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'SAME SAME, BUT DIFFERENT': AN INQUIRY INTO PARADISE IMAGERY OF TOURISM INDUSTRY AND TOURIST PRACTICES

Abstract: Image of the 'paradise' is a conventional icon of mass tourism industry and is most often represented as a solitary tropical island with palm trees, beaches and the like. However, this symbol has been represented in many other contexts, not only in advertising of island tourism. As such, it has developed into a world-wide symbol, to which different emphasis and meanings have been attached, depending on types and goals of individual cultural production or meaning. With different implications of 'the paradise' in mind, I will try to systematize its actualizations and rethink its power and value in contemporary tourist practices of Western backpackers and travellers in postcolonial worlds.

Key words: paradise image, tourism, post colony, tropics, island, beach, Sri Lanka, backpackers.

Introduction

The article's main title phrase '*same same, but different*' is a famous expression of Thai English (i.e. *Tinglish*), which briefly means 'similar, but different in some ways'. In the present article, I will use it as a metaphor for describing transplantation of the paradise imagery from one context to another, but I am also interested in literal sense of this phrase. I understand 'the paradise' as a homogenous symbol, which is 'the same' in its basic meaning, but actualized 'differently' in various contexts, such as art, advertisements, music tunes, movies, travel guides, particular geographical places like e.g. tropical islands, beaches, restaurants, cocktail bars, and, last but not least, in context of backpackers' and travelers' practices.

Although at least the '*same same*' part of the phrase can also be heard in conversations with Sinhalese people in Sri Lanka (i.e. *Singlish*, or Sinhala English), I most often heard it from backpackers and travelers, when they jokingly imitated English spoken in Asian countries. It indeed probably became popular through conversations between the Thai locals and tourists, then spread to other English speaking Westerners through different jokes in new media and in other Asian tourist settings. Misuse of English phrases in different countries and cases sometimes completely changes their meaning,[1] and this phrase especially seems witty in itself to English speakers, probably because it can be

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1   See one of the collections of so called *Engrish* (which originates from misuses of English in Japan, but the term refers to all such examples) on different signs, instructions, menus, anime translations, bags, in naming drinks, household items, etc. on: http://www.engrish.com (accessed 15. February 2012).

somehow understood in terms of 'equality and difference' discourse, perhaps in the context of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism that is a popular ideal among backpackers and travelers. However, the phrase is useful in other contexts as well. It can e.g. mean that the thing in question is not exactly original. For example, on asking a Thai market vendor: "is this *Armani*?", his answer "*same same, but different*" would mean it is actually a good copy. On asking if beaches on a nearby small island are as crowded as the ones on the mainland, this answer would mean they are slightly less crowded, or that in fact it does not matter if they are or not. The latter means that this phrase can be used to express almost anything: from actual relations between the things, to ironic joking about these relations, but also to express statements like 'I don't know much about it' or 'I know something, but I do not want to explain (or do not feel like explaining) it to you right know, etc. The Thai people even started to promote this phrase as a T-shirt slogan and ironically (ab) use it themselves, when they publicly address their Western guests, e.g. on public signs.[2]

On brief examination of the phrase by Google, I was surprised: apart from being defined in *Urban dictionary*[3] with the conventional "used a lot in Thailand, especially in an attempts to sell something but can mean just about anything depending on what the user is trying to achieve", it describes also "the nature of lady-boys in Thailand".[4] The phrase was used as a title of a song featured in the 2008 Bollywood film "Bombay to Bangkok" and it was also used in the chorus of the same song.[5] It is a beach restaurant's name on Thailand's little island of Ko lanta.[6] It is also a title of a book about two kids, an American and an Indian, who are pen pals,[7] and of a movie drama 'based on true story' about a German student travelling to Cambodia and falling in love with a local girl.[8] Last but not least, the phrase is also used in many captions accompanying different images in the vein of 'all different all equal', where one of the elements in group is of different colour (e.g. a red apple among green ones, etc.).

When I heard the phrase for the first time during my ethnographic fieldwork in backpackers' enclaves in Sri Lanka,[9] it somehow functioned as an identity marker for those travelers that regularly returned to south or south-east Asian countries. Because the phrase could also express familiarity with a diversity of travelling excitement, it turned

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2   E.g. a sign in Thailand's Koh Tao bowling and mini golf club says "sorry but today we are closed (same same open … but different ☺)" (see http://www.signspotting.com/44077, accessed 15. February 2012), or vice versa: a sign that a shop is open is completed with "same same closed but different" (see http://lolpie.com/2jbbc/same-same-but-different, accessed 15. February 2012).

3   http://www.urbandictionary.com (accessed 15. February 2012).

4   "When the two breasts look same-same like a woman's but the dong is still there." See http://www.urbandictionary.com, under entrance "Same same, but different" (accessed 15. February 2012).

5   The refrain, where a white man (i.e. mildew) is included goes like this: "Is it just me, or does this room stink like mildew too? Same same, but different." See http://www.urbandictionary.com, under entrance "Same same, but different" (accessed 15. February 2012).

6   See e.g. http://www.tripadvisor.com (accessed 15. February 2012).

7   A book for children by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw (2011) (see http://www.amazon.com/Same-But-Different-Jenny-Kostecki-Shaw/dp/0805089462, accessed 15. February 2012).

8   See e.g. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1368443 (accessed 15. February 2012).

9   I went there for the first time in 2003 for two months, returned in 2004 for four months, and concluded my fieldwork in 2006 by staying another three months.

out to be useful for describing different not particularly interesting places where one traveled before. In this article, I am using the phrase as a point of departure to think about 'the paradise' symbol. Here is an example: an image of a 'paradise beach' is more or less the same, no matter where exactly it is located, but a particular beach, with its name, setting, individual features like a rocky bridge or a micro island near by, can be seen as a bit different then other 'paradise beaches', although it still belongs to the major category of 'paradise beach'. The same dynamics can be seen at principal world icons of 'the paradise' – small islands of the world, like e.g. Maldives, Seychelles, Bora Bora, Mauritius, Bahamas, Canarias, Tahiti, Hawaii, etc. These names are, through repetitive nature of tourism marketing, and due to consumer culture in general, associated with the idea of one and the same 'tropical paradise'. However, in tourist representations, they are presented and understood one by one, as distinctive features in all possible uniqueness and homogeneousness, and are not associated one with another in a kind of region of small tropical islands (except neighbouring islands like e.g. Trinidad and Tobago, or Nicobar and Andaman islands, etc.). They are, in other words, all of them 'the same, but different'.

However, the aim of this article is not only to point to the sameness of 'the paradise' idea, but also to outline the basic contexts of its permutations. I will therefore not trace the paradise image solely according to its appropriation in different representational frames like e.g. tourist marketing, movies, songs and the like, but try to systematize it in four basic contexts: first, as 'text' about ideal lands, places, atmospheres, moods, etc., second, as its imposition on physical places, third, as its simulations, and finally, as its neglecting in postcolonial tourist mimicry and irony. In this vein, the present inquiry is above all a theoretical insight into the use of the paradise idea, and less an ethnographic case, although my ethnographic presence in Sri Lankan south coast settings was the primary source of inspiration for most of the ideas presented here.

A brief overview of paradise imagery in anthropological study of tourism

The 'paradise' metaphor has been conventionally used for promotion of leisure holiday destinations. In anthropological writings, it has mostly been examined through analyses of tourist brochures, photographs, postcards and images (see e.g. Chalfen 1979; Selwyn 1996). Graham Dann (1996: 68), for example, established a typology consisting of four types of paradise images: paradise contrived (or 'pure' paradise without people), paradise confined (images of a tourist ghetto), paradise controlled (locals depicted as servants, vendors etc.), and paradise confused (closer contact with locals and blurred boundaries between them and the tourists). Peter Burns (1999) saw this "brochure-paradise" (109) as "just one part of a range of pressures on culture through tourism", but at the same time noted that "the myths of tourism extend far beyond the creation of paradise through brochures" (111).

These types can also be seen as stages on axis between Edensor's (1998: 149-180) "enclavic" and "heterogeneous" tourist space, where the former 'haunts' the latter through local touristic development as well as through practices of backpackers and travelers, who prefer 'unspoiled' areas, where everyday life of the locals and 'exotic' heterogeneity of 'oriental' streets are perceived as more 'authentic' than polished areas for tour-

ists. In Edensor's ethnography, the Dann's "paradise contrived" can be found at the central site of his case: being alone at the highly symbolical monument of Taj Mahal, feeling its spirit or aura with full moon, sunset, sunrise, etc. (Edensor 1998: 122-125).

Tensions and exchanges between ideal types and actual practices can be seen either in relations between the media and their audiences or between the tourist industry and its clients. Crouch, Jackson and Thompson (2005) noted that the actual imaginations of people are not necessarily confined to what is produced and disseminated through media and tourist marketing, and that we have to consider "an active and also physical encounter with the local and intimate worlds that are the content of tourism", yet, "nothing can be decided in advance about what tourists actually do" (13), or will do.

Similarly, Dean MacCannell (2001) in his critique of John Urry's "tourist gaze" (2002) suggested taking into account "a desire to get beyond touristic representation" (MacCannell 2001: 31). This rejection of "deterministic models of tourist behaviour" (35) and advocating "the unexpected, not the extraordinary, objects and events that may open a window in structure, a chance to glimpse the real" (36) brings out the question: to what degree can mediated paradise nevertheless influence tourists' perception about sacredness of a chosen destination, as Graburn (1977) stated for tourism decades ago?

This question of linking the two sources of paradise production, the tourist marketing and the respective tourist space, can be answered either ethnographically or on a broader theoretical scale. In the following sections, I will rather try to rethink it in the sense of the latter, although I will also insert different examples in my argumentation, at least some of which can be seen as ethnographic.

Paradise imagined

I will first look at the Biblical paradise image.[10] It is a timeless virgin place with trees, waters and animals, yet the snake and the erotic nudity of the couple within represent – on the contrary – transformation and tempting subjects (Marit Waade 2010: 19). However, the paradise is also an idea of many other mythical and religious conceptions around the world: it is located at the top of *axis mundi*, which connects the sky, our world and the underworld. It is often represented as a sacred mountain or a beautiful place with a sacred tree and springs of water (see Schmitek 1999). Both images of the paradise, the Biblical and the mythological one, were imagined either as a sacred *landscape*, or a sacred *place*, or in form of a complex symbol such as the labyrinth, mandala, stupa, *chi-rho* monogram, *Vesica Piscis*, *ihtus*, the cross, precise proportions of gothic cathedrals, symbolic architecture of pilgrimage centres, temples, etc. This means that the paradise as a sacred symbol can be imagined either as a more or less abstract entity or as a specific landscape, i.e. the paradise as a particular piece of *Earth*, albeit not an easily accessible one.

These images also inspired explorations of new worlds overseas in the late Middle Ages. In medieval Christian perception, small tropical islands were especially associated with the Biblical 'happy island'. Although the latter was not confined only to Christian

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10   Such image is seen for example on a painting by Peter Wenzel from the first decades of 19. century, *Adam and Eve in the Earthly Paradise*. See http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-vatican-museum-photos/slides/eosb_166p (accessed 30. January 2012).

and Western views,[11] we can notice its permutations especially in Western film production (e.g. *Adam and Eve*, *The Blue Lagoon*, *Tarzan and Jane*, etc.), as well as in advertising of island tourism. Last but not least, the islandness of the islands was also recognized in postcolonial writing, where they "have become a phenomenological property of social life allowing people to think islands as ontologically separate entities, as island localities symbolically and socially separated from a world outside" (Picard 2008: 1).

This brings us to another implication of imagining 'the paradise': in opposition to the wealth of the 'paradise island', Western imagination also relates an island to danger (*Robinson Crusoe*, *Chuck Noland*, *Lord of the Flies, Lost* series, etc.), dark forces and magic (e.g. Haitian voodoo, south Sri Lankan exorcism, i.e. the 'devil's dance', etc.). In Western imagery, these impure forces gain their incarnation in form of island *inhabitants*, who are diametrically opposed to the paradise island itself. They are seen as savage, unpredictable, impure and "magic" (Picard 2008). In this ambivalent imagery, small tropical islands were feeding the romantic orientalist imaginations and inspiring the first colonialist undertakings in exciting new worlds of beauty, wealth, but also wilderness.

The two images, on one side 'happy paradise', and on the other, 'paradise magic', are, the same as the nudity of Adam and Eve and the snake, representing a warning in the otherwise happy place, or two complementary sides. Also, in conceptions of mythical paradise, there must be a potential danger around (like e.g. the dragon approaching its centre, or the threat of water floods), so that the Paradise's core essence – the *axis mundi's* balance – is recreated through time cycles (e.g. New Year's victory of god over the threat) (see Kravanja 2006).

However, in our case of the two paradises, and the fear of the 'magic' one prevailing over the 'happy' one can be seen in the history of the West's relation to other continents. The construction of the Western knowledge, institutions and scholarship that caused the "Orient" to become static and inferior to the West, was essential for invention of the West's Other (Said 1978). The 'oriental paradise' that Edward Said recognised in classical Western knowledge as discourse of feminine, sensual, erotic, intuitive, etc. 'nature' of the Orient, can also be seen in numerous evocations of 'exotic paradise' in today's popular culture. The images and ideas about 'paradise places' are indeed shared globally in different directions and through different channels, but one of the important targets of them are different Western adventurists, travelers and backpackers that are discovering 'ex-' or post-colonial', 'Third', 'Eastern', 'South', 'developing', etc. worlds through ever new infrastructures of modern tourism and mobility. Maybe what Jamiroquai are singing can be a good example of a more general description of this exotic 'paradise place' imagery:

> *This corner of the earth is like me in many ways*
> *I can sit for hours here and watch the emerald feathers play*
> *On the face of this I'm blessed*
> *When the sunlight comes for free*
> *I know this corner of the earth it smiles at me.[12]*

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11   The old 'Lanka' (Sri Lanka after 1972), for example, was already 'noticed' by ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabians and Chinese and it was also visited by Marco Polo (Crick 1994: 21).

12   This is refrain of the song titled *Corner of the Earth* on Jamiroquai's album *A Funk Oddis-*

The "corner of the earth", where one can feel "blessed" can be anywhere, either in this or in some other world. And this is exactly the point where the "imaginary geography" (Said 1978) persists even nowadays; in this case, 'the paradise' does not have to relate to particular place. In different media, whether classical, such as 'sacred books', paintings, novels, travel writing and the like, or modern, such as movies, songs, internet products, exchanges and the like, the imagery of the paradise can be 'a place nowhere', which means 'just right there, in the paradise itself'. The latter does not mean that the paradise imagery is without place, it just means that its iconography is creating it.

The initially geographically located 'paradise islands' were already reproduced in religion and art in earlier history of the West, before mass tourist industry and media took over their representing. But this 'representing' was an actual creation of an entirely new place. A good example of this are some of Paul Gauguin's Tahitian paintings. Their paradise imagery blotted out the actual life of the island: among other figures and elements, Gauguin indigenized the Eve, the Virgin Mary with the Christ child, saints and angels, the Devil, etc.[13] In terms of language expression, the 'paradise on earth' can be evoked by numerous other phrases. Apart from visual imagery, it can simply be 'The paradise', 'unspoiled place', 'virgin place', 'the navel of the earth', 'heavenly spot', 'place of eternity', 'place like in fairytale', 'beautiful place', 'wonderland', etc. All those and many more other poetic expressions are used for slightly the same thing in other contexts as well, not necessarily conveying the notion of a solitary island.

Nevertheless, we can not fully predict reflections on shared images, because of life's pragmatism and the agency of media audiences. 'The paradise' can mean different things according to different contexts. Within the context of tourism or backpacking, the scope of its interpretations can significantly narrow down. Here are some examples from the *open travel blog*: [14]

> *There is only one paradise on earth, and that is the island Marco Polo called the "finest island of its size in the world" - The World's Resplendent Isle - Sri Lanka.*

> *Boracay in the Philippines looks nice from that piccie but i so wanna go somewhere relatively untouched by civilisation. Dont know how busy boracay gets with tourists... but looks heavenly!*

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ey (2001). This acid jazz band somehow fitted to the taste of young travelers, especially through their first three albums (1993, 1994, and 1996), where the use of ethnic elements like strings and horns and allusions to the planet Earth, space, and travelling were at the fore. Central figure of the band is their primary songwriter and front-man Jason Kay, who also created the silhouette character: Buffalo man, i.e. himself wearing buffalo hat. In videos and on live shows, he also frequently wears plumage resembling to that of native Americans, and surrounds himself with cosmic-like effects of rays, planets, but also with natural attributes like wild animals, plants, etc.

13   Eve was depicted as a Tahitian woman on Gauguin's paintings like 'Delicious Earth' (1892) and the 'Words of the Devil' (1892). The Virgin Mary and the Christ with saints and angels were recognized on his '*Io Orana Maria*' (1891), etc. (for further information on Gauguin's "primitivism" see Staszak (2004).

14   See http://opentravel.com/blogs/paradise-on-earth (accessed 20. December 2011).

There are so many paradises to choose from! I'm just saving up for my next adventure and the Caribbean is on my mind.........

In these three cases, the 'happy paradise' is clearly imagined with reference to geography of islands, their supposed pureness, emptiness, and beauty. Although in the paragraphs above we see that 'the paradise' does not only refer to unspoiled nature and islands, but can be located in a pure fantasy land, the history of actual encounters with the West's Other constructed and reproduced also a very firm kind of paradise, which I briefly touched upon already above through the paradise's magic side. In the next section, geographical and historical features will be added to its examination.

Paradise grounded

Imposing a paradise image on an actual place is only one possible direction of appropriating unknown lands. The other is their cultivation, and organised exploitation of their sources. In general, the latter is derived from individual colonial and postcolonial histories. When the colonies in e.g. South Asia were well established, the early colonial conception of "India" was, in the name of science and development, named by geographic or climatic categories, such as the "tropics" (Perera 1999: 73). In addition to Said's "orientalism" and accompanying exoticism, especially in the colonial part of the non-Western histories, "tropicality" (Clayton and Bowd 2006) came into the fore. The latter is:

> *[…] a discourse – or complex of Western ideas, attitudes, knowledges and experiences – that, since the fifteenth century, has both created and been shaped by distinctions between temperate and tropical lands, with the temperate world routinely exalted over its tropical counterpart, and tropicality becoming central to the definition of the West as a temperate (moderate and hard-working rather than extreme and indolent) human as well as physical environment (Clayton and Bond 2006: 210).*

However, the same as in other conceptions of 'the paradise' that we examined above, tropicality is an ambivalent discourse, containing on one hand "island edens" and on the other "spectre of the jungle", where "fertile yet primitive estate await the civilising and modernising intervention of the West" (ibid.). This "environmental Eurocentrism" (Clayton and Bond 2006: 11) had become central by the late eighteenth century, when imperial expansion of Britain, France and other European powers focused on cultivation and improvement of the colonies (15). Together with colonial undertakings, the attitude towards different islands transformed into that of economic exploitation. First-hand and long-term presence of different colonialists, landscape organizers, plantation bosses, traders, etc. produced on one hand an image of tropical worlds as a "bountiful estates" (15), but on the other hand, rather dark sides of 'the paradise' were reproduced, especially when the colonialists encountered tropical diseases. In these "enervating and pestilential" tropical environments, "development, climate and disease had long been used as markers of tropical backwardness, inferiority and danger" (15-6).

The bright side of 'the paradise' was revived after the colonial regimes dissolved, as many small postcolonial islands of the world have been, with their new "small island states" (Bianchi 2002, 270-1), gradually subjected to tourism development. The prevailing idea during the 1960s was that launching of tourism did not require much financial investment in 'tropical paradise', since all that was needed – sun, sand and happy faces – was supposed to be already there. This had proved wrong, as investments in the infrastructure with foreign aid were costly and left destination countries indebted (Crick 1989: 314-317). Consequently, most early tourism anthropologists and sociologists embraced the opposite extreme (and myth): tourism as pure evil and scapegoat for all negative social changes. In this context, the tourists represented "golden hordes" (Turner and Ash 1975) and the notion of tourism as "passport to development" (de Kadt 1979) was questioned. Drawing on tourism in the 'third world', Stephen Britton (1982) developed a "dependency model", with which he examined how the West (North) over-exploited the East (South). Moreover, Dennison Nash (1977) saw in tourism just another "form of imperialism".

The globalisation processes in subsequent years started to fragment the old economic organizational principles of the world, such as centre-periphery, push-pull, surplus-deficit, users-manufacturers (Geertz 2000: 218-263), and the uncertainty of "disorganized capitalism" (Appadurai 2005: 32-33) was increasingly present on local scales as well. Small islands represented an important part of globally circulated tourist images, but on a local scale, the same images were in turn reproduced 'back' through holiday photos and videos (see Urry 2002). Anne Marit Waade (2010) analysed 'the paradise' and its conception in advertisements and stated it is indeed imagined as a specific place, but also as a condition. The latter is associated with "specific moods and bodily conditions the viewer will achieve when buying the good or just enjoying the ad" (ibid: 16). The 'new paradise' is therefore at the same time grounded in using a specific *place* as a symbol (in e.g. tourist practices of 'documenting' holidays), and imagined in *framing* of this very place in accordance with the preconceived idea of how the paradise looks like.

However, this synchronism of grounding and imagining 'the paradise' is in fact the consequence of transforming it into encounters with the Other that are not uniform, especially if we consider their postcolonial context. As soon as we start to represent particular *named* places as good candidates for the paradise transformation, the idea of the 'pure paradise' starts to implicate colonial and postcolonial elements. Consider for example the lyrics of a famous hit, which was launched in 1945 by American women trio the Andrews Sisters, *Rum and coca-cola*:

> *If you ever go down Trinidad*
> *They make you feel so very glad*
> *Calypso sing and make up rhyme*
> *Guarantee you one real good fine time*
> *Drinkin' rum and Coca-Cola*
> *Go down Point Koomahnah*
> *Both mother and daughter*
> *Workin' for the Yankee dollar*
> *Since the Yankee come to Trinidad*
> *They got the young girls all goin' mad*

Young girls say they treat 'em nice
Make Trinidad like paradise.

And so on … Marit Waade (2010: 24-26) examined "Bacardi ads displaying the tropical dream" (coca-cola took part in them as well). In them, the "tropical paradise matrix" had been used. They reflected "how intoxication, imagination and the tropical dream are related to the paradise matrix", and the ads also show, how this "imagination as communicative strategy is staged and reflected" (26). I do not see much difference between contents of those ads and the lyrics above, but there is a difference in terms of place: if the *Trinidad* is a particular island, the Bacardi ads are placed in an unnamed and abstract paradise, which can be anywhere in the world, or even out of this world. And this difference is crucial in considering the postcolonial context of the paradise imagery, or in other words, in its grounding.

Nevertheless, as we have already seen above, 'the paradise' can also be imagined and reproduced through stories, images, and music; it can be evoked, disseminated, and mediated through movies, popular and consumerist items, names of particular bars, places, parties, cocktails, etc. Although this kind of imagery is still a very spatial image of exotic destinations, it is also an image of touristic experiences and moods of the seasonal holiday time. Along these lines, the paradise can be, apart from imagined and grounded, also simulated, transmitted to different places, and constructed as a specific social space.

Paradise simulated

In his book on the history of vacationing, Orvar Löfgren (1999) examined the evolution of the "global beach" concept (213-239) as mass-mediated icon of the tourist industry. In describing "the tropical dream" (216-220), Löfgren states that "the whole concept of paradise relies above all on the romance of the South Pacific and the tropical beach. The global notion of the beach began in the cult of Hawaii and the Waikiki beach next to Honolulu" (216). These first beach resorts from the beginning of the 20. century gradually developed into a first mass-mediated paradise: postcards, palm trees, music tunes, hula girls with flowers in their hair, tropical nights on the beach – the whole atmosphere was presented through different magazines (e.g. National Geographic), music records, Hollywood production (e.g. Elvis's *Blue Hawaii*), etc.

The images and ideas of 'the tropical paradise' were also reproduced in Europe. Any serious beach had to have palm trees, sand, collapsible deck chairs, and bathing huts (Löfgren 1999: 216). The built environment of 'the paradise' developed into a holiday beach, where sea, sand and sun were just a stage for other activities. Playing with sand, bathing in water, and especially sunbathing, became something enjoyable – and also healthy. The tan started to be considered as beautiful (ibid.: 220-223), and the beach became – despite being persistently imagined as a place of freedom – a place of *tight sociality* (ibid.: 227-228). This 'hybridised paradise' was therefore perfectly accorded with the production of 'paradise moods', although the "authentic" paradise (MacCannell 1976: 91-107) started again to be imagined somewhere in the South or East.

Many 'natural' beaches of the world were subjected to this search of authenticity. But the problem of any beach always lies in the presence of *people*. If the beach is not

crowded with tourists that are secretly observing one another (Löfgren 1999: 228), then the locals, or fishermen might be around. The beaches are not only interesting for investments into tourist infrastructure,[15] they are also interesting for nature conservation, fishing, being there alone, surfing, partying, selling fruit or accessories, offering massages… Consequently, the goal of finding oneself on a 'pure solitary beach' is difficult to achieve.

South Asian beaches developed in slightly different patterns than the ones described above. If the Waikiki beach represents an early model for global beach (Löfgren 1999: 216-220), the *Goa* beach represents a model for a 'hippie beach'. The 1960s West's invasion of India with its twisted spiritual tourism (see Mehta 1979) reached its peak in *Goa*. Through decades of its specific development, the beach has become impregnated with "politics of location" that divides not only the local population from the whites, but also newcomer tourists from "cliques" and "Goa freaks" (Saldanha 2007). These exclusions have adopted a racist idiom that domestic tourists feel even from the local Goans, who reject to serve them or rent them rooms in 'white' parts of Goa.[16] On the other hand, for many backpackers, Goa represents "pervert's paradise" (after Welk 2004: 90, note 3), where domestic male package tours, offering the possibilities to see topless foreign women, are organised from Indian cities (ibid.).

But the *Goa* is an extreme local story in itself. What seems like a crucial difference between South Asian beaches and the 'global beach' is performativity of behaviour. The 1960s Westerners have brought different psychedelic arts there, such as playing with different ropes, strips, hoops and crystal balls, etc., drumming and playing music, taking drugs, but also performing 'free' variations of yoga and meditation. The accompanying ideas and practices of 'free sexuality', resulted in open sexual interest in local people as well.

In the last paragraphs I exposed how 'the paradise' was reproduced from the initial place of Hawaii islands, to mass-media images, and finally myriads of simulacrums all over the world's beaches and holiday settings. The reference point of those simulations were (not necessarily named or located) tropical islands, especially their sandy beaches with palm trees, sun, sea, etc. While these preconceived ideas served well for creating a paradise atmosphere anywhere, at least some of the settings of the 'authentic tropics' already developed their unique stories and styles, which corresponded to tourist tastes different from those of the 'paradise hungry masses'.

The hippie beach of Goa is therefore a model of 'a paradise' that produced – apart from being the tropical beach accorded with the 'happy paradise' image, a place of neo-colonial appropriation of its best spots by Western old timers and freaks, and a place of twisted simulations of spirituality, freedom and artistic performance – also feelings of unease, sinfulness, danger, and of being entrapped in a queer, unfamiliar place, that one has

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15   As Naomi Klein (2009: 379-398) in her *Shock doctrine* convincingly demonstrated for Maldives and for Sri Lanka as well, the programs for investments had already been made by state economists, politicians and corporations before the 2004 tsunamis. Soon after the disaster, they used it as a convenient 'reason' to empty the best spots by moving the village people and fishermen from the foreshore into inland refugee camps.

16   See a short story on 'foreigners only' offers in Goa on e. g. http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2010/01/racism-against-indians-in-goa (accessed 30. January 2012).

to get used to at first. In this kind of 'paradise', the social space and a feeling of belonging to it is more important than the place itself. Furthermore, its sentimental, place-specific, and simulacrum-based features have to be neglected in favour of identifying with its 'culture'.

Paradise neglected

In the social dynamics of identifying with 'proper' travelling style and trying to get enough experience to integrate and belong to a certain travelling group, it is possible to see a tourist's "desire to get beyond the touristic representation", and search for "the unexpected […] to glimpse the real" (MacCannell's 2001: 31 and 36) that I have already mentioned in this article. However, if indeed many Western tourists became immune to sweetness of paradise images, as well as to their either 'found' or fabricated actualizations, some of them are particularly eager to ignore them. Furthermore, they are – different than former colonizers, who in encounters with the tropical diseases and 'enervating and pestilential' environment only saw backwardness and danger (Clayton and Bond 2006: 15-6) – sensitive to the details of what they *experience*, and not so much 'see' or 'encounter'. For these travelers, the attention to paradise imagery is avoided and – among themselves – neglected as an important factor of their 'being there'. What they have in common is that they all see themselves as anti-tourists, and prefer to find their place among the so called backpackers, although even among them, there are significant differences.

The first in-depth inquiry into the backpacker's phenomena took place in an anthropological volume titled *The Global Nomad* (Richards and Wilson 2004). Let me summarize some basic points of it: the ideal backpacker uses budget accommodation, is flexible and arranges his or hers itineraries independently. The emphasis is on social contact with fellow travelers and the duration of their travel is relatively long (16) – on average more than 60 days (20). But, "in spite of the argument that backpackers are keen to distinguish themselves from other types of tourists, their activities tend to be fairly similar to those that might be expected of tourists in general" (27). They visit historical sites, walk, sit in cafes and restaurants, go shopping, attend organized wildlife observation trips, hang out on the beach or do 'extreme' sports. Nevertheless, the backpackers are "experience hungry" tourists, which means that the main benefit for them is the exploration itself, rather then getting to know a specific culture (28-29).

This trait distinguishes them from 'old timers', 'drifters', 'hippie travelers' and the like, who also indulge in local scenes and can stay on one spot for a longer time. Many of those who travel independently, are therefore directly critical to backpackers and call the *Lonely planet* guide rather than their "bible", their "bubble" (36). As "the boundaries between 'backpackers', 'travelers' and 'tourists' are far from clear" (39), the establishing of social status within the "hidden backpacker hierarchy" (Welk 2004: 80) is made foremost through length of traveling (ibid.). In principle, most of them share the anti-tourism attitude, but among them, there are also some that consider themselves 'better' backpackers than the 'mainstream' ones. In their anti-backpacker attitudes, they intentionally avoid "backpacking superhighway where lodgings are always cheap, natives always speak English and restaurants always serve banana pancakes" (Welk 2004: 88). They see

themselves as "real travelers", and to some of them, traveling became "a way of life rather than a way of travelling" (ibid: 89; see also Cohen 2011).

I am not saying that all the backpackers are this ambitious. The competition in the continuum of identification summarized above is rather subtle, and expressed in small 'victories' that backpackers share when they recount their adventures of e.g. price negotiations with the locals, penetrations in non-tourist areas, etc. However, the paradise imagery is – rather than one of the conceptual tools for expressing these 'victories' – a taboo for 'serious' travelers. Neither the imagined 'brochure paradise' of an 'expensive' solitary beach, nor an actual rousseauesque tropical island with postcolonial patina, and even less the simulated 'coco-jumbo paradise' can take part in these narrations without concern about how the listener will judge the narrator's taste and travelling competences. 'The paradise' can in comparison to e.g. "troubles tourism" (Crouch, Jackson and Thompson 2005, 9-11) represent a small part of possibilities that tourism practices can invent today. For many travelers, it is exactly the 'dangerous paradise' (or at least a place that is not overly comfortable and reveals itself as 'true paradise' only with time and efforts), that counts as worthy to search for, and to narrate about to other travelers.

Even if all backpackers are not devoted to travelling to the extent where travelling means a way of life (see Cohen 2011), they have to deal with their fellow backpackers when on the road, and subtly compare their traveling skills through talking about travelling, which is simply a habit of e.g. evening behavior in guesthouses. They simply meet one another on their travels. In Sri Lanka for example, some guesthouses are more popular than others, and they function as a base where the backpackers return from their adventures and explorations of 'less visited' places on the island. Even if the backpacker's taste is accorded with different icons of popular culture, and vice versa, the pop industry adopted backpacker culture and integrated it in its production, they are still aspiring to be great travelers. The pop-freedom is expressed by listening to the 'right' music, wearing long hair or dread locks, 'ethnic looking' dresses, piercings, occasional tattoos, producing small accessories out of natural materials like sea shells, smoking joints, playing 'ethnic' instruments like drums or didgeridoo, etc., but 'the real thing' is an interesting travelling autobiography, where 'the paradise' is either a remote, less visited place, or a queer, dangerous, wild, non-pleasant, etc. place or situation, that nothing previously experienced can compare to.

In upper paragraphs, I underlined that within travelling styles of backpackers and travelers, the paradise idea, whether imagined one, grounded one, or simulated one, is by default neglected as a valuable place to search for or aspire to. However, the paradise's 'price' can raise with inaccessibility of a place one had the privilege or courage to visit. The 'paradise on earth' can be imagined – especially in the present conditions – as a place of escape. It is cheap in the postcolonial countries, and the so-called "lifestyle travelers" (Cohen 2011) switch between their salaries at home and living in cheap paradise. Imagining of possibilities for the future, or plain daydreaming, allow them to make up their identity as travelers, considering themselves relaxed, cosmopolitan, free, brave, independent, easy-going, adventurous and the like. On the other hand, all the places in their travelling careers shape their perceptions of the tourist settings they are in at the moment. At that very place, they have to neglect its 'paradise nature', if they want to prove either their traveling competence or their ability to adopt to 'tougher' circumstances to their fellow travelers.

Conclusion

The four types of 'the paradise' that I introduced in this article – the paradise imagined, grounded, simulated, and neglected – are expanding our view of top-down symbolism of mass tourist and media industries. To the 'paradise production', I added its religious and mythological foundations, its reproduction in Western popular culture, art, and tourist fantasy. Furthermore, geographical features of different candidates for Western 'paradisification', came into the fore through colonial practices, where organised economic exploitation was producing at one hand dark side of the 'paradise's' tropical 'pestilential' environment, and on the other hand bountiful lands.

This ambivalence, which can be seen already in the Biblical 'happy place' with the sinful nudity of the couple and the menacing snake, has been persistently present in all of the representations of 'the paradise' that followed. When the Western ex-colonial empires, favouring 'pleasant' attributes of small tropical islands, pushed these new nation states into extensive development of leisure tourism, it turned out they only wanted to further control their sources and keep them in debt. When certain islands became named, mapped and grounded icons of the world's 'paradise on earth', they also had to face postcolonial discourses of cheapness and humiliating availability of their women. With the introduction of the 'paradise beach' and its simulations into the tourist iconography, a new circle of the 'paradise production' started. This time, the 'authentic paradise' discourses triggered searching for 'paradise' places that might had evaded the tourist publicity and stayed untouched by – so to speak – 'civilization'. On the other hand, 'culture' of certain places, like e.g. Goa and South Asian beaches, started to represent a challenge for appropriating and performing a distinction that avoided both, the (grounded) 'pure paradise' and the (Western) simulated one.

When the alternative forms of travelling became possible with global development of mobility infrastructures and availability of hosting facilities in the emerging small tourist enclaves, the search for the 'authentic paradise' became only a small part of travelling creativity of "free independent travellers" (Crick 1989: 313). The place was not as important, as the quality and pretentiousness of the travelling experience. The paradise image was dispersed in moods and motivations of demanding backpackers and travellers, who again reproduced its ambivalence: on one hand, 'the paradise places' were a matter of courage of individual travellers, who memorised or planned their penetrations into 'newly opening', usually ex-totalitarian, countries. On the other hand, within those 'paradise places', one has to be ready for many inconveniences that require skilfulness and toughness of a 'real traveller', and not a 'pantywaist' backpackers' demands for comfort.

In the beaches and villages of southern Sri Lanka, where I did my fieldwork in the middle of the first decade of this century, I seldom met somebody who would not identify with the identities summarised above. And it always seemed important to ask how long does had one been travelling, and to express attitudes towards travelling, its essentiality for the meaning of life, and the importance of its demanding, yet highly valuable nature for personal development. The beaches of southern Sri Lanka were not crowded at that time, which maybe helped bring up the image of the 'pure paradise' into our conversations. And sometimes this happened for a brief moment: if the idea of 'paradise on earth' did not refer to certain parts of Sri Lanka, it referred to other places where my in-

terlocutors had been, or wanted to go. Nevertheless, the context of these evocations never referred to the situation we were in at the moment. It was either a momentary insight or a part of the narration about other places.

I started this article with the 'same same, but different' phrase. A 'post-tourist' and, through the eyes of the postcolony quite pessimistic extreme, is an opposite permutation of this phrase: "same shit, different island". In the spoken accounts of tourists, this phrase means:

> *No matter which island the traveler visits, he will always encounter: (1) aggressive touts selling t-shirts, conch shells, and other worthless crap, (2) crazy taxi drivers, (3) hot, humid weather, (4) panhandling locals, (5) bugs, and (6) shoddy accommodations and questionable cuisine.[17]*

While our first phrase imposes diversity over homogeneity, the second imposes preconceived homogeneity over aspired diversity, or – even more likely – another kind of aspired homogeneity, that of 'the paradise on earth'. Although the 'same shit, different island' phrase is a nihilistic statement about 'charms' of travelling in the postcolonial worlds, it does not exactly imply the neglect of 'the paradise', but rather – on the contrary – a preconceived aspiration for it and a disappointment after one had come to the spot. But the question is: doesn't the nihilistic attitude expressed through this phrase also expose a travelling style that implies orientalist, exoticist, or tropicalist ideas and neo-colonial habits?

In this scenario, a supposedly 'right' person found him/herself on a supposedly 'wrong' place. In searching for 'the paradise' *within* the existing tourist simulacrums, which are imposed on postcolonial destinations, especially on small islands, one can really feel like another 'stupid tourist'. However, successful escape from this unbearable fate of postcolonial legacy does not lie in attempts to find the 'right island', but in a will of realizing that if something is wrong, probably the 'right' space is facing the 'wrong' (i.e. ignorant) person. Any active contribution to an individual tourist space is showing that tourist experience nowadays is not limited to sight, but is, above all, embodied. Representations of 'the paradise' are indeed powerful, but this does not mean we have to submit to their charms. I suppose you were all expecting me to finish with the following thought: even if 'the paradise' can be once and again searched for all over the world, we do not have to be worried about its existence. It is always here, and it always turns out to be unexpected. In other words: it is 'same same, but different'.

Acknowledgement

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17   See http://www.urbandictionary.com, under entrance "Same shit, different island" (accessed 15. February 2012).

life: imagination, interaction, practice" in Ljubljana, held from 11th-21st July 2011, and on invited lecture on Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje on 13th December 2011.

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