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Interpreting the cultural landscape for tourism development

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Increasing awareness of the resource value of place distinctiveness coincides with concern that tourism can erode the special qualities that attract tourists to particular destinations. This paper, drawn from a larger research project investigating the integration of tourism in small coastal settlements, introduces a multi-method research strategy for interpreting cultural landscapes of tourism. The case study of a well-known resort area on the east coast of Australia demonstrates the dynamic relationship between patterns in the landscape narrative and patterns in the built environment of small coastal settlements. In Noosa, a distinctive built form has evolved in parallel with the narrative of the place as a relaxed but stylish resort village dominated by nature. Both the narrative and physical landscape have been shaped by a local process of constant comparison and contrast with well-known Australian and international coastal resorts. In particular, the paper illustrates how recurring themes in the local dialogue of place have flowed between key urban design/planning documents, ephemeral tourism literature, publications, and the perceptions of residents, tourists and key informants as reported in focused conversational interviews.

Introduction

There is a worldwide concern that tourism can erode the special qualities that attract tourists to particular destinations, ranging from historic cities to coastal regions (Hough, 1990; HRH the Prince of Wales, 1996). At the same time, the resource value of place distinctiveness is receiving the attention of urban authorities and the tourism industry (Ashworth and Goodall, 1990).

This paper is drawn from a larger research project investigating the integration of tourism in small coastal settlements (O'Hare, forthcoming). The paper introduces a multi-method research strategy for interpreting cultural landscapes of tourism. The case study of Noosa, a well-known resort area on the east coast of Australia (Fig. 1) is used to illustrate how the broader research combines data from tourist guides and brochures with focused conversational interviews and the more 'formal' sources of documentary research, published literature and field survey.

The cultural landscape as a theory of human patterns in the physical environment

The cultural landscape is the environment as modified, classified, and interpreted by humankind. This morphological concept posits places, at all scales, as being composed of a cultural overlay on the natural landscape (O'Hare, 1991, p. 33), so that the identity of any one place derives from the historical interactions between the natural and cultural components of the landscape (Fig. 2). The concept is not just a way of viewing special or unique places, but extends to cover the everyday places where people live, work or travel (Meinig, 1979; Jackson, 1984). This paper focuses, however, on the cultural landscapes of distinctive small coastal settlements that attract tourists, in the context of comparative regional, national and global landscapes.

The cultural landscape is one of a variety of approaches to settlement morphology, or the study of settlement form. The theory of cultural landscape offers a way of interpreting the

Fig. 1. Noosa Heads, a cultural landscape of tourism.

continuously evolving human-modified environment. Continuity in the development of cultural landscape theory has been maintained in several disciplinary areas, including geography, anthropology, and design. The term 'cultural landscape' was first used a century ago by Schluter as the basis of his settlement morphology theory (Whitehand, 1981, p. 2). In his studies of the form and appearance of urban areas, Schluter proposed a theory of a 'cultural landscape' comprising settlements, land use and communication lines. He employed a descriptive and explanatory analysis based on the interdependence of form, function and historical development. Schluter's approach entailed:

> . . . the detailed description of the visible and tangible man-made forms on the ground and their genetic and functional explanation in terms of the aims and actions of man in the course of history and the context of nature (Whitehand, 1981, p. 2).

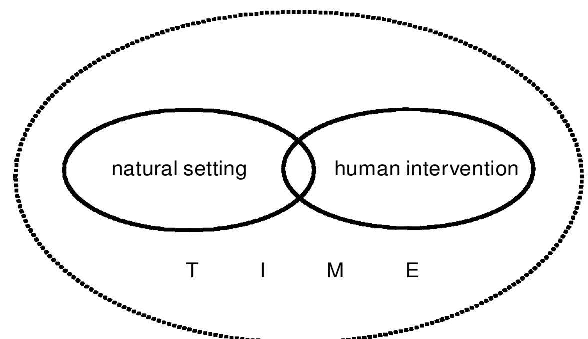

Fig. 2. The cultural landscape as a constant interaction between human intervention and the natural setting, over time.

The early cultural landscape researchers sought to explain the patterns created in the physical environment by human activity and cultural systems. Their work used the landscape itself as the primary source of data, explaining landscape patterns according to the way of life of the inhabitants. The German morphologists explored the way in which earlier characteristics of a settlement (for example road patterns, cadastral boundaries, land uses) exert an inertia on later development.

The main source of continuity in cultural landscape theory during the twentieth century has been the Berkeley School of cultural geography in the USA. Carl Sauer established this tradition in the 1920s, and his students have passed it down to subsequent generations in work ranging from the detailed spatial history of rural landscapes (Hart, 1975), through 'ordinary' landscapes (Meinig, 1979), to the geography of religion (Sopher, 1980). The term 'cultural landscape' is somewhat tautological, as any landscape contains a cultural dimension in terms of human agency or interpretation. The adjective 'cultural' nevertheless serves to emphasize the role of human agency in the creation and perception of landscapes. To omit the otherwise redundant adjective 'cultural' is to risk a reduction in the understanding of landscape. The use of the term 'cultural landscape' reminds us that landscapes are dynamic rather than static, active rather than passive, living rather than relict, inhabited rather than devoid of human intervention.

The interdisciplinary value of cultural landscape theory has been highlighted by J. B. Jackson, who popularized the idea of the cultural landscape in the journal, *Landscape*, beginning in the 1950s, and in his book, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (1984). Jackson was neither a geographer nor a design professional. Perhaps because his starting point was not limited to a single academic or professional discipline, his writings have assisted the transmission of ideas between the fields of geography and design.

Tourism landscapes

The tourism landscape is a particular category of cultural landscape, and often overlaps with other categories of cultural landscape. Several kinds of cultural landscape may coexist in a place. A city might be simultaneously an industrial city and a tourism landscape; a rural area might be simultaneously a farming landscape, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (in Britain) and a tourism landscape. There are potentially as many tourism landscapes as there are cultural landscapes. Tourism is both an agent of landscape change and a component of certain cultural landscapes. Distinctive cultural landscapes are attractive to tourists, and are subsequently changed by that tourism, physically and perceptually.

A strategy for interpreting the evolving tourism landscape

This section operationalizes the cultural landscape approach as a basis for urban design analysis and intervention in distinctive and dynamic small coastal settlements. It builds on a broader survey of cultural landscape method contained in the theoretical literature and in selected examples from recent professional practice.

The research seeks not only to understand past and present landscapes, but also to develop a means of guiding the continuing development of the landscape, through urban design, to accommodate the cultural–economic force of tourism. The approach differs from those applications of cultural landscape research that leave aside the question of how decisions should be made about the continued development of the landscape (for example Meinig, 1986; Jacobs, 1990). Because cultural landscape theory and practice developed largely outside the urban design arena, it is necessary to construct a method of use in urban design.

The research in progress argues that there is no fixed cultural landscape methodology; that humanistic and new cultural geography methods could be incorporated in cultural landscape research; and that Australian urban design practice has begun to include an explicit cultural landscape orientation. Cultural landscape methods need to be further developed in order to ground urban design practice in cultural landscape theory. The method outlined below is designed for cultural landscape interpretation and intervention in areas experiencing transformation by tourism.

The next section of this paper describes the methodology for a richly detailed explanatory case study, to combine interactively a selection of data dealing with both the narrative and tangible patterns of Noosa, a well-known Australian tourism landscape on Queensland's Sunshine Coast (Fig. 3). In the research, within-case depth is given priority over the cross-case breadth attainable in a comparative case study. Constant comparisons are built into the case study strategy to counter introspection and self-reflexivity. Comparisons are made across different data types, and between the Noosa case and other resorts to

elucidate and expand upon key phenomena and issues arising in the case.

Generating theory and practice innovations from an explanatory case study

The present research compares different aspects of the cultural landscape of a single coastal tourism resort, or in other words, some of the multiple cultural landscapes of a single locality. This involves the combination of multiple methods of research in a search for convergences and divergences between:

- patterns in the narrative of the landscape, as emphasized in Jacobs' (1990) study of conflict over the redevelopment of heritage sites in central London, for example; and
- patterns in the land form and activity patterns, as emphasized in Hart's (1975) studies of American rural areas, and more recent urban design studies and heritage studies in Australia (McDonald McPhee, 1990; Landscan and Taylor, 1992).

That others have chosen to focus on only one of these two facets of cultural landscapes indicates the complexity and potential depth of bringing them together. Adoption of a case study strategy enables a wider variety of evidence to be combined – and compared and cross-examined – than might be available in an investigation with a more restricted focus.

The Queensland resort of Noosa has been selected for case study for a number of reasons, including its accessibility to Brisbane, where the author lives and works. Noosa has a history of vigorous public debate over the influence of tourism on the special qualities that attract tourism. Its development for tourism has received widespread publicity throughout Australia for nearly three decades. This publicity has resulted from formal and informal promotion of Noosa's natural and cultural qualities, and from national coverage of several conservation battles. Noosa continues to be promoted as, and widely accepted as, an 'unspoilt' resort, despite periodic publicity claiming that particular development proposals would spoil it. In addition, Noosa has moved in a relatively short time through several

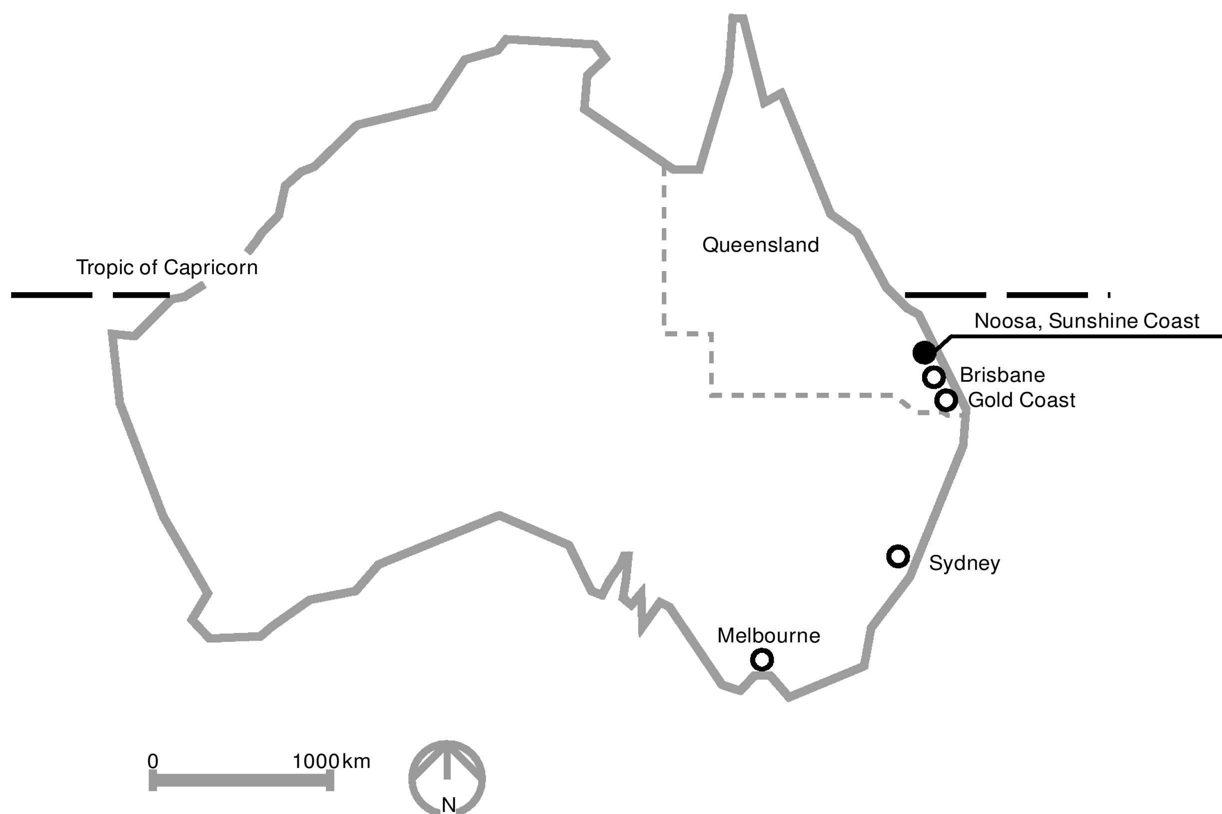

Fig. 3. Noosa's location on Australia's east coast.

definable stages of tourism development to its current state of maturity as a tourist resort (cf. Butler, 1980, and Smith, 1991).

Despite the depiction of Noosa as a 'distinctive' small coastal settlement, aspects of its continuing development and transformation are in many ways 'typical' of other coastal tourism transformations. This typicality enables findings from the case study to be generalized to theory, in this case expanding cultural landscape and tourism theory through analytic generalization (Yin, 1994). The inductive nature of the research means that the main generation of propositions occurs as execution and interpretation of the case study proceeds. Finally, propositions developed into theory are used as the basis of proposals for applying cultural landscape theory to urban design practice (O'Hare, forthcoming). By exploring the dialogue between several themes (after Shields, 1991), the case study is used to address broader questions of the transformation of small coastal settlements by tourism. In particular, the case study contributes to a theoretical re-examination of the widely held proposition that tourism 'spoils' 'unspoilt' places. A primary role of the case study is to provide a method for guiding change in tourism cultural landscapes. The work develops a framework for formulating planning and design objectives in small coastal resorts.

An interactive combination of methods

The complexity of any cultural landscape, and the range of interpretations potentially available, mean that a greater understanding of the landscape will be gained through combining a number of research methods. The aim is to reveal the key characteristics of the cultural landscape through a variety of sources, so that the interpretation is richer than would be obtained by the use of a single research method. The combined approach encompasses both the morphological concept of the landscape itself as a dynamic physical archive (cf. Sauer, 1925; Meinig, 1986; McDonald McPhee, 1990) and other approaches that concentrate on the cultural processes that shape the landscape (cf. Jackson, 1989; Jacobs, 1990).

A qualitative method has been used because of the potential for qualitative methods to reveal the *in vivo* landscape. The reflexive method involves constant comparison between five types of data. The five interacting components of the method relate to the evolution of Noosa as a tourism landscape:

1 selective review of literature on the history, development, character, politics and planning of the place;
2 content review of images of the place contained in tourism literature and the popular media;
3 focused conversational interviews with people who are or have been involved, in some significant way, in the place;
4 analysis and portrayal of the settlement morphology using cartographic and photographic archives; and
5 field study of the constituents of the cultural landscape, and the interactions between those constituents.

The five components of the study are undertaken concurrently. The first three methodological components relate to the narrative patterns, while the final two components address more tangible morphological patterns. Findings in each of the five components influence the undertaking of the other components. For example, the findings from the formal literature review (component 1), the popular literature analysis (component 2), and initial field study indicated appropriate *types* of interviewees as well as particular individuals to be interviewed (component 3). Findings from components 1, 2, 3 and 4 – as intended – have influenced the carrying out of the field study (component 5). In return, field observations have raised particular questions to be pursued in analysis of the other sources.

None of the five component methods alone could reveal the cultural landscape in all its facets. The combination of methods is chosen because of the potential for depth, richness, and reinforcement of findings. The combined methods interpret the cultural landscape through achieving an interplay between individual experiences, the formal, documented story of the place (including maps and 'rules'), popular and marketing images, and 'thick description' of the four-dimensional place, in which the fourth dimension, time, is important. Recurrent themes and patterns, and similarities and differences emerging from the five method components, are of particular interest because they indicate the convergences and divergences between narrative and physical landscape patterns (Fig. 4). Throughout the cultural

landscape interpretation process, the method is compared with existing planning and tourism development processes. Beyond the methodological component illustrated in this paper, cross-comparison with other resorts prevents the reflexive method from becoming self-referential (see O'Hare, forthcoming).

The five components of the case study strategy are explained in more detail below.

Review of formal literature

This component of the study includes both published and unpublished works. Case study sources covered range from pre-European settlement (Steele, 1984) to recent history (Cato, 1979). Unpublished work relevant to the research includes local government and Queensland State Government studies and planning instruments.

Content review of tourist promotion literature and cultural representations of Noosa in the popular media

This component involves a review of images of Noosa contained in a broad range of mainly ephemeral sources. Attention is given to development and change in the image of Noosa over the years. This component of the method is akin to a content analysis, but without being as quantitatively based as in some methodological guides (cf. Krippendorf, 1980) and examples of practice (such as Goodall and Bergsma, 1990). Instead, the material is examined for recurring and emerging themes (such as the 'natural' and 'sophisticated' images of the resort). In addition, attention is given to reinforcement and inconsistencies between written and graphic images within the material, and between this material and the other data sources.

The tourism literature examined includes:

- published tourist guides to Australia and Queensland (Bowen, 1992; McGonigal and Borthwick, 1994; Armstrong, 1996);
- official tourism literature produced by local, regional, state and national tourism authorities during the twentieth century; and
- ephemeral promotional literature produced by tourism operators and the local tourism industry organizations.

From the wider media, images of Noosa in newspaper and magazine articles are examined. These broader sources have not been a primary source of inquiry; they have been drawn on to provide supplementary coverage of themes and issues emerging from the more systematic analysis of tourist literature and the other sources. The locally published 'lifestyle magazine', *Noosa Blue*, from its initial publication in 1990 through to 1994, has been drawn on in relation to themes emerging from the other sources of information. *Noosa Blue*, aimed at residents and tourists, has a strong bias towards portraying Noosa as a relaxed and 'natural' haven for 'sophisticated' people.

Focused conversational interviews

The use of unstructured interviews is becoming increasingly accepted in environmental and other research (Eyles, 1988; Miles and Huberman, 1994). A major benefit is that it enables the interviewees to reveal their own conception of the place and the meaning it holds for them. It potentially enables the gathering of a wider range of information on the place than is possible using structured interviews. Compared with structured interviews, there is less risk of researcher bias and

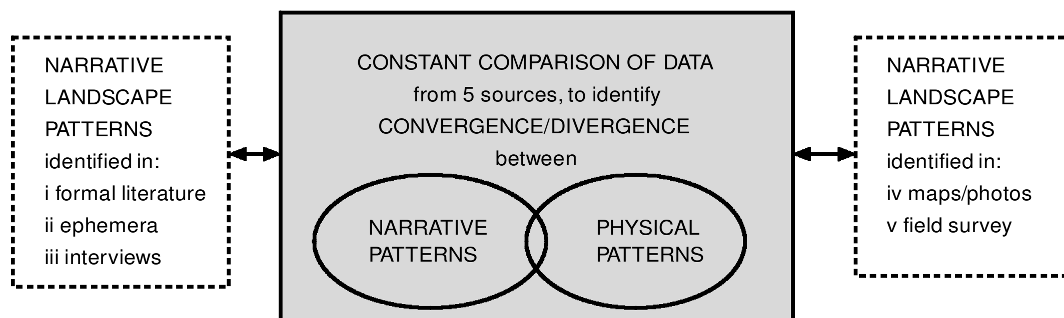

Fig. 4. Elements of the constant comparison component of the research method.

of missing significant information simply because the right question has not been asked.

The informal interview is a focused conversation (my own term, after Eyles, 1988). In this form of interview, the researcher remains open to a broad range of information on what makes the place special to various people who are more intimate with the place than is the researcher. The place's images and meanings for different people are able to be expressed in their individual ways, rather than being squeezed into an imposed uniform format. Given that any one place consists of layers of meaning comprising many competing cultural landscapes (McCann, 1992), the unstructured interview format enables that diversity to remain clearly visible. At the same time, convergences between individual views will be able to emerge.

Thirty interviews were conducted between October 1993 and July 1996, while other elements of the research progressed. Initial interviewees were selected from broad categories of 'Noosa people' suggested by the early stages of the review of formal and informal literature, and from the knowledge of Noosa that I had built up as a distant observer over 20 years. These initial categories (long-term and first-time holidaymakers, short- and long-term residents, tourism operators, well-known architects, and tourists, incomers and investors from Melbourne) were expanded through a controlled snowball method of sampling, with each local interviewee being asked to nominate the range of competing interests (and potential interviewees) within the community. These suggestions were constantly cross-checked with those of other interviewees and with the indications provided by the other data sources. Interviewees included lay people (residents and tourists), 'experts' (including a prominent architect and the Council's strategic planner) and local power brokers (including the mayor and the leaders of the main lobby groups). Interviews with experts and community leaders were more formal, because of their ability to shed light on specific factual information, such as planning controls.

Settlement morphology study using map and photographic archives

The gradual build-up of the settlement during the past 130 years was mapped using historical and contemporary maps obtained from Queensland State Archives, the State Department of Lands (Sunmap), Noosa Shire Council, and tourism bodies and publications. The historical and contemporary photograph collections of the John Oxley Library and the Cooroora Historical Society were examined, and prints of photographs and early postcards were obtained from the latter. The 60 contemporary postcards specifically captioned as Noosa scenes were selected from the estimated 250 postcards on display in Hastings Street postcard shops. The selected postcards exclude novelty postcards and those captioned more generically as 'Sunshine Coast', 'Queensland' or 'Australia'.

Interpretation and display of these documents and photographs were guided by comparing certain recurring depictions with elements of the narrative embodied in the other research components.

The field survey

Physical survey is crucial to the understanding of the tangible aspects of cultural landscapes as inhabited environments. People engage with the tourism landscape itself, with its physical artefacts and activity patterns. The field observations are largely directed by questions raised in the other components of the overall study. The physical place is interpreted in the context of the cultural life that it generates and that generates it. The field study attempts to decode the landscape, as advocated by Rapoport (1990), who describes the entire built environment as archaeological data, or '*congealed information*' (p. 84, citing Clarke, 1984). Hence, 'What has been encoded by human minds, other human minds can decode' (Rapoport, 1990, p. 84).

The field survey focuses on the interactions between a broad range of components of the cultural landscape, many of which are identified in the four other components of the research method. These cultural landscape elements include:

- the underlying natural environment;
- climate and microclimate;
- subdivision pattern and general layout;
- built elements and their spatial relationships;
- service infrastructure;
- land use and activity patterns;

- civic elements;
- evidence of time in the landscape;
- names of places, embodying history and culture;
- elements related to images, perception and meaning;
- sensory stimuli.

A higher level of understanding of the place is gained through interpretation of the interactions between the constituents of the landscape. Attention is paid to how the interacting elements shape, and are shaped by, each other.

Grounding the case study in theory and practice

The case study facilitates the development of explanatory theory relating to the transformation of small coastal settlements by tourism. The case study strategy has the potential for the generation of inductive theory for tourism, in the fields of cultural landscape and urban design. In tourism theory, the case study provides detailed knowledge against which resort life-cycle models may be compared and re-examined. In urban design, the case study is directed to demonstrating the value of cultural landscape approaches in theory and practice. By making contemporary processes of landscape making more explicit, the study contributes to a more dynamic understanding of cultural landscape theory, and defines its value for urban design and planning practice. In particular, the case study is used as a vehicle for clarifying the relationship between informal and formal processes for controlling the transformation of tourism landscapes.

The next section presents some insights into the Noosa case study. These insights demonstrate the reinforcement of the image of the tourism landscape through the various sources of case study data.

Noosa: a case study of the formation and transformation of a tourism landscape

The Noosa district has been evolving as a tourism landscape since the establishment of the town of Tewantin 5 km upstream from the mouth of the Noosa River in 1870 (Fig. 5). Initially, tourism was a minor element of a more diverse local economy based on the logging, milling and transport of timber, and the role of Tewantin as a port for the Gympie goldfields, 20 km inland. As the fine stands of rainforest and other timber were cleared from the forests of the Noosa hinterland, Tewantin continued as a transport node and minor service centre for the developing dairying, horticulture and farming activities on the newly cleared land. Fishing was an important local industry from the 1870s until the 1970s. All of these economic developments were part of the growth of the new colony (and later, state) of Queensland. From the beginning, awareness of, and accessibility to, the tourism attractions of the Noosa area increased in parallel with these more utilitarian changes.

The formation and transformation of the Noosa tourism landscape between the 1870s and 1990s illustrate the continuing importance of natural environment features to Noosa's tourism role. It also shows how the focus of tourism has moved from the river and lakes system (at Tewantin and Gympie Terrace, Noosaville) to the coastline (Noosa Heads, Sunshine Beach and Noosa Sound), later broadening to take in several hinterland towns and villages by the late twentieth century. No attempt has been made to fix a precise study area boundary, as such a boundary would be unable to represent the spatial dynamism of tourism in the area. That spatial dynamism is closely associated with socioeconomic changes in the local area, the immediate tourism region (the Sunshine Coast), the south-east Queensland region, Australia, and the global tourism system. However, the area examined falls mainly within the boundaries of Noosa Shire Council. But, instead of focusing on boundaries, the research deals with shifting nodes of tourism activity and the networks formed by these nodes.

The tourism landscape as presented in tourist guides and brochures 1917–1995

The main characteristics highlighted in Noosa tourist guides and brochures during the past 80 years are summarized in Table 1.

The table provides a glimpse into trends in the portrayal of Noosa as a tourist destination through the twentieth century. The material is integrated with a broader range of data in the main study. The intention here is to illustrate that certain tourism assets of Noosa have endured for at least eight decades, while other

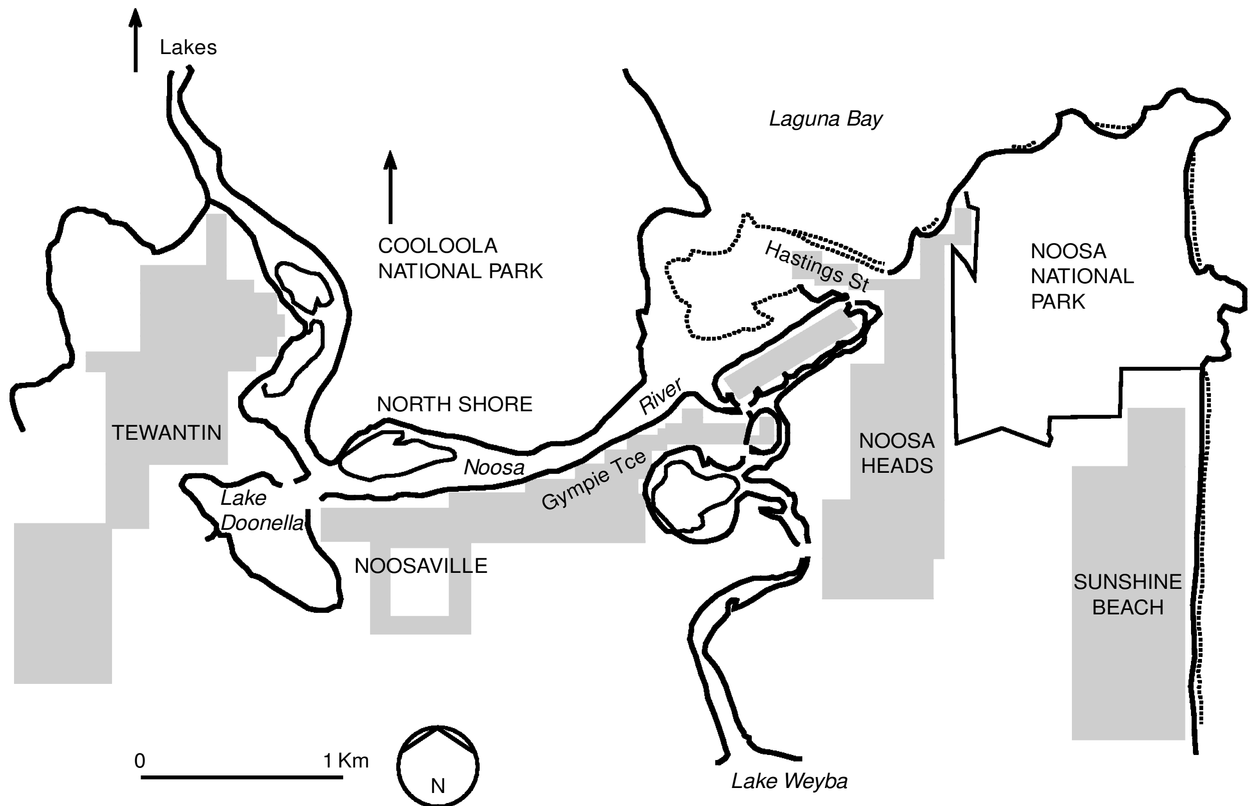

Fig. 5. Noosa as a network of nodes of tourism.

characteristics have been introduced during the development and transformation of the tourism landscape.

An attempt has been made to represent every decade since the earliest available twentieth century tourist guide to South East Queensland appeared in 1917 (QGITB, 1917). The availability of pre-1990s tourist guides and brochures has been limited to those documents that have survived in the public domain, in the collection of the John Oxley Library, the historical section of the State Library of Queensland. As these limitations of documentary research apply to this aspect of the study, other sections of the case study interpretation compare this data with other sources of data mentioned in the preceding section (planning documents, published literature, other ephemera, and the conversational interviews). Inclusion of a wide range of material in the analysis enables convergences and divergences in the tourist image to be more readily seen. However, it should be noted that Table 1 is not a time series diagram, as it refers to only ten documents prior to 1980, four 1980s documents, and seven 1990s documents.

Reading the table horizontally, it is clear that the area's 'natural' characteristics have been highlighted to tourists consistently from 1917 to 1995. The Noosa National Park area, the river and lakes system, the beaches, the Teewah Coloured Sands, and the North Shore/Cooloola area appear in almost all of the 23 reviewed documents. The hills behind Noosa Heads (Fig. 6) also receive considerable mention (in 16 of the 23 documents). Activities directly related to these natural environment characteristics – bushwalking, fishing and surfing (including body surfing and swimming) – are mentioned throughout the century, though a reduced emphasis on fishing since the mid-1980s is apparent, coinciding with the diversification of Noosa's tourism appeal and possibly also with declining fish stocks (cf. Cato, 1979; Palmer, 1996).

The natural character and beauty of the area are acknowledged throughout the period, and these aspects of Noosa's character are tied strongly to the key 'natural' elements of the National Park areas, the river and lakes, and the beaches. References to the natural character have become more effusive in brochures since the 1980s. It is

Table 1. Key characteristics of Noosa highlighted in selected tourist guides and brochures 1917–1995. Sources include the Queensland tourism authority (under its several names during the period), regional and local tourism bodies in the private and public sector, and commercial guidebook publishers.

		Year of publication (1917–1995)																						
		17	27	38	4-	48	49	55	58	61	70	80	85	86	89	92	93	94			95			
																		A	B	C	A	B	C	D
Character	Unique		•									•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•
	Natural			•	•	•		•		•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Beauty			•					•	•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
	History	•	•	•								•		•	•		•			•	•			
	Aboriginal										•			•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
	Low rise														•	•	•	•					•	•
	Not Gold Coast															•		•						
	Laid back			•													•		•	•	•	•		•
	Sophisticated														•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	International std											•			•				•	•		•		•
Natural aspects	Climate	•	•		•							•	•		•				•	•	•	•		•
	National Park[a]	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	River/lakes	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	•
	Beach(es)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Shade	•	•				•					•				•	•						•	•
	Headlands			•		•		•						•				•	•					
	Hell's Gates etc	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•								•	•				
	Hills	•	•			•		•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•
	Landmark trees											•								•			•	
	Coloured Sands	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•
	Cooloola/N Shr				•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Localities highlighted	Tewantin	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•			•			•				•
	Noosaville	•	•				•		•	•	•	•		•			•					•		
	Noosa Heads	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Hastings Street											•	•		•		•		•	•	•	•		•
	Boreen Point	•	•					•	•	•	•		•	•	•						•		•	
	Hinterland	•	•			•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
Activities	Bushwalks	•	•			•	•		•	•				•	•	•	•			•				
	Fishing	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•		•	•	•	•	
	Surfing[b]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	
	Boating	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•			•		•	•	
	Sport			•	•			•	•	•			•			•				•			•	
	Honeymoons							•	•							•								
	Theme attractions										•	•		•				•					•	
	Restaurants											•			•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
	Shopping											•	•		•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•

[a]Refers to the Noosa National Park area, including prior to declaration and subsequent extensions.
[b]Includes swimming, body surfing and surfboard riding.

mainly after the 1970s that the natural beauty of Noosa is portrayed as 'unique', although the definition of uniqueness has now broadened to include lifestyle and built environment issues. Paradoxically – but not unusually – the area's natural character has become more loudly praised during the period that it has been most under threat from the continuing development of the area. Similarly, the aboriginal heritage of the area has been more explicitly woven into the tourist mystique since the 1970s, as recognition of aboriginal culture has developed during this period.

The table shows that descriptions of Noosa's character have become both more numerous and

Fig. 6. The beach, wooded hillsides, and other natural features are highlighted in tourist brochures.

more diverse in the past two decades. A vertical reading of the table for each year shows that, prior to the 1970s, the tourist guides and brochures depicted a narrower range of attractions and activities, with these being based mainly on the natural characteristics of the area. After 1980, there is a greater emphasis on character *per se*, and the range of tourism assets broadens to include a 'laid back' lifestyle, a low-rise built form, 'international standards', and the creation of a cosmopolitan or sophisticated atmosphere through the addition of stylish restaurants and boutique shopping.

These changes are associated with a shift in the localities emphasized by the guides/brochures. The small town of Boreen Point, on the shores of Lake Cootharaba, is mentioned fairly consistently throughout the period, although more recent guides emphasize the elegant Jetty Restaurant rather than the rich fishing grounds accentuated in the early brochures. The early brochures focus on Tewantin, the first tourist base in the area. Gympie Terrace, the riverside esplanade, is also prominent in the earlier guides. Tewantin and Gympie Terrace had held the main holiday role since the 1870s, in parallel with Tewantin's establishment as a port for the nearby Gympie goldfields and for the region's timber industry. Although holiday accommodation is mentioned at Noosa Heads as early as the 1880s (for example Ivimey, 1889), the beach locality played a subsidiary role until the 1960s. Until the 1960s, Tewantin is referred to as the principal tourist destination. The shift in focus to Noosa Heads, and particularly Hastings Street, is marked from the 1980s, and is directly related to the emergence of a 'sophisticated' image, and 'international standards' of accommodation, dining and boutiques.

Urban form is portrayed in various ways in these documents, but is generally subsidiary to the representation of nature. The attractive character of Tewantin as 'a fairly old settlement' is promoted in the early guides produced by the Queensland tourism authority (QGITB, 1917). These contain advertisements illustrating rambling two-storey timber-verandahed hotels, since demolished. Advertisements in the 1950s guides depict vernacular and modern guest houses and flats. Between the 1950s and 1980s, aerial photographs of Noosa Heads show its transformation from a scattered village to a modern holiday town nestled among the trees. Advertisements in the 1980s brochures show larger multi-level masonry buildings stepping down the hillsides, and new three-storey luxury apartment buildings on the beachfront, while the text and editorial photographs emphasize nature. By the 1990s, the theme of nature is supplemented by a 'sophisticated' overlay focused on Hastings Street, 'one of the most glamorous streets of any resort in Australia' (Sunshine Coast Tourism Promotions, 1989, p.25). The brochures emphasize the low-rise architecture and stress the warm climate, the national parks, beaches and waterways, and the relaxed lifestyle.

Tourism as comparative consumption of the cultural landscape

> Waikiki, the Riviera, Acapulco, Carmel, Malibu – give me Noosa any day.
> (Groom, T., 1993 Letter to editor, *Noosa Blue* No. 11: 4)

The spontaneous tendency to compare tourist destinations, as demonstrated in Noosa tourist brochures, planning documents, published sources and case study interviews, supports two themes in recent scholarly writing on tourism. First, there is evidence that tourists are 'looking for differences' (Hough, 1990) – primarily differences from their places of origin (Krippendorf, 1987; Rojek, 1993). Second, tourism has similarities to other forms of consumption and consumerism, particularly the activity that economists and land use planners call 'comparison shopping'. This second theme relates to the fact that, in a global market, tourism destinations are competing with other similar 'products'. Com-

parison shopping for a coastal tourist resort is assisted by the international brochures published by transnational tourism operators such as Club Med, and by sun, sand and surf travel wholesalers such as Thomsons in the UK.

The case study interviews and literature contain constant comparisons between Noosa and other places, including the cities where so many of Noosa's tourists and residents originate. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the way in which descriptions and perceptions of Noosa are articulated by the means of comparison and contrast with other resorts in Australia and overseas. The tables show that the resort comparison dialogue tends to emphasize the positive aspects of Noosa, through both comparison and contrast with other tourism landscapes: Noosa is generally likened to 'unspoilt' places, and contrasted with 'spoilt' places. The process of comparison and contrast with other Australian places results in a picture of Noosa as a small town integrated with a beautiful natural setting. A warm subtropical climate and good accessibility enable visitors to enjoy the sheltered north-facing beach, good surfing, and attractive waterways. The low-key, low-rise urban form is subservient to the natural environment. Community involvement is held to have created a non-urban ambience, marked by an absence of traffic lights, four-lane roads and high-rise buildings. In contrast with some of the other resorts cited, Noosa is described as being uncrowded, and combining prestige with a friendly holiday atmosphere. The international comparisons perpetuate Noosa's nature myth and overlay the casual, relaxed, laid-back atmosphere with an emphasis on elegance and stylish people. The beachfront tourism business district of Hastings Street is the focus of comparisons with stylish European resorts and cities. Where more negative comparisons and contrasts are made, Noosa is described as too 'expensive', too 'crowded', too 'touristy', and 'spoilt by over-development' and 'commercialism'. In comparisons with international resorts, there is an evident bias towards 'stylish' European resorts

Table 2. Comparisons/contrasts between Noosa and other Australian tourist resorts (Sources: case study interviews, ephemeral tourist literature, published tourist guides, popular and formal literature on Noosa)

Noosa is like...	because Noosa is/has	Noosa is not like . . .	because Noosa is/has
	Positive:		*Positive*:
Byron Bay	Natural setting + north-facing surf beaches + warm climate	Byron Bay	Friendly + uncrowded; River
	+ environmentally oriented planning and design	Cities	No traffic lights, 4 lane roads or high-rise
Brunswick Heads	Small town in natural setting + holiday atmosphere	Surfers Paradise/Gold Coast	Low-rise development in natural setting
Manly (Sydney)	Town right on beach	Sthn Sunshine Coast (Caloundra, Maroochy)	Low-rise + natural + non-suburban, due to community involvement
Agnes Water – 1770	Good surfing		
Victorian beach resorts	Natural, prestigious		
Caloundra	Still waters + surf	Coffs Harbour } Port Douglas }	Tasteful + natural + not overdeveloped
NSW Central Coast villages	Dominated by natural setting		
Port Macquarie } Port Stephens }	Ditto + good surf + waterways + water activity	Agnes Water – 1770	Less remote
		Victorian beach resorts	Year-round climate makes good facilities viable
North Stradbroke Island	Similar integration of tasteful fishing villages in similar natural setting	North Queensland beach towns	Good surf beach
Port Douglas	Tropical tourist goldmine + laid-back lifestyle	Mission Beach	*Sub*tropical climate
	Negative		*Negative*
Surfers Paradise } Manly }	Expensive + no longer nature based	Byron Bay	Too touristy + less remote + no alternative lifestyle
Begara, Mon Repos	Beauty and peace spoilt by tourism	Caloundra	No longer family oriented
		Victorian beach resorts	No sense of history
Melbourne	Suburban sprawl	Woodgate	No longer nature based
Whitsunday islands	Nature spoilt by overdevelopment		

Table 3. Comparisons/contrasts between Noosa and international tourist resorts (Sources: case study interviews, ephemeral tourist literature, published tourist guides, popular and formal literature on Noosa)

Noosa is like . . .	because Noosa is/has	Noosa is not like . . .	because Noosa is/has
	Positive		*Positive*
Honolulu	Sidewalk cafes, stylish people, exotic ambience	Waikiki/Hawaii	Low-rise development in natural setting
Carmel	Nature myth + low-key development + elegant people interested in environment	Spanish Mediterranean	As above
		French Mediterranean	Public beaches open to all
		Monte Carlo, Sorrento	Low-rise and laid-back
		New Zealand beach towns	Warm climate
Noumia + Bali	Sunny beach + quality accommodation		
Teneriffe	Generic: small + cute		
NZ beach towns	Beautiful		
Greek islands	Unspoilt + casual + good coffee at beach		
Mediterranean beaches	Relaxed + informal		
Monte Carlo + Sorrento	Beauty of natural setting + upmarket tourists		
French Mediterranean	Low-rise, village atmosphere (Hastings St)		
Mexican resorts	Mediterranean lifestyle		
Paris streets	Hastings St stylish atmosphere		
Marbella + nearby town	Natural beauty and stylish shops and cafes		
Phuket + Pattaya	Beach + climate + relaxed		
	Negative		*Negative*
San Francisco and 'international cities'	Expensive galleries, shops and 'city coffee'	Marbella	Wasted opportunity for riverfront promenade
St Tropez	Promenade of expensive shops	Puerto Banus (Marbella)	No marina
		Banff	Crowded, gimmicky, touristy shops
Banff	Touristy, crowded		

rather than less 'tasteful' American resorts. Noosa tourist brochures and key local interviewees suggest that the presence of international operators is an important component of the 'upmarket' image (for example Tourism Noosa, 1992, p. 24).

A more official example of the tendency to compare Noosa with international resorts regarded as stylish and tasteful, rather than with other Australian resorts, was the first Noosa Shire *Design Manual* prepared in the mid-1980s by the Council, with community input (NSC, 1986, p. i). Under the subheading 'aesthetic aspects', support is expressed for 'a unified resort feeling' (NSC, 1986, p. 15) and well-known international resorts are cited: 'Examples of continuity in design providing popular memories of resort areas include Bermuda, the Greek Islands and . . . the Mediterranean' (NSC, 1986, p.15). This section of the *Design Manual* focuses on the creation of 'continuity of character' at the eastern end of Hastings Street through the use of similar roofing materials (NSC, 1986, p.15), and can be seen as a direct prelude to more recent descriptions of this area as 'the Paris end of Hastings Street' (see below).

Despite the frequency of international comparison, Queensland's Gold Coast receives the most comparative mention. The Gold Coast is frequently cited as significantly different from Noosa because of the presence of high-rise development, urban sprawl tendencies, and a greater modification of the natural environment.

The Gold Coast as an archetypal coastal tourism resort: from exemplar to anathema

The attractiveness and distinctiveness of Noosa has come to be defined, in part, in terms of what it is not. In the conversational interviews and

other data sources, Noosa is consistently spoken of as being markedly different from the Queensland Gold Coast, and from Surfers Paradise, the centre of the Gold Coast (Table 4). The descriptions of these differences are frequently used as ways of articulating Noosa's own cultural landscape characteristics.

Surfers Paradise, or 'Surfers', as it is usually called by Australians, is Australia's most highly urbanized and best-known coastal resort (Smith, 1991). Surfers is the main resort on the Gold Coast, a 40 km stretch of urbanized coastline that stretches from 70 km south of the Queensland capital, Brisbane, to the New South Wales state border. The Gold Coast and its urbanized hinterland, with a combined population of over 300 000, is one of the most rapidly growing regions in Australia. The long, flat, coastal and estuarine strip is backed by a lush green hinterland and rainforest-covered volcanic mountains. The coastal strip is characterized by an almost continuous band of high-rise apartment buildings, many of which shade the beaches in the afternoons. For much of the twentieth century and particularly the third quarter of the century, the Gold Coast, and Surfers Paradise in particular, was acclaimed in Australia as the epitome of what a good coastal resort should be. In 1950s references to Noosa, the Gold Coast is depicted as a benchmark of desirable tourism development (Anon, 1955).

Not the Gold Coast means . . .

> The Sunshine Coast is very different from the Gold Coast. There is none of the glitzy, ritzy, fast and furious atmosphere here. The ambience is quieter, softer, more in tune with nature . . . [T]here is strong resistance by locals to 'another Gold Coast' and . . . development has been kept low-key and low-rise (Bowen, 1992, p.138).

The contrasts between Noosa and the Gold Coast revealed in the research data contribute significantly to a broader narrative of Noosa as a low-rise 'village' in a natural setting, yet with an aura of style and sophistication. These two reported characteristics of Noosa are outlined below.

No high-rise: Noosa as a village in the trees

Tourist brochures and published guides are quick to point out that there are no high-rise buildings at Noosa. Some brochures attribute the lack of

Table 4. Noosa Heads versus Surfers Paradise and the Gold Coast: descriptions from interviews and formal and informal literature

Noosa Heads	Surfers Paradise/Gold Coast
Unique	International
European	American
Low-rise	High-rise, skyscrapers
Natural	Commercial
Tasteful	Distasteful
Style, elegance	Disneylandish, touristy, trendy
Relaxing, laid-back	Busy, razzle-dazzle hassle, rat race
Low-key	Glitzy, ritzy
Village atmosphere	Fast and furious atmosphere
Small	Big
Like southern France; Manly; Mediterranean	Like eastern Spain; Hawaii; Las Vegas; America
Environmentally responsive	Environmentally damaging
	A mistake
Quiet, intimate	Hectic, overcrowded
Beautiful	Ugly, vulgar
Outdoor oriented	Indoor oriented
Country town, in the bush	City
Parking/traffic problems	Parking/traffic solutions
Good	Bad
Developers controlled	Developers dominant
Things to do	Things to visit/see
Vulnerable	Resilient
Product of motor car era	Established in railway era

high-rise buildings to an 'edict that no building shall be higher than the trees' (for example Sunshine Coast Tourism Promotions, 1994, p. 101). This point was also mentioned consistently by those interviewed in this research. The origin of the 'no high-rise' ethos is more complex than the 'enlightened planning edicts' claimed in the tourist guides. The absence of high-rise development at Noosa can be attributed to a complex interaction between a number of factors including community activism, the inherent instability of the Hastings Street sand spit, the severe subtropical cyclones of the early 1970s, and the economic boom-and-bust cycle.

The tourist guides are misleading in their sparse explanation of Noosa's low-rise built form. Although the ban on high-rise has been formalized in local planning controls, the move was led by community activism, and helped in fortuitous ways by the combination of the severe storms of the early 1970s and the economic slump that followed the boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The simplistic claim that 'residents have prevented any development higher than the tree line' (Tourism Noosa, 1995) is therefore only a partial explanation. A court case brought by local residents, though legally unsuccessful, signalled to Noosa Shire Council, developers, and investors that development proposals would be closely scrutinized by an articulate and well-organized community. The catchcry of 'no buildings taller than the trees' became a firm element of the Noosa narrative.

The Noosa Parks Association, a highly effective community organization formed in 1962 to lobby for the expansion of Noosa's National Parks, has been a strong opponent of high-rise development. The Association's concern at potential impact on the natural environment was accompanied by sometimes sensationalist concern at potential social problems such as crime and the isolation of elderly residents (Noosa Parks Association, 1981, p. 9). In voicing these concerns, the Association drew on media reports of high-rise living in Surfers Paradise and Honolulu. The constant reiteration of the anti-high-rise theme over the past three decades is matched by a physical tourism landscape in which the natural environment has remained prominent despite extensive tourism and residential development.

Noosa's 'not the Gold Coast' theme is the narrative of a village atmosphere rather than an urban character. Noosa Shire Council identifies as part of its tourist attractiveness a 'lifestyle factor relating to Noosa's low key development and slower pace, as compared to cities and other tourist resorts' (NSC, 1991b). Because this aspect of Noosa's lifestyle is recognised as significant to the Shire's economy, 'city symbols' such as traffic lights and four-lane roads are explicitly discouraged by Council policy.

Through the visual media, several tourist interviewees had a strong image of Surfers Paradise as high-rise, overdeveloped and less 'aesthetically pleasing' than Noosa Heads. Some likened Surfers Paradise to 'the Las Vegas Hawaii sort of feel', describing it as 'Disneylandish' and 'distasteful' in contrast to Noosa. A young Canadian woman had found Surfers to be 'very, very, very touristy'. A young Gold Coast couple, holidaying at Noosa Heads, said

> It's nice to get away from [Surfers] and have the bush. It's all high-rises everywhere . . . We like looking out to the National Park, rather than at high-rises casting shadows over the beach.

They disliked the crowded beaches and parking difficulties of Surfers Paradise, and didn't perceive Noosa as having these problems. It could be inferred that such problems are less irritating in a more natural physical setting. Another informant preferred Noosa as more 'laid back' and less 'trendy' than Surfers Paradise.

While talking about Noosa's height limits, a retired operator of holiday units said

> I've had a lot of [holiday tenants] remark: they like [Noosa]; it's more natural and smaller, not like the Gold Coast.... [W]e've had people come to the units from the Gold Coast, to have a holiday away from the rat race, and how it was down there.

A Californian backpacker also spoke of the Gold Coast as being more like a city. An elderly couple who first came to Noosa from Melbourne for winter holidays in the mid-1960s had switched from the Gold Coast because

> it was getting nearly as bad as it is now. We don't like that razzle dazzle hassle thing

> about the Gold Coast, and Noosa didn't have any of that. It was quiet, [a] beautiful little country spot.

Having made Noosa their retirement home in the early 1970s, they felt that the Noosa community-led opposition to high-rise development had prevented developers from 'taking over' Noosa, as they had the Gold Coast.

Style and sophistication

Over the past two decades, the attraction of Noosa's natural beauty has been supplemented by an increasing emphasis on style and sophistication, as indicated in Table 1. Two key elements of these supplementary myths[1] in the Noosa narrative are expressed as 'the Paris end of Hastings Street' and 'the Noosa style'.

The Paris end of Hastings Street

In recent years, the eastern end of Hastings Street has come to be referred to as 'the Paris end of Hastings Street' (Mainwaring, 1993, personal communication; Tourism Noosa, 1992, 1995). This grand description conflates two aspects of Noosa: Noosa as a place with connections to Melbourne, and Noosa as a place with pretensions to European style and sophistication. Since the late nineteenth century, part of Melbourne's most fashionable city street has been popularly known as 'the Paris end of Collins Street'. The attachment of a similar soubriquet to part of Noosa's most fashionable street is an indication of the influence that Melburnians and ex-Melburnians have had on the construction of Noosa's image.

'The Paris end of Collins Street' in Melbourne is an allusion to an elegant tree-lined boulevard edged by boom-style Victorian buildings, a place for stylish people to promenade and be seen. In a less formal way, 'famous Hastings Street' (in ephemeral references too numerous to list) has been constructed physically and perceptually as a stylish street for elegant people to promenade, to sip coffee at sidewalk cafes, to shop at expensive boutiques, to see and be seen. The declaration of a 'Paris end of Hastings Street', and its formalization in the developer-named French Quarter resort, successfully translates cultural capital into real estate capital. The emergence of the 'Paris end' of Hastings Street can be tracked in the locally produced tourist brochures of the 1990s. The term appears in advertisements for individual resorts in 1992, when both the Hotel Laguna, at the western end, and Saks, at the opposite (eastern) end of the street, are described as being at the Paris end of Hastings Street (Tourism Noosa, 1992, pp. 7, 12). By 1995, with the opening of The French Quarter resort, the 'Paris end' becomes firmly located at the eastern end of the street, in the advertisements for Saks and the Ocean Breeze resort (Tourism Noosa, 1995, p. 11). By 1996, the long-established Netanya beachfront resort also describes itself as being at the Paris end of Hastings Street (QTTC *et. al*., 1996, p. 5), and the term is in use in some brochures' general descriptions of the eastern end of Hastings Street. The invention of the Paris end of Hastings Street represents a broadening of the projected appeal of Noosa: the focus on the beach and National Park is supplemented by an equal focus on Hastings Street as a place of style and sophistication.

'The Noosa style': a dialogue between Mediterranean and vernacular influences

The idea of a 'Noosa style' of design appears frequently in the research interviews, ephemeral and popular literature, and in Council documents. The term covers a wide range of design, including fine arts, commercial design, interior design, architecture and urban design. The currency of the term by the mid-1990s can be seen in the title of a major exhibition of local applied arts held in June 1995: *Noosa: The Style* (Noosa Regional Gallery Society, 1995). A key interviewee involved in leadership of both the local arts community and the influential Noosa Parks Association outlines the contributions of the Queensland vernacular response to the local materials and climate, the creativity brought by new interstate and overseas residents in the 1960s and 1970s economic booms, and the resort style of the 1980s and 1990s. The latter, composed of 'vast expanses of pastel concrete – instant palm landscapes [is] very Noosa – but just like every other tourist trap' (Moroney, in Noosa Regional Gallery Society, 1995, p. 1). For Moroney, a 'Noosa style' can only be developed out of the community demand for 'preserving its natural environment, and encouraging a built environment that is in sympathy with the nature of Noosa' (ibid.). Thus the idea of a Noosa style is closely related to the themes of nature and of community involvement.

[1]The term 'myth' is used here in the sense of 'an intellectual construction which embodies beliefs, values and information, and which can influence events, behaviour and perception' (Short, 1990, p. xvi).

Early articulation of a Noosa style of architecture and urban design appears in the study accompanying the Hastings Street DCP (NSC, 1983/87, Part B), which includes a brief evaluation of the built form of Noosa Heads in the early 1980s. The term 'Noosa style' is yet to appear, but this planning and urban design study provides clues to its origins and components. The study observes that 'the recent mediterranean style of architecture appears to be satisfactory for the seaside tourist context' (NSC, 1983/87, p. B35). The acceptability of the Mediterranean design approach is based on 'the climate, the strength of the sunlight, the colour of the sea and the resort atmosphere' (NSC, 1983/87, p. B49). The

> 1970–1980s mediterranean style apartment buildings with bagged brickwork painted in warm colours . . . with concrete or terracotta roof tiles . . . although having nothing in common with the [vernacular . . .] perhaps point the way towards an attractive and cohesive future (NSC, 1983/87, p. B29).

In architecture and urban design, the evolution of a Noosa style has been attributed to three nationally known local architects – Gabriel Poole, Lindsay Clare and John Mainwaring – and to two local property developers (Poole, in Jarratt, 1993, pp. 15, 16). Gabriel Poole describes the Noosa style as 'creating architecture which has been thought out for this climate, architecture that actually works', rather than the problem of 'people coming up from down south and building without thinking' (in Jarratt, 1993, p. 15). Poole states that he and Mainwaring created the Noosa style,

> a concept that came from the ideas of [two developers] who liked the *Mediterranean influence* that I found attractive at the time. My other great influence was the Mexican architect [Louis Barragan] (cited in Jarratt, 1993, p. 16, emphasis added).

John Mainwaring has helped to define the Noosa style through articles in *Noosa Blue* and through his role as co-editor of the regional design magazine *Casa*. The philosophy of the magazine is articulated in terms of the nature myth that permeates all five sources of case study data: '[W]e are for anything that *preserves or complements the natural environment*, against anything that threatens it or detracts from it' (Anon, 1993, p. 1, emphasis added). Mainwaring states that Noosa resisted the American high-rise influence, and backdates the emergence of the Noosa style to Gabriel Poole's 1960s Tingirana motel and holiday units on the beachfront in Hastings Street. The Tingirana, 'the connoisseur's favourite '60s building in Noosa', is a simple structure with Mediterranean-style single skin blockwork walls (Mainwaring, 1992a, p. 24). The only constraint in the brief was 'the preservation of the large eucalypt which had become a Hastings Street focal point' (Mainwaring, 1992a, p. 24). This Moreton Bay Ash continues to dominate Hastings Street (Fig. 7). The Tingirana Arcade responds to the subtropical climate by being kinked 'to keep out the savage nor'easters' (Mainwaring, 1992a, pp. 24, 26). Mainwaring suggests that the canvas roof on the popular restaurant at the beach end of Tingirana Arcade was an unconscious prototype of Poole's internationally known tent house at Eumundi in the Noosa hinterland (Mainwaring, 1992a, pp. 27).

A move towards lighter-weight 'timber and tin' construction is part of a current diversification in the Noosa style, encouraged by the Council. The Council is, however, only one participant in a broader community debate. This new stream of 'the Noosa style' is inspired by the few remaining examples of the early twentieth century Queenslander style of resort architecture (see Fig. 8), by simple vernacular 'weekenders', and by the holiday homes and retirement cottages designed by fashionable Brisbane architects Froud and Job in Noosa Heads in the 1960s. Mainwaring (1991, 1992a, 1992b) argues for using these buildings as a guide for designing in

Fig. 7. The 1960s Tingirana Motel, built around a large Moreton Bay Ash in Hastings Street, demonstrates a tradition of dominance of the built environment by nature.

Fig. 8. Halse Lodge: the last of the original guest houses at Noosa Heads.

harmony with the local environment, climate and contemporary way of life.

Alan Starkey, a local architect-developer of over 20 holiday apartment buildings, is not mentioned in the 'official' narrative on the emergence of a Noosa style. In an interview, Starkey (1996, personal communication) spontaneously mentions the Noosa style in reference to Council encouragement for a distinctive Noosa design approach. Starkey describes the elements of the Noosa style in terms of '. . . the Mediterranean influence. It's not truly Mediterranean but it's got that influence, with the plastered walls and the tiled roofs and draped pergolas.' He acknowledges Gabriel Poole's work in Hastings Street, and adds several of his own post-1980 designs for holiday apartments as examples of the style. The aspects that he says exhibit the Noosa style are the freedom and looseness of the architecture, 'the simple feeling of the Mediterranean', simple pitched roofs, orangey-red roof tiles, curved polycarbonate awnings over the Hastings Street footpaths, and 'a sort of timelessness' that endures while the environment changes around the building. A 'curvy feeling' is now used in the design of Starkey's buildings near the sea. A 'sub-tropical feel' is important in Starkey's definition of the Noosa style. Because Noosa is 'a place of shade',[2] Starkey believes it is 'nice to see trees rather than heavy buildings imposing themselves'. Like several other interviewees, Starkey stressed the central importance of having 'the built and natural environment working in harmony'.

The idea of a 'Noosa style' of architecture is a powerful myth, whose full dimensions could only be judged with a more detailed investigation, which is beyond the scope of this paper. It is never made clear whether the Mediterranean influence is derived from contemporary Mediterranean resort designs or from the Mediterranean vernacular, or whether there is such a thing as a generic Mediterranean style. References in the case study data to Mediterranean design influences always focus on Noosa applications rather than on Mediterranean origins. Investigation of the latter issue is unlikely to shed much light on 'the Noosa style'.

The role of urban design/planning documents in formalizing the narrative landscape

Since the 1970s, Noosa's landscape narrative has been formalized through the incremental adoption of planning controls to deal with the physical growth and transformation of the resort. Planning and design terminology and processes, which may appear similar to those used in other places, are directly informed by the local landscape narrative, and in turn subtly reshape the narrative through the articulation of key landscape values. Over three decades, there has been a dynamic interaction between physical landscape qualities, tourism promotion, public perception, development, and urban design/planning interventions. The examples below relate to the landscape 'myths' introduced in the preceding section.

Legislating the low-rise village atmosphere

In the early 1980s, Sydney consultants Jackson Teece Chesterman and Willis attempted to articulate the components of the 'village atmosphere' cited at public meetings held during an urban design study for the formulation of a Development Control Plan (DCP) for Hastings Street (NSC, 1983/87). The characteristics contributing to the village character (summarized from the document) are identified as:

- limited access, with 'defined topographic entrances or gateways' (NSC, 1983/87, p. B47);
- strong promenade activity in Hastings Street (see Fig. 6), with its active street frontages,

[2] The name 'Noosa' is believed to have the meaning of 'a place of shade' (Cato, 1979). This meaning is reinforced in the Noosa narrative, while an alternative translation, 'place of spirits or ghosts' (Cato, 1979; Steele, 1984), is ignored.

numerous restaurants with footpath dining, and high pedestrian traffic;
- a strong natural landscape character, including remnant dune landscape, the Noosa Woods, and large trees near the Surf Club;
- historical continuity, seen in the remnant Woods, the few older timber vernacular buildings and, to a lesser degree, the older motels;
- a casual atmosphere, deriving from land use diversity, spatial diversity, and informal planting;
- sensitive design solutions articulating between the climate, vernacular approaches, and a 'Mediterranean' design influence (NSC, 1983/87, p. B49);
- predominantly small businesses, 'providing a diversity of building forms and . . . personal, friendly, service' (NSC, 1983/87, p. B49);

The Hastings Street DCP responds to an identified key issue of 'maintaining the village atmosphere in a beautiful natural setting' (NSC, 1983/87, p. A2) by being based on four key principles:

- that residential *density* be maintained at a level similar to pre-1983 development and which can be located on a site without the need for high-rise buildings;
- that *building height* be restricted so that new buildings will not dominate existing buildings or mature trees;
- maintaining a *variable setback* for the Hastings Street frontage to conserve the informal streetscape character;
- that *landscaped open space* be provided to the front and rear of sites to contribute to the overall landscape theme (NSC, 1983/87, p. A3–4, emphasis in original).

A statutory restriction limiting new buildings to 'the height frame set by existing buildings and trees (AHD[3] + 18 m)' is supported by a 'basic standard' of four storeys including parking, with

Fig. 9. Noosa River, Sheraton Hotel and hillside development.

[3]AHD = Australian Height Datum (the national standard survey reference).

exceptions allowing a fifth storey in the centre of a large building site (NSC, 1983/87, p. 7). The Sheraton Hotel, approved in 1987, manifests these development standards. Despite its prominence, standing taller than any trees (see Fig. 9), the myth of 'no buildings taller than the trees' remains intact – even when the statement and contradictory photograph appear side by side, as in several of the tourist brochures. The inconsistency between the statement and the visual image goes unremarked because, in this instance, the landscape narrative brackets out incompatible elements of the physical/visual landscape. A terraced hillside development, technically a two-storey building, is derided in the landscape narrative as 'the chest of drawers' and 'a corpse hanging in the town square as a warning to the citizenry' (Mainwaring, 1993, personal communication). The Sheraton and 'chest of drawers' (juxtaposed in Fig. 9), demonstrate the challenge of translating community expectations into effective design/planning controls.

In a later reinforcement of the four-storey limit, a local planning policy notes that '[t]he low-rise building form of almost all development in Noosa has been seen through tourist surveys as being one of the major elements of attraction to the area' (NSC, 1991a, p. 1). Lack of high-rise development is now well accepted by Noosa's tourism development industry. The height limit has not retarded property values and investment motivations, as indicated by the 1996 development of six $2.8 million apartments in a three-storey building on the beachfront (Starkey, 1995, personal communication).

Legislating for style

Noosa Shire planning studies and planning instruments place a high emphasis on visual aesthetics. The following words appear repeatedly in the objectives of the 1988 Strategic Plan: visual impact, aesthetics, aesthetically pleasing, attractive, beauty, image (NSC, 1988). Provisions of the Strategic Plan are explained as having the purpose of preventing 'untidy', 'ugly', and 'undesirable' urban form (NSC, 1988, p. A677). Throughout the Council's studies and planning instruments, the area's natural beauty is highlighted.

The Hastings Street Development Control Plan (DCP) places an explicit emphasis on visual amenity and character (NSC, 1983/87, p. A1). A stated key principle of the DCP is

> [t]hat due consideration be given to the *aesthetic appearance* of the development particularly in relation to adjoining development (streetscape, colour, articulation of facades, pitch of roofs and materials etc.). (NSC, 1983/87, p. A4, emphasis in original)

This is supported by a performance criterion requiring

> buildings with small scale elements on the Hastings Street frontage, by variations to building lines, treatment of building facades and . . . spaces between buildings and street.

The 'basic standards' require that 40–60% of Hastings Street property frontages be set back 10 m from the south side and 7 m from the north side of the street, and encourage the remainder to be built to the street alignment and to be provided with awnings or other weather protection (NSC, 1983/87, p. A8). Provisions are specified for breaking up building bulk and massing along Hastings Street and its parallel beachfront through 'the articulation of wall and roof surfaces to achieve [an] intimate small scale character . . . and to minimise the impact of large unbroken building surfaces on that character' (NSC, 1983/87, p. A11). The Hastings Street DCP responds to early 1980s community fears of the potential loss of 'the treasured ''village atmosphere''' (NSC, 1983/87, p. B3). The unstated intention of these requirements appears to be to accommodate an increase in built density while maintaining Hastings Street's established character of detached buildings surrounded by trees and open space.

Council documents contain veiled references to the Gold Coast as an undesirable model. The Council's *Design Manual* (NSC, 1986, p. 25), makes it clear that architecturally '[a]ttractive shops and well designed themes are a better investment' than '[f]lashy treatment of building exteriors and dull landscaping'. In other words, Noosa is tasteful and discreet, in contrast to other, flashy, coastal resorts.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to illustrate the dynamic relationship between patterns in the landscape narrative and patterns in the built

environment of small coastal settlements. The Queensland resort of Noosa provides a case study of the overlaying of a cultural landscape of tourism on a natural landscape valued by visitors for over a century. The case study has been used as the vehicle for testing a multi-method research approach to the interpretation of tourism landscapes. In this paper I have focused on interpretation rather than the principles for design intervention (see O'Hare, forthcoming, for the latter). The Noosa example illuminates the urban design value of ephemeral literature such as tourist guides and brochures, when combined with more formal published literature, documentary research, field survey and focused conversational interviews. In particular, this paper has attempted to illustrate how recurring themes in the local dialogue of place have flowed between key urban design/planning documents, ephemeral tourism literature, and the perceptions of residents and tourists. The research method suggests the potential value of a community participation approach to the design of larger interventions. In Noosa, a distinctive built form has evolved in parallel with the narrative of the place as a relaxed but stylish resort village dominated by nature. Both the narrative and physical landscape have been shaped by a local process of constant comparison and contrast with well-known Australian and international coastal resorts.

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