



The Lure of the island: A spatial analysis of power relations

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Abstract Islands – especially small ones – are now, unwittingly, the objects of what may be the most lavish, global and consistent branding exercise in human history. This paper draws on a post-structuralist perspective to propose an understanding of “the island lure” by disentangling and unpacking four, inter-related, constituent components of ‘islandness’. These components are themselves borrowed and adapted from a spatial analysis of power and power relations, and especially from Henri Lefebvre’s treatise on spaces of production. In its ontological approach, the paper offers a different critique of the representation of islands and island life.

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The fascination with/of Islands

Islands have been branded long before the concept found its way into management schools and contemporary marketing discourse. Already in the 10th century, Eric the Red, an early settler on a large and remote island, is reported in the Icelandic sagas to have named that new territory *Greenland* in order to attract other settlers there. Five hundred years ago, it was claimed that one could harvest cod from Newfoundland waters simply by lowering a basket into the sea. Perhaps we can consider islands as prototypes, targets for some of the earliest systematic attempts at branding: advancing, and romancing, a meaningful and desirable difference in a world crowded by competitive categories (Martin, 1989: 201).

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Islands – especially small ones – are now, unwittingly, the objects of what may be the most lavish, global and consistent branding exercise in human history. It has been said that there is “little doubt” that islands have what has been described as a particular “lure” or “fascination” to visitors (Lockhart, 1993; 1997; King, 1993; Baum, 1997; Baum et al., 2000: 214). It speaks to a yearning for an island space and island life that is part myth, part marketing hype, part reality ... and not all continental or mainland driven. This yearning seems to be gathering momentum of late: with millions of tourists visiting islands every year; with waves of urban refugees escaping the rigour and stress of city life; and with exclusive investors buying up island lots and even whole islands as private properties. Islands thus find themselves presented, even constructed *de novo*, as locales of desire, as platforms of paradise, as habitual sites of fascination, emotional offloading or religious pilgrimage. The metaphoric deployment of ‘island’, with the associated attributes of small physical size and warm water, is possibly “the central gripping metaphor within Western discourse” (Hay, 2006: 26, emphasis in original; also Connell, 2003). Tuan (1990: 247) claims that four natural environments have figured prominently in humanity’s enduring and endearing dreams of the ideal world. They are: the forest, the shore, the valley ... and the island.

A layering of at least five, mutually reinforcing influences can be proposed to explain this condition. First, there is a lingering western tradition – dating back at least to the Odyssey – which has held islands in high esteem, assigning them a key role in the economic, political, and social dimensions of the Mediterranean and then Atlantic worlds, given the way that myth, icon and narratives of/from islands have functioned for mainland cultures (e.g. Gillis, 2004). Second, building on the first, but starting at around the European age of discovery, is the construction of islands as outposts of aberrant exoticism, peopled by innocent and exuberant natives (e.g. Lowenthal, 1972: 14; Gillis and Lowenthal, 2007). Third, and still later, is the island as background for the enactment of a male and heroic paean to colonialism, the subject of Robinsonnades that extend up to the present in the likes of Tom Hanks' movie *Castaway* or the TV blockbuster series *Lost* (e.g. Hymer, 1971; Loxley, 1990). Fourth, is the development of the notion of going on vacation as a regular activity by the world's burgeoning travelling classes: whether for relaxation, adventure or self-discovery, islands project themselves as ideal destinations (e.g. Baldacchino, 2006; Butler, 1993; Löfgren, 2002). Fifth, is the realisation by many developing island states and territories that they can 'sell' their sea, sun and sand (and perhaps sex, but more hopefully their salt) to such visitors, by appealing to their constructed modern need for travel, and thus carve out for themselves a beguilingly easy route to development (e.g. Apostolopoulos and Gayle, 2002; Briguglio et al., 1996a, 1996b; Conlin and Baum, 1995; De Kadt, 1979; Royle, 2001, Chapter 9). Other attractive characteristics can be added to the mix: physical separation, jurisdictional specificity, cultural difference, 'getting away from it all', the possibility of claiming an understanding of the totality of the locale as trophy (Baum, 1997: 21; Baum et al., 2000; Butler, 1993).

This paper

And yet, in spite of all these *ex post facto* explanations, understanding what *exactly* is it about islands that attracts and appeals remain "speculative" (Baum et al., 2000: 215). "The essence of the deserted island", argues Deleuze (2004: 12), "is imaginary and not actual; mythological and not geographical". Islanders in particular may be justifiably confused, even resentful, by how their homes are seen and objectified as 'paradises' by mainlanders; by how their homes, as well as themselves, continue to be ritually "aestheticised, sanitised and anaesthetised" (Connell, 2003: 568).

This paper proposes to facilitate a better understanding of "the island lure" by disentangling and unpacking four, inter-related, constituent components of 'islandness'. These components are themselves borrowed and adapted from a spatial analysis of power and power relations (e.g. Lefebvre, 1991). In essentializing the discussion, the paper also offers some methodological strategies for coming to better terms with the different facets of island life.

Enter space

The critical role of space and of the physico-material environment in articulating human consciousness, and thus in making meaning, has been the subject of increasing attention in contemporary social sciences. From Foucault (1977) and his anal-

ysis of buildings as capable of deploying power; to Massey et al. (1999) and her heuristic device of 'activity spaces' as porous and open locales that captures everyday life and its mobilities. From De Certeau (1984) and his examination of how people individualize the artifacts of mass culture, in order to make them their own; to Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and his descriptions of the intimate experiences of place. From Amin and Thrift (2002) and their image of cities as formed by multiple use and history; to Shields (1991) and his explanation of the role of the spatial in making up culture. These diverse contributions represent a post-structuralist 'critical turn' in spatial – and increasingly political economic – geography, highlighting a cognitive and social constructivism that had been totally disregarded in those renditions of space driven by an unambiguous Cartesian positivism.

Given the applicability of her analysis to island studies, Doreen Massey's work is especially relevant here. She postulates that the social is constituted in the process of the production of the spatial. Space and social structures are thus mutually constitutive; and the outcome of this dialectic turbulence is always varied, fragmented, contested:

"Truly recognizing spatiality [...] necessitates acknowledging a genuinely co-existing multiplicity ... In the way in which I wish to imagine space there is no closure; on the contrary, there are always loose ends and disruptiveness." (Massey et al., 1999: 281; 290).

Representations of space

Lefebvre contends that there is much more to space than meets the eye. Space starts from the very crude, natural space ("absolute space"), and moves up to more complex identities whose significance is socially produced ("social space"). Lefebvre's basic argument in *The Production of Space* – and one he shares with Massey – is that space is a social product; a complex social and ideological construction, based on values and the social production of meanings, which affects spatial practices and perceptions. As a Marxist philosopher (but highly critical of economic structuralism), Lefebvre argues that this social production of lived space is fundamental to the reproduction of society, hence an 'active moment' of capitalism itself (Harvey, 1982: 390). The social production of space is contentious but typically commanded by a hegemonic class or élite as a tool to reproduce its dominance. To change life is to change space: architecture is revolution (Merrifield, 2000: 173).

We are thus faced with at least three (but possibly four?) interpretations, or identities, of space: First, straddling the physical with the ideological, is represented space, that which includes maps, plans, roads, models, designs and similar forms, the space constructed by the practice of such professionals as architects, urban planners and civil engineers, which includes the built environment. These spaces are fleshed out interpretations of how space should be disciplined and designed for the sake of smooth communication but also surveillance (e.g. Ball and Webster, 2003). The second is representational space which also overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. It is at the periphery of mainstream culture and regulation, chaotic and elusive, the space where new and counter-hegemonic ideas and practices take shape: from graffiti to squatting, and includes the appropriation and use of (private

or public) space for public protest. This is that (largely mental and intuitive) space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate, and which is dominated by theories and ideologies (Lefebvre 1947/2000: 135). The third is experiential space, or the lived and situation-specific version of space, revealed through the physical and experiential deciphering of space in everyday life and practice, such as journeying to and from work (Lefebvre, 1991: 38–41). Such everyday cultural anthropology is the site of, and the crucial condition for, the “reproduction of the relations of production”, including how space, and time, are engineered and presented (Aronowitz, 2007: 135); mobility/ties and transportation options and their infrastructure equate thus to “socially reproduced motion” (Cresswell, 2006: 3). Space is formed by the dynamic interrelationships between these multiplicities: representations (or conceptions) of space; representational (or lived) space and experiential space (or praxis). Beyond all this, if we still wish to accommodate the positivists and empiricists, and reify space beyond its human interpretation and experience, there would exist a fourth, or distinct, layering: crude, geophysical material space. These spatial identities, then, are the conceptual tools that permit a better understanding of how space is re/produced and re/presented. These concepts are very pertinent in helping develop an informed and more nuanced understanding of ‘the island lure’.

Beyond material island space

Of course, an island is that biophysical body of land surrounded by water that makes it naturally and visually distinct from any other land spaces. It is such geophysical detachment that has created the conditions for evolution on islands to morph into such diverse, including endemic, forms. This is one explanation for the assorted island cultures and languages that exist around the world today. However such a reductionist rendition hardly tells us anything about either the production or the presentation of the island space, even as such productions and representations tend to align themselves with the core features of islandness. In other words, an island cannot be naively understood in its strict material, reified form: a delineated, predetermined, bordered space; it is so thoroughly seeped in “emotional geography” (e.g. Stratford, 2008) that it is perhaps impossible to disentangle its “realities” from its “dreams” (Royle, 2001: Chapter 1); its geographical materiality from its metaphorical allusions. In spite of a suggestive and self-evident materiality, an island is a thing “in the making”: incorporated through stylized and socio-culturally packaged body work and performance (Ingold, 2006).

This messiness is the basis for the symbolic usage of islands as premier sites, and models, for carefully designed and manicured spaces: from Thomas More (1516) rationally ordered *Utopia* to William Golding’s (1954) anarchic dystopia in *Lord of the Flies*; millenary narratives about Paradise, Eden and Shangri-la especially in the Western imaginary (Gillis, 2004); pirate bases, religious shrines, maximum security prisons and quarantine sites. Island life rides piggy back on what Bruno Latour (2008: 2) explains as “the spread in comprehension and extension of the term design”, since islands can so much more easily be conceived or transformed into a gated community, given the imagined relative ease of controlling access. The nature of the island residents can change with context – from

prisoners to lepers, from reclusive millionaires to monastic communities – but the key premise often remains that of crafting the island as a malleable platform for the practice of some form of exclusivity that needs to be protected from mainland interaction or contamination. To island is to control.

Unlike mainlands, one can actually build or buy and own a whole island (FT *Expat*, 2002; Vladi *Private Islands* web-site). The geography of excision is simply too gripping; the island image is too powerful to discard; the opportunity to ‘play God’ on an island is too tantalizing to resist. We would make islands in our own image (Denning, 1980; Denning, 2004). Virtual islands can be, and have been, conceived, engineered or fashioned in strict accordance to the whims and ideals of their [invariably male] masters: take Daniel Defoe (1719) and his *Robinson Crusoe*, or Jules Verne (1874) and *The Mysterious Island*. Can one be but a Governor on one’s own island (Redfield, 2000: 12; Loxley, 1990)? Actual physical islands have been similarly transformed: a whole island can become a nature reserve, a quarantine station, a prison, an offshore finance enclave, a military base, or an upscale tourist resort, apart from private property. Islands have definitively shifted “... from the register of the ‘found’ to the register of the ‘made’ ” (Sloterdijk, 2005: 279). The engineered Palm Islands of Dubai, or ‘The World’ archipelago close by, are contemporary examples of this pseudo-manufacture (Junemo, 2004). Islands are hot private regions even within the virtual spatiality of *Second Life*, offering “the most flexibility and privacy” (<http://secondlife.com/land/privatepricing.php>). In contrast, mainlands, with their sprawling hinterlands, with their vastness and unfathomable complexity, overwhelm and frighten.

Thus, islands constitute epitomes of commodified represented space. Whether in the real, virtual or fictive worlds, islands seem straddled by the tropes they can fulfil, and are subjected to radical makeovers by the whims of politicians, engineers, developers or the filthy rich. Island stuff is often either banalised and subsumed within a paradigm of structural deficiency (Hau’ofa, 1994); or else romanticised, rendered as coy subject matter, glimpsed fleetingly through rose-tinted glasses (Smawfield, 1993: 29). Theirs is almost a destiny to be transformed, Disneyfied; and these processes are in turn manifestations of attempts at absolute control; modern, secularised and technology-rich versions of “civilising missions” (e.g. Urry, 1990: 9). So absolute that they may seek to eliminate the very islandness of enisled spaces, with the building of fixed links that connect islands to mainlands (e.g. Baldacchino, 2007).

Such absolutist plans are easier to implement when islands are “cleansed environments”, and the developers do not meet any opposition. This is because islanders typically have their own plans, and the grand designs of wannabe transformers can yet be challenged, thwarted, even sabotaged. They cannot be reduced to what anthropologist Raymond Firth had nonchalantly described – and easily reminiscent of Massey – as “turbulent human material ... [to] be induced to submit to scientific study” (Firth, 1936: 1, my emphasis). Islanders manifest different degrees of ‘actorness’, articulating their own concerns and interests, and not necessarily in unison. In Lefebvrian terms, islanders have their own spatial practice, the capacity to produce their own spatiality: arguably and naturally, one that they believe is suitable to them (rather than to outsiders).

Expectations of paradise

On populated islands, the islanders find themselves in a quandary. Their development trajectory is heavily dependent on openness to external intervention: hurricanes, missionaries, invasions, aid, remittances, tourism, imports, exports. Island living depends on giving and taking, especially with decreasing size of populations; a situation easily conflated with vulnerability (Briguglio, 1995; Baldacchino and Bertram, 2009). Islanders know implicitly: there is at least one worse predicament than being totally overrun by external intervention; and that is being truly insular. Island residents may be silently thankful that even a perverse interest in them by the overseas community is possibly better than no interest at all. (Consider the Maldives: promoting itself an exclusive island tourism destination that is threatened by sea level rise: but with its typical long-haul tourists contributing to the same global warming that is causing the problem. Perverse indeed.) Some islanders may be confused by how they are seen as ‘paradises’ by mainlanders, while they may struggle at home against un- and under-employment, aid dependency, brain and skill drain, waste management, water shortages, drug running or money laundering. Others will accept the claiming syndrome as a necessary mythology, since it bolsters the charm and mystique of their tourism industry (on which so many island jurisdictions depend as their flagship industry and hard currency earner). Some will protest and seek distinctiveness, laying claims to an exceptional, indigenously rooted counter-identity. Some others will be confused by statements about bio-diversity and endemism that are meant to redefine the net worth of what to them may be well-known, banal, common, local species. And yet another category of islanders would develop and hone those skills that allow them to engage mainlanders, manipulating their resources, humouring their objectives, fanning their fantasies, managing and riding over the very figurations of islands and island life that seek to type them (Baldacchino, 2008). They often survive comfortably as glocal citizens in a split, schizoid world with two parallel sets of values, languages, practices and spatialities (e.g. Black, 1996: 127). Fencing strategies are often subtly deployed, whereby local cultural traits and events are hidden or ring-fenced – in or out – in order to preserve them from the rampant commoditisation that tourism would invariably bring (e.g. Boissevain, 1996). In Lefebvrian terms, they seek to curtail, excise and protect some aspects of experiential space, while they resign themselves to the deep and necessary impact of representation.

And so, though islanders presumably *could* attempt to recast and redesign their island space in their own terms, most will not dare risk this. Given the enduring lure, fascination and mystique of ‘islanding’ to those who would visit islands, many islanders understand that they ought to pay due respect to a powerful and millenary cultural industry that they simply cannot afford to alienate. There is a fair amount of “deep acting”, “staged authenticity” and “invested tradition” involved in fulfilling the heightened expectations of paradise: culminating in feeling the emotions one is expected to express in situations of exchange (Hoschschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000; MacCannell, 1989). Many islanders will accept this obsession (by the Other) to claim, objectify and render into beguiling metaphor as a necessary mythology to be endured, even refreshed and encouraged – perpetrated by their very own local

branding and marketing organisations – since it bolsters the charm and mystique of their tourism industry, which may be their key foreign exchange generator.

Branded islands

A successful branding exercise is also, to a considerable degree, dependent on deep acting. Just like workers and their emotional labour, deep acting is a form of deliberate stereotypical self-presentation and representation, wherein just one narrow set of characteristics are displayed; in so doing, organisational goals – typically related to marketing – are promoted. The intended effects of these displays are on other, targeted people: mainly clients, customers, investors and tourists; actual and potential.

The branding of places is a design exercise; often compared to the branding of cattle: “... applying an attractive logo, a catchy slogan, and marketing a place as if it were nothing more than a product in the global supermarket” (Anholt, 2006: 4). Brands and branding provide insights about the geographies of commoditisation (e.g. Watts, 2005). The very representation of an island space (and its implicit selectivity in privileging some spaces over others) may be geared primarily for outsider (such as visitor) consumption: note the production of island maps, street signage, or media advertising spots, not typically in the register of the locals (Péron, 2004). And yet, this may be a price worth paying to advance a sellable appeal to those who would consume it as commodity. The brand descriptions consulted by Leseure (2010), by way of example, include a number of specifications about the alleged feel, or personality, of various islands. For example, Skye is ‘breathtaking’. Orkney is ‘calm’, ‘timeless’, and ‘irresistible’. Guernsey is ‘contemporary’ and ‘thriving’. Neighbouring Jersey is ‘enriching’. The Isle of Man is ‘intriguing’. The Turks and Caicos are ‘beautiful by nature’, while Bornholm is ‘the bright green island’ (The latter green appellation will probably be a common branding denominator in this more environmentally conscious age, and may not help much to differentiate islands from each other.). A critical disposition to such exercises, however, should alert one to the manner in which these are exercises in the “manufacture of meaning” (Jackson et al., 2006): they seek to typecast and set these island scapes, their people and cultures, into an essentialised, *pro forma*, mono-dimensional and representational straitjacket.

... and Island brands

There is then a dialectic relationship between this deeply embedded fascination of/with things enisled and those products that are produced from these island locales. In many situations, riding on the marketing juggernaut is simply too tempting an opportunity to miss: products and services from islands often do well to position and differentiate themselves as *island brands*. With a niche market strategy, island brands can be competitive on the basis of their special features, meeting special and even unique consumers’ needs, as well as appealing to the typically more affluent and numerous members of their scattered diasporas (e.g. Punnett and Morrison, 2006). A very limited literature has looked explicitly at the relationship between islands and entrepreneurship (e.g. Baldacchino, 2005a, 2005b; Fairbairn, 1988; Baldacchino

and Fairbairn, 2006). Part of the reason for this dearth of research is that islanders are more likely to embrace mercantilism than entrepreneurship, a characteristic accentuated by the perceived restrictive effects of smallness and islandness on the profitability of any commercial initiative that hopes to add value at home (e.g. Thorndike, 1987: 98).

Some brands flaunt and exploit their non-replicable or non-substitutable, perhaps organic, ties to particular, local places (Pike, 2009: 192). Many an island is already deeply wedded to an existing, iconic image typically connected to some locally available species, practice, craft or material with high levels of local input. Agro-food and drink brands, in particular, seek a “valorisation of milieu” (Amin and Thrift, 1992) by “. . . articulating and representing particular spatially embedded cultural forms and meanings of goods and services as sources of value” (Pike, 2009: 194). Examples include Fair Isle sweaters, Guernsey cows, Shetland ponies, Texel sheep, Barbados rum, Gozo cheese, Islay Whisky, and Trinidad hot sauce. Fiji Water is the second best selling imported bottled water brand – after Evian – in the USA, building an image of “affordable luxury . . . sourced from a virgin ecosystem in Fiji” (Beverage World, 2007).

The notion of developing island-specific brands that piggy back freely on ‘the island allure’ is not just a ‘good value for money’ approach to marketing, a ‘best practice’ example of brand consolidation, or just one technique that allows the development of viable export-oriented products. There is a feedback loop in place here, and the distinct aura surrounding specific products should collectively resonate harmoniously with the image that ‘the Island’ – concealing a narrow and nested business, financial and/or political elite? – may want to promote about itself.

The easiest such image, and the one that most ‘warm water’ islands have now embraced and adopted, is that of a zesty, vibrant, fun-loving location, targeted at tourists. Products, services (or wholesale experiences) that accompany, and reinforce, this link between island brands and their home island (or island region) brand include: reggae, sauces and rums from the Caribbean (e.g. Pounder, 2010; Punnett and Morrison, 2006); olive oil, bread, cheese, yoghurt, tomatoes, red wine and other items of the lauded Mediterranean diet (e.g. Haber, 1997); the Pacific region’s trade mark indigenous history and culture (e.g. Hayward, 1998; Royle, 2001: 193) and dishes based on the sea snail conch (*Strombus gigas*) in the Bahamas, with its appealing aphrodisiacal properties (e.g. Major, 2002).

Islanders in colder locations, unable to develop sun, sea and parties as tourist products, have done just as well with messages that emphasise either clean and unspoilt spaces ripe for nature based, adrenalin pumping adventure and discovery: such as Iceland “far different than you ever imagined” (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2009) and New Zealand, “the youngest country on Earth” (Visit New Zealand, 2009); as well as encounters with unique historical episodes, again mainly targeting tourists, such as Viking traditions in Shetland (Visit Shetland, 2009) and Gotland (Stephens, 2008). But: perhaps nothing beats the truly iconic aged single malt whiskey from the Scottish Isles (Delves, 2007).

Discussion

The above insights are meant to provide a more informed understanding of the inherent fuzziness, malleability and con-

testability of the island trope. Marketing gurus, by definition, are out to buck this trend, positioning and typing an island in order to appeal to a certain tourist segment or consumer market; in a smaller island jurisdiction, one could also presumably get one’s act together faster, and somehow oblige different stakeholders to ‘sing the same tune’ and ‘walk the same talk’: behaving consistently by sending out messages that consolidate a robust (and not just an appealing) brand.

But this performativity, even if successful in its intent, is always going to be a partial and sanitised rendition of island life; it does not, it cannot, tell the whole story. While extensive and expensive efforts may be made to craft a particular brand image and brand experience – rendered ever more authentic by deep acting natives – such a display of unitarism is ultimately a front for a more complex, chaotic and power-driven layering of meanings, references and narratives.

Eriksen (1993) does well in presenting both the rootedness and the connectedness of island societies with his case study of Mauritius. What are meant to be the sharply delineated edges of communities are actually crude (and possibly dangerous) imaginaries, stylised and essentialised in the face of an (equally stereotyped) Other. Denning (2004: 6) does just as well when he cautions that a shore, much like the island it may envelop, is “. . . a double edged space, in between: an exit space that is also an entry space; a space where edginess rules”. Shores are powerfully evocative places where elements, histories and ecosystems collide; the dynamic interfaces of the basic materialities of land, sea and air; interstitial spaces that can harbour high biological diversity; liminalities that are ever pregnant with possibility and surprise. Marshall (2008) identifies the different and messy categories of those who spend time on, or belong to, the small community of Grand Manan Island (New Brunswick, Canada).

Yet, the essentialising impulse drives other scholars like Hay (2006) to claim that usage of the term ‘island’ merits being an exclusivity restricted to *bona fide* islanders. The very origins of nissology – the study of islands – were allegedly inspired by the need to study islands “on their own terms” (McCall, 1994, 1996). But, pray: what are those terms? If indeed “continentals covet islands”, (McCall, 1996: 1–2), should then island studies scholars ‘seek revenge’ by coveting their subject matter in terms of stark and absolute, contrasting discourse? As I have myself argued:

“An island is a nervous duality: it confronts us as a juxtaposition and confluence of the understanding of local *and* global realities, of interior *and* exterior references of meaning, of having *roots* at home while also deploying *routes* away from home. An island *is* a world; yet an island *engages* the world” (Baldacchino, 2005c: 248).

And yet, in my thus rendering island studies in broad strokes of trite and banal opposites, Fletcher (2010) is right to retort: “this is a nervous stance which may stall debate”.

Conclusion

The study of islands has come a long way in just a few years. Thanks also to the critical space provided by *The Contemporary Pacific* (since 1989), *Island Studies Journal* (since 2006), *Shima* (since 2007) and now the *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, there is both a broader and deeper articulation and

engagement with the subject matter. The philosophical yet sterile question ‘what is an island?’ continues to surface, of course: as will the but we are well on our way to move from an epoch of comfortable oppositions and binary thinking that position insiders against outsiders, openness versus closure, roots versus routes, global versus local. *Bonnemaison (1994)* does well in using the symbol/metaphor of the canoe for mobility and the tree for stability, reminding us that the canoe is made from the bark of the tree.

Thinking with Lefebvre, we are conscious of the developing conceptualisations of island studies and the paradigmatic grip that they may hold – like trumpeted brands – on our understanding of the field, even as the discipline emerges into its own; but we should also be looking out for those creative, pesky and irreverent ideas on the metaphoric margins that could ultimately drive our scholarship forward. Finally, these observations do not replace the ‘meaning making’ behaviour of those who do not just think of or about islands, but *with* them (*Gillis, 2004*): navigating their physical and human geographies in the mundane practices of day-to-day life.

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