Where Green Turns to Gold: Strip Cultivation and the Gold Coast Hinterland

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Abstract: The social and cultural relationships between a rapidly expanding coastal tourist city (the Gold Coast) and its hinterland are explored through the analysis of local media representations.

Key terms: Gold Coast, hinterland, demographic change, community, Tamborine Mountain

Introduction

'There's gold in them thar hills'. This is the front-page headline in the Gold Coast *Weekend Bulletin*, August 15-16, 1998. The hills are the Gold Coast hinterland and the gold is tourist gold. The accompanying story is about new Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation chief, Terry Jackman, exhorting Gold Coast tourist operators to 'hammer its hinterland attractions - and not its beaches - if it is to become a favourite holiday destination for Europeans and Americans'. Mr Jackman, himself a Gold Coast businessman and 'Indy' chairman, 'said nature walks, waterfalls and national parks held the key to the region's future'. The headline is a nice little play on words. Local readers would have already been hit, if not hammered, by the tourist slogan 'the green behind the gold' in earlier attempts to incorporate the hinterland into Gold Coast tourism packages. The Jackman story gave the hinterland an extra boost and since then the rhetoric of tourist operators and media alike has kept the hinterland tourist experience on the boil. Such rhetoric was put to use by the developers and supporters of the Naturelink Cableway as they argued for the compatibility of green and gold against the cableway's green-only opponents. The cableway, similar to the one operating at Cairns, would have traversed world heritage rainforest and created a major tourist development at Springbrook, a tiny village at the top of the range. The plan was rejected by the State government in 2000 because it involved commercial activities in a World Heritage-listed national park.[i]

This is not an article about greens versus developers, although they do make their appearance. It's mainly about the repercussions of population movements - movements of tourists and internal migrants impacting on the spaces and places that constitute the Gold Coast and 'its' hinterland, especially the hinterland. Note the quotation marks around 'its' in the previous sentence. I realised only after I'd written it, minus quotation marks, how much meaning is wrapped up in that little word, more so perhaps than the green and gold already mentioned. There's a strong sense

in this word that the Gold Coast possesses or owns and thereby controls that region and has the power to influence or even dictate how it is to be envisaged or identified by the rest of the world. Why, then, are the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney called the Blue Mountains and rarely, if ever, the Sydney hinterland? Does this mean that the Blue Mountains have evolved a distinctive identity sufficient to extricate themselves from the naming rights of the Sydney metropolis?

Hinterlands and the 'cultural turn'

What I am interested in, therefore, is how a hinterland region and its people are written and spoken about, how they are identified, described, represented, imaged and imagined, and how all of that interacts with the way people envisage, represent and identify themselves and their region. In short, my approach is a cultural one based on an analysis of popular texts and discourses as they are produced mainly through mass media and advertising, including their localised manifestations. It is, I hope, a small contribution to the 'cultural turn' that has occurred over the past decade or so in both urban and rural studies in which traditional quantitative analysis of population statistics and functionalist descriptions of social groups and classes have been supplemented, and in some cases overtaken, by a greater attention to the symbolic functions of words and images as they construct imagined communities and collective identities.[2]

This is not to suggest that the work of those who put in the hard yards tracking population shifts and trends or conducting exhaustive ethnographic fieldwork is not a valuable resource for the cultural studies of place. And real people move from one real place to another with all kinds of real consequences for themselves and others. Nevertheless, the cultural studies approach is concerned with how perceptions of reality are mediated and inflected through symbolic representation in which the mass media play a key role. This, however, does not necessarily preclude ethnographic research into how people perceive and imagine their own and others' place in the world, or the application and examination of statistical data.

This article is a very exploratory dipping of the toe into these waters as they pertain to movements of people, past and present, into hinterlands and how these people and hinterlands are represented and imagined. While focusing mainly on the Gold Coast hinterland, it is a tentative step towards a more theoretical appraisal of the meanings of hinterland, and the uses to which those meanings are put, within the social and cultural construction of place. Methodologically, it relies on the citation of recent Australian demographic research and its translations into journalistic discourse, the analysis of local newspaper reportage and real estate advertisements[3], and finally my own observations from the perspective of one who lives in the Gold Coast hinterland. Much of what follows remains rather speculative. It is, as they say, a work in progress.

The big picture: demographic change

A study of the Gold Coast and its hinterland can always begin with the axiomatic observation that they, like so many other coastal regions in Australia, are undergoing profound transformation due to demographic change and all its social, cultural and economic consequences. And these regions are bound to come under more pressure as demographic change intensifies. The changes are being monitored and studied mainly by social scientists (not to mention marketeers and real estate agents). They

are also being widely recognised and exploited in both the entertainment and news media because, I would suggest, audiences can identify with them not only at the experiential level of lifestyle and economic decision-making but also at the level of popular cultural and symbolic meanings and values. Indeed, so widely have these changes been canvassed and commented on that it hardly seems necessary to dwell on them. However, in dealing briefly with the big picture I will attempt to relate some of its brushstrokes to my own smaller hinterland canvas.

The big picture already has its title - Fleeing the City. In popular parlance it's the Sea Change phenomenon (see Murphy in this issue). Retirees are moving away from the city and spreading themselves along the (mainly) eastern seaboard. And a lot more - the baby boomer generation - are about to follow. The flow is not restricted to retirees, however. Working singles, couples and families are heading to the coasts, seeking employment in services, trades and professions generated and expanded by the arrival of retirees and growing tourist industries in the coastal towns, although surveys indicate that these migrants are more concerned with quality of life issues such as climate, health, recreation pursuits and better housing than they are with immediate employment prospects. Not all well-heeled retirees and professionals who do decide to move are migrating to the coasts. Many are heading to lofts and apartments and the cosmopolitan life in the ever-gentrifying inner cities where the word 'latte' is all that is required by journalists to describe their aspirations.

Nor are all those who leave the city well-heeled. Coastal towns and regions are attracting the urban poor - those who don't and won't benefit from the sale of urban property because they don't own urban property: the low-waged, the unemployed, and pensioners and other welfare recipients, including single parents. These 'battlers' are also motivated by quality of life issues as well as the incentive of lower housing costs or lower rents and the possibility for some of casual or part-time employment. Other ex-urban migrants who have been identified are those who seek varied forms of spiritual affinity with nature often associated with subsistence or non-materialist and anti-consumerist living: New Agers, ferals and reincarnated hippies. Spiritual connection with the land rather than with the sea per se is the hallmark of these migrants who have settled and formed communities mainly in hinterland regions of the NSW north coast, South East Queensland and Northern Queensland.[4]

New Age settlement in hinterland regions raises the issue of where hinterlands 'lie' - where and how they are positioned and what roles they play - within all those activities and practices that constitute population change and movement in Australia as well as the accompanying discourses that play their own constitutive role. Academic research into the coastal-migration phenomenon, when it does refer to hinterlands, seems content to merely add them as almost indistinguishable appendices to the coasts, the assumption being that they are experiencing the same kind of population changes and pressures as the coasts, although on a lesser scale.[5]

In the absence of specialist research focused on hinterlands, and relying on media attention to hinterland areas as well as personal observation, it would seem that hinterlands are indeed experiencing population changes and pressures although these are not always or necessarily equivalent to what is happening on the coasts. There is also the question of whether there are differences between popular perceptions of hinterlands and coasts and whether there might be contradictions and contestations between coastal and hinterland values and lifestyles and how these contradictions and contestations are played out. At the empirical demography level there are unanswered questions that could have some bearing on the above issues. For example, we know that there has been an increase in rural residential development in the north 'coast' of NSW (Edols-Meeves & Knox 1996). Is this due

mainly to in-migration from the cities or to out-migration from regional towns such as Lismore? Again, in the case of the Gold Coast hinterland, is population increase due to migration from the Gold Coast itself or from bigger urban centres - and to what extent might it be due to 'double-migration' from, say, Sydney-Melbourne to the Gold Coast and then to the hinterland?

Regardless of how useful this kind of statistical data may be for contextual purposes, what this article is mainly concerned with are the discursive practices, differences and contestations that both mark out the imaginary territory within and between coast and hinterland and contribute to the territorialising process that occurs when a more populous and powerful coastal city or town begins to eye off its rural or semi-rural neighbour.

The Gold Coast hinterland

First, a brief introduction to the Gold Coast hinterland. But already there are problems of definition and placement. There is no official or formal demarcation of city and hinterland that I am aware of. The city limits actually take in much of the inland mountain area where, for example, at Tamborine Mountain they form a boundary with the Beaudesert Shire. One is therefore left to vaguely general and unofficial or 'popular' perceptions of where the hinterland begins - perceptions gleaned from local media references such as 'them thar hills'. Such references indicate that the hinterland begins in the eastern foothills of the higher hills (or mountains) that run parallel to the coast and eight to ten kilometres inland.

The mountains are the Tamborine Plateau to the north, the Darlington and McPherson Ranges, and the Lamington group to the south. They are characterised by the following: large areas of thickly wooded forest including rainforest remnants (these make up the national parks); small pockets of cattle, dairy and small crop farming, small rural estates and rural holdings; semi-rural towns and villages with the biggest population centre at Tamborine Mountain (population about 5,000) followed by Canungra, Beechmont and Springbrook. Population is denser in the eastern foothills with rural estates and 'acreage' properties at Mudgeeraba, Tallai, Currumbin Valley, and the areas west of Nerang and Oxenford.

Strip cultivation

In his contribution to the *Gold Coast Urban Heritage and Character Study* - a section on architecture and planning - architect Philip Goad (1997) describes the urban formation of the Gold Coast as a series of linear strips or bands that run parallel to the ocean. These he identifies as the beach, the tower/residential coastal strip, the highway strip, the canal estates, the suburbs, and the semi-rural hinterland. This is a useful heuristic to begin an exploration of the Gold Coast and 'its' hinterland in terms of popular representations and perceptions of the built and natural environments within the basic nature-culture-nature matrix formed by these linear strips. Beginning at the eastern extremity we have a distinctive nature/culture binary with the ocean and the iconic highrises separated by the narrow strip of beach, although the view from the highrises is very much towards the natural zone of the ocean. The highway strip is the least 'natural' strip with its hotel-motel-shopping mall-drive-in constructions. Then, from the canal strip to the hinterland strip, culture becomes sporadically focused on community, while nature gradually begins to assert itself (or rather nature is increasingly asserted by means of cultural symbolism) until the

tourist/traveller/migrant both physically and figuratively arrives at the nature-weighted and mediated hinterland. The movement of population inland towards the hinterland is accompanied by an increasing degree of nature image-making, but these images represent a regulated and controlled nature that is to be consumed effortlessly along with other lifestyle advantages and products.

The following will illustrate. A large glossy insert in the *Weekend Bulletin* advertising town centre living at Robina in the suburban strip tells potential buyers what they have supposedly told the Robina Corporation about their lifestyle needs. Besides wanting to live 'within walking distance of everything' and with increased security and in a 'real community', new home buyers 'want private botanical gardens to relax in - but you don't want to maintain them yourself'. As well, 'You've told us you want to be in town, but also surrounded by nature, with paths and parks and waterways alive with birds', and 'Your ideal home would have a lot of outdoor space that you can bring inside'. Here is nature delivered to the front door as a product, a suburban nature without the tedious yard maintenance of traditional suburban living. In another advertisement for the Robina Land Corporation 'a leading academic at Griffith University' explains that 'in new communities getting to know your neighbours and generating friendship will lead to support systems and social networks similar to those which exist in for instance small country towns or communities where people have lived for three or four generations'. Overcoming the contradictions, Robina promotional discourse reconciles and merges contemporary suburban preoccupation with security and privacy, and the myth (one among many) of the close-knit but open and friendly rural township or community.

In the same advertisement a lecturer in organisation and community relations at Griffith University declares the Gold Coast to be at the 'cutting edge of community development in Australia'. Well, gated and privately policed community development perhaps. The lecturer continues: 'New communities such as those forming on the Coast cut across age, class, status, educational, racial and cultural divides, and that's what makes it so very interesting'. What makes it so interesting is that the new Gold Coast communities like Robina are middle-class suburbs (one hesitates to use the Americanised term enclaves) where land-house packages start at around a quarter of a million dollars and the main 'divide' is whether you're a heavily-mortgaged young professional couple or a cashed-up retiree from Sydney or Melbourne. Gold Coast communities that do cut across the divides of age, class and race in interesting and paradoxical ways are those that cut across the 'denatured' coastal and highway strips at the traditional urban centres of Southport and Coolangatta or where the old cheap-rental six-pack and walk-up units still survive in the shadows of the ritzy highrises.

Moving on, the academic cultural tourist comes to the last strip - the semi-rural hinterland. I believe this strip can be further divided into inner and outer strips. The inner strip of the foothills takes in rural residential developments of the Gold Coast while the outer strip of national parks, 'authentic' nature and small towns and villages is identified and portrayed in terms of tourist weekend and day trip visits from the Gold Coast rather than as a Gold Coast residential zone. Land is relatively cheap on the inner strip, and as the Gold Coast population continues to rise, suburban estates of modest pretensions are emerging in pockets throughout the strip. Bigger houses, some of them immense, are taking up their positions along the eastern ridges that command views of the coast.[6] Another salient characteristic of inner strip development are the planned rural estates and the bigger individual rural residentials or 'acreages' whose acme is surely reached by the many mansions seductively offered as prizes Australasia-wide in the glossy brochures of the art

unions. In the hyperbole of real estate advertising these stunning 'heritage' properties provide prestige rural living in 'parklike' acres where rurality, nature and sophisticated living combine to create majestic effects bordering on the sublime and, more often than not, the ridiculous.[7] 'Authentic' natural environments within the inner strip figure more prominently in the copywriter's art, although they remain outnumbered by images of parkland and organised rural activity centred on equine pursuits (definitely room for a pony) and boutique cropping of fruit and nuts.

Security is the catchcry for highrise and suburban estate development, but the effective application of technical security measures poses something of a problem for rural and semi-rural properties. The sales and promotional literature for these properties therefore emphasises privacy and seclusion over security. 'Neighbours. What neighbours?' asks an advertisement for Somerset Meadows, the implication being who wants or needs neighbours? [Figure 1] Absence of neighbours, at least close neighbours, is advocated as a desirable condition in life. This presents something of a paradox because one might expect that an advantage of a rural estate would be the dependability of neighbours in providing mutual security. Indeed, I would contend that further population movement and accompanying statistics and perceptions of crime in semi-rural areas will see rural estates relying more on the rhetoric and imagery of security and protection currently

Figure 1

concentrated on suburban estates. Meanwhile, the emphasis on privacy and the privatised gaze over one's parklike acres in the rural lifestyle hinterland inner strip downplays any notion of community which again differs from suburban estate discourse and again, paradoxically, disavows a popular myth of traditional rural and small town life.

Crime and the fringe dweller

Questions surrounding crime have followed population movement towards the hinterlands where they hover indeterminately. Those migrants who have fled the city for fear of crime and who follow media accounts of non-urban crime may well be carrying that fear with them. There are discernible differences and distinctions, however. The pinpointing of rural crimes in certain areas such as mid to far-western NSW suggests the spatialising of rural crime as much as urban crime, and the emergence of low crime rural areas which may offer the hope of safe-havens for those who worry about such matters. Whether hinterlands afford safe-havens, real or imagined, is a matter for further research. Nevertheless, the reporting of hinterland crime suggests that the media are beginning to create a number of identifiable crime images and/or stereotypes focusing on criminals hiding out from and evading other criminals and police, drug production and distribution, and domestic violence including murderous outbreaks perpetrated within a growing right-wing extremist gun culture defiantly opposed to gun control. Linkages are then made between criminal incidents and the exodus of the dispossessed to the fringe areas of the sunbelt coastal locations.

Again, some areas are singled out as crime hot-spots based on one or two shocking crimes committed in those areas. Certain parts of the Sunshine Coast hinterland have been identified as such, including Gympie and its surrounds where 'blockies' congregate. These are described as society's losers and battlers who live in caravans and sheds on a few cheap acres and subsist on welfare or odd jobs (Scott 1999). While the social and economic problems are real enough - leading to a statistically identifiable trend towards Hansonism among these fringe dwellers (Stimson 2001) - it is the crime connection that attracts publicity to the extent that a new pseudo-fictional genre of crime reporting is emerging. I call it the genre of rural noir or rural gothic, in which horrific murders are described and explained by focusing on their rural or small town settings. And it is the setting that influences - and in turn is influenced by - the way the crime story is slanted. The Snowtown murders and the Glenwood (near Gympie) murders committed by the fugitive William Fox come to mind as examples.[8]

The reporting of two double murders early in 2000 - one at Springbrook in the Gold Coast hinterland, the other at Main Beach in the tower/residential coastal strip - shows, too, how crime journalism attributes different identities and senses of place to these two strips located at the extremities of the Gold Coast. The young couple found stabbed to death in the yard of their isolated house on the mountain were revealed as minor criminals known to the police. Although the crime has not been solved and there were few clues, the local media strongly implied that the couple were on the run and in hiding, not from the police but from other criminals who had caught up with them in their hiding place. Neighbours described the couple as quiet, private, and rarely seen.

This crime was pushed off the front page by an equally horrific but even more sensational murder, the immediate outcome of which was a grotesquely fascinating spectacle for hundreds of cafe and restaurant patrons on Tedder Avenue, the 'trendy

and cosmopolitan' heart of this most fashionable of Gold Coast addresses. The reporting of the Springbrook murders is characterised by isolation, privacy, concealment, evasion, the hunters and the hunted, and the cold, calculated revenge of criminals - along with a setting amidst the brooding forests conducive to such conditions and activities.[9] On the other hand, the Tedder Avenue murders - a crime of passion involving widely known and notorious local identities exposed to the scrutiny of the street - gave reporters the opportunity to dwell on this part of the Coast's under-construction image of urban sophistication in which cafe culture enjoys the big city-style *frisson* of unpredictable and risky street life.

Crime and its reportage, then, are cultural and symbolic markers of the borders and identities of places within the coast-hinterland nexus. The ways in which crime is reported will also play a role in influencing the nature and distribution of populations within the hinterland regions, although whether or not 'secure' areas and enclaves can be identified or created, as is the urban trend, remains to be seen.

Theorising the outer strip

In many ways the outer hinterland strip is the most complex and diverse of all the strips so far encountered. In terms of identity it is the most crisis-ridden and messy. Population-wise it is more mixed and diverse than might be expected of a semi-rural location. To adopt a rather over-used, but in this case I believe apposite, concept, it is a liminal space. Liminal space: that betwixt and between space or place where ritualistic practices, positionings and encounters can either support or subvert structures and relationships of power.[10] It might also be identified as the metropolitan Gold Coast's 'other', another much-applied concept.

In fact there are so many ways of applying the concept that it can be called on to describe any conceivable relationship between two or more entities. For example, in terms of the Gold Coast metropolitan-hinterland relationship the hinterland could be described as both exotic other (when its natural wilderness aspects are highlighted) and, as Doel (1994) puts it, 'the other of the same' (differences appropriated to the same, as in the commodification and theming of nature for tourist consumption in the Gold Coast tradition) depending on what 'text' you happen to be reading at the time. How, or rather in how many ways, the hinterland conceives the Gold Coast as its other remains, for the time being, an open question.[11]

Tamborine Mountain

Let us consider the case of Tamborine Mountain. Here the growing population (there is talk of 'capping' it at 9000 when all currently zoned blocks are sold) consists of the following: descendants of the original and older pioneer farming and timber-getting families; more recent (ie, in the past 60 years or so) purchasers of small farm holdings (now mainly low-yielding avocado and rhubarb farms); self-funded retirees; local business people and their staffs involved in the usual pursuits as well as tourist-related enterprises (cafes, restaurants, arts and crafts and antique and 'country-ware' outlets, plant nurseries, bed and breakfast and lodge accommodation, wineries, wedding chapels); 'commuters' who drive off the mountain to work in the Logan or Gold Coast areas; pensioners and welfare recipients; the unemployed. There is a small 'alternative' contingent but of middle-class rather than feral persuasion. In the early decades of the 20th century the Mountain became something of a hill station for mobile Brisbanites, its cooler climate encouraging the

construction of hotels and guest houses for weekend parties and for those seeking longer relief from Brisbane summers. Now weekend and day tourism is its main industry, with a recent emphasis on chalet-style 'luxury' accommodation for professional couples. One image that the mountain has created for itself is that of a Northern European outpost with its Swedish, Polish and German eateries and outlets and its European settlers apparently attracted by its 'alpine' ambience.

The public tensions and conflicts over the Mountain's future - its identity and its development - are emblematic of those affecting other similarly placed, sized and growing communities where lines are drawn in the sand (or rich, red volcanic soil) between pro and anti-development factions and where development includes not only the built environment but also the kind of people who accompany physical development. And here parochialism and xenophobia based on class and age lines and now more commonly fear of crime, raise their heads. Actually, the built environment can be linked to fear of undesirable in-migration. On the Mountain there are periodic outcries against the construction of multiple small houses by the same developer, or high density housing, the argument (sometimes thinly disguised for 'PC' purposes and inclusion in the local newspapers) being that such housing is a quick and economical means of gaining cheap but consistent rents and this in turn will attract the unemployed, drifters, down-and-outs, single mothers and their delinquent children, and so on.

Another means of disguising or depersonalising this kind of exclusionary and polarising 'social problem' discourse is to define the problems as Gold Coast-type problems that accompany the spread of Gold Coast-type developments and lifestyles. These are portrayed as shallow, artificial, vulgar and materialistic, and attractive to undesirable elements. Therefore in Doel's (1994: 1042) terms we may be looking at what he calls the 'other of the other' - the opposite of the other of the same - in which the Gold Coast as other of the other is ex-appropriated and de-territorialised in the sense that it has become a signifier (of whatever) detached from its territorial and physical setting.

Meanwhile, regardless of whether or not the Gold Coast has been de-territorialised, its proximity, both real and metaphorical, and its perceived advantages and disadvantages provide a backdrop to debates over future directions for the Mountain. This backdrop is real as well as figural: the eastern escarpment provides a panoramic view of city and ocean, a visual reminder of the city's encroaching expansion. It's called the tombstone view by the detractors - a reference to the appearance of the distant highrises. Thus is reality symbolically endowed.

Those public advocates who favour development do so in varying degrees. While none argue for absorption (again real or metaphorical) into the Gold Coast, rather pointing to the Mountain's distinctive natural attributes, they view the Gold Coast as a feeder of tourists attracted not only by nature but also by the usual commercial tourist outlets mentioned earlier. These are the outlets that will provide a growing economic base (ie, jobs) for Mountain residents, they claim.

Those who resist development, too rapid development, or certain kinds of development are also varied as well as many. There is, though, a common experience of constant vigilance directed at what must seem to be a never-ending flow of development proposals ranging from the massive (the proposed Cockatoo Creek motor circuit at the western base of the Mountain) to the minute (fairy lights on a prominent fig tree). Cockatoo Creek has 'intertextual' associations with the Coast. The major complaint against the proposal is the noise that will rise towards dwellings on the western escarpment; some sympathetic residents on the eastern

escarpment claim that they can discern noise from the Indy races at the Coast, a much greater distance away.

But even the fairy lights are freely-hanging signifiers of some interest and consequence. They are part of the Mountain Winter Yuletide season, a blatantly commercial strategy to attract tourists with a kind of Christmas-in-July atmosphere of blazing log fires and, yes, fairy lights everywhere. Relatively harmless and a boost to the economy, some argue - including the local tourist association whose idea it was. But when considered in conjunction with the creeping Disneyfication of Gallery Walk (the main tourist thoroughfare flanked by bizarre and fanciful buildings and an excessive signage), along with wineries that import their wine from the Hunter, mushrooming wedding chapels custom-built for dolled-up Japanese couples limousined from the coast, burgeoning mini-bus day tours that herd and hurry their mainly international clientele from one conveniently-placed nature spot to the next, and a proposal from TMTA (Tamborine Mountain Tourist Association) for helicopter 'incentive day trips' from the coast, the helicopters being likened to 'metal butterflies' - when all these things are considered, the intrepid cultural studies traveller will reach for a pocket Baudrillard[12] and begin to make pronouncements to the effect that the hegemonic Gold Coast is indeed creating its golden other of the same in 'its' hinterland hills.[13]

Some locals are attempting to subvert the spread of Gold Coast imagery and enterprise by means of humour and satire which they submit to the two local newspapers, the editorial content of which is mainly provided by residents' letters and short articles. Byron Bay has its Mr Fast Buck$. Tamborine Mountain, in keeping with its more conservative character, has G. R. Upton Mills Brigadier (retd.) who always demands more extreme or colossal versions of proposed developments. And then there is TOMATA (Tamborine OUR Mountain Ante (sic) Tourism Association), whose fictitious monthly meetings minutes are duly published. On signage: '"I think yes", opined Antonio. "You can never have enough signs showing tourists the way off the mountain". There was a general murmur of agreement and a movement to request doubling of all signs pointing to the Gold Coast was passed unanimously. A lot of letters involving signs on Gallery Walk were disqualified on the grounds that TOMATA doesn't consider that particular road as part of Tamborine Mountain....' (By implication it's part of the Gold Coast.)

Conclusion

The inner and outer hinterlands of the Gold Coast may be seen as shedding some light on occurrences, conditions and issues which other coastal and hinterland communities will experience in the not-too-distant future, as rapid development and population growth push them in the same direction that the Gold Coast has been travelling for the past three decades. The light shed may be a little unfocused at times because the relationship between the Gold Coast and its hinterland is both anomalous and many-faceted. The classic nature/culture binary may have some initial heuristic value in understanding that relationship, with nature becoming more discursively and prominently signposted as one approaches and enters the hinterland. But this is nature as culturally constructed, a nature that is ordered and regulated in the inner hinterland by those who graft it onto the hybridised myths and imagery of suburbia and idyllic rurality.

The myths and idylls, though, however strongly promoted by real estate publicity, are beginning to become a trifle tarnished by those other mass-mediated myths of the rural and the rural fringes that settle on the threat of crime and deviance. From

the commercial and tourist perspective of the Gold Coast, nature in the outer hinterland is commodified for and consumed by the tourist - green transformed into gold. The outer hinterland, too, centred on Mount Tamborine, has been undergoing a theming process with commercial enterprises and outlets offering tourists 'small mountain community' and 'naturalised' commodities and experiences. The hinterland communities themselves are a heterogeneous mixture of old and new arrivals. Some are escapees from urban pressures of the Gold Coast and the capital cities, who abhor and resist the colonising commercial influence of the Gold Coast. Some are more genteel, older and long-standing residents who fear another kind of Gold Coast influence - rising crime rates and declining social standards. Others in varying degrees support the tourist influx and its economic advantages or wait for the inevitable to happen. In either negative or positive case the hinterland has found 'its' other - the city of the Gold Coast.

When it comes to 'othering' on the Mountain, where debate over development and the Mountain's identity are intensely conducted at grass roots level, the Gold Coast as other looms large both metaphorically and in actuality. The Gold Coast, on the other hand, is too big, too powerful and self-absorbed to conceive of 'its' hinterland as other except, perhaps, as other of the same. It is too deeply involved in its own inexorable expansion and its extraction of gold from its hinterland colony, although from time to time it is reminded that it can face resistance, as the Naturelink failure testifies. Coastal hinterlands that don't have metropolitan others as big as the Gold Coast and which have (perhaps as a consequence) been able to construct viable distinctive identities and attract counter-urban migrants may be in a better position to resist or contain metropolitan imperialism. For the resistance in the Gold Coast hinterland it might already be too late. Nevertheless, the conflicts and contestations within the outer strip of the Gold Coast hinterland - sometimes quite ferocious in their intensity - provide a kind of clearing house for disparate concepts and images of lifestyle choices, or even an early warning system, for those who might be contemplating flight from the city.

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Endnotes

[i] The Gold Coast City Council has bought two former Naturelink properties in Springbrook as part of a plan to purchase properties of strategic and environmental importance. The encouragement of tourism still appears to be one of the motivations for the purchases. According to Gold Coast mayor, Gary Baildon, 'Springbrook is one of the city's most picturesque Hinterland tourist attractions, and a vital part of the diverse landscape that makes up the Gold Coast' (*Weekend Bulletin*, Sept. 22-23 2001, p. 68.) Note the strong identification of Springbrook and the hinterland with the city of the Gold Coast.

[2] The cultural turn in rural studies refers mainly to the rejection of essentialist, a priori, reductionist and functionalist definitions of the rural (Cloke 1997: 368) and the urban/rural binary in favour of investigations of how the social construction and cultural representation of the rural, the semi-rural and the post-rural are 'fashioned by academia, officialdom, the tourist industry and other "outside actors" in addition to rural actors themselves' (Lawrence 1997: 1). (One can assume that the mass media come under the heading of 'outside actors'.) Attention is also being directed towards hitherto repressed or neglected rural voices, including those of racial and ethnic minorities and women, and the power relations responsible for this neglect (Murdoch & Pratt 1993; Philo 1992, 1993). Cloke (1997: 369) adds rural landscapes and the 'spatiality of nature' to this list of cultural concerns. Share (1995) provides an Australian perspective to 'representation in the post-rural era', as does Richardson (2000). For a functionalist approach to hinterlands based on demographic change, see the study by Barkley et al (1996) of the 'spread' of population into urban fringes and the 'backwash' from more distant hinterland areas in Wisconsin, USA.

[3] My analysis of local media has concentrated on the press as it is the main purveyor of real estate advertisements and related topics. A more detailed investigation of local and regional identities would need to encompass broadcast media as well.

[4] For an up-to-date survey of the impacts of recent economic restructuring and demographic change in Australia, including 'the city versus the bush dichotomy and other regional difference', see Stimson (2001). Birrell et al (1997) give details on population movement to SE Queensland, Stimson and Minnery (1997) to the Gold Coast. Curry et al (2001) describe and discuss population and social change and economic development in the Western Australian coastal shire of Denmark. St John (1997, 2000) has produced studies of alternative lifestylers and ferals. Rothwell's (2001) feature article for *The Weekend Australian* is a good example of a journalist's overview of the baby-boomer Seachange phenomenon. The article is based on the KPMG annual population report by Bernard Salt entitled *The Big Shift: Welcome to the Third Australian Culture* (Hardy Grant Books, 2001).

[5] See, for example, Stimson's (2001) brief references to hinterlands. He does make the important point, though, based on earlier research (Davis & Stimson 1998), that hinterlands, along with outer urban areas, predominantly in coastal or near coastal

locations, contain disproportionate numbers of One Nation supporters. From an empirical and functionalist tourism studies perspective Getz (1999) has researched tourist development in the Cairns hinterland otherwise known as the Atherton Tablelands. This study barely acknowledges the existence of disparate responses to tourism development in the region, the reader being left to infer there is almost uniform acceptance or that the research has adopted an a priori assumption that development is an indisputable given. In the absence of discussion on this issue, it might well be that rural decline and the distance of the hinterland from Cairns discouraging travel to coastal employment have left few alternatives to almost total economic dependence on tourism. The situation in other hinterlands might be different with, for example, the more diverse population of Tamborine Mountain, including those who commute daily to work on the coast, reflected in a diversity of viewpoints regarding development issues. We can only await further research to resolve this matter.

[6] 'Green turns to gold' is the headline given to a story about a couple who 'made a million' after the sale of their Tallai home. 'With an 830-square metre architecturally designed home on the Tallai block, which is similar to many of the surrounding million-dollar homes and properties, the Hinterland is beginning to offer a lot more value for money' (*Weekend Bulletin*, May 19-20, 2001, p. 7).

[7] Size and ostentation aren't everything in the acreage strip. The *Weekend Bulletin* has been running a series of features by Nan Dwyer who recounts her more down-to-earth experiences of a more traditional rural hinterland life in a gently satirical, whimsical and self-deprecating style: 'Those new to the rural scene must continue to wrestle with frog droppings on the verandas and possum poo on the steps as they search for the formula for gracious living'.

[8] For studies of regional and rural crime and the media, see Ewart (2000), Griffiths (1998), Van Acker (1996).

[9] French cult leader Lue Jouret and some of his followers sought anonymity and isolation at Tamborine Mountain in the lead-up to their involvement in mass murder and suicide in Switzerland (Ryle 1994).

[10] Lawrence (1997) drawing on Turner's (1985) seminal explications of the liminal, contends that the rural may approximate what Turner calls 'liminal space' in that it is marginalised and 'part of a transformative continuum from one socially organised state of being to another.... The rural is simultaneously a site of vestigial wildeness (sic) and the forward edge of a civilizing force, or again simultaneously a zone of historical recidivism but also of rustic retreat (1997: 3). I would suggest that if the rural can be so defined, then it is the hinterland that has a greater claim to being a liminal space, situated as it is between the urban and the rural where new arrivals (initiates) are introduced to those contending forces that ritualistically and simultaneously assert their own cultural identities and what they perceive to be the appropriate concomitant cultural identity for their region.

[11] See Philo (1997) for a discussion of Doel's notions of the other applied to rural cultural studies.

[12] Here I am referring to Baudrillard's (1983) theories of the simulacrum and hyperreality. As Cloke (1997: 370) puts it: 'Baudrillard's Disneyland, the place where utopian dreams are realized, may offer interesting cross-overs with some idyll-ised ruralities'.

[13] *Weekend Bulletin*, May 19-20, 2001, p.48: 'Visitors head for the hills...Mount Tamborine is emerging as the waking giant of the Gold Coast tourism industry...And the plateau town...is now a hub of special events and new development that is the envy of the coastal community'.

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