places in the background not unlike the tourist photographs and postcards. Renaissance art of Florence was thus thoroughly promoted by them for centuries, its value heightened and institutionalized. By the time Stendhal arrived to Florence in 1817, the city had been recreated by the travellers as a place of high cultural significance of the past with the stress on material culture. It was believed that seeing this material culture with one's own eyes would help one experience something from the times it belonged to.

Already in the 19th century the experience that travellers had in Florence was culturally premeditated, of which Stendhal proved to be an example. Upon arriving to Florence, he rushed straight to the church of Santa Croce to see the burial sites of Michelangelo, Galileo and Machiavelli. What he experienced there he described in his travel book *Naples and Florence*: 'I was in a sort of ecstasy, from the idea of being in Florence, close to the great men whose tombs I had seen. Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty. . .I reached the point where one encounters celestial sensations. . .Everything spoke so vividly to my soul. Ah, if I could only forget. I had palpitations of the heart, what in Berlin they call 'nerves'. Life was drained from me. I walked with the fear of falling'. Dr Magherini, refusing to acknowledge the importance of cultural context and premeditation for this phenomenon, nevertheless did allow in her book that in order to be affected by the great beauty of Florence, one had to be an art lover.

In a contemporary world, Florence syndrome, despite being reinforced by a longer tradition of institutionalization than in the 19th century, has chances to become a thing of the past. With the dissemination of media, travel is more and more often experienced as a deja vu. The Swedish anthropologist Orvar Löfgren argues that with places of interests and art objects being photographed and distributed, they undergo pre-visualization: when we see them with our own eyes, they rarely live up to the digital image of themselves. But this, ironically, is another syndrome—the so-called Mark Twain Malaise, experienced by especially sophisticated and cynical travellers who make a statement out of being unimpressed with famous objects of art. [MY]

Bali Syndrome

Overcoming segregative norms within exotic tourism

by Richard Catty

The proliferation of package holidays and massive hotel complexes, crammed tightly into the tourist enclaves of once unspoiled utopias, has altered the face of small scale 'exotic' tourism. It has, for the most part, been completely eaten up. Consumed by a global industry that unashamedly pimps out entire countries in thirty second YouTube adverts and feverishly ferries consumers between borders like cash loaded freight containers. This mass approach to tourism, while highly profitable for a select few, can have a profoundly negative impact not only on the lives of local people, whose needs are rarely considered in the planning of exotic resort developments, but also on the authenticity of tourist experiences. It constitutes a movement away from the true spirit of adventurousness towards a more spurious type of exploration. Similar to that of playing an RPG game, where progression along one of the multiple storyline possibilities offers the semblance of unique experience, while simultaneously being entirely restricted by the limitations of the underlying algorithms which govern the game. That's not to say that there is a predetermined list of things you might see in the various exotic locations across the globe. Rather, that the quality of these experiences are dictated more and more by the burgeoning sphere of convenience travel in which exotic tourism tends to operate, rendering any attempt to taste truly authentic culture difficult, if not impossible.

One might try staying in the 'old town' in order to experience the cultural heart of a place and the essence which made visiting such an appealing prospect in the first instance, only to find that, in the wake of the wave of mass tourism that has crashed ashore, it no longer exists in its original form. Perpetuated only as an imitation of its original self to be lapped up by tourists in box ticking exercises. Its authenticity crushed by the brand of self serving 'overtourism' that gave us Venice. This phenomenon is referred to as the Bali syndrome, named after the place where the ramifications of segregated tourism are perhaps felt most greatly. You don't need to have been to Bali to comprehend the hypothesis, developed by Claudio Minca, Associate Geography Professor, Department of Ancient and Near East Sciences at the University of Venice. The syndrome refers to any place that has experienced an explosion of tourism and reorganisation of tourist spaces, followed by a relative implosion of culture owing to a disconnect between the interests of large scale developers and the customs, values and wallets of local people. Like high rise Benidorm, which imports daily red top newspapers for the summer invasion of Brits and has all but eradicated its sense of Spanishness. Or Ho Chi Minh City, which offers homestay excursions, the details of which are published in shiny brochures and found in hostel lobbies, ostensibly offering a genuine account of rural life, but instead providing nothing more than a meal, a couple of beers and the five other backpackers that have been lumped in with your 'intimate' stay. A hostel or hotel's broad selection of brochures may give one the impression of being surrounded by a vast sea of culture. Whereas they are more likely an indicator of one's strandedness upon an island, metaphorical or physical, which far from being a cultural paradise, serves only to isolate from the realities of native people. Like a star that once bred life into its galaxy, but has since supernovared and collapsed into a black hole, absorbing all resources, human, natural and cultural, which previously orbited it. The black hole's nucleus becoming ever denser. Its vast power allowing nothing to escape and subjugating all aspects of local culture as a means towards its own ends. Until eventually, local society ceases to function autonomously, serving only to increase the number of tourists that gravitate towards the cultural void and fuel its insatiable appetite for profit.

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Such is the case in parts of Bali. So starkly segregated are tourist resorts from local inhabitants that, despite each party's vested interest in one another, they are unable to coexist in a way that would sustain the use of artisanal crafts for their original purposes. Instead, the talented hand weavers, silver workers, wood sculptors and other artisans, along with the huge number of shopkeepers that pedal locally made goods, operate transiently, moving from place to place depending on the demands of tourism, and function primarily as horses on the arts and crafts merry-go-round. Each revolution of which reinforces, in the minds of travellers, the idea that the 'real' Bali is rich in rustic forms of art and craftsmanship. Thereby increasing their profusion as tools for attracting yet more visitors, who once again empty out their pockets for a go on the merry-go-round and a souvenir or two. The cultural artifacts they take home now almost entirely a bi-product of their having visited in the first place. This in many ways negative development, though significant may not be interpreted as catastrophic, for at least it preserves some elements of Balinese culture. However, for those facing poverty and living outside the tourist bubble, the choice of how to make a living is not so obvious. Especially since virtually all opportunities now rely on tourism in one way or another. And so, in the areas between the resorts and the craft villages, where tourism has not yet extended its probing fingers, the drug dealers, pick pockets, prostitutes and fake tour guides move in. A process which can be observed in any region worldwide that suffers from similar touristic expansions. It further exacerbates cultural tensions, this time as rifts between locals espousing legitimate lifestyles and those who are forced into more pernicious forms of survival. Thus, the real implosion of a once healthy society reveals itself, whereby local unity is ruptured and resentment spills out of the wound, manifesting itself both as conflict within the community and aggression towards the segregated tourism which it all stemmed from. In response to this growing hostility, some complexes further segregate locals from tourists, this time in the form of physical barriers meant to protect the latter against theft or harm and avoid any reputational damage that either might cause. On top of the cultural bondage, synonymous with the Bali Syndrome, places of natural beauty around the world are also being exploited for the benefit of big business tourism. Especially the beaches that once supported small, locally owned B&B's and restaurants, but now function as tourist bait on hotel comparison sites.

Yet, when the majority of holidaymakers have witnessed first hand the dark side of segregating tourism, why is it that so many continue to add to the problem by holidaying in ways they know to be unsustainable or detrimental to society? Maybe it's for the simple fact that tourists who book onto exotic, all-inclusive holidays don't do so for the reasons they shouldn't. Package and slick luxury holidays alike are designed to be both convenient and tempting. And no matter how loud the warnings about their consequences, they are all too easily drowned out by the effective marketing strategies of big brands. Perhaps then, rather than chastising travelers for their highly manipulated lifestyle choices, the best way to advocate tourism which promotes genuine cultural exchange, distributes wealth fairly and protects the environment from harm is to focus on the beneficial impacts of the alternatives.

Fortunately, such alternative options have become a dominating trend across Bali in recent years. One example being Bambu Indah boutique hotel in Ubud, which offers uniquely designed dwellings and an eco-conscious mentality that even extends to the issue of light pollution. Or Bali Eco Stay resort, set in a secluded mountain location, combining the appeal of Bali forty years ago with modern methods of permaculture. Perhaps most inspiring of all is Potato Head, brainchild of Indonesian eco-conscious entrepreneur, Ronald Akili and Bali's first carbon neutral hospitality brand. Their aim is to inspire individual change towards more sustainable ways of living by being plastic free, delivering eco-workshops to guests and bringing locals and tourists together via their purpose built village. The design of which helps to sustain local artisanal crafts in an authentic way by incorporating them into its architecture, interior and artwork. All this combined with local and world renowned music, zero waste food and a respect for cultural values, which together provide genuine and value changing experiences for guests. *RC*