



ISISA

Newsletter

Volume 16, Number 1, July 2016

Published by the International Small Islands Studies Association



EDITORIAL

To start off this issue we have an invitation to the ISISA 15th Islands of the World Conference.

Apart from that, participants share their experiences in Lesvos, Greece during the last ISISA Conference plus many more interesting articles which one can find in this Newsletter.

Remember that the Newsletter is only what you make it. We encourage anyone who has something to say, or share about Islands, Island Studies or Book Reviews about Islands to send them over to me for the next issue.

*Reminder: If you have any contributions for the December 2016 Newsletter please pass them on to me **by not later than November 15, 2016.***

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15th 'Islands of the World' ISISA Conference 2017



Kangaroo Island, South Australia
2-8 July 2017

Congratulations to our colleagues from Lesvos for hosting a successful conference that further explored the notion of 'Islandness', welcomed delegates with warmth and generosity, gave insight into the life and culture of their Island, and provided an outstanding exemplar of sustainability for future ISISA island hosts.

Kangaroo Island is very excited to host the next conference and planning is well advanced to ensure your visit will be memorable. We extend a heartfelt invitation to the many delegates who plan on making the journey to our South Australian sanctuary - Kangaroo Island. Today, Kangaroo Island is home to 4500 people. Each is connected to the island's rich heritage and diverse natural environment by the respect, independence, resourcefulness and ingenuity that has made Kangaroo Island what it is today. We acknowledge that it may be a long journey, but a journey well worth your time.



Here are three (of the many) reasons we think you should consider attending the 15th *Islands of the World* Conference in Australia:

1. Kangaroo Island is a place that allows you to reconnect with the things that really matter in life – personal relationships, wild nature, real hand-made food and wine, agricultural products grown in balance with nature, and authentic people and experiences. You'll enjoy the adventure!
2. Our conference program will include outstanding peer reviewed papers and posters from you, interactive Community Conversations on island issues, a variety of interesting and interactive guest speakers, plenary sessions addressing the concept of 'islandness', and expeditions into the heart of the Kangaroo Island.
3. Support the ISISA tradition of attending the IoW conference, where you can forge new relationships, share information and contribute to the international pool of island wisdom.



As this is the first opportunity for South Australia to host the ISISA Conference, we do sincerely hope that you will join us on Kangaroo Island in July 2017.

To learn more about Kangaroo Island, conference registration and paper/poster submission, visit our website www.kangarooisland2017.com or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kangarooisland2017/>



Shared experiences of Lesvos and the 14th ISISA Island of the world conference:

Thunderstorms, sunshine and my first ISISA conference

By Christian Bonnici (University of Malta)

It has been a long tradition in my family to spend the first few days of November relaxing in the peaceful village of Ghasri on the island of Gozo. There is no coincidence in the choice of period for the much-awaited vacation. We usually choose the first days of November because they concur with the primary school mid-term holidays, from which my six year old daughter and my wife, who is a teacher, are direct beneficiaries.



Picture of the author with a dog encountered during the field trip to Papados on 26/05/2016 as part of the ISISA conference programme

On my part, in spite of traveling several times during any calendar year, including for vacation purposes, our annual November trip to Gozo is the one that I always look most forward to. Usually it's that time of the year when Summer over the Maltese Islands would be dragging its feet, still undecided whether to call it a day or to extend its warmth and sunshine further into November and possibly December. The weather's undecidedness and the contrasting hot and colder air have, for the past five or six years, regularly contributed towards a vacation full of thunderstorms, rain, but not without a day or two of bright sunshine and clear skies. Yes, the weather at the beginning of November in Malta and Gozo can play crazy jokes. So crazy that during the past autumn-winter period (2015-2016) the number of thunderstorms that hit Malta could be counted on just one hand while the amount of rainfall was close to the lowest ever since data started being collected. And yet, the annual appointment with thunderstorms and heavy rain were once again present during the first days of November 2015.

This brief introduction about the November weather over the Maltese islands could not be left out from this article which is about my first experience in an ISISA conference. This is because the contrasting November weather is a very good reflection of the contrasting feelings I had experienced when on the 29th of October Godfrey Baldacchino (ISISA President) had informed me that the deadline for submitting an abstract to the 2016 ISISA conference was in just two days, that is, 31st of October. I hadn't spoken to Godfrey for a while, but somehow, on my last day of work before the much-awaited November vacation, I dared message him to ask when the next ISISA conference was going to be held so that maybe I could submit an abstract. Little had I known that the deadline was in just two days. With hindsight, I can easily say that this was all my fault as I must have followed the ISISA website to keep myself informed about the key deadlines. However, I have to admit that I was so winded into my PhD research and data collection that the least thing that had crossed my mind was to check the ISISA website. Yet, Godfrey's reply was a wake-up call, although on that 29 of October, I tried hard not to see it that way. My heart was telling me 'go pack the luggage and get yourself ready for a few days of relaxation'. My mind on the other hand, had been conditioned by Godfrey's wakeup call and had already started wrestling with my heart in a power struggle that could not be softened unless with 'divine' intervention. My heart's manifesto was based on the desire for a much-awaited vacation among the lovely Gozo

valleys, walks along the island's notorious green hills, the warm sunshine that contrasts with the 'traditional' thunderstorms and most of all the quality time with my family, which had become quite scarce in view of a very demanding job and the concurrent Ph.D. research. My mind on the other hand was adamant to make me believe that, in spite of my oversight, the deadline had not yet passed. This was a very clear indication that I should in no way avoid submitting an abstract for the 2016 ISISA conference. Coupled with this rather strong 'argument' that my mind was making, there was the fact that compiling an abstract should not have been a difficult task for me because I had been working on my PhD for over four years and I had been in a phase where my ideas had started fitting into the puzzle. But still, my heart had dominated for long long patches and it was only when, while closing the luggage, I decided to tell my wife about my internal struggles that the conflict somehow was resolved. As soon as I started trying to convince her (or rather, convince my mind) that I do not have enough time to write an abstract for the ISISA 2016 conference because "this was meant to be a vacation, free from work and research", she just told me "you should just get your laptop with you and tonight when everybody retires to bed, spend some time on your own in the silence of the farmhouse in Ghasri to refresh your mind and write a good abstract." And with that 'divine' intervention, all my troubles just faded. Indeed, I put my laptop in the car booth, next to the luggage and my two-year-old son's pushchair and headed to the beautiful island of Gozo.

This is how my participation in the 2016 ISISA conference in Lesvos started. I must not forget to mention that, while the sun was shining brightly until we crossed the Gozo channel and reached the farmhouse in Ghasri, the weather has changed completely later on in the day. This meant that my inspirations for the abstract were accompanied by none other than a 'traditional' thunderstorm and heavy rain for most of the one hour and a half that I spent refreshing my ideas and writing them in a way that would be interesting enough for the ISISA reviewers to promote my abstract towards the next phase, that of allocating a presentation slot in the Lesvos conference.

The rest of the vacation was, as I said earlier, characterised by the contrasting weather conditions. In addition, the period between the submission of the abstract, its acceptance, the writing of the paper and the actual attendance to the Conference was also characterised by contrasting feelings. First of all I have never attended an ISISA Conference before so I didn't know what to expect at all. Secondly, I knew little about Lesvos Island, or rather, I got to know about it because of the immigration crisis that evolved during 2015 and because, being part of Greece, it is also a victim of the huge economic crisis that has crippled the country including its islands. And yet, the sharp contrasts have not been over, because more were on their way.

Reaching Lesvos from Malta was not a difficult task. A one hour and fifty-minute flight from Malta to Athens and a fifty-minute flight from Athens to Mytiline was all it took. Yet when the plane landed on Lesvos, it was immediately clear to me that the micro airport of the Island is indeed a sharp contrast with the majority of airports that I have passed through in my thirty-four years of existence. Reaching the hotel from the airport was also characterised by a sharp contrast, not only because the road that leads you to the hotel is all coast road, though a bit bumpy at times; not only because the Formula 1 style taxi ride in Lesvos is more similar to one in Mexico or Venezuela; but also because it did not take more than 8 to 10 minutes. The taxi fare was also below the average of all the taxi fares that I paid during my previous travels such that I had to

conclude that this ISISA Conference was indeed characterised by contrasts. And why should it be otherwise? After all, islands are heavily characterised by contrast between them, in spite of several common characteristics, and between them and the bigger mainlands. The contrasts among islands became very evident during the 4 days of the conference, varying from island of Gotland in Northern Europe to the Bahamas Islands in the Atlantic Ocean and to the island of Guam in the Pacific Ocean, to mention just a few. Yes, just a few, because to really understand how many countries have been represented in the ISISA conference, one could simply look at the conference programme and realise how far away some people have travelled for this conference. Those who benefitted from the ISISA scholarships had definitely an opportunity not to be missed to attend the conference. But others have made not only a financial sacrifice but certainly a physical sacrifice of long hours of travel to be among their fellow islanders to share experiences, network and learn from each other.



The Untold Stories of the Refugee Crisis

By Genève Phillip (St. Maarten, Dutch West Indies)

The toggle between mainstream media and social media to define their respective boundaries in the view of global on lookers, has played out against the backdrop of a viewing public that is eager to hear and witness the next big story! In 2015, that next big story became the Syrian/Iraqi refugee crisis and its subsequent implications for peripheral Greek islands such as Lesbos and by extension, the rest of the European Union. Having been a participant of the recently concluded ISISA Conference in Lesbos, Greece, I was both humbled and amused to witness first hand, the untold stories of the refugee crisis. In retrospect, I realize that the stories being told of the said crisis via the media, had painted a less than accurate and composite picture of the situation in actuality.

What a great misfortune, an island that has traditionally been a tourist based economy, being thrown into the global media arena, displayed as an island in crisis. Undeniably, this would present a grim outlook for prospective tourists who as a result of media (mis)management and (mis)representation of the situation, would be compelled to imagine refugees running wildly in the town of Mytilene, snatching bags and mugging tourists. What I experienced was quite the contrary. I saw refugees who were entrepreneurs, making handicraft of the life jackets that saved their own lives. I heard stories of refugees asking tourists not for money but for books. Most notably, I witnessed a community of persons on Lesbos Island, showing the rest of the world what it meant for one small island to have a global impact and restore our faith in humanity!

In an era where many countries are preoccupied with protecting their sovereignty and managing their immigration systems and structures with an iron fist, here was Lesbos, a peripheral island, on the brink of the collapse of their tourism industry, welcoming thousands of refugees on a daily basis to share in their space and resources. Perhaps thousands of tourists' dollars and not refugees would be much preferred. Notwithstanding, islanders were visibly tolerant and understanding of the situation in which they found themselves. The question remains, how do islands like Lesbos, illustrate their resilience in a context where those most well poised to inform and educate about the true Lesbos story seem to conspire against the island to do just the opposite? I remain optimistic that even with the sharp decline in tourism, researchers will become increasingly inclined to travel to Lesbos in order to witness history in the making and continue to generate awareness for the untold stories of Lesbos.

A Conference to Remember

By Peter Meincke & Sue Williams

What a wonderful ISISA conference in Lesbos! Sue and I were overwhelmed by the hospitality, the events the venue the hosts and the participants. We could not believe it turned out so well in spite of all that Lesbos was experiencing. I had not been to an ISISA conference for many years and it was good to see that the interaction among disciplines and different viewpoints continues in the search for the nature of islands. Thank you so much to all those who made that a week to remember.

Imagining Mytilene

Cadey Korson

Photos by: Andrew Korson

These images represent the dynamic cultural landscape my husband and I discovered on our walks through Mytilene during the ISISA 2016 conference.

The orange life jacket is an iconic representation of the impact of refugees on this island: a subtle reminder of graver issues in this idyllic coastal landscape.



On the side of a derelict building in the port, this image of a woman wearing a hijab made from the Greek flag worriedly stares at passersby. Her face has been tagged with anarchy symbols: remnants of the anarchist movement that arose after the economic crisis.



However, Mytilene is still in many ways a typical Grecian island. White washed buildings with orange terracotta roofs are set against a hilly backdrop and hide streets bustling with produce sellers and the cacophony of Vespas.

Small Islands and Big Impacts: Studying Global and Local, Ecological and Social Effects on Coral Reef Ecosystems

By Dr. Annette Breckwoldt

I am delighted to inform you about a research topic (special issue) initiated by my working group at ZMT that has just been accepted in *Frontiers of Marine Science*: "Small Islands and Big Impacts – Studying Global and Local, Ecological and Social Effects on Coral Reef Ecosystems" (<http://journal.frontiersin.org/researchtopic/4899/small-islands-and-big-impacts---studying-global-and-local-ecological-and-social-effects-on-coral-reef>).

The final submission deadline is 31st October 2016, and I am inviting you to contribute as well as to forward this message to your respective networks.

Context

This Research Topic follows from a conference in September 2015 in Makassar (South Sulawesi, Indonesia), on 'Small Islands Research in Tropical Regions (SIRTRe) - The Spermonde Archipelago and other Case Studies'. It will present the essence of three decades of research on the Spermonde Archipelago along with new research contributions, and provide an integrative and interdisciplinary analysis of social-ecological complexities of feedback processes linking ecological developments of coral reefs systems with resource use dynamics. Employing a small-island lens, particular attention will be paid to

- causes and effects of environmental change (e.g. coral reef dynamics, drivers in ecological community changes, water quality),
- analysing multi-level local to global drivers (e.g., fishing pressure, market dependencies/effects),
- implications for coral reef dependent livelihoods and
- investigating resilience in the respective human and marine communities.

Situated within the Coral Triangle, the Spermonde Archipelago is a set of islands off the south-west corner of Sulawesi, Indonesia. These over 100 islands, their associated coral reefs and the approximately 30,000 inhabitants are located at the interface of one of the largest fisheries of the South-east Asian region. Exports of coral, fish and other invertebrates reach millions of people around the world driving a fishing industry that has developed a highly diverse social-economic-political hierarchy. Likewise, varying fishing targets, techniques and intensities have reshaped marine communities driving dynamic ecological feedbacks in the face of intense coastal urbanisation.

There is a need to allocate more energy, time and funds to social-ecological research on coral reef dynamics of the South-east Asian region (e.g. with multi-level GIS analysis), as details of combined effects of environmental changes and resource use as well as trajectories under

different management regimes still need to be understood. The influence of changes in marine resources will go far beyond the actual small islands where the resources are exploited.

Given the Southeast Asian region's high biodiversity, human population density and fishing pressure, as well as the regionally differing challenges of environmental change, this Research Topic will link the ecological with the social perspective for an integrative and interdisciplinary analysis of island resource use and management. We invite interdisciplinary papers, case studies, reviews, survey results or conceptual approaches from interested individuals and groups of the projects, universities and institutions involved in research taking place in the region. In this way, the Research Topic will enhance the scientific knowledge on small tropical islands under multiple pressures and provide both a unique perspective to managers and institutes, both regionally and globally, looking for relevant or comparative information.

Call for papers

Sea, Port, City 2017

Aberdeen, Scotland 11-15 September 2017

Web: <http://www.sea-port-city.org/spc2017.html>



This international island and maritime studies conference concerns marine urbanism and sea, port, city processes worldwide, past and present. The conference will feature academic, industrial, and governmental perspectives on maritime systems, cultures and traditions, politics, history, clusters, operations, economics, logistics, environmental issues, and infrastructures.

In order to understand human interactions with the ocean, it is necessary to take an integrated view of terrestrial and marine urbanism. How does a harbour develop into a port? How do ports interact with cities? How do offshore activities influence onshore life? Is urbanisation of the sea on the increase? What roles do small towns and large cities play in the global network of port processes? Sea, Port, City will consider these questions and more, discussing such topics as shipping and transport logistics, offshore cultures, port operations, fishing supply chains, the sea-port-city interface, maritime technologies, offshore energy, social dynamics in maritime communities, and climate change and the environment.

Sea, Port, City is a research network under Island Dynamics. Network partners include the University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute; University College London's Institute for Risk & Disaster Reduction and Institute for Global Health; and Zhejiang University's Ocean College.

About Aberdeen: Aberdeen (population 229,000) is among the UK's most important port cities, formerly a major fishing port and today centre of the country's offshore energy activities. Although it was the development of the North Sea oil industry that revived the city's fortunes in the 1970s, Aberdeen has a venerable history. From the majestic architecture of Old Aberdeen to the imposing monuments of the city centre to the cloistered fishing village of Footdee to the industrial harbour at the mouth of the River Dee, Aberdeen is a city of surprises – at once the cultural and economic capital of Northeast Scotland and this region's gateway to the wider world.

About the conference: 11-12 September are devoted to tours around Aberdeen city, harbour, and the surrounding area. 13-15 September will feature conference presentations by delegates and invited speakers. Presentations will be held at the University of Aberdeen.

How to make a presentation: Conference presentations will concern all aspects of sea, port, city processes. Presentations are invited from academic researchers, policymakers and government representatives, the business community, and NGOs. The deadline for abstracts is 31 March 2017, but to ensure that you have the opportunity to seek funding from your institution or government, we recommend that you early.

You can submit your abstract here: <http://www.sea-port-city.org/spc2017/cfp.html>

For more information, contact convenor Adam Grydehøj at agrydehoj@islanddynamics.org

Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos 2016: Hong Kong

By Ilan Kelman

Coastal cities tend to have harbours, as do islands. A “fragrant harbour” would seem to be an ideal location for combining urban studies and island studies. Which is exactly what we had for the Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos 2016 conference, held from 7-12 March in Hong Kong.

Impressively organised and generously hosted by the [School of English](#) and [Department of Geography](#) at the University of Hong Kong, the conference is the second in the series conceived by Adam Grydehøj's [Island Dynamics](#). The [Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos](#) network has served as a hub for those studying cities on islands, islands of cities, islands in cities, cities comprising islands, islands comprising cities, and all other city-island combinations. The outcomes are explored theoretically and empirically through the journal [Urban Island Studies](#).

The first conference, in October 2014, kicked off the network in Copenhagen, an island capital city. Both the Hong Kong and Copenhagen conferences were remarkable for their interdisciplinarity, with presentations from planners, architects, engineers, artists, musicians, sociologists, folklorists, and geographers amongst many other disciplines. We were all brought together by a common interest in exploring the intersection of urbanity and islandness.

In Hong Kong, the parallel sessions were expertly framed by the keynote speakers arriving from four continents. From a film about Pacific cultures encountering climate change through to greening island cities for sustainability, we received a tour of the world from their insights.

Sadly, one keynote was to be one of John Urry's last talks. He enthralled us with the terrifying amount of wealth secretly offshored to island city locations—just weeks before the Panama Papers hit international headlines. Days after departing from Hong Kong, having doled out his typical inspiration and generous advice, John passed away.

Despite the fascinating presentations and engaging discussions, our time was not spent just sitting down. The conference's official opening and closing were flanked by full-day field trips exploring the venue's island and city traits.

First, a boat tour of Hong Kong's Container Port brought us up close to the giant cargo ships and many islands within the harbour. The conference ended with a bus and walking tour of the New Territories, providing a sharp contrast to the water-based experiences. Several of us stayed an extra day for a stroll around Macau.

Other field trips included a Kowloon walking tour kindly given by local expert Ian Ho-yin Fong from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a gorgeous sunset boat ride to Lamma Island for a fresh seafood dinner (with plenty of tasty vegetarian options as well). Adding in a cohort of student volunteers always on hand and a lunch-time theatre performance from university students and staff meant that the conference engaged with local flavour and flair ensuring that we felt part of the location, not just outsiders gawking through a conference lens.

The same energy, excitement, and creativity is already taking shape for the next Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos conference, to be held in [Madeira from 8-12 November 2017](#). Your interest might be Mumbai or St. John's; you might hail from Nuuk or Hobart; or you might just enjoy the intellectual and practical challenges of urban islands. No matter what your discipline, background, or work, come and enjoy mingling and exchanging with others who seek to connect cities and islands.



The old and new of Hong Kong's harbour. Photo: Ilan Kelman



Local conference host Dr Otto Heim, University of Hong Kong. Photo: Ilan Kelman

Island Literature: A Reading List

By Danielle Redd

Many novels are set on islands both real and imaginary. Historically speaking, western authors have tended to view the “desert island” as a *tabula rasa*, an empty signifier which they can inscribe with their own ideologies. For this reason, the island setting plays host to a variety of literary

genres. Several examples include romantic fantasies of seclusion, horror stories in which the bounds of the island prevent escape, and most famously in Western literature, the trope of the Robinsonade: desert island survival stories in which castaways (often a solitary male) are washed onto the tropical island's shores, and take ownership of it.

A lot of novels serve to reinforce the stereotypical island tropes: “small”, “tropical”, “isolated”, “backwards”; a permissive, empty space inviting (masculine) colonization. These stereotypes persist not only in western literature, but also through travel brochures and television shows such as *Survivor*. Even typing the word “island” into google image search produces a homogenous series of photographs of small islands with verdant interiors, bordered with white beaches and unpolluted, azure seas. However, there are many more novels that are writing “back” against these stereotypes, providing readers with diverse representations of islands.

I would like to share a list of five island novels I believe are doing just that. All of them challenge one or more of the stereotypes shown above, but they also make for entertaining and compelling reads. I have tried to ensure that I have included islands based in different locations (although, due to the fact my PhD research centres round cold water fictions, two have been written by UK authors). Some of the novels in the island are geographically real, some are imagined – most are a mixture of both. In no particular order, here they are:

***Foe*, J M Coetzee (1986)**

In one of the most famous postcolonial rewritings of *Robinson Crusoe*, by the South African Nobel prizewinning author J M Coetzee, a woman named Susan Barton finds herself shipwrecked on Crusoe's island. Friday is presented as the mute victim of trauma, and Crusoe as a tired anachronism. After being rescued, Susan is left taking care of Friday in England. Whilst he stays stubbornly silent, despite her best efforts at getting him to communicate, she narrates her experiences to the novelist Daniel Foe, who seems intent upon rewriting them into a story about her relationship with her daughter, because ‘the island is not a story in itself...by itself it is no better than a waterlogged boat drifting day after day in an empty ocean.’ This is a powerful, metafictional allegory about racial and gender divides; about who has the right to tell a story.

The Fear of Losing Eurydice, Julieta Campos (1975, translated into English 1993)

I am on a personal crusade to make sure that as many people as possible read and study Julieta Campos, a Cuban born, French educated, Mexico-based writer, whom I believe has received insufficient critical attention in Europe. The *Fear of Losing Eurydice* is an experimental novel, composed of fragments of lyrical, hallucinatory prose, which describes the descent into isomania of a character known only as Monsieur N. The reader navigates the text not by following a linear plot but by tracing the metaphorical significance of the many island images and symbols that emerge, disappear and recur throughout the text. The text both challenges the stereotypes imposed upon islands, referring to them as ‘palimpsests’ comprised of multiple ‘invisible readings,’ and highlights the inherent difficulties and dangers of constructing utopias.

Crusoe’s Daughter, Jane Gardam (1985)

Crusoe’s Daughter is a bildungsroman set in Edwardian Britain, which follows the life of Polly Flint. She is sent to live in seclusion with her spinster Aunts, where she remains for the duration of her life. Polly’s favourite novel is *Robinson Crusoe*, and as she reads and rereads it, the events of the twentieth century unfold rapidly around her. *Crusoe* becomes, in her own words, ‘a spiritual biography,’ a text that inspires and consoles her as she comes to terms with her own solitude and enislement. The book is by turns poignant and comic, as Polly Flint compares her ‘condition,’ often unfavourably, to *Crusoe*’s: ‘He was a man of course, so it would be easier. He didn’t have blood pouring out of himself every four weeks. He would never feel disgusting.’

A Summer of Drowning, John Burnside (2012)

Liv and her mother Angelika live on Kvaløya, an island in the Arctic Circle, a land of twenty-four-hour winter darkness and summers of ‘endless, mind-stopping white nights of insomnia and wild imaginings’. Liv narrates the events that unfolded one summer in her teenage years, which begins when two of her classmates drown. Liv becomes convinced that their death was the result of the mysterious female spirit, the *huldra*, and as the story unfolds, she becomes convinced that another classmate, Maia, possesses malevolent, supernatural qualities. Is Liv’s mind playing tricks on her or are there really ‘infinitesimal loopholes of havoc in the fabric of reality that could spill loose and find you’? I loved this novel for its ability to consistently subvert expectations, its unconventional and self-sufficient female characters, and the lyrical descriptions of the liminal

spaces of Kvaløya, ‘a complex puzzle of light and movement, an endlessly shifting maze of grey and silver and salt-blue.’

Heaven’s Edge, Romesh Gunesekera (2002)

This novel is set in the near future on an unnamed tropical island (representative of Sri Lanka), with a ‘past choked with wars, disputes, borders as pointless as chalk lines in water.’ It follows Marc, who journeys to the island where his Grandfather was born and where, years later, his father died, ‘looking for something. My lost soul, perhaps’. Instead of the paradise he envisaged he meets a local woman, Uva, who insists on showing him the dark underside of an island community shattered by the effects of both ecological disaster and the uneasy “peace” enforced by a brutal military regime: ‘I want you to see what they do to control us.’ The love story is quickly cut short when Uva must flee the military, and Marc is detained. He manages to escape, and after a journey marked with bloodshed and horror, he eventually locates her, but ‘too many deaths had blotched our separate lives to allow for a simple return to our beginnings.’

Islands Are Good to Tinker With

By Eva-Maria Knoll - Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna.

Which country was the first to produce floating solar panels? A small tropical island country, we might guess, located perhaps in the Caribbean or the Indian Ocean where the abundance of sunshine meets geographical island limitation. Wrong guess! Of all places in the world, it is Austria – an 8.7 million country, land-locked in central Europe, pioneered in floating photovoltaic solutions for bounded island space.

A holiday trip to the Maldives inspired Martin Putschek, an Austrian Solar Entrepreneur, to tinker with the high-in-sun-scarce-in-space problematic. In cooperation with the Vienna University of Technology and the Fraunhofer Institute in Germany he launched the world’s first sea-floating solar power plant and founded

the company Swimsol. In 2014 the first 15m by 15m floating platform with 112 solar panels was anchored in the sandy lagoon of Four Seasons, one of the iconic Maldivian luxurious resort islands. It has reduced the annual carbon footprint of this resort by 35 tons of CO₂ emissions – an equivalent to 30 return flights from Europe to the Maldives. Further projects on Maldivian resort and local islands followed, and by 2016 this offshore eco-product is planned to be launched in French Polynesia.

The tiny low-lying coral islands of the Maldivian archipelago provided the perfect playground for this kind of developmental tinkering. Just think about the enormous daily consumption by the 109 posh resort islands with about 1.3 million tourists per year using AC to make the tropical heat endurable. Or consider the vulnerability of the approximately 200 inhabited islands. Electricity dependent when it comes to cooling, lightening, the processing of drinking water and so on, the 380,000 Maldivian islanders have to rely on costly diesel imports. In turn, these depend on world market pricing. Not to mention the annoying sound of a diesel generator on small, densely populated island ground. With a 300-to-one sea-to-land-ratio and with only 33 of the about 200 inhabited islands larger than 3 square km the Maldivian archipelago is characterized by an outstanding limitation of solid ground – but the islands are surrounded by vast lagoons of calm waters.

A lot of tinkering was necessary to make “Swimsol Lagoon” sea-water corrosion-resistant and resilient towards currents and waves up to 2 meters. This eco-friendly solution produces energy which is less expensive than the conventional diesel-generated electricity and comes along with an alternative financing system provided by Swimsol enterprise: savings in energy costs are used to pay back the loans required for acquisition costs.

So far, what is missing in this astonishing linkage between a landlocked country and a tropical island world is the point of view of the islanders. What value do Maldivians ascribe to energy, local resources, technological innovation, sustainability and the view of the lagoon? What is the local understanding of saving and wasting energy?

What a rewarding research field for a social anthropologist with an interest in island studies. I hope I can contribute to that in the near future.



Swimsol Lagoon platform in front of Gili Lankanfushi, a resort island in North Male Atoll



96 kWh solar system of Dharavandhoo, a 1,3 x 0,48 km local island in Baa Atoll with around 2000 inhabitants



Swimsol's employee Akram Ali carrying out maintenance work on a rooftop

All photos by courtesy of Swimsol: <http://swimsol.com/>

Islands are about more than Isolation

by Adam Grydehøj

The other day, I was talking with Rosie about Rendall. ‘And what would that be?’ you well may ask.

It would be a place you’ve not heard of. Though it’s on an island, so I suppose you should’ve done. Rendall’s south of Evie, which is where Rosie bides. And Evie’s in the middle of nowhere, so Rendall must be just ever so slightly more somewhere than that.

Which makes Rendall less of an island place than Evie, I guess.

But you see, I used to bide up in Rendall myself. Just three months, mind. Not for ages. But three months’ plenty to get a feel for a place like Rendall when all you’re doing is huddling in some little cottage, not seeing anyone.

Which isn’t quite true. For I saw people once a week when I went down the road and caught a ride into Kirkwall for my shopping.

First time, I didn’t catch a ride. I tried to walk it. I made it as far as Finstown, which is just nearly half as far as necessary, but a good two hours on the go notwithstanding. And I bought some biscuits and other things to put in my pack, then off home I went. (All I remember, frankly, is the caramel shortbread, which I’d not seen before ever, savage that I was.) And on the way home, a fellow picked me in his car, and it’s from then on that I’d ride into town once a week. Finstown not being a ‘town’ precisely.

But other than that. Other than that, I was alone in my little cottage. There wasn’t much in the way of light or heat. No TV. No radio. Once I dreamed I woke up, and there was Jesus standing outside the window, hollowed black eyes, heavy big black crown of thorns on his head. (But that doesn’t really count as seeing someone, I guess.) And once I’d a dream about seals and a little dead seal skeleton, which I’ve relocated to Shetland and put in my novel, that’s how much it impressed itself upon me. But otherwise, there I was, all alone.

Every day, I’d get up in the mornings and seat myself at the little table in the sitting room to do some writing or reading or whatnot. It took not many mornings before the cows started waiting for me beyond the fence outside. When I’d come out into the sitting room and look out the window, I’d see the cows all lined up, staring at the window, just waiting. And soon as they saw me, they’d start lowing and would keep at it for a bit before returning to their business in the fields. It’s must be a boring life, that, being a cow. But not lonely, precisely, for they at least have each other.

And later that every day, sometimes in the winter darkness of it, I’d go down to the shore, and I’d follow the coast, looking out to Shapinsay and the lights of Kirkwall beyond, blinking out there in the far off, some great enormous cosmopolitan animal, in whose belly were heaped all the lovely pre-packaged foods that I could only get at once a week, on Saturdays, when I caught a ride into town, and my metaphor collapsed beneath the weight of its own heaving. And every

day, I'd walk along the shore out to the ruins of St Thomas, the husk of a kirk a way's up the coast – in the direction of Evie, if that helps get you oriented.

First day I descended onto that shore, there was a seal on the rocks, freshly dead. And that seal kept on being dead, just got deader, over the course of those three months, stinking like hell, flesh withdrawing away behind its teeth. Rotting, like, and all that time, I just needed to pass it on the way to St Thomas, then pass it again on the way back. Not that anyone ever said I needed to make that walk, to perform that circuit, unthinking and changeless, as the world changed around me, the season died, and what light I had got shorter, and the bottles of whisky I bought on the Saturday got to last less time.

Three months. I tell you.

I've no doubt my Rendall's more an island place than Rosie's Evie. She has a car. And she speaks to people. Evie's practically a big city if you look at it that way.

An island's a place that's isolated, removed from the hustle and bustle, so I'm told. It stops being an island if you build a bridge to it. In fact, it stops being an island if it depends on other places for food and electricity and money and that. An island needs to be cut off if it's to remain an island. Except for tourists. Tourists don't count. You can have as many tourists as you please and still be an island, just so long as they visit you in order to be isolated and give you their tourist money so that you have enough cash to ensure you never become dependent on outsiders. It's the principle that counts.

But see, I don't believe it. You'll not be telling me that my Rendall was more an island place than Rosie's Evie. Rosie's Evie has life in it. It's a place you can love. It's the kind of place that makes you want to study and visit island communities. And the fact that you can get from there down to Kirkwall by car in a fraction of the time it would've taken me to trudge from Rendall to Finstown (Finstown!) makes it no less an island place for all that. Kirkwall, see, that has a supermarket, that has connections, that has ferries. That's the Big Bad Wolf with its prepackaged curries and its direct line to Aberdeen. But you'll not be telling me that Kirkwall isn't an island sort of place.

'Now, hold on,' someone (not you, obviously) might be saying, 'that's just you being extreme, Adam. We don't want uninhabited islands. We just don't want your island cities (<http://www.islandcities.org>) – Manhattan, Busan, Mumbai, Stockholm, Singapore. Those aren't *real* islands.'

Of course. That someone just wants to keep islands special, keep them as they are. Locked in the past? No, no. Just special, without all of that electricity network and imported water and off-island caramel shortbread and off-island ideas and that. Unless a place is already connected, already has all those things, maybe. In which case, we've no choice but to remove them. That's how to keep the island special, that is.

That's how to keep an island so that someday every last one of the islanders dies or moves away. And an island's a place that's isolated, removed from the hustle and bustle, so I'm told.

But it's a funny thing. In the past, islands weren't actually stuck in the past. That's a new thing. That's an innovation. In the past, islands weren't always the most up-to-date places by mainland standards, but they were always in the present. They might not have always had the best connections, but by God, that's not because those islanders didn't *want* to be able to have connections elsewhere. It's not like they *wanted* to hole themselves up in their little specks of rock in the stormy sea. They'd have loved curries in plastic trays. And if they ate those curries (as long as they kept eating their rustic island diets alongside), and if they went to town for shopping (as long as they also bought and bartered local), and if they were occasionally influenced by foreign fashions and experience (as long as they localised them and made them their own), who could really blame them?

Not me. Live and let live, I say.

But to do that, first you need to live.

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Shetland, Summer 2013

A REVIEW OF SIX APPROACHES TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

By Colin S. Mellor (Consultant Economist/Engineer/Planner)

1. Introduction

Since around the 1970s, many small island territories have secured independence from their former colonial powers, such as the United Kingdom, Portugal, Netherlands, France and Denmark. Not surprisingly, this led to considerable interest in the broad topic of how best to build socio-economic development in such small island developing states (SIDS). This brief review discusses six socio-economic “models” which have emerged in these circumstances, and attempts to draw some conclusions.

2. A J Dolman: “Islands in the Shade”

Dolman was a prolific author, with a broad range of interests. He was very much a planner, both spatial and economic, along the lines of the French concept of *planification*. Dolman was English, though he lived in the Netherlands. Sadly, he left us at far too early an age. His seminal work in this context, “Islands in the Shade” (1984), was a detailed global analysis of the different approaches that SIDS have used, and continue to use, to promote their socio-economic development. He was one of the first to refer to ‘microstates’ as a specific category of analysis. His work quickly became required reading for international development specialists grappling with the special challenges of socio-economic development in SIDS, and remains relevant to this day.

3. E K Fisk: Subsistence Affluence and Resource Limits

Fisk was also a prolific author in the period after the Second World War to the 1990s, though his key concepts in this context (subsistence affluence and the inherent resource limitations to the socio-economic development of SIDS), while widely known, are quite difficult to access readily. Fisk was English, though after much travel, he settled in Australia. He was essentially an economist, and was keenly interested in addressing the notion that appropriate economic policy could be used to achieve desired social outcomes. He also had a keen interest in agriculture, which possibly tempered his perennial focus on the resource limitations of SIDS. He lived a long and fulfilling life (albeit his final passing was under sad circumstances).

Fisk first encountered “subsistence affluence” in the Highlands Region of Papua New Guinea; he was engaged at the time to study the economy of PNG, and his initial reaction was that there was no “economy” to speak of as, in the main, nobody in the Highlands used money at that time. And yet, by and large, the people in the Highlands seemed well-fed, and lived vigorous lives, albeit some of their spare time was spent battling with their neighbours. Fisk then developed the concept of subsistence affluence, primarily in the context of the Pacific Islands Region, though the concept can be applied globally (and is not unique to small islands). What this concept implies is that, even in the most resource-scarce islands, it may be possible to enjoy reasonable health and material living standards based on a subsistence lifestyle, from readily available fish, coconuts, pigs and poultry, root crops, and so on. As such, the concept puts a safety net under the

vast bulk of the population, and conventional unemployment, abject poverty, and starvation, become largely unknown.

Fisk's second contribution was focused on the inherent resource limitations of SIDS, such as land shortages, little or no mineral wealth, and even very little potable water in some instances (especially for atoll nations). He developed three categories of SIDS, namely "fully furnished" (such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), "partly furnished" (such as Tonga and Samoa), and "unfurnished" (such as the low-lying atoll nations of Maldives, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Marshall Islands). The clear implication was that approaches to socio-economic development of SIDS had to be tailor-made to suit significantly different resource endowments and limitations.

4. I G Bertram and R F Watters: The MIRAB Model

The MIRAB model grew out of work commissioned by the New Zealand Government to review its policy to four of its small island neighbours (Cook Islands, Niue, Tuvalu, and Kiribati) in 1984. The model is an acronym for **M**igration, **R**emittances, **A**id, and **B**ureaucracy. More whimsical observers were inclined to relabel it as MIRAGE (with **G**overnment **E**xpenditure, replacing **B**ureaucracy). Both its ideators, Geoff Bertram and Ray Watters were geographers, and when the model emerged in the mid-1980s, some observers simply dismissed it as a fancy acronym with little or no socio-economic substance. To be sure, there are many issues involved, such as the real ease of migration, the actual behaviour of remittance patterns over time, the tangible availability of aid in the longer-term, given "donor fatigue", and the doubtful reality of the prospects for funding bureaucracy/government expenditure on an open-ended basis for a small island developing state. One of the key features of a MIRAB economy is its ability to explain the seemingly contradictory co-existence and continuation of Gross National Expenditure (GNE) exceeding Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Despite its initial detractors, the MIRAB model has remained remarkably resilient, and by now has been applied globally. Bertram in particular (1999, 2006) has revisited the model, and seemingly strengthened its socio-economic credentials and standing. Oberst and McElroy (2007) have argued that the MIRAB model has dominated the small island economy literature for two decades (1985-2005). However, since 2005, two further models have emerged, as discussed below.

5. G Baldacchino: The PROFIT Model

Baldacchino, from Malta/Canada, is a highly prolific author and well-known to many readers of this ISISA publication. His PROFIT model (2006) combined the notions of **P** (people considerations); **R** (resource management); **O** (overseas engagement); **FI** (finance, insurance, and taxation); and **T** (transportation). Baldacchino described his model as surely no less "fancy yet meaningless" than MIRAB, but useful as a title for another pole of the strategic menu. "PROFIT economies would differ from their MIRAB neighbours by being more interested in: (i) a shrewd immigration and cyclical migration policy; (ii) engaging in tough external negotiations concerning the use of local mineral, natural, political and other imaginative resources; (iii) securing and controlling viable means of transportation; and (iv) luring foreign direct investment via very low/no taxes". Relative to MIRAB economies, PROFIT ones would display more niche manufacturing and resource management; a diplomacy driven by procedural considerations rather than a direct quest for aid; a low reliance on aid and remittances to sustain local incomes; and strong financial services provision (Baldacchino, 2006).

6. J L McElroy: The SITE Model

At about the same time (2006), US economist Jerome L McElroy developed his SITE model, being an acronym for **S**mall **I**sland **T**ourist **E**conomies. At one level, SITE is simply a recognition that some small island economies have benefited greatly in socio-economic terms by focusing on tourism development as a source of wealth. Typical examples are Fiji, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Maldives and Seychelles. In turn, Bertram (2006) proposed a “three-way taxonomy” linking the MIRAB, PROFIT, and SITE models.

Nevertheless, there are some surprising dimensions in all this, such as the extent to which the small island developing state is truly independent. Broadly, many island states may find it more difficult to promote international tourism, compared to those which retain some form of linkage to their major source markets in developed countries. A classic case in point is Cook Islands, which remains in “free association” with New Zealand, and uses New Zealand currency and passports, and yet retains quite a few of the trappings typically associated with a fully independent island state, such as being a separate member of the Asian Development Bank. Its main tourism source market is New Zealand, no doubt in part due to the ease of access into Cook Islands for New Zealanders, and the use of the same currency.

7. Fortunate Accidents of History: The Dot TV Phenomenon in Tuvalu

A final “model” refers to seemingly random happenstance, which has led to good fortune in some SIDS. One striking example is that of Tuvalu and its Dot TV phenomenon (G Baldacchino and C S Mellor, 2015). There are other such instances, such as massive deposits of valuable natural phosphates in several Pacific Island nations, including Kiribati and Nauru. In the former case, Ocean Island (Banaba) was mined to exhaustion, but much of the proceeds was invested in the wisely managed Kiribati Trust Fund, and remains a financial resource for the country until this day. In contrast, Nauru had major valuable deposits as well, but profligate spending and unwise investment expenditures, have largely, if not totally, eliminated this financial windfall for Nauru.

The Tuvalu Dot TV phenomenon is a long and fascinating tale. In brief, when internet country domain names were allocated in the 1980s, the country acquired exclusive ownership of the domain name “.tv”. In time, the commercial value of this pure accident of history was recognized, and Tuvalu reaps sizeable financial benefits until this day from this fortuitous event.

8. Conclusion

Given this plethora of economic models and examples, what can we conclude in general on the socio-economic development prospects for SIDS? Some ideas follow:

(i) Socio-economic development prospects depend clearly on the socio-economic level of the island(s) concerned, which in turn is related to their population, economic resources, location, history, etc;

(ii) There is a strong conclusion that islands should focus on what they already do well, and not get led astray by the numerous, "get rich quick schemes", often peddled (such as nuclear power in Tonga!);

(iii) Some islands have done well by specialization, such as in tourism, shipping, specialist agriculture (such as ingredients for perfume, in the case of Comoros), fisheries, pearls, philatelic and numismatic products, offshore banking, legal tax minimization services and other financial services;

(iv) Others have benefited by exporting skilled labour (such as maritime workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu);

(v) Yet others have benefited from "accidents of history"; for example, Tuvalu (formerly Ellice Islands) has made a fortune by renting out their allocated internet domain name (".tv") to international interests;

(vi) Others have "benefited" financially from allowing others to use their territory for various purposes, such as for prisons, military bases and rocket ranges, bomb testing, rocket launching and satellite tracking, phone sex sites, casinos and related services, and so on;

(vii) Many island nations benefit from remittances from islanders who have moved to more developed, mainland countries; and

(viii) Last, but not least, many islands "benefit" from funding received from the international aid regime, in all its manifestations.

On a final note, the "wild card" in all this is the ongoing impacts of climate change, which are already a key concern for many small island nations, and these concerns are bound to be magnified as time goes on.

Comments on this brief paper are most welcome, to: niloc84@yahoo.co.uk.

Migration and development in the Maldives

By Muna Mohamed

In 1879 H.C.P Bell, the ex-archeologist commissioner for Ceylon(now Sri Lanka) at the request of the Sri Lankan government, visited the Maldives for the “purpose of investigating pre-existence of Buddhism”. Bell visited the Maldives again in 1920 and 1922. The result of his investigations is a report on history, archaeology, and epigraphy of the Maldivian islands. The demographic information in the report shows the total population of Maldives in 1921 to be 70,413; of which only 8.7% were living in capital island Male’.

Population of Atolls of Maldives: 1921

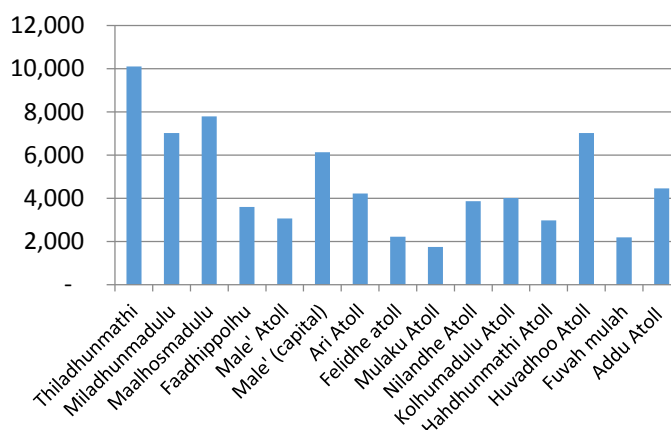
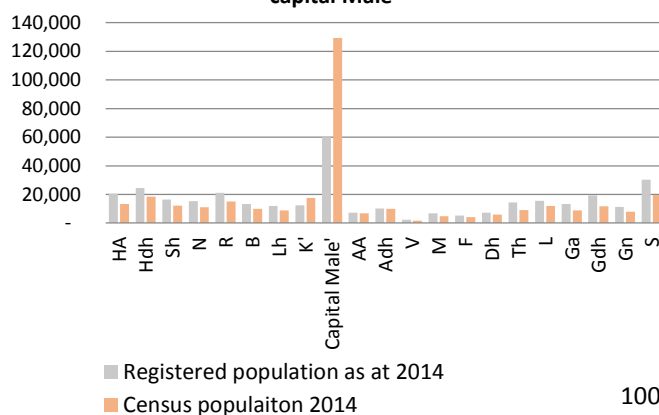


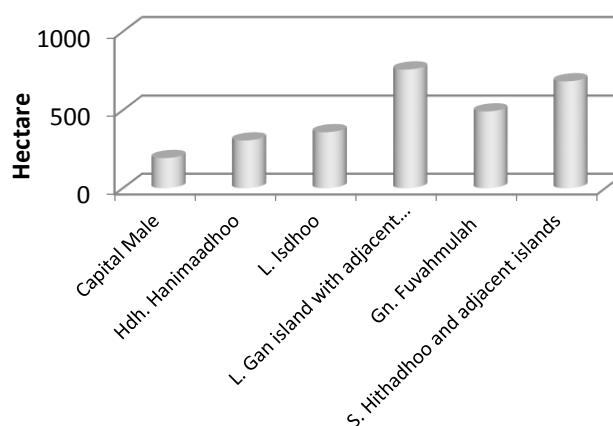
Figure1: Population 2014: Atolls of Maldives and capital Male'



129,381 locals living in the island city, 53% are migrants from other islands living in temporary accommodation, often paying 85% of their income on rent as per Human Rights Commission of the Maldives². The fact that, even people from largest atolls like Thiladhunmathi, Addu, and islands like

94 years after Bell, Census result of the Maldives in 2014 showed that population living in the atolls of Maldives are declining (Figure 1) with an average of 23% outflow. The destination of most migrants seems to be capital Male' making it the **world's most congested city, with more than 65,201 persons per km²¹**. Of the population of

Figure 2: Largest islands of Maldives compared to capital Male'



¹ Census 2014 summary tables, page 21, National bureau of statistics Maldives

² <http://www.hrcm.org.mv/publications/otherreports/HousingAssessmentReportEnglish.pdf>

Laamu Gan, Hanimaadhoo, Fuvahmulah ([Figure 2](#)) with so much potential, migrating to live in much smaller capital Male' is worrying.



Male': Pic: Facebook: Ashwa Faheem

As a solution to the problem, successive governments started building more housing units in Male city, followed by massive expenditure for reclamation of lagoons in Hulhumale' to make a satellite city adjacent to it.

However, UN special repertoire for Housing Raquel Rolnik³ in 2010 stated that the main problem in the Maldives is not lack of housing, but rather the absence of "urban" or city level facilities in parts of Maldives except Male'. With such policy advice many expected that the state would focus on equitable development of island communities with emphasis on regions. However, the Finance minister Mr. Abdulla Jihad in his budget speech for 2016 announced that Hulhumale (the satellite island of Male') is been developed to facilitate migration of 70% of Maldivians⁴! *Already 1/3 is living in the small capital*

island Male' making it one the world's most congested cities. The announcement came in the midst of controversy over constitutional amendment (Article 251), allowing foreign ownership of land for the first time in the history of Maldives. At this critical juncture honest open debate and dialogue about future policy options for Maldivians towards sustainable equitable development is urgently needed to address uncertainties over the future of the country.



Ibrahim Asad, Maldives

³[Special Rapporteur on adequate housing Raquel Rolnik \(2010\).](#)

⁴ Finance minister submits record MVR27bn budget for 2016

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