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**Infrastructures of the Imagined Island:
Software, Mobilities, and the New Architecture of Natural Paradise**

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Abstract

Software is re-coding and re-scaling island space, assembling islands in new configurations of territoriality and governance while generating new kinds of atmospheres of place, landscape, and nature. Travel and leisure destinations, especially in the Caribbean, are being disembedded from national territories and repackaged as “natural” enclaves that are connected to “global” metropolitan transport, media, and data flows. This paper explores how informational space and tourist space are converging in new fantasies of mobility, accessibility, and island paradise. It aims to show how new metropolitan spatialities are affecting remote Caribbean islands and other dispersed enclaves as much as “advanced” urban regions, as Caribbean states and territories adjust to complex new infrastructures and architectures of mobility. The paper first reviews recent developments in contemporary architectural theory associated with Computer Aided Design (CAD) and “liquid” or “mobile” architectures of hyper-urbanism, cyberspace, virtual reality, computer gaming, and evolutionary software. The empirical analysis then turns to two specific Caribbean examples of the disembedding of island space from structures of local governance and territoriality through which new virtual islands – amalgams of infrastructure, architecture, and software – are unbundled from local communities, citizenries, and publics, and repackaged as intensely capitalized destinations of “untouched natural paradise”. The first vignette concerns Zaha Hadid’s masterplan for a new resort on Dells Cay in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The second refers to the new massive resorts such as “Atlantis” at Paradise Island in the Bahamas, and “AtlanticA” on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, especially their relation to computer gaming and fantasy spatiality. The paper concludes by drawing comparisons with other global island developments in regions such as China’s Pearl River Delta and the United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), showing the wider implications of the emergent mobile infrastructures and virtual realities of the imagined island.

Introduction

Software is re-coding and re-scaling island space, assembling islands in new configurations of territoriality and governance while generating new kinds of atmospheres of place, landscape, and nature. Travel and leisure destinations, especially in the Caribbean, are being disembedded from national territories and repackaged as “natural” enclaves that are connected to “global” metropolitan transport, media, and data flows. This paper explores how informational space and tourist space are converging in new fantasies of mobility, accessibility, and island paradise. Although this appears as simply an intensification of the existing tourism development strategies promoted under late 20th-century neo-liberalism, it is important to recognize the unanticipated mutations in island space that 21st-century development is producing. Software enables and assembles the infrastructures of transportation and tourism that bring people and goods to places, and stitch places together, while data routing and communication infrastructures are grounded in part in the “off-shore” data-processing centers distributed around the Caribbean.ⁱ How are informational space and tourist space converging in new fantasies of mobility, accessibility, and island paradise?

My aim is to show how new metropolitan spatialities are affecting remote Caribbean islands and other dispersed enclaves as much as “advanced” urban complexes. How are Caribbean states and territories adjusting to complex new infrastructures and architectures of mobility? Recent geographies of state rescaling and urban restructuring emphasize the historicity of social space, the polymorphism of geographies, the dynamic restructuring of scale, and the continuous remaking of state space and urban space under capitalism (Brenner 2004; Brenner and Theodore 2002). Neil Brenner argues that “the image of political-economic space as a complex, tangled mosaic of superimposed and interpenetrating nodes, levels, scales, and morphologies has become more appropriate than the traditional Cartesian model of homogenous, self-enclosed and contiguous blocks of territory that has long been used to describe the modern interstate system” (Brenner 2004: 66). In the Caribbean the postcolonial modernist dream of national bounded territorial states made up of stable citizenries, democratic civil societies, and national markets has been undermined on every side.

Structural adjustment policies and the implementation of neoliberal privatization has in many cases increased unemployment, splintered provision of public services, and weakened local governance. Many Caribbean territories in any case exist in “extended statehood systems” by which they are governed by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or the Netherlands.ⁱⁱ Caribbean Governments are also highly engaged in forming new regional associations and renegotiating international trade agreements, and are increasingly forming

supranational partnerships, alliances, and market integration.ⁱⁱⁱ In some cases the rollback of the state and its inability to control flows of weapons and drug shipments across its borders has contributed to very high levels of violence (especially in Kingston, Jamaica; Port-au-Prince Haiti; and Port of Spain, Trinidad), as well as poorly managed flows of refugees and deportees. Thus new state morphologies are producing not only sites of intense investment, private capital speculation, and highly channeled transnational mobility, but also sites of state withdrawal, breakdown of governance, and illegal mobilities.

It is my contention that the emergence of highly (over)valued sites of intensive tourism development is part and parcel of the same process of spatial restructuring that is simultaneously producing enclaves of intense violence, withdrawal of governance, and collapse of civic life – and that software is crucial to these spatial restructurings. If software is writing cities, as Thrift (2001) puts it, it is also writing distant outposts of ex-urban mobility. Virtual islands, as I call them, are part of what Graham and Marvin describe as the “splintering of urbanism” and “unbundling of infrastructure”, and function as filaments of metropolitan connectivity which hop over otherwise abjected and disconnected regions of the world, such as those that James Ferguson has so compellingly described in Africa (Ferguson 2006). Caribbean governance is increasingly embedded in multi-scalar transnational entities; virtual realities are increasingly penetrating physical spatiality in the fantasy islands of tourist mobility; and the disavowed localities of social exclusion and infrastructural disconnectivity are being cut off and abandoned to violence, to informal economies, to black markets, and to shady dealings.

My aim is not to present Caribbean people or states as victims of an externally imposed and monolithic globalization. Caribbean governments and business development agencies are complicit in these processes, as active agents who recognize the need to capture economic flows and interact with regimes of supranational governance in flexible ways. Tourism remains the most important economic sector in the Caribbean as a whole, even if unevenly distributed across various territories (Duval 2004).^{iv} It therefore plays a special role in spatial restructuring and the re-scaling of governance. A new vision of the spatiality of state re-scaling in the Caribbean can be fruitfully connected to the “performance turn” in tourism studies, which pays attention to the “networked mobilities of objects, images, texts and technologies that permit tourism performances to take place and to be represented and (re)circulated across often great distances at various sites and times” (Haldrup and Larsen 2006: 1; Sheller and Urry 2004). I argue that in the Caribbean the macro-scale shift towards complex, polymorphic, and multiscale state geographies is fundamentally related to the emergence of complex new micro-scalar systems of physical and electronic mobility (and immobility) and their dynamic restructuring of both the spaces/spacing and times/timing of tourism.

My analysis begins (perhaps surprisingly, since most contemporary architectural theory is associated with “advanced” urban spatialities) with a review of some developments in architectural theory and software that underlie the new trends in island development. New practices of Computer Aided Design (CAD) support new building forms in densely inhabited places that integrate transport and informational logistics into buildings. Some architects and artists are also exploring how cyberspace, “virtual reality”, computer gaming, and evolutionary software can contribute to changing the design and practice of architectural space in the city. Theories of complexity, navigation, and interface, as well as new uses of physical materials and information technologies, allow architects to build more fluid structures, creating spaces of movement that appear to mobilize space. However, the focus on advanced metropolitan regions has produced a blind spot in our understandings of emergent spatialities around the world. Many peripheral localities are networked into the core metropolitan space through the expansion of airports, cruise lines, Open Skies agreements, and new software-supported modes of travel and leisure. The new spatialities, theorized as urban or metropolitan, are affecting remote Caribbean islands and other dispersed enclaves as much as central urban complexes.

After reviewing some recent conceptualizations of liquid and mobile architecture, I turn to two specific Caribbean examples of the disembedding of island space from structures of local governance and territoriality through which new virtual islands – amalgams of infrastructure, architecture, and software – are unbundled from local communities, citizenries, and publics, and repackaged as intensely capitalized destinations of “untouched natural paradise”. The first vignette concerns Zaha Hadid’s masterplan for a new resort on Dells Cay in the Turks and Caicos islands. The second refers to the new resort of Atlantis at Paradise Island in the Bahamas, and its relation to computer gaming and fantasy spatiality, including imaginary representations such as the Pirates of the Caribbean film series. I conclude by drawing comparisons with some other global island developments in regions such as China’s Pearl River Delta and the United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), and the wider implications of the morphing infrastructures of the imagined island.

Liquid Architecture in Island Space

Mobilities are a central feature of contemporary architecture and design. Recent imaginaries of complex and fluid space such as those being developed by Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, Marcos Novak, and Brian Massumi provide us with new visual and conceptual vocabularies for understanding contemporary spatial complexity. These architects experiment with deconstructed space, geographies in motion, spaces of mobility, mobilizations of space, and the morphing of physical and virtual spatialities.^v Such work has interesting convergences with recent mobilities theory within the social sciences (see Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006b), which I begin to

explore here. Architecture and design are increasingly being foregrounded in the development of sites of mobility, such as airports, train stations, multi-modal termini, and entire urban master plans. Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture, for example, designed a master plan for the area near Lille that would be a new nodal point for the Eurostar high-speed train service. Euralille was conceptualized as a transport intersection defined by its relationship to international rather than national structures. Recent infrastructural development in the Caribbean can also be understood as a relation to transnational spaces of mobility.

My focus will be especially on Zaha Hadid's work, which arose out of experiments within modernist art, including Suprematism and Constructivism, while she worked with OMA. In the 1990's new computer-aided digital design techniques were incorporated into her work, spurring what some have described as "a new architectural language" developed at Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA) (Schumacher 2004; cf. Foster 2006).^{vi} Hadid is especially well-known for her use of CAD drawing techniques to create complex liquid-like spaces of momentum, rhythm, currents and flow. "The latest software allows her to take the existing landscape and unfold it, to pan, swoop, swerve, cut, slow down and speed up. [...] Instead of the framed image, the critical painting or the film, the model for her work is now the screen that collects the flows of data into moments of light and dark." (Betsky 1998: 13).

Hadid states that, "after twenty years, an interest in fragmentation gave way to an obsession with fluidity. [...] It was a slow transition away from Euclidean, ninety-degree geometries to other paradigms. [...] we began to multiply and transform the ground plane, which led to a series of investigations that had to do with the idea of terracing, topology, and landscape" (in Gannon 2006: 17). In recent architecture more generally "infrastructure and landscape, 'infrascapes', have increasingly become the new design scales for architecture" (Hoete 2003: 146). Rather than a fixed site with a frozen building, such architecture deals with flows in and out, landscapes of mobility, and processes of bundling and unbundling. Patrik Schumacher, elaborates that in ZHA buildings "one will experience moments of spatial intensity in zones of convergence and overlap and moments of repose where these bundled trajectories branch apart" (Gannon 2006: 21). Some of Hadid's recent projects are described in liquid terms: "If the volumes of her designs are increasingly fluid, so are the exteriors [...] the building becomes more or less than a ripple undulating out of the site, moving up to encompass spaces and then dying back down into the ground...like rivers or lakes" (Betsky 1998: 12).

ZHA has also designed a number of projects connected to transportation infrastructures, including the Strasbourg tram terminus and car park (1998-2001); a maritime terminal at Salerno, Italy (1999-); a high-speed train station in Florence, Italy (2002-); an award-winning design for a automobile-producing factory at the BMW Plant Central Building in Leipzig, Germany (2001-5); and

most recently a model for a TWA airport terminal entered in the International Furniture Fair (IMM, Cologne, February 2007). Some architects have collaborated with choreographers in the design of flows of people through public space in airline terminals.^{vii} But there is also a larger scale at which architecture helps to choreograph international travel not only within the airport, but in the connections from road or rail transport, to airport terminal and lounge, to arrival area and ground transport at the destination, and finally into the spaces and zones of the resort itself.

In “Transmitting Architecture: The Transphysical City”, architect/theorist Marcos Novak points out that “The history of invention alternates between advances of transport and advances of communication, that is to say from transmitting the subject to transmitting the sign and presence of the subject, establishing a symbiosis of vehicles and media that leads from antiquity all the way to the present” (Novak 1997: 261). Up until now, he argues, the casting of expression and perception across greater and greater distances has been achieved by signal, image, letter, sound, moving image, and other media, more than by architecture. But now, finally, “not only have we created the conditions for virtual community within a nonlocal electronic public realm, but we are now able to exercise the most radical gesture: distributing space and place, transmitting architecture” (ibid). The new “liquid architecture”, he suggests,

leads to a re-problematization of time as an active element of architecture at the scale of the cognitive and musical, not just the historic, political, or economic event. The language and metaphors of networked, distributed computing apply even greater torque to the straining conventional definitions of architecture: not only is real time now an active concern of the architect, but the logistics of sustainable, transmissible illusion become as real as the most physical material constraints. Form follows fiction, but an economy of bits replaces the economy of sticks and stones. (Novak 1997: 261).

In Novak’s vision of transmissible architecture, architecture must be concerned not only with “the motion of the user through the environment”, but also with “the next step, in which the environment is understood not only to move, but also to breathe and transform, to be cast into the wind not like a stone but like a bird. What this requires is the design of mechanisms and algorithms of animation and interactivity for every act of architecture” (Novak 1997: 262-3). He calls for new tools, beyond the Euclidean geometries of the plan, section, elevation, perspective, etc. “An alternative architectural poetics would look past the depiction of objects and surfaces to the description of latent information fields. The air we move through is permeated by intersecting emanations of information from every object: electromagnetic flux, intensities of light, pressure, and body heat form complex dancing geometries around us at every instant” (ibid: 265).

While ZHA applies software to the creation of new spatialities, other architects

take spatiality into the realm of the virtual, and virtual spaces into the realm of the physical. Novak is interested partly in a cyberspace architecture, whose tectonics will be informational, but he envisions this as also making “valid contributions to the physical world” (267), rather than existing only in electronic form. In the transmissible and transphysical city, he argues, urbanism will become an interface to the net, “a new, nonlocal urbanism”, one “freed from a fixed geometry” (269), but certainly not “postphysical” for it will still be interwoven into the physical matrix (270). It is my contention that the same kinds of de-formations and re-foldings of physical and virtual space are affecting “peripheral” regions like the Caribbean as much as the “advanced” urban metropolis. Fragments of Caribbean space have been sutured into metropolitan space such that we can no longer think of these as separate Euclidean regions.

“Transphysical” and “fluid” architectures are taking shape not only in the global centers of metropolitan power, but also on the peripheries in the island spaces of tourism and leisure, now lifted out of their local contexts and connected to the infrastructural scapes (both transportational and communicational) of mobile elites. Architecture and design strategies and styles are playing a prominent part in new tourism developments in the region, closely linked to efforts at product differentiation, niche marketing, and producing spatial exclusivity. Thus architectural theory offers not simply as way of externally modelling spatial complexity, but rather is integral to the respatialization and rescaling of Caribbean tourism infrastructures to be ever more tightly coupled with urban metropolises and easily navigated by metropolitan tourists. The current restructuring of Caribbean space arises out of the same complexity, mobility, and informationalization that are respatializing central metropolitan urban spaces.

The disembedding and mobilization of island spaces into global networks and cyberspaces occurs especially in and through the realm of tourism. Tourism’s circulation of people depends on the co-circulation of goods and of data, which together make up the networked infrastructures of neoliberal global economies:

People, goods, and data are: 1. distributed world wide; 2. mobile; 3. localized. People are localized around the focal points of their lives, goods are localized in warehouses, and data on hard drives. We call the world-wide circulation of people ‘tourism,’ the transport of goods and data ‘routing.’ Without packaging there can be no transportation. People are packaged in outfits and vehicles, goods in shipping containers, and data in TCP/IP packages. Each packet travels under the code name of an address, which anticipates an arrival in a particular location. These addresses are called travel documents, freight papers, or headers. It begins with a delocalization, and until arrival everything takes place in the anonymity of non-places. There can be no transit without a network. At the end of the twentieth century, the infrastructures of tourism, shipping, and routing are growing to form network architectures which span the world.^{viii}

The Caribbean archipelago, already physically distributed, is central to the networked architecture of global tourism, shipping and routing. Not only are people, goods and data packaged, but island space itself circulates. Physical replicas and virtual representations of utopia, paradise, and desert isle are packaged both in the collective imaginaries of cyberspace (electronic media of promotion, advertising, luxury marketing, and lifestyle magazines) and in the material architectures and landscapes of resort development. In the following section I consider some of the current strategies for developing, packaging, and reterritorializing Caribbean islands for tourist access, interface, navigation, and consumption.

Dellis Cay, Turks and Caicos

Although usually associated with advanced urban design, the principles at work within the architectural practice of Zaha Hadid Architects are exemplary of the emergent “fluid” structures of mobility space within the Caribbean. How does the architecture of mobility unfold on a remote island? Hadid has been commissioned to oversee the master plan and design of several elements of a new resort on Dellis Cay in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Her specific contribution to the project also includes design of “the futuristic-themed ‘Marina’ Lifestyle Zone, which includes luxury condos and a hotel, a number of beachfront villas, a commercial building with restaurants and boutiques, a marina with 110 slips and 4 to 5 mega-yachts, and a lighthouse.” She will also design one of the “West Beach Estates” which will form a “sparsely developed Lifestyle Zone with most of the natural vegetation of the cay intact... [and] will offer magnificent views of the reef located just offshore”.^{ix} The development at Dellis Cay is marketed both as exclusive private property and as an art collection, especially to “US baby boomers drawn to the privacy, exclusivity and beauty of the island, and design and art collectors who want ‘special pieces’ in the world,” according to the Turkish developer Cem Kinay.

The creation of the “all-inclusive resort” throughout the Caribbean has long served as a way of creating spatial enclaves that carved out tourist territories largely cut off from the surrounding locality, and from the local inhabitants (Titley 2005, Pattullo 1996). The gated, security-guarded, and even fortified private enclave of the all-inclusive resort is exemplary of a development strategy that makes Caribbean space more accessible to foreigners and less accessible to local inhabitants. Indeed, as Gavan Titley argues, all-inclusive resorts function as “carefully spatialised and curated stages, [which] attempt to secure a generic, deterritorialised Caribbean of desire through modes of performance”, representation, surveillance, and policing that blunt any sense of interconnectedness or responsibility in the very act of “travelling closer to others” (Titley 2005: 190).

Offering proximity yet exoticism, untouched nature yet world-famous design, the promotions of Dellis Cay (like many such resorts) emphasize exclusivity and privileged access: the untouched local desert island (small, remote) and the thrills of celebrity and high culture (global, mediatized). These dualistic themes of proximity with exoticism, privacy with publicity, are emphasized in a *New York Times* article on the yet to be built resort:

The emerald necklace of Caribbean islands known as the Turks and Caicos are the “it” paradise: so close to the American mainland, and yet so exotic; so private -- but look, there’s Bruce Willis’s yacht! They have one of the world’s greatest reefs, and beaches so white they might have been poured by Domino. Now a hotel impresario, Cem Kinay of the O Property Company, is adding famous architects to the mix. His \$1 billion Dellis Cay resort and residential complex has a master plan and marina by Zaha Hadid (Iovine 2006).

The architecture serves to differentiate Dellis Cay from surrounding Caribbean resort-space, while also providing a unique interface with the island, its beaches and reefs, and a mode of easily navigating this novel space. The association of Domino Sugar with white-sand beaches serves to erase the histories of sugar-plantation slavery in the Caribbean, while seemingly endorsing the artificiality of a staged nature. Such advance publicity helps to attract the media spotlight and online buzz as the not-yet-built becomes the anticipated best-yet-to-come. New information and communication technologies connected to global media outlets thus assist the neoliberal respatialization of the Caribbean for the benefit of the super-rich, yacht-owning, aeromobile global elite.

Caribbean governments participate in this process, competing with each other to provide sweeteners for every property development deal. A new \$45 million Grand Turks Cruise Terminal, for example, has just been constructed in the Turks and Caicos islands to attract more tourism. In a context of relentless inter-locality competition, the developer O-Property Collection (OPC) can be perfectly blunt in its assessment of the favorable economics of development in the Turks and Caicos:

Dellis Cay enjoys favorable development terms with the cooperative government. OPC has acquired nearly all of the private land on Dellis Cay and has negotiated a development agreement with the Turks and Caicos Government to develop a mixed-use project. The project involves building infrastructure and about 70,000 square meters of construction within the next three to five years. On the island, which will be divided into “lifestyle areas” designed by the world’s foremost architects, the focus will be on creating an upscale, exclusive, private island serving the needs of affluent travelers. Dellis Cay will open in 2008. (www.opropertycollection.com)

This is a clear example of a cooperative Caribbean government giving special rights and privileges to a private commercial developer, whose interest is baldly in “serving the needs of affluent travelers”, with little discussion of the environmental or social impacts of this project on a remote and largely undeveloped landscape. The two-thirds of the island that will remain a mangrove reserve are described in the U.S. press as a “lush mono-landscape” that is “an apt setting” for the celebrity architecture, only a “slim channel away from the tourist-friendly Parrot Cay” (Iovine 2006). Thus the fragile cay environment is turned into a green backdrop to support a privatized landscape friendly to wealthy tourists, but serving as a natural barrier to local people.

Financial Times architecture critic Edwin Heathcote discusses the trend towards “starchitect developments” in relation to the multi-million-dollar home designs by Piero Lissoni, Kengo Kuma, Shigeru Ban, David Chipperfield, and Zaha Hadid at Dellis Cay, he says:

when radical and disparate styles are grouped for display in one place – like exotic animals in a zoo – the risk is a non-community that sits uncomfortably between exhibition, private collection and gated ghetto.[...] Bar the incongruously traditional colonial welcome centre, the modern designs are certainly a step forward for architecture in the Caribbean. But, with sales opening this autumn and only computer-generated images available at present, it’s difficult to see how the “zones” given to each architect will fit together, or how Dellis Cay will amount to a real community, rather than a group of barely inhabited holiday homes.[...] The downside is a commodification of architecture. “Collections” run the risk of remaining ungrounded, full of remotely designed one-offs, poorly coordinated and unrelated either to one another or to their physical or cultural contexts.^x

Of course architecture is already commodified, and the building of community was never the aim of a resort such as this. While such “architectural zoos” of “blockbuster buildings” have recently been used to revitalize post-industrial city centers, these tourism-boosters are only just beginning to appear in peripheral and “natural” (non-urban) regions of the world. Caribbean island space, once emptied of inhabitants and re-designed to interface with metropolitan networks of computer design, branding, online sales, and elitist media becomes a highly valued get-away. Private islands, accessible mainly by private jets and private yachts, are becoming the preferred sites for *un-gated* luxury development, the island itself providing a protective barrier against the outside world and an open prospect of the sea-scape much like the privatized open prospects of English country estates that created an illusion of boundless property.

A number of largescale Caribbean developments have been built or planned on outlying islands, especially in the Bahamas. Examples include Kaye Pearson’s development of Chub Cay in the Bahamas, which will have helicopter

connections to Nassau; or the development of Bimini Bay Resort and Casino on North Bimini, also in the Bahamas, which will eventually include a full service marina, luxury hotel, a casino, spa, shopping village, and golf course (Price 2006). These isolated luxury developments are enabled in part by new airports, heliports, and growth in flights that make them more accessible, but also by colonial histories, neo-colonial presents, and neoliberal policy decisions. Each of these development strategies is an attempt not only to fragment space and control a piece of the Caribbean, but also to add value to a particular site by developing its distinctive character, its architectural and landscaped “feel”, and its connectivity to other highly-valued locations. Places are not fixed but are implicated within complex networks by which “hosts, guests, buildings, objects and machines”, as well as workers, finance capital, regulatory agencies, and software systems are contingently brought together to produce certain performances and atmospheres in certain places at certain times (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, Urry 2004, Sheller 2004b).

Such “spaces of seduction” and safety, argue Graham and Marvin, are “being ‘bundled’ together with advanced and highly capable premium networked infrastructure (toll highways, broadband communications, enclosed ‘quasi-private’ streets, malls, and skywalks, and customized energy and water services)” while the spaces left behind become “network ghettos” – “home to the people who are being marginalized by the reconfiguration of contemporary cities” (Graham and Marvin 2001: 220). Thus the same small place can contain “natural Paradise” and hell on earth.

‘Paradise has a new address’

The new resort of “Atlantis” at Paradise Island in the Bahamas is being heavily marketed as it opens for business. Full page and half-page advertisements in the *New York Times* present it as a kind of virtual island, a simulacrum of the imaginary civilization of Atlantis thought in ancient times to have been lost beneath the sea. “Only Atlantis could top Atlantis”, states one ad, blurring the (real) copy and the (imaginary) original through their mirror naming. “The great city has become a new world”, continues the text, “More amazing, more thrilling, more beautiful than anything you can imagine.” As a new world in the new world, the resort plays on themes of the discovery of paradise in the Caribbean, a Western trope dating back to Christopher Columbus’s journals, Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*, William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stephenson’s *Treasure Island*, and other such island imaginaries.^{xi} But it takes this simulated history to the utmost extreme by claiming to mimic or recreate the lost city of Atlantis, described by Plato.

The resort’s architecture echoes the theme of a lost civilization through a kind of fantasy architecture that appears to derive from computer gaming – far more populist and Las Vegas in its appeal than the highbrow designs of Hadid. It

includes the coral-pink turreted tower blocks of The Cove Atlantis, a “resort within the resort” that opened in March, 2007; the seven-story water slide and river ride of Aquaventure, with a Mayan-style step pyramid at its heart; and Dolphin Cay where guests are invited to “interact with gentle dolphins”. The further marketing slogan “Paradise has a new address” suggests both the spatialization of fantasy in a “real” place and the creation of a virtual reality that is somehow unearthly, like the biblical paradise or like the lost city of Atlantis. It has an “address” which is Paradise Island, Bahamas; or 800-Atlantis, or Atlantis.com, depending on how one gets there. As tourism theorists note, “Increasingly we travel to actual destinations to experience virtual places. This is one of several principles that frees tourism to invent infinite new products” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 171). The “hybrid interfaces” between virtual and material in “interactive travel” have been explored by Jennie Germann-Molz, who argues that “new technologies and technologized practices de-materialize and re-materialize tourism geographies” (Molz 2006: 1). Many geographies, artists, architects and software-designers are exploring the interface between “real” and “virtual” space in urban public spaces,^{xii} but may not have realized the extent to which islands are also a crucial site of software invention, fantasy space, and interactive spatiality.

The aesthetics and practice of tourist resort performances like those at Atlantis overlap with the increasing number of virtual islands that populate cyberspace. Some games involve the building of island civilizations, or developing a new society on a tropical island, while others use virtual islands as destinations for immersion in various other kinds of avatar activities.^{xiii} Gaming (in the sense of both gambling and computer gaming) and playing (in the sense of water parks, sports activities, and nightclubs) are central to the brand of tourism promoted at the Paradise Island Atlantis resort. Atlantis promotes the fact that guests there can gamble not only in casinos, but also by the poolside or in other convenient locations. Casinos, of course, have been pivotal in the creation of virtual-reality city-scapes in the USA (e.g., Las Vegas, Atlantic City), and Atlantis is a kind of extension of the “recent escalation of ‘convergences’ and ‘synergies’ within and among the communications, entertainment, retail and real estate development industries”, which is driving the resurgence of urban and ex-urban “shopertainment”, property speculation, and casino capitalism in the United States and beyond (Hannigan 1998: 61-2; Sheller, forthcoming). Such “urbanoid” environments take the form of virtual ports in the Caribbean, that offer a simulacrum of local color and exotic travel, while also supporting off-shore financial investment of liquid capital and the appearance of freedom of mobility for metropolitan consumers – all dependent on the surveillance, policing and exclusion of actual local populations.^{xiv}

This is closely aligned with the cruise-ship sector, which also takes the form of increasingly gigantic floating play-lands. Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, for example, recently launched Freedom of the Seas, described as the “Largest Cruise Ship in the History of the World”, which includes rock-climbing walls, ice-

skating rinks, bungee trampolines, surf-wave simulators, fitness centers, salons, spas, and shopping arcades.^{xv} The cruise-tourist, although making a physical journey, often visits only a virtual Caribbean, either of the kind that has been invented around specific shopping ports or private beaches to serve their needs, or of the kind where they never even have to leave the ship (cf. Sheller 2004b on pleasure islands). Cruise-ships frequently stop at vaguely named destinations and private beaches, such as “Labadie Beach on the island of Hispaniola”, rather than announcing a stop in the country of Haiti, which might frighten off customers due to its well-known billing as the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Wood furthermore argues that globalized cruise fleets are detached from place and operate as “mobile floating chunks of multinational capital” flying flags of convenience that protect them from international labor laws, environmental protection, and “from territorially based state and regional regulation in the Caribbean” (Wood 2004: 160).

Other fantastical Caribbean island imaginaries circulate in the cinematic realm, with the most glaring recent example being the box-office hit series of *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, starring Johnny Depp as pirate Jack Sparrow. The second and third of the series were filmed on the Windward island of Dominica, where the Disney Corporation constructed a “cannibal village” and used other locations such as Hampstead Beach and Indian River. Polly Pattullo points out that Dominica is “an island struggling in the wake of globalization and the collapse of its banana industry” but “at least some of the film’s US\$300m budget – three times more than the government’s annual expenditure – went on the logistics of housing, feeding and servicing an army of actors and technicians”, including one man hired to “harvest coconuts lest they should fall on a Hollywood head: he earned enough money to build a small house” (Pattullo 2006: 3). Local Carib leaders (descendants of the native indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, first encountered by Columbus and later granted a “reserve” by the British Crown) objected to the depiction of native islanders as cannibals. The representation of cannibals in the film takes the form of an absurd spoof of the most degrading cinematic representations of primitive tribes, adorned with bones, grease paint, a gruff language, and failing wood and stone-age technologies. An Afro-Caribbean obeah-woman, or sorceress, also appears in the story, applying charms and methods of divining that derive from historical sources. We can expect these fanciful depictions to color not only pirate-themes computer gaming, but also future tourism promotion in Dominica, which has long marketed itself as an untouched eco-paradise for nature-lovers: Dominica, the nature island, brought to you by Disney.

The Caribbean island fantasy, supported by easy access and improved infrastructures of transport and communication combined with the low mortgage rates, sub-prime lending, and inflated house prices in the US market over the last five years, has also contributed to a spate of property speculation in the Caribbean. Not only are resorts being built on a massive scale, but there are also huge developments of holiday homes on beachfront property and private islands

across the region. The Turks and Caicos Sporting Club, for example, has recently advertised development of Ambergris Cay, an 1,100 acre private island to be managed by the Greenbrier Resort and Club Management Company. Its “proposed amenities” include a “5,700 foot jet strip with customs house”, a “deepwater marina accommodating 200+ foot yachts”, “eight miles of pristine shoreline”, and “no taxes”. Beachfront home sites of one to seven acres are being sold (undeveloped) for between \$525,000 and \$4.5 million US dollars. Many such Caribbean destinations have waived property taxes, such as the St. Maarten Dawn Beach residences, 99 private homes that have access to the Westin St. Maarten Beach Resort and Spa, with a spa, casino, restaurants; the properties feature a “satellite TV uplink [...], expansive ocean views along with easy access to beautiful beaches[...]. community maintenance, and 24/7 security”.^{xvi}

Even more excessive is the AtlanticA residential resort under development by the Puerto Luperon Company on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic. A multi-billion dollar project that will eventually encompass over 3,000 homes, plus hotels, villages, and marinas spread out over a 1,400 acre peninsula, it is described as “The World’s First Fly In-Yacht Out Resort Enclave”, which will “have singular statues in the Caribbean as highly integrated and comprehensive marine and private aviation destination”. The publicity continues:

In the heart of the Caribbean, and the jungle-brushed mountainous [sic] of northern Dominican Republic, lies a truly unique peninsular [sic] set in a seascape of ocean and inlet waters. Lush with orchid-laden forests and dramatic vistas, are views of ocean shoreline and terrain with dramatic elevation changes, which create rolling parklands, and corral terraces that segway [sic] into a massive central highland plateau.

Between the Atlantic Ocean and the calm waters of the Bay of Luperon, lies an extraordinary location destined to evolve into the exclusive master-planned destination resort called AtlanticA. A safe haven animated by harbor and highland villages, will reflect the joy of exotic local culture and traditional marine community bustle within winding streets, sidewalk cafés and boutique shops. Town homes with private docking, gorgeous condominiums and the ultimate living abroad reward, your own private ocean, golf or beach villa estate home.

[The Marina] will feature a prestigious deepwater harbor, very reminiscent of St. Tropez, with docking slips for picturesque yachts and a harbor with a cruise ship terminal – the first ever resort in the Caribbean to incorporate such a feature in their planning. It will be one of the largest and most prestigious marinas in the Caribbean, featuring...

80 docking facilities in AtlanticA’s harbor
450 marine slips

- 260 super yacht hangars
- 5 shipyards and plats
- 13 dry dock parking facilities
- Cruise ship terminal, including a 100,000 gallon fuel station.^{xvii}

Such massive infrastructural developments involving new forms of transportation access, new forms of property ownership, and new forms of border control are part of a wider process of bifurcated mobility within the Caribbean, in which islands are splintered into fragments that are highly accessible to a mobile elite while local populations are more and more tightly controlled in their ability to move, to access public space, or to control their own national territory. A discourse of “safety” legitimizes control over access, while supposedly “exotic local culture” (exotic because disconnected from modernity?) is nevertheless mobilized as a performance of place.

The Caribbean is not the only location for the invention of virtual islands. Economies of excess, spectacle, and speculation are driving regional capitalist development in other island locations (Sheller, forthcoming). In Macao, a small island territory near Hong Kong, developers are hot in pursuit of “Asia’s Las Vegas”. With tourist arrivals projected to rise from 16.7 million in 2004 to 20 million in 2005, casino development in Macao is sparking a race “to build bridges, tunnels, railways and airports and possibly even a \$3.8 billion 17-mile bridge across the Pearl River, to enable visitors to move easily between Macao’s casinos and Hong Kong Disneyland.^{xviii} The Pearl River Delta development area is held up by Rem Koolhaas as the epitome of contemporary (and future) urbanism.

Another excellent example is the development of Dubai’s Palm Island project, where playful consumption, shopping malls and real estate investment are generating new geographies of consumption as a spectacle (see Junemo 2004). Dubai’s famous man-made island, known as The Palm, Jumeirah, is a vast structure shaped like a date palm jutting out into the Arabian Gulf and visible from outer space. This is accompanied by other planned developments including Dubai World Central, a “logistics city” centered on a new international airport with six runways, a commercial city of high-rise buildings, and an enterprise park with conference venues and a science and technology university. Also under construction is Dubailand; “Billed as the most ambitious tourism, leisure and entertainment project ever made, Dubailand will feature giant theme parks, state-of-the-art sporting facilities, shopping malls, spas and museums when it opens in 2008.”^{xix} It currently occupies one billion square feet of land and has attracted \$17.7 billion in investment for the construction of projects including a FIFA stadium, an FIA Formula 1 race-track the Dubai Autodrome, the Global Village visitor attraction, the Aquadunya water park, the Snow Dome indoor ski resort, the Legends Dubailand theme park, and the largest mall planned in the world, the ten-million square foot Mall of Arabia.

Nearby Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, has unveiled plans for their own \$27 billion investment in a new island complex, centered on the creation of the Cultural District of Saadiyat Island (Island of Happiness). The plan includes “three museums designed by the celebrity architects Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel and Tadao Ando, as well as a sprawling, spaceshiplike performing arts center designed by Zaha Hadid.”^{xx} The museums will include branches of the Guggenheim and the Louvre, as well as a maritime museum and a national museum. The complex is berated as an exercise in “global branding” by some, but others envision the opportunity “to plant the seeds for a fertile new cultural model in the Middle East.”^{xxi} Above all, it is another creation of a new kind of networked territoriality through the convergence of fluid architecture, new infrastructure, and cultural flows with the island spaces of tourism.

Conclusion: Virtual Governance?

Who or what is physically moving in and through the Caribbean is highly contested, unevenly distributed, and variously regulated, channeled and controlled. The United States has just begun for the first time to require passports for all travel to international destinations in the Caribbean (excepting United States territories).^{xxii} Meanwhile, informal economies breach national borders, whether through the hidden suitcase-trade of informal commercial importers,^{xxiii} the barrel-loads of goods and monetary remittances sent home by transnational diasporas, or the illicit transshipments of drugs and weapons that course across the Caribbean in small boats and planes. The back and forth movements of transmigrants disrupt national borders, while US Coast Guard ships continue to intercept refugees at sea and return them especially to Haiti, while the US government arrests and deports increasing numbers of Caribbean nationals who live in the shadowy state of being “deportees”. The flows of cruise-ships, airplanes, and tourists are interstitial to these other ongoing mobilities, and they are increasingly securitized into segregated corridors of transport, special channels for communication, and spatial enclaves that are cut off from the perceived dangers of these other transnational fluidities.

Mobilities in and through the Caribbean also take electronic form. Maintaining the illusion of paradise islands requires a great deal of media grooming, suppression of local news reports on crimes such as kidnapping and murder, and management of online travel-reservations, special offers, and destination websites. At the same time, using other communicational channels, many transmigrants join communities online to create islands-on-the-net where they exchange news and views with fellow nationals at home and abroad. New US homeland security legislation has led to tightening up on electronic monetary transfers through offshore banks, as well as greater control over passports and travel. Global events such as the Cricket World Cup (held in the Caribbean in March-April, 2007) have encouraged the updating of security systems including the region’s early implementation of electronic passport checks against the

Interpol database.^{xxiv} Nevertheless, offshore assembly factories, back-office data services, and free trade enclaves and tax havens freckle the region with “outernational” (to use Paul Gilroy’s phrase) wormholes that constantly undermine state control, or at least modify it away from a “gardening” model and towards a “game-keeping” model in which the state harvests whatever moves through its territory, and grooms its territory to attract bigger prey.

This has been a very preliminary sketch of the forces and processes of infrastructural and architectural development that are re-spatializing Caribbean territories. Paying attention to mobilities and place-making – both transportational and informational, real and virtual – offers a new trans-disciplinary paradigm for thinking about the contemporary re-scaling of Caribbean states, islands, and the resort areas within them. Much on-the-ground, in-the-air, over-the-sea, and online research remains to be done, but I hope to have least piqued an interest in conceptualizing contemporary Caribbean development processes in terms of software, mobility, and re-sclaing. Both Caribbean governments and Caribbean populaces will need to become more aware of these issues of space, mobility, and infrastructure if they hope to maintain control of their sovereignty and territory in the coming decades. If they cede too much territorial and infrastructural control to the virtual Caribbean, they will become hollowed-out virtual states, with no lands left to govern.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Ewart Skinner's study of Jamaica Digiport International (JDI) in the mid-1990s called attention to the new role of customized urban space and cheap information labor in the Caribbean (Skinner 1998). Caribbean governments, in association with the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), have supported the development of such high-tech "off-shore" service sectors by creating special deregulated zones "favorable" to business, including cheap labor, low taxes, subsidized infrastructure, and "friendly" legal institutions. According to Stephen Graham, JDI "is a classic example of the new urban spaces that are emerging far away from the centralizing and high value-added heartlands of global, second-tier and high-tech cities" (Graham 2002: 218; and see Freeman 2000 for a case study of Barbados's high-tech sector).

ⁱⁱ Lammert de Jong and Dirk Kruijt argue for the concept of "extended statehood systems" to describe the diverse arrangements governing the relation between the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, France and its Departements d'Outre Mer (DOM), the United Kingdom and its Caribbean Overseas Territories (COT), and the USA and Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands (de Jong and Kruijt 2006). The Turks and Caicos, discussed below, are part of the United Kingdom, while the Bahamas is an independent state, but part of the British Commonwealth.

ⁱⁱⁱ Trans-regional organizations include the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community Common Market (CARICOM), the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL), the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), and the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA). Regional states are currently in the process of forming a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and are also engaged in negotiations with the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), the Central American Free Trade Association (CAFTA), and the European Union (EU).

^{iv} A recent World Bank Report entitled 'A Time to Choose: Caribbean Development in the 21st Century' (2005) calls for "liberalization" of telecommunications and other public services (electricity, water, ports) through privatization and regional regulatory approaches that "open" these sectors to external private financing and investment. It praises the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and other Caricom countries that have negotiated 'Open Skies' agreements with the United States. Overall, the report reflects the economic importance of tourism to the future of the region.

^v See M. Crang, 'Urban Morphology and the Shaping of the Transmissible City', *City*, 4 (3) (2000): 303-14; M. Novak, 'Liquid architecture in cyberspace', in M. Benedikt (ed.) *Cyberspace: First Steps* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991); M. Novak, "Transmitting Architecture: The Transphysical City", pp. 260-71 in *Digital Delirium*, A. and M. Kroker (eds), (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1997); R. Koolhaas and B. Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1994); P. Schumacher, *Digital Hadid: Landscapes in Motion* (Birkhauser, Basel, 2004).

^{vi} Zaha Hadid was recently feted in a major exhibition of her work at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, June 3-October 25, 2006, 'Zaha Hadid', organised by Germano Celant and Monica Ramirez-Montagut. She was the first woman to be named Laureate of the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize, in 2004, and she currently has projects in progress in more than ten countries.

^{vii} Jesse Green, "Passengers May Now Pirouette to Gate 3", *The New York Times*, Theatre/Dance section, 28 May 2006, p. 1, 27.

^{viii} Reinhold Grether, “Breakthrough to the World Code: etoy’s Concept of Net Architecture”, pp. 96-103 in *Mutations*, eds. Stefano Boeri and Multiplicity, Rem Koolhaas and Harvard Design School Project on the City, Sanford Kwinter and Daniela Fabricius, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Nadia Tazi (Bordeaux: arc en reve centre d’architecture; Barcelona: ACTAR, 2000), p. 97.

^{ix} How long the reef and mangroves will survive this onslaught of development remains to be seen. It seems irrelevant to mention that the Turks and Caicos have a Protected Area System, in which the shallow water and reef areas between Pine Cay and Dellis Cay are included in the ‘Fort George Land and Sea National Park’ (<http://www.environment.tc/protected/north/index.htm>).

^x <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/6870272a-4324-11db-9574-0000779e2340.html>

^{xi} Richard Grove, “Edens, islands and early empires”, in R. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Mimi Sheller, “Iconic Islands” in M. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness” in M-R Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

^{xii} See, e.g., the Breaking the Game project’s Overclocking the City theme at <http://workspace-unlimited.org/breakingthegame/symposium01.htm> (accessed 3/14/07).

^{xiii} The computer game Second Life has spawned a whole host of islands, some of which are used by universities or libraries for teaching purposes. Linden Lab, “the company that created and runs Second Life, has sold more than 100 islands for educational purposes, at about \$1,000 each plus \$150 a month maintenance.” Universities teaching cyberclasses on such islands include New York University (media studies), Harvard (computer science, and law), Ball State University (English) and Pepperdine (education technology). Christine Lagorio, “Pepperdine in a Treehouse: Cyberclass in Second Life is the ultimate in distance learning”, the *New York Times*, Education Life, 7 January 2007, p. 22-23.

^{xiv} Bill Maurer has done very interesting work on the mobilities of quicksilver capital in the British Virgin Islands. See Bill Maurer, “Complex Subjects: Offshore Finance, Complexity Theory, and the Dispersion of the Modern”, *Socialist Review* 25 (1995): 113-45; Bill Maurer, “A Fish Story: Rethinking Globalization on Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands”, in J X Inda and R Rosaldo (eds) *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

^{xv} Royal Caribbean Times: A Royal Caribbean International Publication, Advertising Supplement to the *New York Times*, 7 May 2006; www.royalcaribbean.com; Solomon 2006.

^{xvi} <http://www.westinstmaartenresidences.com> (accessed 3/22/07).

^{xvii} <http://www.atlanticadr.com> (accessed 3/22/07).

^{xviii} “In Macao, Giant Pleasure Domes are Decreed”, David Barboza, *The New York Times*, 11 September 2005, Travel Section, p. 3.

^{xix} Dubai, Special Advertising Section in *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 December 2006, p. 82

^{xx} Hassan Fattah, “Celebrity Architects Reveal a Daring Cultural Xanadu for the Arab World”, *The New York Times*, Arts Section, p. E1, 1st February 2007

^{xxi} Nicolai Ouroussoff, “A Vision in the Desert”, *The New York Times*, Arts and Leisure, 4 February 2007, p. 1.

^{xxii} The new US passport policy came into effect January 23, 2007, and led to much concern in the Caribbean over loss of bookings. Some offered special deals, such as Nassau Paradise Island, in the Bahamas, which offered family rebates for up to four new US passports (costing \$97 for adults and \$82 for children). NassauParadiseIsland.com (accessed 10 January 2007). Meanwhile the United States Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are promoting the fact that passports are not needed for US visitors.

^{xxiii} See Gina Ulysse, *Uptown Ladies, Downtown Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

^{xxiv} The participants in the Cricket World Cup (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago), along with the Bahamas, are the first region of the world outside of Switzerland to check all incoming passports against Interpol’s database of 13.4 million lost or stolen travel documents. (Marc Lacey, “Caribbean to Screen Passports Using Interpol Global Database”, *The New York Times*, 2 March 2007 (<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F00E13FB3D550C718CDDAA0894DF404482>)).