather than a significant meaningful process arises. Answering the above two questions concerns the role and position of community planners. First, community is viewed as "a dynamic system connected via relationships", where "demand" and "scarcity" are both aspects...
of these relationships. Current settlement functions can surely satisfy most demands, but are insufficient to satisfy the aspect of scarcity. For instance, the market functions to satisfy food, clothing, housing, transportation, and entertainment demands, but simultaneously creates a deficient mindset of a consumer society in which only demands can be satisfied via monetary exchanges. Governmental organizations construct roads to satisfy the growth of traffic, but simultaneously continuous land expansion has created environmental deficiencies. Installation of monitors in neighborhoods can provide safety, but simultaneously intensifies the scarcity found in interactive and mutual trust relationships between people.

In summary, regardless of whether community empowerment or community planning, much emphasis have focused on the anthropocentric aspect for over ten years in Taiwan. Even regarding the perspective of environment, the emphasis has been placed on anthropocentric physical spatial environment. Consequently the connections of community relationships are extremely thin and weak. This also explains why community empowerment and community planning lack progressiveness and the ability to reform. Given continuously attention paid to satisfying individual needs, the scarcity dimension of people and other relationships can not be understood. Consequently, the meaning and value of community empowerment lies in making up for or changing deficient relationships. Moreover, the role and mission of community planning is to remind individuals of relationships, providing possible solutions and methods for community empowerment. Restated, community empowerment aims to not only to let residents consider how to convey opinions and express demands to policy makers, but also to act effectively in the face of scarcity. Moreover, community planners should not be defined by meeting the needs of community residents; instead, they should be working on sowing the gap between scarcity relationships, and further guiding toward the implementation of an ideal relationship.

3.3. Role of Community Planner: Providing Context, Collective Governance

Regarding the role of community planners, this work assumes that training plan assignment is intended to provide training for community planners. However, exactly what community planners are must be clarified. Community empowerment and planning are assumed here to be distinct. Community empowerment workers and community planners also have different role assignments. A community planner must possess not only basic knowledge of community empowerment, but also advanced knowledge as well. As mentioned earlier, when the vitality and progressiveness of communities come from the reflections and readjustment due to the scarcity relationships, community empowerment is necessary in unifying the meaning of collectives is not only concerned with how to obtain civicness and solve problems involving participation and empowerment, but must also use internal latent power to move on toward a “good” path. This approach is precisely the role assignment of a community planner. Through this process, the role played by community planners is to provide methods and contexts for moving in this “good” path, and achieve “good” results through collective management with community empowerment.

Restated, professionalism is crucial for community planners. However, “profession” is not a generally acknowledged close system. It is the ability to be creative and to solve problems. Consequently, the training of community planners, with respect to students of space related majors, does not involve “rehearsal” of school courses. Training is also not an intensive learning course for students with unrelated educational backgrounds. The goal is to provide new vision and methods, and also to learn how to improve the world.

4. Matzu: A “Place” from which to See, Know, and Understand the World

4.1. Identity and Less-advanced Advantage in Matzu

Since the 1990s, community empowerment in implementing cultural works in Taiwan has always been considered an important democratic policy. Moreover, this concept has accompanied the political transformations of the country, and encouraged waves of unrest seeking community autonomy. Community empowerment is a new outlook on residents and the place they inhabit, and what it carries out is the writings on local histories and creations of history, to tell the difference between the local place and the nation as a whole, which can further describe features that belong to the self. Restated, the emergence of the “community” concept not only includes the discussed construction of the new relationships between citizens and the country, but also implies an emphasis on “place” under these new relationships.

A place not only describes a specific space, but is also a social construction process social construct. Hence, the uniqueness of spatial description and the affluence of social process are also part of the unique appeal of the place. Accordingly, the uniqueness and affluence of Matzu indicates a “place” where identity is present.

Matzu is located on the western side of the Taiwan Strait. Matzu comprises 36 islands scattered outside the mouth of the Mingjiang River, forming a bright pearl on the ocean. The islands are formed of granite; and their landscape comprises rising and falling hills, and rocky coasts. Remnants of ancient human inhabitants from six thousand years ago, during the Neolithic Age, show that the Fujian tribes in Han Dynasty established an oceanic tribe by traveling far overseas to seek shelter. During the early Ching dynasty, fishermen from eastern Fujian and small numbers of people from Guangdong immigrated in large numbers, constructed buildings from local materials, forming settlements in each bay, and thus establishing the unique settlement seen at Matzu today. However, during the Kuomintang Government retreat from China to Taiwan, Matzu became a military fortress heavily scarred by tunnels, battlements, slogans, artillery batteries, and various battlefield related markings.
zu with a special aura of interwoven life and existence, creating a low-profiled defense feature.

Nevertheless, place is not only the landscape of space, but is also the method and manner of human existence. Place thus is inherent, i.e. the practice of daily life (Cresswell, 2004). Compared with Taiwan, due to special historical chances, Matzu has been relatively untouched by modernization. One the one hand this has meant that Matzu has avoided the creative destruction associated with modernism, thus maintaining relatively rich and holistic spatial resources; on the other, this has meant that Matzu has experienced different life experiences to Taiwan. A meaningful place is not a landscape which observers view from the outside. Rather the meaning of a place is contained in the practice of concrete daily lives, and the provision of different visions for the future to become an organic part of the world (Cresswell, 2004).

From this perspective, Matzu is not an "off-shore island" to Taiwan, but a "place" to see know, and understand the world.

4.2. Place of Living vs. Landscape of Commodification

Giver the policy normalization of community empowerment and the combination of the dimensions of local industries and development, community empowerment has altered from a meaningful process to a formal tool. This change is owing to hastily seeking local characteristics and a community anchoring while unknowingly changing the "place" on which residents depend into "commodities" which only concerns price. According to this logic, community empowerment focuses on outward marketing of this commodity and obtaining increased value by increasing the attraction of unknown others.

This trend undoubtedly reflects the needs for economic development. Some communities actually have created new opportunities by following this route. On the one hand, however, in most situations "places" tend to become others- and consumer-oriented. Furthermore, via the temporary timespace connection, the world is becoming increasingly homogenous. Mobility and demotic culture cause places to become a poor and shallow "landscapes". However, this trend also arouses and creates anxiety because when community empowerment is seen as a tool in the organizational process used to satisfy demand, while the outcomes fail to meet expectations, increased anxiety and fractures can occur, making social relations more problematic and cynical.

This phenomenon has occurred in numerous areas which have experienced community empowerment. However, this dire situation persists most of the time, while the reasons causing the dire situation are neglected. Different communities invariably encounter different problems, and these problems may have different causes. However, if community empowerment increases individual anxiety and suspicions, then for the same reasons, the gap of scarcity is also inevitably increased when paying too much attention to the needs.

Besides creating a need for local autonomy originating from the reflection of political situations, community empowerment has also undergone reflections and repairs regarding the capitalism and industrialization which cause scarcity problems of creating strains on interpersonal relationships and alienation between individuals and other relations. Thus, community empowerment may become an institutional depletion and not a creative participation when it is viewed as a means for achieving needs, and thus against the original spirits.

The reminder of the spirit of community empowerment spirit is especially meaningful as far as Matzu is concerned. The reason is because the spatial shaping and social construction process of Matzu differ from those in Taiwan. From the characteristic fishing village before the start of the cross-strait conflict, to becoming a battlefield, even after returning to a more peaceful state as hostilities died down in 1992, the experiences and issues encountered by Matzu differ significantly from Taiwan. Consequently, failure to carefully distinguish between the two, and blindly copying Taiwan's experiences, concepts, and policies will lead to processes and outcomes that do not reflect the actual needs and scarcity of Matzu and further may cause ossification and increase anxiety. Furthermore, the uniqueness and richness of Matzu will be neglected. Also, the fact that the practice of daily lives is the source of local vitality and meaning will be forgotten as well.

4.3. Mapping the Terrain and Shaping the Place

As mentioned earlier, the unique and rich space possessed by Matzu has constructed a place with strong identity. However, a space has become a place because it not only describes a set of spaces, but it is also the emotional attachment between individuals and the place, and the meaning and experience of the world. Living makes a place alive. If there was no living, a place would only be an empty space lacking vitality. Furthermore, it is the diversity of places that makes the world more meaningful. Hence, viewing the world from a place, a place is merely "a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world" (Cresswell, 2004: 11).

Therefore, before examining the issues of community industries, the response of community empowerment should be the adjustment of the relationships between inhabitants and the land. Restated, community empowerment concerns the relationships between inhabitants and the land, the establishment of Matzu's lifestyle and cultural characteristics through everyday life, and the establishment of their own cultural beliefs. These factors form the foundation that makes Matzu a "place" and further moves toward sustainability. Only in this way can the future of Matzu not be left dependent on unknown, foreign, and illusionary tourists. Only in this way can Matzu invite visitors who respect, favor, and have good intentions on the place, and increasingly invite visitors to return to Matzu, and help Matzu create new memories worth recording.

4.4. Orientation and Goal

According to census figures, the Matzu has a population less than 10,000. Meanwhile, the actual number of long-term island residents is probably even smaller. Recently, along with the changes in the role of Matzu, the island has become a focus for governmental spending.
The implementation of physical construction projects (such as village preservation, townscape renaissance, and off-shore island constructions) or non-physical projects (such as community empowerment, community industries, cultural landscape, and cultural resources) invites increasing working teams with different styles and objectives to participate in the future operation and transfiguration of Matzu. Simultaneously, these projects also encourage numerous communities to join together to actively engage in community activities. How to help the limited population digest these massive resources to assist them in developing identity and value of local living and to move toward sustainability is the main orientation and goal of community empowerment center.

Community empowerment is a long and slow process, and must be accumulated, introspected and emended consistently. Regarding our understanding of Matzu, introspection regarding community empowerment, knowledge of methods of "place" construction, and the acknowledgement of the orientation of community empowerment center, we propose that the goal of community empowerment become a continuous process dividing into short term (3-5 years) and long term (5-10 years). Based on these goals and through a step-by-step process, it is hoped that Matzu can become a meaningful, charismatic and sustainable "place".

4.4.1. Short-term Goals

4.4.1.1. Mapping the Appearance of the Place

The meaning of "place" exists in spatial memories, life trajectory, and all aspects of living. This study aims to assist inhabitants via different methods such as: verbal, pictorial and objective descriptions to portray the true essence of Matzu.

4.4.1.2. Constructing Internal Confidence

The attraction of a place derives not only from the perception of unique aesthetics of spatial landscape. What really attracts individuals is how inhabitants of a place interact with the environment and develop their own logic and value system, which differs from the drive towards homogeneity associated with globalization. Construction of such internal confidence is the most valued and important structure of a place.

4.4.1.3. Developing Living Aesthetics

The development of living aesthetics results from the establishment of cultural customs. However, such cultural customs, similar to living habits, form an integral part of daily life, and do not need to go through strict aesthetic training or a display of a form of performance. The cultivation of such aesthetic ability and experience represents the most effective means of achieving publicity.

4.4.1.4. Establishing Partnership Relations

Regarding the division of the administrative boundary, the four townships on Matzu are distributed on five different islets; and these townships on the separate islets are further divided into different communities. In fact, the relationships among ecology, society, and economy are extremely high in an unique island setting such as Matzu. Thus, forming supportive networks with neighboring communities and partnership relations among island communities through conversations and interactions, while sharing collectively and undertaking tasks together, can shape a common sense of place, and further enable collaboration to replace competition.

4.4.2. Long-term Goals

4.4.2.1. Shaping Local Charming, Developing Experience Economy

Short-term goals provide the bedrock for long-term goals. The short-term goals mentioned above provide foundations for constructing a place's attractiveness. These foundations are irreplaceable and unforgettable elements for developing experience economy such as tourist backpackers, long-stay, spiritual industries, and art villages.

In short, Matzu has the best potential and development conditions comparing to Taiwan.

4.4.2.2 Benevolent Environmental Protection, Promoting Sustainability

Given global warming trends, the threat of rising sea levels is real. However, with respect to Matzu, which lies within the Taiwan Strait, is one of the first to face this challenge Matzu stands to be one of the first places in the world to face this challenge. Thus, Matzu faces a major crisis. The best approach is to be responsible and provide environmental protection, while practicing community empowerment and carrying out regional operations to stop global warming from community levels.

5. Possible Way-out: Facing Globalization: Re-emphasizing "Place"

Global Economic reconstruction during the 1970's influenced geographical spaces in two important ways:

(1) It promoted new spatial division effect and inter-city competition pressure. Numerous old industrial villages adopted enterprise management methods in response to the economic demands associated with the impact of de-industrialization.

(2) Given the time-space compression, capital flow becomes significantly transnational and rapid changes and interlocking of environmental problems were created in cities. Cities thus must adopt a management style based on sustainability. Furthermore, co-construct boomtowns were established following the integration of entrepreneur cities to form regeneration policies. Based on the political economy of modern liberalism, combining the two main themes can be viewed as occasionally resulting from capital accumulation during post-industrialization. Although the de-industrialization impact differs from the experience of capitalism in western cities, it is gradually appearing in the management of cities in Taiwan.
Furthermore, due to its developmental history and the political effects caused by geopolitics of the two-party systems, Taiwan has developed entrepreneur cities based on sustainable development, which have induced regional governance facing numerous unstable factors and potential conflicts.

Based on the perspectives of accumulating and controlling resources, the core-peripheral gaps are expanding with respect to globalization. This same phenomenon occurs in Taiwan's history of city transformation. Nevertheless, societies do not submit to the structural dominance compositions. Globalization results from various processes and has effects that are simultaneously separated and unified. Globalization has created new methods of stratification, and frequently causes different outcomes in numerous different communities or areas. Globalization may cause the destruction of local activities, but those who are affected are likely to reflect upon these situations and reorganize their thoughts. Globalization thus has created an increased emphasis on place worldwide.

However, the core concept of community empowerment in the face of globalization is "participation", which includes both method and ideology. Regarding method, participation is a process. Participation enables citizens to resolve their uncertainty regarding the future of society; furthermore, increased participation can lead to self-governance. Regarding ideology, participation is a belief. Participation stresses that self-determination is a human right that can create better cities and a better world (Ogilvie, 1999).

If community empowerment under the trend of globalization is viewed as a community movement, then the description should be focused on explaining constructs rather than activity objectives. As a form of community participation, community empowerment is the continuity of social relationships. However, the creative power possessed by community empowerment is visible in its public acceptance, which can be verified by participation and self-determination.

Increased participation can lead to self-governance. Regarding ideology, participation is a belief. Participation stresses that self-determination is a human right that can create better cities and a better world (Ogilvie, 1999).
a military and naval base, and as a hospital. The Hospitaller and British experience have both underscored one simple reality: that insularity is not synonymous either to isolation or to remoteness.

With long-term historical developments, like the spectacular progress in science and technology, the stunning revolution in the means of transport and communication, and the powerful process of globalization, most of the features which had historically marked Mediterranean islands, have either disappeared altogether, or their impact on the insular indigenous population subdued, rendering the effect completely or almost completely innocuous. But others have been frustratingly exacerbated. In the sixteenth-century Mediterranean, piracy or the fear of pirates had rendered everyday life on most of the islands ‘withdrawn and insecure’. Today, in other seas, on oceanic highways, this same phenomenon has re-emerged in all its force and it would not be very surprising to see it reappearing also in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, several Mediterranean islands are today re-enacting one of the traditional roles they had for long experienced during their historical evolution – that of providing what Braudel called ‘a convenient stopping place’, not, this time, for ‘Christian pirate vessels’ as they did in the sixteenth century, but for boats transporting loads of what is being termed ‘irregular’ or ‘illega’ or migrants. Masses of inhabitants, from all quarter of the African continent sail out, generally from different points on the North African coast, in search of a better, safer, healthier future in Europe.

Numbers alone are piercingly vociferous. It has recently been claimed that around a million people in Libya today are looking forward impatiently for their first opportunity to take their ill-fated journey to hopeful Europe. From January to mid-August this year, thousands of irregular migrants have swamped the islands of Malta and Lampedusa in the central Mediterranean and the Spanish Canary Islands in the Atlantic. Others have followed other routes. To cite a few illustrative figures, 1000 had land in one several Malta’s bays. About 200 boats with over 12500 people had landed on Lampedusa. At one point ‘no fewer than 15 boats, with over 400 immigrants, landed on the tiny Italian island in 24 hours, at the ferocious rate of three minutes’. Over 22000 reached Los Cristianos and other ports on Spain’s Canary Island of Tenerife. On 7 September alone, some 900 landed there. Most of the crossings are made in old fishing boats, or small, flimsy rubber dinghies, packed with irregular immigrants. With sudden jerk or jolt from anyone on board, they often overturn and sink. These are tragic occurrences that are becoming too catastrophically regular. Corpses of young Africans, recovered from the Mediterranean, including those babies who die of too much exposure to the elements and for shortage of food and drink, are dreadfully common sights on our TV screens and in daily newspapers.

Islands, like Malta, Tenerife, and Lampedusa, and the several Greek islands in the eastern Mediterranean, are gateways to Europe for irregular migrants and genuine refugees, the first stages they normally reach, offering them a breathing space, indeed a ray of hope, if they are fortunate enough to survive the grave perils and insensitive obstinacy of the sea and wind ‘when both contend which is the mightier’. Rarely, however, are such islands their promised desired destinations. Instead of being forcedly repelled away from our shores, as used to happen in the past for fear of their piratical intentions, they are now for humanitarian reasons offered a temporary sojourn. Once these boat people have reached the safety of the sheltered shores alive, they are temporarily taken to detention centers. About 1500 are currently held in detention centres on Malta. A centre built for 190 people on Lampedusa hosts an estimated 400. such centers offer irregular immigrants a safe roof over their heads, food, and drink, clothing and reasonably respectable sanitary conditions – a modicum of human warmth and reassurance. They also offer the rest of the insular population protection from the potential spread of contagion which these immigrants could be unwittingly carrying with them. This is the least civilized societies can offer by way of introduction – a taste of decency and civility, a feeling of Christian graciousness and consideration. There have even been suggestions in the local press in Malta to convert certain monasteries and convents, left half-empty by the decline in Catholic vocations on the island, into centers like these to acco-

mmodate hundreds of irregular migrants fairly comfortably. But the steady, uninterrupted flow of these people and the very limited space available on tiny Malta which, unlike Tenerife or Lampedusa, Sicily or Crete, cannot resort to an own mainland, to an ‘off-shore’ refuge, place the State in a similar predicament. With only some 314 square kilometers of land lying at the southernmost border of the EU, Malta is the smallest of all EU member States and the most densely populated. Yet, as a civilized state, it is, like all the others, aware that ‘humaneness should never be denied’. The authorities are also conscious, and here lies the dilemma, that either should these people be allowed to have their aspirations dashed, callously and ruthlessly. These rightly or wrongly, had given their precious little all in the hope of reaching their promised land.

The experience of Malta in this field is vast, direct, and immediate. The island enjoys domestic stability, political and economic. Within the wider international context, it enjoys equal freedom from any threatening forces. But the immediate neighborhood can create unpleasant conditions, potentially promoting instability in all spheres. The events concerning the massive flow of irregular migrations and the fact that this is allowed to develop into a consistent trend underscore a number of social realities – several and diverse. As has already been indicated, logistics, or the mere force of numbers, and the lack of adequate and decent space, is
a serious one indeed. Cultural and linguistic differences; the method of their identification; and the impact on the economy of such heavy unexpected incursions unilaterally flooding into the island, are a few others. The enormous scale of the crisis sharply highlights another element that looks and sounds very familiar to historians of medieval and early modern Malta — on vividly recalling the island's utter dependence in the distant past on outside help. And the consequences are growing more unpleasant than that. The problem is creating tensions. Inhumanely and unchristian though this may sound, sectors of the population on Malta, as on other islands, are beginning to consider irregular immigrants worse than unwanted guests, than intruders. They are not welcome; they are unwanted. Their presence tends to promote a dangerous element of racial discrimination and hatred within sectors of society. The problem this phenomenon is currently creating belongs only in part to Spain and Italy, to Malta and Greece. It is quintessentially a European problem of gargantuan proportions, and as such it compellingly demands a collective European approach, a holistic effort to arrive at a common long-term solution based on 'active solidarity'.

On August 11 2006, to curb the influx of irregular migrants into Europe, the EU launched its first joint border patrol mission, the Hera-II. A budget of €3.2 million would go to finance the exercise of patrolling the Canaries Islands. Coordinated by the EU border agency Frontex, the Hera-II mission involves two naval vessels from Italy and Portugal in a joint operation off the Canaries, supported by military planes from Italy and Finland for aerial surveillance, and by Spanish military vessels and helicopters. The launch of Hera-II has been defined as 'a historic...a very tangible expression of EU solidarity amongst member states. A similar mission, Jason I, should commence shortly in the central Mediterranean to help Malta and Italy address efficiently and effectively their specific migration pressures. The philosophy inspiring such policy, it has been pointed out, is not the desire to build a 'fortress Europe'. Rather, such joint measures are prompt by genuine humanitarian and Christian motives — to save hundreds of lives at sea, to reduce irregular immigration, and to combat the rapidly increasing traffic in human beings.

The success and impact of such missions can only be gauged over the long term. It cannot be expected that irregular migration would grind to a halt, suddenly, overnight, simply because Hera-II and Jason-I have been launched. In fact, notwithstanding Hera-II, notwithstanding the cooperation of Morocco and Mauritania in that exercise, thousands of irregular immigrants are still inundating Tenerife, to extent that Spain has decided to change its approach to the problem. Once caught in Spanish territorial waters or on Spanish land, all migrants would be repatriated. One thousand Senegalese were the first to suffer the consequences of this decision. If most of the irregular migrants appear to proceed from various points on the immensely vast Libyan coast (some 6000 kilometers long), then, to be effective and to save lives, the patrols should act in harmony with Libya. Already a transit country in need of help, Libya has now, it would appear, agreed to collaborate with the EU in this monitoring activity.

The proscribed intention of the overall policy is, do doubt, to have such patrols act as a deterrent, to scare irregular migrants away. The missions will succeed if this aim is realized and lives are saved. Loss of life resulting from human trafficking is not only a tragedy. It is a crime. Such tragedies and such crimes will multiply if no immediate practical solution is found to dismantle the criminal organizations in human beings, like traffic in drugs, involves ruthless criminals and substantial amount of illegitimate gains and profits. Thousands of dollars are paid for an ill-fated journey from Libya to the first European island. Italy has recently set up (or is about to set up) two task forces to combat traffic in irregular migrants on a pattern similar to units investigating the Mafia and terrorism. There is the fear that these joint humanitarian operations policing the Mediterranean might very well encourage armed conflict at sea in response not much unlike privacy in early modern times. Monitoring the seas and the sighting of these well-armed and well-equipped naval forces, by small dinghies or wooden fishing boats, hardly ten meters long, wobbly and overloaded, may also, as has already happened, cause the poor people on board to react instinctively, to panic, to move, for example abruptly to one side, and the boat to capsize and sink.

The EU surveillance missions, however, pose a few intriguing questions. First, once the patrol ships and helicopters intercept an immigrant boat, what method would be employed to redirect it to its territorial point of origin? Would the use of force be allowed if these patrols encounter resistance as they almost certainly would? Secondly, would such operations negate some of these incisive, less severe, and less pungent. No military equipment, however sophisticated, and no form of compulsion, however subtle, will ever succeed in stopping it. Libya can do more in this field, by endeavoring, to cite two instances, to act in a more practical way 'as a regional hub of socially innovative technology' — to export its expertise in the 'desalination of water', and in 'developing and sharing' its expertise in 'coastal management'.

The second reason is that Brussels has taken too long immigrants their right to seek asylum, even though these are very likely in a tiny minority? Unfortunately, the current solution appears somewhat short-sighted and superficial. And this for two major reasons. First, it fails to reach the roots of the problem. What is driving huge numbers of Africans out of their country is simply abject African poverty, miserable inhuman conditions at home, dismal prospects which do not inspire hope or aspiration. To endeavor to eradicate poverty in all its expressions and manifestations is the first logical step. Only that will start making the sharp and enticing contrast with Europe less incisive, less severe, and less real to realize that to stop irregular migration is one problem; to have irregular immigrants deported is another; and to stem the entire trend altogether is a third. Now, Brussels appears to have understood that none of these problems can succeed without Libya's cooperation. Europe should encourage Libya to participate in and to contribute to its programmes. To do this, Libya needs Europe's help. To be able to control its long Mediterranean coast and its southern frontier, to prevent potential migrants, to enter its sub-Saharan flank (Nigeria.
is one example) and from leaving its endless shores illegally, Libya needs Europe's expertise and sophisticated equipment. The North African country requires 'resources, machines, technology, [and] vehicles'. What should be avoided, however, is to allow Libya's participation, its contribution, to be defined simply as a business transaction. By helping to control its northern and southern flanks, Libya would not be providing 'a service for others'. Illegal emigration and immigration are both threats to national sovereignty - both Libya's and Europe's. The quintessence of the whole solution is a healthy multinational relationship, a determined cooperation to avoid the loss of precious life and stem criminality. No state should be allowed to exploit the issue for ulterior motives. Within the context of the phenomenon of irregular migration, certain Mediterranean islands have lost, they have indeed shed, their proverbial historical marginality and assumed a centrality, albeit perhaps a negative one, that has gained them the highest priority on the EU agenda.

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Les Gonaives, the City of Doom

A few years ago, Les Gonaives was first submerged by the fury of an angry hurricane. A group of Haitian poets each wrote a poem for the injured city.

One of them wrote: 'Earth, our Earth, our cities and villages under the load of waters...and this rain...not the one that please gardens, refreshing the soil such a promise given to the forthcoming flowers - not that one - but pure violence that sweeps away, drowns, kills...' 

Last September three hurricanes hit again, almost simultaneously, Les Gonaives located on the north-west of the island. One was not sufficient. The city was hit harder than ever; most of the casualties came from there. Will there be any poet to lament the victims, the drowned children?

The images that we have received from our friends in Haiti are scarcely bearable. One could say that the disaster was foreseeable, that what happened could happen again if the conditions at source remain the same. In fact, they are still the same - deforested hills,
ravaged soils and degraded habitats, insufficient risk prevention services and so on.

Why so? The time for questioning will come later. Today it is time for solidarity. The calls for solidarity stemming from the authorities and from other sectors and involved parties should be listened to, such as the Ebenzer Mission headed by Pastor Michel Morizet or Medecins sans frontieres, fighting presently in Les Gonaives to bring relief to survivors having lost their few belongings, shelter, furnitures, clothing and often their loved ones. Those calls should be heeded, because the Haitian deaths, missing children, are part of us, of all of us, islanders or not.

The needed mobilization should not be limited to bare gifts. Of course, money, goods and supplies are needed urgently. But also time should be dedicated and words. Ideas and actions should also be invented to fully express solidarity.

There are many ways to express solidarity. Only indifference and uncorcern can bridle inventiveness and imagination in the creation of dynamic solidarity networks. Everybody should join it, including youth, children and their educators. Young people can be made aware that everywhere disasters can strike our homes and families, wherever we might live. It is also important that the youngsters and people of Haiti know that friends from many other countries and islands consider Les Gonaives as their own stressed home.

Recalling the old adage, a country is also what it is able to do in response to the catastrophies that strike. A great deal, a very great deal, if solidarity and friends step in and join hands in support.

Fishermen houses distinguish each one from the other by their bright colors offering the unique profile of an architecture which fits extraordinarily with the Mediterranean vegetation and the deep blue of the gulf of Naples.

Procida is the smallest of three islands, perhaps lesser known than its sisters Capri and Ischia, but endowed with an outstanding natural and cultural heritage. A heritage that is worthy of be better known and cherished and more so to be lived as integral part of the citizen's social identity.

The Italian NGO "Cantiere Giovani" (youth workshop) has chosen to apply in Procida its innovative methodology and contribute to enhance the island's heritage organizing last September an international workcamp, sponsored by the Campania regional authorities ,hosting young people from all over the world in the frame of a project aiming at the environmental and cultural rehabilitation of an important heritage item of the island. The subject matter for these youths coming from Germany, Ukraine, Japan, Czech Republic, U.S., South Korea, and Slovenia, together with volunteers from Italy and Morocco was to build and organize a library in the ancient Villa Scotto-Pagliaro to be put at the disposal of all citizens.

Procida : International Youth Working At the Promotion of the Island Environment

By Mario Lupoli (contact cantieregiovaniؤول@gmail.com)

This historical mansion is by the way the head quarters to The Association Vivara-Small Island Friends, of course partner in the Cantiere-Giovani initiative. The Cantiere-Giovani initiative in Procida is part of its national and international social-promotion policy implemented with due attention to all its environmental and cultural components. A successful methodology, indeed. A blend of local and international actions based on the principle that the cultural and geographic origin diversity of
Youth, Challenges

Education in Islands: Hardships and challenges

By Jenny Marday

Education particularly in Small Islands is not always an easy challenge for pupils and teachers to overcome. Despite being scattered around the world, the small islands face often similar problems of educating their youth. The reasons may depend in fact on the patterns of traditional life which still characterise many small islands. Their social and economic welfare or what is the most closest to that concept originates from the traditional use of land and marine resources. Children have always participated to the related tasks since their early childhood. Girls are usually needed to work in the market gardens and the boys are expected to go out to sea and catch fish with their elders. For the parents, the most pressing concern is not whether a child can read or write but where the next meal is coming from.

On the other hand the children are tuned to their traditional life with their backs on school, and a glance at some of the textbooks is enough to understand why. Illustrations of children gathered around a birthday cake covered in candles may be in no relation to their islands reality. The school teachers are obliged to play a difficult role of mediator between two visions of life and are unable to give these young people neither any support in their pursuit of knowledge and identity nor any footholds in their quest in mastering reading and writing.

The four experiences
Child Friendly Schools or gud fella frenly skul opened in Vanuatu.

In the Tafea Province on the island of Tanna, Vanuatu, in the South Pacific Ocean the formerly drab, sterile school buildings have been turned into brightly coloured, dynamic classrooms filled with books, activity stations and enchanting pictures. Little Davilla who only a few months back resented the idea of going to school now is struggling not to leave the classroom once the school day is over.

Tanna, Vanuatu, 15 May 2008, Davilla wakes up everyday before dawn to get ready for school, reading over her lessons as she packs her bag. For this sixth grader learning is fun “I love school especially English,” she says.

Davilla lives with her five brothers and sisters in the Province of Tafea in Vanuatu. Her mother stays at home and her father is a fisherman.

which have been brought forward by UNICEF certainly deserved further attention.

Danette in the Island of Rodrigues received training from BEFA to make a fresh start in life; Child friendly schools opened in Vanuatu; Pink elephants and marbles energize education in Indonesia and in PNG, Girls are fighting for their rights to go to school.

Danette in the Island of Rodrigues receive training from BEFA to make a fresh start in life.

Rodrigues, an island located 574 km east of Mauritius is one among many islands around the world where the early years of primary school can be a scary affair. For one thing, the environment is not home; well the teacher is certainly not their mum or dad and the only thing the pupils have in mind is to go home. Danette who is now an adolescent of 17 was a victim of the above dilemmas, failed the end of the primary education twice (CPE) despite spending six years in primary school. She was unable to read or write and found herself at home all day with few prospects. Danette was isolated from the rest of her peers and had no friends in her neighbourhood.

But one day Danette heard about BEFA (Basic Education for Adolescents) which was initiated by the Rodriguez administration with the technical and financial support of UNICEF. Initially, she attended BEFA classes for three hours a week in a small room in a trainer’s house afterwards when the BEFA centres were opened she went regularly. And not only did she acquire knowledge but she was also gaining values and skills that would serve as a foundation for life long learning.

The second phase of the BEFA project was a Professional Integration Programme aimed at encouraging young adolescents to discover their professional interests.

Danette’s dream was to become a car mechanic despite the fact that in Rodrigues, this was exclusively a boys’ domain. Her dream became true when her request to spend three months in a garage was approved. Danette now has a clear vision of her future career in Rodrigues.
For most children coming from poor families quality education is all too often out of reach. Schools do not provide enough classroom and the teachers are not properly trained. But things are now changing with the concept “From Drap to Dynamic” child friendly schools. This pilot project is putting strong emphasis on teacher training because teachers are the key to making the school a rich place for learning. The workshops helped them to examine their own ways of teaching and revisiting how children can learn in an interesting environment. In addition to that the Parents and elders are helping the community to create child friendly schools. Davilla most often stays at school late with the other kids to help the teachers to put up pictures to create a subject corner. And this initiative has been adopted by Solomon Islands who have started implementing the Child Friendly School Project.

Pink Elephants and Marbles Energize Education in Indonesia

“Assalamu’alalum”, in the most gracious name of god says a sweet little voice on the 97 FM, MBS radio. Here are today’s stories about the adventures of the Pink elephant and his friends the cats for the pupils at Kalisari elementary school, in Indonesia.

Betti, has been selected to read out stories on air, in addition to that school assignments are read out class by class reaching all radios within a two kilometre radius and all but three of the student’s homes. Although the land around Kalisari is fertile, the area in the Banyumas district remains extremely poor. Betti often goes to the fields to help her parents. According to the school officials 70% of the families survive from farm labour and small home industries. The broadcast is deliberately timed to reach homes in the mid afternoon so that parents would be encouraged to allow their children to return from the fields three hours before sunset to do their homework.

And at Karanglo elementary school, just north of Purwokero, the educational theories behind active, joyful and effective learning are put into practice, Yulia another little girl says that” Before it was so boring just sitting there every only listening to the teacher talk, now we are much encouraged to ask our questions, our teacher guides and assists us but we do the work.

Magazines hang from the outside walls of the classrooms and administration buildings, which are arranged in a horseshoe around a central volleyball and basketball court. The Students and teachers, and everyone is happy”.

But back at the MBS Radio, the tale of the pink elephant is winding up and Novii is getting ready to read the afternoon’s homework assignments. I want to be a journalist so this is very good practice for me. My mother is very proud to hear my voice on radio.

Yearning to learn in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is known to be a richly diverse country and its rapidly developing society. While in the cities a number of educated people lead sophisticated middle class lifestyles while, many rural people survive as traditional subsistence farmers. Poor families lack the money to pay for their children’s school fees. As a result school enrolment is the lowest and the gender gap in primary school is the highest in the region.

In the Kundiawa District, Chiubutu Province, Papua New Guinea, Susannah at the age of ten had to drop out of school and help her family on the family coffee plot. Susannah says that her parents told her that they could only afford to keep her older brother and sister at the boarding school where they are now studying. Her older sister is in grade 11 and her brother is in grade 10. Their fees are a total of 2000 kina per year, including her uniform it would have cost an extra 200 Kinato let Susannah stay in school.

But Susannah smiles shyly when she passes her friends dressed in their uniforms walking home from school as she returns from five hours of hand picking tiny red coffee beans from bushes, which she holds in a basket. By contrast, her friends dressed in their uniforms are carrying books.

“I feel very sad that I can’t go to school”, says Susannah in Melpa, the local language “I used to like reading and writing so much”.

Susannah is one girl representing many who face the same issues in PNG. As financial difficulty is increasing many parents are asking whether it is worth sending their children to schools but things are changing thanks to the School Fees Akepile (Akepile means to assist) which gets the whole community to contribute to pay the fees for all of the children of the village. This way forward is interesting as little by little things are changing for the best in Papua New Guinea.
Volcanoes, Landscapes and Cultures
First World Conference
Catania 11 - 14 November 2009

Insula, the International Scientific Council for Island Development, contributes to the organization of the First World Conference on "Volcanoes, Landscapes and Cultures", under the auspices of UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Italian government, and in partnership with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MaB), the Sicilian Regional Government, the University of Catania, the Etna Regional Park Authority, and other relevant organizations, such as IAVE the European Association of Volcanology.

The Conference, the first of its kind, will address from a holistic and multidisciplinary point of view the core aspects of the ages-old relationships between humankind, the volcanic landscapes, and the obscure turulences of the mineral world.

Participants from all geographical and professional horizons are invited to share traditions, knowledge and experiences, and uncover together promising areas for innovation and peaceful development of volcanic territories.

The meeting finally aims at the creation of a permanent "on line" platform, in order to foster an intercontinental dialogue and knowledge exchanges, provisionally called "the House of Volcanoes".

The venue will take place in Catania (Sicily), at Mount Etna's slopes from 11 to 14 November 2009.

For more information, visit the website of the Conference: www.etnacatania2009.com

To contact us, please mail to: conf-volcano@etnacatania2009.com

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- Etc...

Nature and Culture
- Parks, Protected Areas, Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO's World Heritage, Territorial and Landscape Management, Geo-Parks
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- Myths and Societies
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Sicily Welcomes You!
Insula’s Guest

Interview with Her Excellency, Mrs Laura Faxas, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic to Unesco.

INSULA: Tourism is supposed to be a reliable source of income in most of the Caribbean islands. A simple look on the statistics confirms this estimation. Tourism is seen everywhere on the first rank or in the first three ranks in the composition of the PNB. As an industry, tourism is considered as an important source of jobs creation, as a dynamic factor to stimulate the economy and the modernization of the Caribbean industries through the provision of infrastructures by the State or by the private sector.

According to the figures of the Dominican Central Bank, tourism brings more than 1 Billion of US Dollars each year in comparison to the important source of revenue represented by the remittances from the Dominican emigrants attaining some 1500 Millions US Dollars per year. In addition to that, tourism creates more jobs than agriculture. In 2007 the number of tourists reaching the Dominican Republic by air neared the 4.5 Millions. Notwithstanding these figures, a paradox, the type of tourism prevailing in the Caribbean, despite its role and impact over the economy, is not a totally reliable source of income, as it depends on many elements uncontrolled by the Countries.

The tourism sector can in fact be easily affected by external factors such as economic or political crisis in the countries at the origin of the travellers, or more close by climatic accidents such as hurricanes and tropical storms.

The Strong competition among destinations offering similar touristic products, or oil prices increase can also disturb the tourism sector’s profitability. In addition to the above, internal factors such as the national social landscape affecting the security of the citizen or the quality of the services offered should not be neglected, as they contribute to the uncertainties of the tourism industry dynamics.

An acceptable balanced progress of the tourism sector in a sustainable perspective can be envisaged only taking into account the deep social transformations tied to the structural changes of the Caribbean economies shifting during the eighties from an economy of agro-export towards service industries, a process which was at the origin of years of social adjustments.

The crisis of the agro-export based on the extensive plantations of sugar, coffee or cacao has in fact oriented most of the Caribbean countries towards a services grounded economy, tourism in particular together with the assembling industries operating within the so called free-trade areas or “Zonas francas and Maquilas” They moved thus from an economy based on the creation of wealth, where the government played a major role to an economy based on services, where the private sector, mainly in the hands of foreigners plays the main role.

INSULA: We understand from the above considerations that the tourist industry is largely in the hands of international companies and investors; a situation that opposes expatriates occupying the most profitable working positions, to local workers entrusted with ancillary low paid tasks, is it the case? Can social conflicts be expected?

H.E. L. FAXAS: In a general way, being a sociologist I wouldn’t like to play the role of a prophetess .I am moreover very much aware of the complexity of social processes. A forecast based on an automatic link between an objective situation of socio-economic inequality and the start of social conflicts has never been proved. The resilience though time of several authoritarian regimes has historically depicted such evidence. As a general rule you are nevertheless right in observing that the touristic resorts in the Caribbean are mostly in the property of international companies while the national capital in the sector is constantly weaker. A reality which influences obviously the labor market.

For the sake of our analysis, to make a step further, we may split your question in two parts. On one side let’s consider the situation of national while collars and the possibility for them to reach higher responsibilities. On the other side let’s examine the situation of the labor force according to less qualified employments. The latter get jobs such as maids, gardeners, drivers, security guards and maîtres de maison. The national white collars, at least in the Dominican Republic, have few chances to reach important positions as these posts are reserved to foreigners, in particular from Spain. This gives a hint about the weight of Spanish investments in our Country.

It is therefore difficult to speak about competition for management level posts among nationals and foreigners. Such competition is in fact almost nonexistent. Of course the present situation has brought forth indeed a national debate on the working conditions and the wages of the locals dedicated to ancillary tasks. A debate leading to strong critiques on the limits of a tourist paradise.

INSULA: Tourism patterns are however changing world wide, travellers are more and more attracted by the natural and cultural features of the visited countries. Such a nature and culture friendly trend will obviously change the investment and management structure of the international Tourism Industry. The consequences of such trends may also affect the patterns of the tourist offer in the concerned countries. How is this matter advised in the Dominican Republic?

H.E. L. FAXAS: Tourism is an important source of income and our economies are not ready to bypass it. Of course we have to face the major challenge of introducing a viable strategy leading to sustainable tourism patterns taking in account, in the long term, all social components and environment protection needs. We have to take carefull measures, focussing on diversification and competitiveness so that local investors would not take risks in venturing in the tourism industry as this would have a significant impact on the national economies. Till now each foreign Dollar invested in the tourism sector,yield very little and leaves only a few cents to the hosting Country.

Effective policy formulation mechanisms need to be fostered to encourage the active participation from all sectors of the national Community in the achievement of shared objectives. Government has realized indeed that the undertaking of sustainable initiatives depends on the mobilisation of the private and the public sector together.

With the increasing competition for the tourism pie, especially on Islands,a long term strategy which takes in account the community needs,within a holistic framework for development is more than essential. The Dominican Republic is therefore actively engaged in promoting ways to reconcile the need for overpassing the standardized all-inclusive touristic resort operations, while proposing incentives to innovation and diversification.

All sectors of our society are thus called to participate to such a dynamic move,in particular the younger generations. It is amazing to observe how largely the encounter with cultivated travellers has contributed to their educational and cultural progress.

We shall promote this trend. After all, in our globalizing world, the very yeast for a sustainable future is youth.

H.E. L. FAXAS: The Dominican Authorities, aware of this reality have already taken in consideration the development of a quality offer, beyond the traditional ‘‘Sun and Beach’’ and wish to face the challenges represented by the trends you are talking about. At this present time our Minister of Culture, Mrs. Laura Faxas, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic to Unesco, has decided to step up the issue of diversification of tourism and to make this offer more attractive and competitive as regards the other Caribbean Islands.

REFERENCE: Ambassador Mrs Laura FAXAS, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic to Unesco, San Francisco, Mrs. FAXAS, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic to Unesco, San Francisco, Mrs. FAXAS, Permanent Delegate of the Dominican Republic to Unesco, San Francisco.
Book Review

Iles et energies : un paysage de contrastes

Collective publication coordinated by Gilles Guerassimof and Nadia Matzi

Fragile and vulnerable territories, the islands, on the one side, on the other a core issue of the debate on climate change, the energy and finally a question mark: how to concile both aspects?

To provide an answer is the challenge confronted by this collective work proposed by 20 engineers and managers taking part in the OSE specialization master course on energy engineering and management of the prestigious “Ecole des mines” in Paris.

Though this collection of texts, the authors drive us beyond the usually admitted opinions offering an updated insight on the multifaceted relations among energy and islands.

The readers will discover the islands through their energy management, their energy resources and potentials, their electricity production and distribution patterns, the adapted technologies and finally the policies implemented to face the local energy demand.

This volume offers not only a way to understand island’s diversity but, through the considerable quality of the documents presented, the result of the analytic tools adopted. It represents positively a consistent professional reference.

OSE: Research group of the Center of Applied Mathematics of the Paris “Ecole des mines”.


Island Sustainability... Challenges and Opportunities for Okinawa and Other Pacific Islands in a Globalized World

By Hiroshi Kakazu

"Wherever I am thrown, I stand on my own will »

Surprisingly enough, this old motto of the Isle of Man in the British Isles becomes a sort of paradigmatic key that the author of this volume offers us in order to facilitate our sailing among the ambiguities and contradictions hiding in between the concepts and the realities of what is usually called Sustainable Development.

Investigating islands, Hiroshi Kakazu is congesting professional experience notices of course, that sustainability is less the result of less framed policies then the outcome of events appearing at random outside or inside the islands geographical space. To turn hazards in opportunities is a quality shared by the islanders all over the world. This is the reason why Kakazu recalls the Manx motto. This is the reason why the author pursues in the present volume his questioning of the principles ruling the nonlinear processes which characterize island trajectories in a world that is familiar to him, the East-Asia and Pacific archipelagos.

He adopts a see-saw methodological notion confronting figures and facts from his native island Okinawa, with figures and facts from the Pacific. Professor Kakazu costs an attentive glance over that changing world and an eye on what is named Globalization, with its positive and negative connotations.

The socio-economic issues are the main focus of professor Kakazu’s considerations pursued with what may be called “enlightened optimism”, meaning essentially that all problems could be solved by reason. A perspective due to the professional bias of a brilliant economist. But there is more. There is a deep understanding of the complexities of island societies together with a keen consciousness that general reliable models for sustainable island development are still not a hand while the best available policy mix for each single island economy cannot be found without addressing interrelated issues, such as possible changes in technology, demographics and decision making processes at all levels. A honest and genuine approach which makes this book worth reading.

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