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REVIEW ARTICLE

Tourist utopias: biopolitics and the genealogy of the post-world tourist city

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This review article locates urban tourism research within contemporary debates of critical urban studies. The review describes and analyses an emergent urban form – the “tourist utopia” – by focusing on the paradigmatic examples of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau. Though culturally, historically, and geographically distinct, these tourist cities share a set of characteristics which foreshadow more general global urban transformations. These characteristics include their juridical status as enclave “spaces of exception” within larger states; transnational investment regimes; public–private partnerships; transient multi-national populations; superlative and iconic architecture; and economies devoted to shopping, gambling, sightseeing, spectacle, and amusement. I explore the way each of these tourist cities functions as a metropolitan laboratory of urban futures and analyse them in terms of relationships among post-Fordist regimes of labour and consumption, themed environments and scripted experiences, mobilities of tourists and workers, and novel forms of sovereignty. The review highlights, in the tradition of the world city hypothesis, seven characteristics of these paradigmatic cities that are increasingly common to many global cities today; and speculates about the dialectic of dystopian and utopian valences in their post-world city futures. More generally, it introduces concepts from urban theory which may be relevant to research on tourism.

Keywords: enclave; neoliberal; world city; immaterial labour; sovereignty; mobility; utopia

In Dubai, the tourist is the perfect citizen who, rather than paying taxes, simply comes for two weeks, deposits a lot of money, and leaves with no further demands. Easterling (2006, p. 127)

1. Introduction

At the start of the twentieth century, the sparsely populated settlement of Las Vegas, Nevada served primarily as a water stop for travellers on wagon trains and railways between Los Angeles, California, and other regions of the USA. The Trucial state of Dubai in what is now the United Arab Emirates was a small village whose negligible economy depended primarily on pearl diving. The Chinese territory of Macau was a Portuguese colony whose “golden age” as a gateway for trade between Europe and Asia had ended more than two centuries before. In 1900, the populations of Macau, Dubai, and Las Vegas, respectively, were 64,000, 10,000, and 19. W.H. Auden referred to Macau in an early
twentieth-century poem as a European "weed" in the East, an "oddity" where "nothing serious can happen".

At the time the words were written, the sentiment could have legitimately been applied to all three cities. However, a century later, Las Vegas is known as an entertainment Mecca, adult playground, and "city of sin", serving as a cinematic, literary, and philosophical metonym for prurient excess and hyperreality. Dubai is a phantasmagoric experiment in innovative architecture and design, featuring the world’s tallest building, biggest shopping mall, and largest artificial island, with a sovereign debt so sizable that the city’s economic troubles disturb global markets. The tiny city of Macau is now the world’s most densely populated territory, and has eclipsed even Las Vegas to become the most lucrative site of casino gambling on the planet. No longer simply marginalized or overlooked places, each of these cities has become a “destination” attraction. These cities have gained prominence by producing nothing tangible aside from the built environment itself, which is primarily constructed by non-local concerns to attract non-local workers and tourists. Each city depends on profits derived from affect-driven tourist consumption related to such activities as gambling, shopping, and sightseeing. In many ways, they are indicative of a more general de-industrializing global economy where accumulation is increasingly achieved from an economic logic of “intensification” that relies on the speculative circulation of capital, without recourse to production of goods (Nealon, 2002).

In 2011 alone, and in the midst of a global recession, Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau were visited by more than 70 million tourists. Of course, a territory whose population produces little and devotes much of the day to excessive leisure is not sustainable. Thus, the economic viability of each city today depends on those temporary tourist visitors and the nomadic workers who provide various services: hotel room cleaners and web designers, security guards and singing gondoliers, masseuses and celebrity chefs. Without tourist visitors and/or non-local workers, these seemingly vibrant cities would effectively cease to be viable.

1.1. The emergence of the post-industrial tourist city

The ascendance of cities such as Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau indicates a new “decentered and deterritorializing” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xii) regime of capitalism, characterized by speculative finance and biopolitical production. Capital and sovereignty are reterritorialized today in a number of new forms and locations. For example, Manuel Castells identifies the regional “technopoles”, such as Silicon Valley, and the “megacities” – “discontinuous constellations of spatial fragments, functional pieces, and social segments” (Castells, 2000, p. 436), such as Sao Paulo, that together rescale the state to organize the information society (Castells, 2000; Castells & Hall, 1994). In contrast, Easterling (2005) details the contagious “spatial products” of infrastructure and logistics protocols that operate outside the state to lubricate globalization processes.

With a focus on Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau, this review article analyses what I will refer to as the tourist utopia – enclaves within the state that constitute another post-industrial reterritorialization of urban form. To explore the composition of this emergent formation, I analyse interrelationships among post-Fordist regimes of labour and consumption, themed environments and scripted experiences, mobile tourists and workers, and antecedent new forms of sovereignty and citizenship. Focus on the tourist dimensions of these three cities highlights distinguishing characteristics that are produced in part by speculative capital and are increasingly common in many global cities today.
I highlight Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau because they are each distinct urban environments that pose a paradigmatic case: a Sunbelt city in the American West which developed under a regime of market capitalism and democratic governance; an Islamic emirate and port in the petroleum-rich region of the Middle East, with roots in feudal patronage and with a unique corporate-style absolutist dynastic regime; and the oldest European colony in Asia, recently reunited with China’s market-socialist economy. These cities differ markedly in their respective geographies, cultures, histories, economies, and political systems. However, the collective development of these cities is indicative of the dramatic changes in world systems in the latter twentieth century. Not much more than a generation ago Las Vegas, Macau, and Dubai stood, more-or-less, respectively in the First, Second, and Third Worlds. Today the “spatial divisions of the three Worlds” are “scrambled so that we continually find the First World in the Third, the Third in the First, and the Second almost nowhere at all” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xiii).

1.2. The city as an object of urban tourism research

Understanding the rapid development of tourist cities such as Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau and their role in the contemporary transformations of the global economy invites the critical attention of scholars of both tourist and urban studies. However, Ashworth (2003) contends that urban tourism research has suffered from a debilitating “double neglect”: “those studying tourism neglected cities while those studying cities neglected tourism” (p. 143; see also Ashworth, 1989, 2014; Ashworth & Page, 2011). The result is that although urban tourism comprises a significant component of tourist practices, and many cities today make serious efforts to attract tourists, urban tourism is still a relatively undeveloped field of scholarship. I address this neglect by analysing the tourist dimensions of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau by drawing on a critical review of potentially productive theoretical concepts emerging from urban, social, and cultural theory.

This is a review article about urban tourism, but it does not comprise an audit of the urban tourism literature as such (Ashworth has already done an admirable and comprehensive job in this regard); rather, this is a review of urban tourism, and of the tourist city, as a potentially radical concept, a potent nexus of contemporary social, cultural, and economic phenomena. I review a body of literature emerging from the concerns of contemporary urban theory and apply it to these three paradigmatic tourist cities with the aim of addressing two limitations of extant urban tourism research identified by Ashworth. One impediment to urban tourism research is the manner in which the tourist city is an indefinite and overdetermined object. While cities play a central role in tourism, the cities which tourists visit are not generally defined by tourism per se (Ashworth, 1989). Major global cities such as London, Boston, or Bangkok which serve as popular tourist sites also feature a complex variety of other trade, manufacturing, retail, labour, logistical, governance, and residential functions, the importance of which overwhelms their status as tourist sites; this makes it not only difficult to clearly define the object of urban tourism, but to even locate the tourists in those cities, due to the dispersed variety of attractions and activities.

When scholars do conceptualize the city as a tourist site, adopting what Ashworth (2003) refers to as an “ecological” approach to urban tourism, they often end up describing not the city itself so much as an internal patchwork of discontinuous locales and sub-districts – “central tourism districts,” “tourism business districts”, or historical quarters – which serves to diminish the urban totality as an object of study. Therefore, the field of urban tourism research benefits from clarification
Regarding how the city functions as a tourist object. To that end, Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau are paradigmatic tourist cities with development, planning, and governance strategies specifically designed to attract and manage tourists. Those tourists are central to the spectacular recent growth of these locales, rather than a by-product of other metropolitan functions.

A second impediment to urban tourism scholarship is a peculiar disciplinary parochialism in tourist studies. Scholars of tourism do not engage with the wider literature of urban studies, and have failed to employ the potentially productive resources of urban theory. Ashworth and Page (2011) contend that today “any analysis of urban tourism needs to explain and understand the dynamics of urban change and evolution arising from the implications of new theoretical insights in urban studies” (p. 11). They suggest that the voluminous “world city” literature, in particular, is one primary line of urban scholarship that may be fruitful for tourism research.

I hope that urban theory might illuminate productive approaches for analysing tourist cities, but also that study of these particular cities from the vantage point of tourist studies may challenge some assumptions held by urban scholars, particularly the very “world city” concept that Ashworth and Page (2011) have suggested is a worthwhile avenue of research. Due to their intensified, heightened, and exaggerated characteristics, tourist locales such as Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau foreshadow more generalized developments in city form, function, and governance.3

1.3. The importance of urban tourism practices

This effort to revitalize and refocus urban tourism research is timely given that the world has recently, for the first time, become predominantly urban, with more than half of the global population now residing in cities. Furthermore, tourism is increasingly utilized as a governmental technique for economic and social development, and tourism practices are crucial to urbanization itself.

For example, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has embarked on an ambitious experiment in social engineering and vital population governance that aims to rapidly urbanize 100 million rural peasants over the next decade. This project is motivated by an effort to create an urban middle class with consumption habits that will sustain the Chinese economy by weaning it from an over-reliance on export-oriented production. In order to produce cosmopolitan, “quality” (suzhi) citizens who can productively live and work in urban locales, and who will enable those macro-economic goals, the PRC has strategically promoted tourism as an “inexpensive substitute for education” (Nyiri, 2009, p. 154) of the population, a pedagogical enterprise for fashioning modern citizens. Tourism is “a key sphere in which the reinvention of the Chinese subject takes place” (Nyiri, 2007, p. 97; see also Breidenbach & Nyiri, 2007; Nyiri, 2007, 2010). If this project is successful, Chinese consumers will not only contribute to China’s economic growth; their travel and purchasing habits may sustain global capitalism itself, at least in the mid-term. Due to a PRC exit visa scheme that grants favourable status to select citizens, many of those Chinese tourists make their first trip outside the mainland proper to visit the anterior enclave of Macau. Therefore, Macau’s tourist function is a crucial component of China’s urbanization. The mutually dependent relationship among tourism and urbanization suggests the crucial need to reinvigorate urban tourism as a vital practice for understanding contemporary social life. This review is therefore motivated by the assumption that urban tourism should be central to both tourist scholarship and research on the city itself.
1.4. Tourist utopias

In Section 2 of this review, I address three formal considerations of tourist utopias: (2.1) their status as enclave spaces of exception within larger states; (2.2) the post-Fordist quality which distinguishes each of these cities from the world cities of industrial capitalism; and (2.3) the manner in which each of these tourist cities may be understood as a utopian laboratory for experiments in urban form and development. This provides a context for Section 3, in which I detail – in a manner consistent with the world city debate – seven axiomatic characteristics underlying development of such tourist cities; these characteristics suggest that the contemporary metropolis has replaced the industrial factory as a generalized site of biopolitical production (Hardt & Negri, 2009) crucial to understanding tourism today. In Section 4, I consider the inherent contradictions of an urban development strategy that promotes growth primarily to serve a transient population of tourists. Finally, in Section 5, I deploy these three cities in a speculative utopian “imaginary reconstitution of society” (Levitas, 2013) that tentatively explores a “genealogy of the future” tourist metropolis; I suggest that the “conditions of possibility” of this future are immanent within the simulated built environments, immaterial labour, and spectacular leisure activities common to these tourist cities today.

2. Formal considerations of the tourist utopia

The metropolis is a factory for production of the common. Hardt and Negri (2009, p. 250)

2.1. The tourist city as space of exception

The key condition that enabled the remarkable development of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau is that each is an autonomous “space of exception” to normal political and juridical rule, an enclave or “offshore” space in a larger territory. These cities reveal “that intensified processes and patterns of uneven development today are increasingly expressed in enclave spaces” (Sidaway, 2007, p. 332). The identity of these tourist cities derives from their exceptional status. The state of Nevada was for most of the twentieth century the only site of legal casino gambling in the USA. Dubai has historically been relatively more open to visitors and foreign investment than the other states of the UAE, and today remains a “stark contrast” (Davidson, 2007, p. 33) to even its closest neighbour, Abu Dhabi. Macau was for more than 400 years a European enclave in China, and as a post-colonial city now reunited with the motherland as a Special Administrative Region, it remains a paradoxical enclave of the state, the only site of legal gambling in the PRC, with its own constitution, currency, and legal regime.

Ong (2006) and Palan (2003) have highlighted in different ways, the importance of such exceptional spaces to the contemporary global economy. For Ong (2006), neoliberal economic policies in Asia involve the deployment of the exception as a post-developmental strategy of governance. South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and China pursue economic development via “zoning technologies” that create special zones to entice transnational corporations with tax benefits and a flexible labour force, and “variegated citizenship” that parcels out economic advantages or personal freedoms to select local groups. Palan (2003), on the other hand, describes the creation of distinct enclaves of financial activity that rely on a dialectical bifurcation between “on shore” realms, subject to conventional state regulation and taxation, and “off shore” realms where some degree of those regulations are withheld. Offshore does not literally describe an island locale; it is “not a territorial
space but a juridical innovation”, a constructed legal or regulatory fiction that reconfigures conventional territory (Palan, 2003, p. 162).

The key operation of both “neoliberalism as exception” and offshore finance is an uneven division of a sovereign territory into parts, and selective application of special regulations or liberties to a circumscribed component of that territory. Palan (2003) contends that offshore designation “divides the sovereign corporate space of the nation into (at least) two virtual territories characterized by different degrees of regulation and taxation, specifically to attract international business” (p. 20). This “juridical bifurcation” (Palan, 2003, p. 20) of the nation-state is indicative of both approaches. These tourist cities have developed as symbolically offshore “spatio-juridical enclosures” (Palan, 2003, p. 1), spaces of exception to conventional legal regimes in the national territory. Each city can be understood as a departure from the state order to which it belongs. They are “offshore” cities in a manner similar to offshore tax havens, free trade zones, duty free shops, and shipping “flags of convenience”. But the tourist city is a fundamentally different type of exception than those studied by Ong and Palan. These scholars have examined exceptional spaces of production, including manufacturing for export, or production of financial wealth; but the tourist city is an exceptional space of consumption. The tourist enclave is a respite that assembles a diverse array of visitors and biopolitical resources.

2.2. The tourist enclave as biopolitical metropolis

At the start of the twentieth century, there had emerged a clear network of world cities that managed industrial capitalism, including New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. To explore the function of these cities in industrial capitalism, Friedman (1986) proffered the world city hypothesis; seven statements about the role of cities that attempted to “link urbanization processes to global economic forces” (p. 69). This hypothesis has engendered an extensive body of literature and debate which seeks to define world city functions and establish a global world city hierarchy.

In a recent critique of the world city paradigm, Therborn (2011) indicates two shortcomings that are particularly relevant to the emergence of tourist cities: “It leaves the state out (of focus). It leaves the city out, as a built meaningful environment” (p. 273). Therborn contends that in these accounts, the state is overlooked as a component of the global economy. “The world has been seen only as a world economy, and a world economy from which states are absent or marginal . . .” (p. 272). In other words, the world city approach tends to present those primary cities of London, New York, and Tokyo, as essentially “stateless”, autonomous nodes in an interconnected network. This is consistent with the very different approach of Hardt and Negri (2000), who claim a contemporary decline in the nation-state’s role. In contrast to both perspectives, I acknowledge that the nation-state remains the primary geopolitical actor; tourist cities are thoroughly embedded in states to which their economic vitality depends. The exceptional condition of these cities only becomes meaningful in the context of the state, on which it depends for its very definition. However, functioning as “spaces of exception”, the relation of the city to the state is paradoxical — the centrality of the state derives from the very fact that it appears peripheral.

Therborn also argues that the world city paradigm overlooks the city as a lived environment. This research has “excluded urbanity, of any kind, city design, architecture, sociability, culture” (p. 273). In this literature, world cities appear as little more than “command points”, abstracted business environments in a networked economy, effacing not only the actual office buildings, but the iconic landmarks, population diversity, and leisure activities
that define the city. I hope to highlight the specific “form-of-life” typical of tourist cities in order to understand how the architectural elements, population movements, and patterns of labour and leisure contribute to their ambiance.

Therborn’s critique resonates with the observation that the world city hypothesis referred to the role of cities in an industrial economy, while the tourist enclave is a node for reproduction of a post-Fordist regime and speculative global economy of “casino capitalism” (Strange, 1986). This characterization of our era as post-industrial is qualitative, not quantitative (Hardt, 2012). Obviously, much of the global economy is still industrial. To foreground post-industrialism, however, is to suggest that a post-Fordist form-of-life predominates even in industrial activities. Similarly, London, Tokyo, and New York continue to serve their world city functions in the global economy, but prominent tourist cities play a complementary role, and the experiential “cityness” of these tourist sites pervades other urban areas. “[T]he urban is now the generalized way of life of the postindustrial period of capitalism”, says Keil (2007). “The ‘world city’ has no externality left because it encompasses everything” (p. 167).

These tourist cities exemplify an ongoing “shift from the industrial to the biopolitical metropolis” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 154). Hardt and Negri understand the biopolitical today as “a new stage of capitalism characterized by the disappearance of the borders between economics and politics, production and reproduction” (Lemke, 2011, p. 65). The contemporary city is the site of biopolitical production.

Fordist city development and urban form “were determined by the industrial factory, its needs, rhythms and forms of social organization” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 154). The factory was the site for labour production of value, but it also assembled a diverse group of workers, facilitating encounters beyond the labour function and even outside the control of capital. In the post-Fordist regime, the city has subsumed the factory as the site of a new mode of immaterial production, focused not on producing commodities for the market but on production of subjectivities and the transformation of human relations. This regime constitutes the biopolitical city. Built urban space co-mingles people from a variety of social positions, creating “a living dynamic of cultural practices, intellectual circuits, affective networks and social institutions”. Production increasingly involves immaterial and emotional forms of labour by which value is extracted from residents’ knowledge, creativity, affect, care, and cooperation – the very forms of work that typify the tourist service industry. Together, these practices form an urban commons, comprising social and intellectual resources formed from the “languages, images, knowledges, affects, codes, habits, and practices” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 250) that characterize the urban environment.

For example, Macau needs workers who can navigate a variety of official and visitor languages and dialects, including English, Portuguese, Cantonese, Putonghua, Thai, Japanese, Korean, and Tagalog. These workers enable relations among diverse visitors, and use their language facility in affective service encounters in casinos, restaurants, and resorts. The collective knowledge and linguistic skills comprise a commons that is certainly appropriated by capital, but which might conceivably be valorized for resistance to this exploitation. Such urban resources constitute the basis of the biopolitical regime of capitalism, and bolster Hardt and Negri’s contention that the very resources resulting from capitalism’s demand for immaterial and affective workers may be mobilized to create social alternatives. As Negri (2009) says

The metropolis is constant capital in action, a mad expropriation of labour-power; but also the place where the multitude reappropriates intellectual capital and the common produced by
labour. Therefore, the metropolis is at once a place of exploitation and a terrain of exodus. (p. 50)

The advantage of understanding the tourist city as a biopolitical metropolis is that it foregrounds and takes seriously the very labour and leisure activities that are often dismissed as frivolous and unimportant (see Axiom 3.7).

If tourist cities serve important functions in the global economy – as in the pedagogical role that Macau plays in subjecting consumers to urbanize the PRC – we may understand them as surrogate world cities, biopolitical sites focused on tourist consumption, rather than industrial production. Therefore, to distinguish the post-Fordist tourist locale from the world cities of industrial capitalism – and with a focus on their biopolitical significance – I refer to these tourist enclaves as post-world cities. In the final section, this “post-world” focus will ultimately orient me beyond the cities themselves and towards a “genealogy of the future” (Jameson, 2009, p. 434) of the biopolitical tourist metropolis.

2.3. The tourist enclave as utopian urban laboratory

The name “tourist utopias” is inspired by Wilson’s (2003) discussion of the sixteenth century “pirate utopia” of the African republic of Sale, which was not only a bacchanalian respite for a diverse group of Muslim corsairs and renegadoes, but had a proto-democratic system of governance that Wilson contends was a precursor to both the British commonwealth and the American and French republics.

The pirate serves as an apt metaphor for the “non-state actors” who often play an important role in the development of tourist cities, the coterie of developers, consultants, “orgmen” (Easterling, 2005), entrepreneurs, gangsters, and the like, who collude with the state in both licit and illicit partnerships for mutual benefit. The original pirate utopia was an extra-state haven for actors who were crucial to the origins of capitalism in the Mediterranean, serving both sides of the hyphen that separates “non-state”. Pirates existed along a sliding scale of criminality and legitimacy, from bandit to buccaneer to privateer, sometimes sanctioned by the state in letters of marque, sometimes acting out of individual initiatives or anarchist beliefs. To a certain extent, non-state actors in tourist enclaves serve a similar role today. Casino entrepreneurs such as Sheldon Adelson invest in infrastructure and serve quasi-governance functions in Las Vegas, Macau, and Singapore; Chinese organized crime groups finance high-stakes gambling that produces billions of dollars of public tax revenues in Macau (Wang & Eadington, 2008); and soldier of fortune Erik Prince, owner of Blackwater (now called Reflex Response), provides an 800-strong expatriate security force of Latin American mercenaries in Abu Dhabi (Mazzetti & Hager, 2011).

Such experiments in shared governance create new enclave iterations as the state deploys zoning technologies to cede territory to extra-state regulatory regimes to facilitate accumulation.

I am not suggesting that Dubai or Macau is homologous with Sale. However, these sites are populated by diverse groups of non-state actors, and rehearse emergent forms of urbanism, governance, labour, and sociality; because of their intensified experiences and exaggerated characteristics, they reveal a nascent, and more broadly generalizable, biopolitical form-of-life. This observation contextualizes these sites within the pedagogical function of leisure and the manner in which tourism is a sort of “cultural laboratory” (Lofgren, 2002, p. 7). Minca (2010) similarly suggests that the tourist enclave may be viewed as a “laboratory” for “experiments in desire and imagination, in culture and space, in the biopolitical inclusion of life in the tourist machine” (p. 90).
For example, Koolhaas (1994) contends that the turn-of-the-century leisure site of Coney Island served as a “laboratory” to test themes and design motifs that would later be implemented in Manhattan, which became the exemplary twentieth-century city. “Enclosure” of various attractions on Coney Island created a thematic “park-enclave” model that became the toolkit for the city. Coney Island was a testing ground for all the elements of the modern metropolis. Here developers constructed prototype skyscraper towers, managed a dense urban population, illuminated the night, highlighted the role of the city block, and enabled the more general “institutionalization of misbehavior” (Koolhaas, 1994, p. 49) that would become New York’s trademark. Coney Island unwittingly “defines completely new relationships between site, program, form, and technology”, says Koolhaas (1994, p. 62), which ultimately served as a blueprint for Manhattan.

Similarly, Dubai’s “instant city” (Bagaeen, 2007) growth strategy today serves as a paragon for Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and other Gulf cities which are angling to attract capital and tourists (Amrousi & Biln, 2010; Rizzo, 2013). Macau’s remarkably lucrative casino gaming-led development has inspired neighbouring countries, including Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Laos, and Myanmar, to pursue casino economies. While Singapore’s technocratic governance and Garden City urbanism – dismissed by even Koolhaas (1998) two decades ago as a “Potemkin metropolis” – is today a model emulated by aspirational developing states around the world (Chua, 2011); with recent legalization of casino gambling, Singapore has become the apotheosis of a tourist city-state.

The tourist cities explored here may be understood as laboratories for testing new urban formats, protocols, mobilities, and subjectivities. If Coney Island was a petri dish for the Fordist city, the tourist enclave is a pedagogical node for the reproduction of a post-Fordist economic regime and increasingly speculative global economy of “casino capitalism” (Strange, 1986). The tourist topoi is a synecdoche for an economic logic of intensification whereby financialization extracts profits directly from capital itself, without recourse to production of goods. “[I]n a world that contains no new territory – no new experiences, no new markets”, says Nealon (2002), in an analysis of the Las Vegas strip, “any system that seeks to expand must by definition intensify its existing resources, modulate them in some way. This, in a nutshell, is the homology between the cultural logic of globalization and the economic logic of finance capital . . . .” It is no accident that many cities have turned to gambling to stimulate economic growth. But even sites where casino gambling is prohibited often encourage highly speculative forms of accumulation. Dubai’s entire debt-financed cityscape of glass office towers and mega-shopping complexes resembles a high-risk game of chance played out on the scale of the built environment; this makes the formerly enduring “secondary circuit of capital” prone to inherent instability, with profound consequences for the itinerant workers and tourists who populate the city (Bloch, 2010; Davis, 2008).9

Though I have called them tourist utopias, these cities might better be construed as dystopian for the manner in which vast resources are deployed to benefit a few at the expense of many others, with often devastating social costs and environmental consequences. However, a utopian impulse that reverberates through these cities is crucial to understanding their development. Each city features fantastical attractions – luxury shopping malls, themed mega-hotels, casino resorts, gated communities – representing myriad historical eras and cultural traditions. The ancient civilizations of Babylon and Egypt; the travels of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta; capitalism’s origins in Venice and Lisbon; the baroque dreams of Mad King Ludwig and Walt Disney – all converge in the built environment
of the tourist city. Each city is designed for *homo ludens* and privileges consumption over production, leisure over labour, and gratification over the daily grind.

For prospective workers from the South, these cities are Edens of employment. The reality of labour exploitation belies this hope, but it animates the desires of many potential expatriates. Regardless of promises of remuneration, the tourist city is a chimera for many workers, who cannot enjoy the beach-front resorts, air-conditioned shopping malls, and indoor ski slopes. In Dubai, authorities actively discourage the South Asian construction workers who build the attractions from even visiting tourist spaces (Buckley, 2012, p. 7).

The tourist utopia is a paradox: a nexus of decentered capital; a space of exception embedded in the state; a site of productive consumption; a laboratory of urban futures; a conflicted and overdetermined Arcadia. These *topoi* are both utopian and dystopian, perhaps best understood as heterotopias (Foucault, 1986), the deconsecrated “other spaces” of global capitalism.

Following Therborn’s lead, but taking it a step further, I hope to deconstruct the very idea of a world cities paradigm. The tourist utopia functions as a paradigm in the Foucaultian sense of the word. Like the panopticon for Foucault or the concentration camp for Agamben, “Paradigms establish a broader problematic context that they both constitute and make intelligible” (Agamben, 2009, p. 17). Friedman’s world cities argument began with a set of seven hypotheses, which subsequent scholars explored in deductive fashion by testing them in various cities. The present approach, by contrast, begins with three singular and paradigmatic cases that function simply by the “analogical logic of the example” (Agamben, 2009, p. 18). Rather than proceeding by deduction or induction – from universal law to empirical case, or vice versa – I proceed from the “particular to the particular” (Agamben, 2009, p. 19), such that each singular case may serve as “an exemplar of a general rule that can never be stated a priori” (Agamben, 2009, p. 22).

To explore the relationship of these tourist enclaves to global capital, and in the tradition of both Friedman (1986) and Therborn (2011), I will suggest seven axioms that emerge from these paradigmatic tourist cities; specifically with regard to sovereignty, economy, population, labour, architecture, urbanism, and leisure. These axioms are developed from a critical review of extant literature, as well as my own experience as both tourist and researcher in these three cities.

3. **Seven axioms of tourist utopias**

A world economy always has an urban center of gravity, a city, as the logistic heart of its activity. Braudel (1984, p. 27)

3.1. **Each city is an extra-territorial enclave or “space of exception” embedded in a state, with an ambiguous sovereignty which is variously “graduated” (Ong, 2000), “bifurcated” or “commodified” (Palan, 2003)**

3.1.1. **Las Vegas: normalization of the exception**

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican–American War ceded the Spanish territory that is now Nevada to the USA. The city of Las Vegas was founded in 1905, and Nevada legalized gambling in 1931. For most of the twentieth century, Nevada was the only site in the USA with legal casino gambling.

The expansion of Nevada’s gaming industry relied significantly on non-state actors like those pirates who populated Sale. Notorious gangsters such as Bennie Siegel, Meyer Lansky, and Moe Dalitz used the city for ill-gotten gains, and cash-rich financiers such as the Teamsters and junk-bond investor Michael Millikin, who funded development in
the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than prohibiting this influx of questionable capital, the city, county, state, and federal governments each found ways to tap the industry for tax revenues, licensing fees, patronage, and employment (Denton & Morris, 2002).

Las Vegas has been one of the nation’s fastest growing metropolitan areas and is the only American city founded after 1900 whose population grew to more than 1 million by the year 2000 (Moehring & Green, 2005, p. 1). There has in turn been a subsequent “Las Vegasization” of the USA. If Nevada was for nearly a century an exceptional space, gambling has become increasingly normalized across the country as other states pursue gambling as a strategy of municipal development. The exception becomes the rule: today gambling is legal in 48 states plus the District of Columbia, the latter the very site of federalist power that once sought to control its spread (Gross, 2007).

3.1.2. Macau: state-transnational network

Macau’s ambiguous status in relation to China and Portugal long served the interests of both states. Although a Portuguese territory for nearly half a millennia, the city was never technically a colony. Clayton (2010) refers to Macau’s indefinite geopolitical status as the city’s “sort of sovereignty”. This ambiguity allowed both nations to exploit the enclave for trade, smuggling, human trafficking, and a lucrative post-war gold market.

Gambling was legalized in Macau in the mid-nineteenth century and operated as a monopoly concession granted by the Portuguese administration in exchange for a share of the profits. Gangland violence created a lawless atmosphere in Macau in the years leading up to Portugal’s return of the territory to the PRC. Following the handover, the government liberalized the casino industry and granted gaming concessions to foreign operators. Ironically, the Las Vegas gaming industry had become so legitimized that the Macau government awarded gaming concessions to Las Vegas operators Adelson and Steve Wynn in hopes that they would not only professionalize the industry and develop the economy, but would also help restore law and order to the territory (Lo, 2005).

This governance partnership between the state and the private sector is an example of what Ong (2000) refers to as a “state-transnational network whereby some aspects of state power and authority are taken up by foreign corporations located in special economic zones” or outside the territory (Ong, 2000, p. 57).

3.1.3. Dubai: enclave archipelago

Gambling is not legal in Dubai, though the subject has been broached on the artificial islands that house the Burj Al-Arab and Atlantis Hotels. Petti (2008) notes that this “offshore urbanism” is repeated in the upscale gated communities and proletarian labour camps which make Dubai an archipelago of exceptional spaces. Dubai deploys zoning technologies to subdivide its already exceptional territory into a number of sub-districts. There are more than 20 economic free zones in Dubai, including Logistics City, Health Care City, International Academic City, and even a Flower Centre. Each zone is governed by a distinct regulatory system which differentiates it from the territory at large, with alternative provisions for foreign property ownership, tax rates, import and export costs, and labour regulations. Dubai is a site of multiple metropolitan exceptions.

As Palan suggests with regard to “offshore” spaces, sovereignty is commodified in Dubai. Emiratis commonly monetize their own citizenship by offering their nationality for sale to international businesses who need a majority national partner to conform to
local law. Revenue from these opportunistic partnerships makes labour superfluous for many locals.

3.2. Each city is supported by transnational investment regimes, public–private partnerships, and neoliberal technologies of governance

Today, the global cities of New York, London, and Japan – dominating, respectively, the equities market, currency exchange, and international banking – are key sites of production of the global financial economy (Slater, 2004). However, this mobility of capital produces tourist cities of consumption whose recent emergence may be understood, in part, as a product of capitalism’s recomposition, in the wake of a succession of economic crises since the 1970s, from a planner state to a crisis state (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The planner state prioritized production, with accumulation based on Fordist organization of labour on a national scale. This system of “embedded liberalism” was stabilized by a Keynesian macro-economic bargain among the state, corporations, and workers that ensured a mass consumer society, populated by a work force that enjoyed high rates of employment, enabling workers to provide a market for the products they produced.

Hardt and Negri identify a shift in the 1970s from the Keynesian planner state to a “crisis state”, which “becomes the normal condition of capitalist development and rule to the extent that the bilateral processes of economic and juridical organization that provided an organic relationship between labor and capital are abandoned” (Hardt, 2005, p. 11). A global transformation of capital relations, across a set of interrelated trajectories, from production to consumption, savings to debt, the “real” economy to financialization, planning to crisis management, and labour stability to mobility, has significant consequences for the metropolitan environment. The whimsical ambiance of these tourist cities obscures their dependence on the crises of industrial capitalism: of Fordism’s ability to return stable rates of accumulation, of the Fordist bargain with labour that preserved high rates of employment, of the center–periphery model which was the basis for the international division of labour, and of the sovereignty of the nation-state and the corresponding ascendance of the city as a locus of governance.

In this economic context, the state’s role in production of the metropolitan environment and governance of the city moved from manager of social welfare and community development to entrepreneurial facilitator of privatized investment (Harvey, 1989, 2007). The public–private production of urban space is especially evident in Dubai (Buckley & Hanieh, 2014). Such partnerships, which have enabled the city’s development for a century, have increased markedly in the past two decades. Dubai originally used economic incentives to attract a Persian merchant class to the territory. Abolition of import and export tariffs and declaration of a free port was an early form of exceptional zoning; foreign traders, in turn, created an atmosphere of ethnic, racial, and tribal tolerance in the territory that persists today. This regulatory and cultural tolerance differentiates Dubai from the other emirates, making it an attractive site for investment and tourism. The early relationship between the ruler and the Persian merchants is today “replaced by a new balance, namely between the ruler on one side and a class of both local and international business entrepreneurs on the other” (Hvidt, 2007, p. 566).

Dubai’s government-led, fast-track development depends on a flexible expatriate labour force; the emirate has largely bypassed industrial development to create a service economy (Hvidt, 2009). This strategy uses city branding to attract capital, constructing supply in the built environment, and allowing it to create demand. However, aggressive enticement of foreign investment and foreign workers has consequences for sovereignty.
3.3. **Each city hosts large numbers of mobile tourists and foreign labourers who create a palpable atmosphere of impermanence**

Ultimately, to speak of any of these locales as “cities” is to reify what is really a nexus of circulations of people and capital moving according to different logics of residence, work, and leisure (LiPuma & Koeble, 2005). In 2012, 10 million tourists visited Dubai, 28 million visited Macau, and 39 million visited Las Vegas. However, tourists visiting Dubai hoping to engage the locals will note the lack of encounters with Emiratis, who comprise a small portion of the population and who do not typically work in the frontline hospitality trade. In the hotel lobby and shopping mall, one will encounter Indians, Africans, Persians, Thais, and Filipinos who have been drawn to Dubai by the UAE’s oil wealth and expanding service sector. The city’s attractions are built primarily by South Asian labourers housed in desert labour camps and largely invisible to casual visitors. Approximately 85% of the emirate’s population of 2 million comprised foreign workers. The large number of labourers living in Dubai, isolated from their families abroad, contributes to a population that is more than 75% male; two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 20–39 (Bloch, 2010, p. 946; Dubai Statistics Center, 2011). This uneven population distribution combined with the fact that foreign workers generally “have temporary residency”, “no access to citizenship”, and “limited membership and participation in society” (Fargues, 2011, p. 274), renders the long-term sustainability of this model questionable (see also Kathiravelu, 2012; Khalaf, 2010; Vora, 2011a, 2011b).

Macau’s recent economic development was the catalyst for local population growth of 27% in the decade from 2001 to 2011. Significantly, 59% of the current population was born outside of Macau, including more than 107,000 non-resident workers. Tourists comprise the bulk of the city’s population, with more than 60% of them coming from mainland China. To encourage domestic consumption, the PRC has introduced an Individual Visitation Scheme (IVS) which relaxes exit visa requirements for Chinese from selected cities and provinces so that they may visit Macau as individual tourists. The IVS can be understood as a neoliberal technology of governance, what Ong (2000) refers to as a form of “graduated sovereignty”. Graduated sovereignty involves a two-dimensional governance strategy: “state-transnational networks” (discussed above) and “differential state treatment of segments of the population in relation to market calculations” (Ong, 2000, p. 57). Both techniques of governance have been applied to Chinese citizens in relation to Macao. Mobility of Chinese nationals is tightly managed by the PRC. Site of residence is strictly controlled through the hukou system of household registration. The IVS partitions out cross-border mobilities to select citizens in response to the “market calculations”, discussed by Ong. This allows the government to control the flow of tourists into Macao and to privilege residents of more affluent locales.

3.4. **Each city possesses a biopolitical “economy of fascination” (Schmid, 2009) devoted to service and consumption which depends on “immaterial,” affective, and cognitive forms of labour**

The reliance of each of these cities on foreign workers who are deployed in a biopolitical production regime is illustrated by the specific case of the Filipino expatriates who comprise a significant proletariat population in each city. As the world’s largest supplier of expatriate workers, the Philippines is crucial to global biopolitical production, and at any moment more than 10% of the population, and 25% of the labour force, work abroad. There are more than 42,000 Filipinos in Las Vegas – comprising the largest Asian ethnic group in
the city (Clarito, Lawler, & Palmer, 2005, p. 220) – more than 200,000 Filipinos in Dubai, and more than 14,000 Filipinos in Macau, comprising the city’s largest non-Chinese ethnic group. These mobile workers comprise a stateenabled biopolitical production regime that is increasingly the engine of the global economy. These workers capitalize off their English language proficiency and facility for intercultural adjustment to secure work; of course, these remunerative multilingual and multicultural skills are the by-product of the nation’s dual colonialisms by Spain and the USA.

The movement of Filipino workers into this economic field was prompted by the state, which adeptly promotes labour mobility, subjecting a post-colonial Filipino worker who privileges overseas employment. The catalyst was Ferdinand Marcos’ declaration of martial law in 1972, and his decision – in compliance with the desires of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank – to introduce neoliberal economic reforms. Martial law was the “state of emergency” that Marcos exploited to solidify his power, and which “provided unprecedented opportunities for the IMF and the World Bank to fully restructure the Philippine economy along the lines desired by the liberalization strategy” (Bello & Broad, 1987, p. 263). The nation’s greatest economic success derived from exporting the bio-power of the citizenry.

The exportation of Filipinos coincided with the biopolitical transformation of global capitalism that began in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Such workers are integral to the labour regime indicative of tourist cities. The “mass worker” of western industrial capitalism has been supplanted since the 1970s by a “social worker” (Negri, 2005) whose productive activities tend towards an abstract, intellectual, immaterial labour (Hardt, 1999). This labour produces an immaterial product – such as knowledge, information, affect, or communication. Tourist cities depend on chauffeurs and chefs, casino croupiers and hotel hostesses, acrobats and gondoliers, body guards and sex workers.

Filipino workers whose English language performance is a form of affective labour demonstrate how in contemporary life, “Our brains, linguistic capacities, and interactive skills have all taken the place of fixed capital” (Hardt, 2008, p. 10). In order to manage accumulation from affect, capital must dispossess not only labour but subjectivity; this means that labour value for such workers often derives not from their “intrinsic properties” but from their “situational ones” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2010, p. 5); that is to say, from their ability to communicate in an international language and willingness to live perpetually abroad in a precarious state of mobility. Their labour salability is flexibility tied to linguistic adaptability. Filipino physicians work as nurses, school teachers tend bar, college-educated women toil as domestic workers. As Virno (2004) suggests, “Nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labor” (p. 63). The affective and experiential product of immaterial labour is commodified in the tourist city, but it also comprises the urban commons.

3.5. Each city is characterized by superlative and iconic architecture which is themed and narrated to produce “experiences”

Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau are known for their superlative architectural developments, including the world’s largest shopping mall (Dubai Mall), hotel (MGM Grand, Las Vegas), and casino (Venetian Macau). Each also attempts to add to its notoriety by means of idiosyncratic forms of achievement or differentiation, such as debuting the first indoor ski slope in the Middle East (Mall of the Emirates), the world’s most powerful beam of light (Luxor Hotel, Las Vegas), and the world’s largest crystal chandelier (Sands Macau). Such
attractions brand the cities as destinations but contribute little to the livability of the metropolitan environment.

Such iconic architecture in tourist cities differs markedly from iconic buildings of industrial capitalism. The architecture of twentieth-century capitalism was defined by the International Style which shunned ornamentation in an effort to create a sleek modernist aesthetic of glass, steel, and concrete that exposed the functional element of the materials. The corporate skyscraper was the iconic element of the modern cityscape, a testament not only to industrialist egos but also to their commitment to the social and cultural life of a particular city. Structures like the Empire State Building not only served as the headquarters of business enterprise, but engaged with the surrounding city, functioned in social ritual, enhanced public space, and contributed to civic life (Kaika, 2011, p. 982). However, iconic buildings in the tourist city are primarily prestige products, initiated by companies whose operations are located elsewhere, funded by transnational elites with no local commitment, designed by celebrity “starchitects”, and with no discernible role in the city in which they are located. As Aureli (2011) notes, “the agenda of the iconic building is a postpolitical architecture stripped bare of any meaning other than the celebration of corporate economic performance” (p. xii). The buildings are not meant to contribute to the life of the city for residents so much as to how the city skyline is viewed by visitors from afar (Acuto, 2010). Each tourist city has its own iconic Tower of Babel: Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world; Stratosphere Tower in Las Vegas, America’s tallest free-standing observation structure; and the Macau Tower, with the world’s highest bungee jump, see Figure 1. Kaika (2011) refers to such contemporary iconic buildings as “autistic architecture”, buildings that fail to communicate with the city to which they belong. Each is a temporary “totem for flexible capitalism” (Kaika, 2011, p. 976), an element of the built environment that mimics the fate of the tourists and expatriate workers that populate the cities, temporarily located in the city, but not of the city.

If iconic buildings are “autistic” and do not communicate with the surrounding city, themed environments entail of an overabundance of communication. Themed environments feature architectural and design motifs that call forth associations with other cultures, times, or places. Each tourist city cites themed architectural forms from the others. The Venetian Macau is a copy of the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas; and the same simulated Mediterranean theme also appears in Dubai’s Mercato Mall. The dancing water fountains that amuse tourists at the Bellagio in Las Vegas reappear at the Wynn Resort in Macau and alongside the Dubai Mall; each is actually designed by the same company, Water Entertainment Technologies. Whereas contemporary iconic architecture may be uncommunicative, the themed environment presents a complex and increasingly intertextual narrative. “In the themed environment”, contends Lonsway (2009), “space is constituted as a textual device” (p. 51), creating an experience which can be commodified.

3.6. Each city is based on a grammar of design elements including glass curtain wall construction, enclosed atriums, and ubiquitous air conditioning, so that the interior “is the privileged domain for the urban encounter” (Koolhaas, 1998, p. 1073)

Lefebvre (2003) famously contended that the “complete urbanization” of the world was displacing the Fordist production regime as the prime strategy for resolving the internal contradictions of capitalism. Marxist concepts of class, division of labour, collective bargaining, and social reproduction that emanated from the factory floor were subsumed in an epistemological shift by the more diffuse concerns of urban globalization – production
of homogenous space, accompanying experiences of leisure and consumption, density of intercultural contact, the colonization of everyday life by capitalism.

If this globalization of the urban was merely “virtual” in Lefebvre’s time, it seems fully realized in tourist cities today. The case of Dubai is one of the complete urbanization of nature (Ouis, 2002), the wholesale transformation of the desert into a “total landscape” (Mitrasinovic, 2006), complete with indoor ski slopes and ice skating rinks; air-conditioned shopping malls and bus stops; desert gated communities with incongruous names such as the Greens, Lakes, Meadows, and Springs; and extraordinarily costly artificial islands constructed in the sea for speculative purposes from the very sand that lacks value on land.

The tendency towards enclosed forms of encounter in shopping malls and hotel atriums creates an urbanism that manifests Hardt and Negri’s (2000) contention that, under current conditions of global capitalism, “there is no more outside” (p. 186). The spatial division between inside and outside reflected an underlying characteristic of modern politics that has informed theories of sovereignty (civilized/natural) and liberalism (public/private). Hardt and Negri (2000) contend that “the capitalist market has always run counter to any division between inside and outside” (p. 190), thriving rather on commerce and interchange; today we live under the real subsumption of society to capital which precludes any exterior vantage point ‘outside’ the capital relation. The interiority of air-conditioned, enclosed urban encounters materializes this condition in the built environment, whether it is experienced sitting at a café under a glass ceiling, navigating a canal in the basement of a

Figure 1. Each city has its own iconic Tower of Babel: Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, an unintentional monument to the limitations of debt-financed real estate development.
Source: Author.
casino resort, or skiing the indoor desert slopes, see Figure 2. Gunel refers to Dubai’s Ibn Battuta mall as an “absolute island” that “instigates an unquestionable hierarchy between the inside and outside, through which the inside becomes clearly favored” (Gunel, 2011, p. 544).

When mobile and autistic architecture is combined with commercialized sovereignty, the result is “post-civil society” (Jameson & Speaks, 1990). For Hegel, civil society was a “mediator between the immanent forces of capital and the transcendent power of modern sovereignty”, advocating for common good by steering a path “between the self-interested endeavors of a plurality of economic individuals and the unified interest of the state” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 328). I intend “post-civil” to refer not to a historical moment emerging after a mature civil society, but to a contemporary spatial relation typical of the tourist city. If civil society requires “socially inclusive spaces with a high degree of autonomy from the state and commercial interests” (Douglass, 2008, p. 27), design of tourist cities discourages such spaces. Post-civil society results when interior urbanism is aligned with a transient population of tourists and workers who lack a genuine stake in the city and the right of political participation. Indeed, Lefebvre (2014) notes that due to heightened urban mobility and increased migration, “The citizen (citoyen) and the city dweller (citadin) have been disassociated” (p. 205), ending the ancient convergence of polis and politics. In response, he suggests the need for a revised “revolutionary concept of citizenship” (p. 205), one which I will suggest may have roots in tourist leisure practices rather than proletarian factory labour.

3.7. Each city privileges heterotopian activities including gambling, shopping and spectacle, highlighting, in the words of the Situationist International, that “leisure is the true revolutionary problem” in contemporary capitalism

Finally, to return to where we started, each city is ironically utopian; these cities are not actual utopias, “sites with no real place”, but real places where utopian characteristics
are “simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). These cities function as “heterotopias” – actually existing utopias. Indeed, Foucault’s litany of heterotopias appears like a genealogy of the tourist enclave: the garden, museum, fairgrounds, honeymoon, motel, brothel, ship, and colony.

The tourist city effectively severs the relation between the ascetic Calvinist work ethic and the spirit of economic productivity which served, from Marx to Weber to Keynes, as a mainstay of the mythology of capitalism: the offshore tourist enclave revels instead in the promise of accumulation based on nothing but play. In an era in which capitalism has colonized every facet of experience, cognition, and affect, neither the factory floor nor the spaces of ‘collective consumption’ serve as the locus of political mobilization. Productive leisure has overtaken industrial labour to produce a biopolitical metropolis, the site of production of knowledge, affect, and subjectivities which may constitute a new post-industrial commons.

4. Interregnum

In their role as tourist destinations, cities can symbolize everything from the founding of civilization itself to the future limit of civilization. MacCannell (2012, p. 187)

4.1. The 2008 global financial crisis

Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau crystallize a constellation of characteristics pertaining to mobility, urbanization, labour, consumption, accumulation, and dispossession that typify many cities today, from Manama to Manila, Venice to Cairo, Singapore to Doha (see Table 1). I have suggested that these locales constitute laboratories for testing urban forms and motifs that may be a harbinger for global cities. At the same time, however, production of urban space and superlative architectural projects for the primary purpose of attracting transient tourists makes the tourist enclave inherently precarious.

The extent of this precariousness became evident during the 2008 global financial crisis, which struck Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau alike, highlighting congruities among the cities’ respective economies and their over-reliance on real estate speculation. In November 2009, in the wake of a series of high profile construction projects, Dubai announced intention to delay repayment of $26 billion of debt, with reverberations throughout the global economy. The emirate would eventually be buttressed by a petrodollar-financed loan from the sheik of Abu Dhabi, pointing to a fundamental distinction between the neighbouring emirates. “Petro-capital”, noted Roy (2011), “was more durable than property capital” (p. 322). Dubai symbolically repaid this largesse by naming the world’s tallest structure, an imposing autistic concrete monument to the limitations of debt-financed development, after Abu Dhabi’s ruler: “Dubai, once imagined as the center of the world, was now repositioned as an Arab city, its future entangled with local circuits of brotherly solidarity” (Roy, 2011, p. 322).

<table>
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<th>Table 1. Axioms of the tourist utopia.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sovereignty Enclave space of exception embedded in state territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy Post-Keynesian, post-Fordist, neoliberal crisis state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Mobile tourists and workers with no enduring civil commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Immaterial, affective, cognitive, and biopolitical forms of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture Built environment designed to heighten ambiance and generate sensory experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanism Interiorized, encapsulated, and simulated forms of encounter that confound modern dichotomies of inside/outside</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure Consumption displaces production as locus of political identity and agency</td>
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Plummeting property values dampened consumer confidence; declining tourism in Las Vegas in the wake of the crisis, combined with the hubris of overeager developers, created a perfect economic storm that severely depressed returns on the Strip. The $9 billion CityCenter project built by MGM and Dubai World was the most expensive privately funded real estate project in American history. The development’s iconic towers, each designed by a marquee architect, failed to create the intended “city center” residential community envisioned by MGM president James Murren; many of the condominium units were converted to short-stay hotel rooms and the project’s autistic architecture today serves only as the infrastructure for a transient post-civil society of weekend visitors, see Figure 3. The unfinished Echelon and Fontainebleau Resorts, with a combined estimated cost of nearly $7 billion, are Las Vegas’ most visible monuments to the crisis, but other bankrupted ruins include Manhattan West, Spanish View Towers, Sumerlin Centre, and St. Regis Residences.

During the height of the crisis, Adelson’s Las Vegas Sands company became so overextended by concurrent development projects in Las Vegas, Pennsylvania, Macau, and Singapore that the company’s stock value dropped by 90%, and Adelson’s personal net worth fell by $13 billion. In danger of failing to meet a maximum leverage ratio of assets to debt that was part of the company’s financing agreements, the corporation faced potential bankruptcy; Adelson injected $1 billion of his personal fortune into the company to keep it afloat. His financial troubles prompted concerns in Macau about whether bankruptcy might force the local government to nationalize his massive Venetian Macau Resort and operate the casino.

4.2. The tourist city of cards?
It was perhaps appropriate that in 2010, professional card stacker Brian Berg constructed the world’s largest house of cards, a replica of Macau’s Venetian Resort, inside the property.

Figure 3. Las Vegas CityCenter: autistic architecture for a post-civil multitude. The buildings in the project were designed by Daniel Libeskind, Norman Foster, Cesar Pelli, Helmut Jahn, and Rafael Vinoly.
Source: Author.
Berg overtook his own card-stacking world record, using 218,792 cards to build the 272 kg structure without using glue or tape. The Venetian house of cards inadvertently exemplifies many characteristics of the tourist city. The card house is an enclave city-within-a-city (inside another city). The iconic card house structure makes no real contribution to local civic life. As the “world’s largest” house of cards, the structure’s relevance derives from its superlative stature, verified by Guinness, and inconsequentially meaningless. Finally, the structure was painstakingly assembled in a bravura display of immaterial labour – after all, what is “professional card stacking” but immaterial productivity taken to its most ludicrous extreme? As such, the house of cards may be understood as an exceptional example of a “general rule that can never be stated a priori” (Agamben, 2009, p. 22), a singular paradigm which functions analogically to illuminate the very diagram or apparatus of the tourist city. That is, the heterotopian house of cards functions to “create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault, 1986, p. 27).

“I think there’s a lot of things in our world that we’re searching for answers for”, said Berg in an interview with the Daily Mail on the day the structure was completed. “Cures for things, the environment, energy, and I think sometimes the simplest idea is probably the one that’s most powerful, and will produce the most sort of viable results”. While the contribution to environmental protection is negligible, from the standpoint of political economy, the house of cards illustrates in strikingly simple terms the ability of capitalism to extract accumulation from even the most unlikely dimensions of leisure activity. No product is manufactured and nothing is consumed except commodified affect. The house of cards might be read as a cautionary allegory for the tourist city. If the city is designed solely for tourists, is it simply a phantasmagoric city of cards, a precarious edifice that is held together without glue or tape? Berg and Adelson cooperate to build a structure from which both may maximize accumulation until it inevitably collapses; this autistic architecture was never meant to last. The industry of structural “subtraction” in Las Vegas (Easterling, 2005), the implosion of buildings for real estate speculation and as a spectacle for tourist fascination, demonstrates capitalism’s ability to turn even its own destruction into a means of accumulation.

The financial crisis highlighted the limitations of this development strategy. The securitization of real estate and heightened expectations for immediate profits from what was formerly treated as a long-term investment in the built environment makes the secondary circuit of capital particularly prone to instability (Gotham, 2009, p. 357). This volatility creates precarious labour conditions. Commenting on “Dubai’s Long Goodbye”, Bloch (2010) notes that

The emplacement of construction and real estate development at the very core of this past decade’s growth strategy means that the sector’s huge problems, as seen elsewhere in the world, affect every other aspect of social and cultural life in Dubai. (p. 949)

In this environment, the large segment of the population tied to construction and real estate sales may disappear as fast as the financing (Buckley, 2012; Buckley & Hanieh, 2014). There was so much idle construction equipment in Las Vegas during the financial crisis that one opportunistic entrepreneur created a themed construction attraction called *Dig This*, where adventurous tourists pay handsomely to shovel trenches with a backhoe and play “excavator basketball”. Much like the spectacle of architectural implosion, this experiential amusement extracts accumulation from the literal dust of capitalism’s demise by inverting both the labour form and the means of production into a commodified leisure
pursuit; in so doing, *Dig This* perfectly embodies the Situationist credo that “leisure is the true revolutionary problem” in contemporary capitalism.

5. Post-world tourist cities: a genealogy of the future

Vacations remain one of the few manageable utopias in our lives. Lofgren (2002, p. 7)

5.1. The imaginary reconstitution of the tourist city

If the paradigmatic tourist city exaggerates the folly of tourist-led development and manifests the contradictions of capitalism that emerge in moments such as the financial crisis, it may also provide an arena for what Levitas (2013) calls the “imaginary reconstitution of society”. That is, functioning as laboratories of urban design and tourist practices, these cities may also reveal a “genealogy of the future” (Jameson, 2009) metropolis, exposing a latent utopian impulse that resides in the exaggerated attractions and visitor expectations. If Koolhaas discovered the immanent diagram of Manhattan in Coney Island amusement park, we might similarly glimpse a nascent metropolis in these exaggerated tourist enclaves. Hardt and Negri’s (2009) conception of the biopolitical metropolis is instructive. These thinkers envision the contemporary city, not merely as a pathological site of antagonism and expropriation (clearly evident in the inhumane treatment of Dubai’s construction workers, for example), but as a “factory for the production of the common” (p. 253). They valorize the circuits of exchange and cooperative relations enabled by the biopolitical city and attempt to recapture socialization of the commonwealth.

Observing the contradictions of finance capitalism, Jameson (2009) advances his own imaginary mode of ‘utopology’. This innovative hermeneutic involves an effort to change the valences on phenomena which so far exist only in our present; and experimentally to declare positive things which are clearly negative in our own world, to affirm that dystopia is in reality Utopia if examined more closely, to isolate specific features in our empirical present so as to read them as components of a different system. (Jameson, 2009, p. 434)

I take up this challenge with the post-world tourist city. The Situationists’ exploration of the revolutionary potential of leisure ultimately provides the groundwork for a speculative account of the future of the biopolitical tourist city.

5.2. Revolutionary leisure

Inspired by founder Guy Debord’s influential *Society of the Spectacle*, the members of the Situationist International (SI) pursued an aggressive critique of modernist architecture and functionalist urban planning in post-war France, concerned about the commodification of experience typical of European industrial capitalism in the 1960s.

The SI criticized tourism as a leisure pursuit and the reduction of the city to inauthentic tourist attractions, though their theoretical programme and oppositional politics have an ironic relevance to tourist studies. The SI programme of Unitary Urbanism sought to counter the capitalist spectacle through the creation of “situations”, an avant-garde performative critique that would later become, in another ironic iteration, a motif of the post-Fordist experience economy which is so important to tourist enclaves such as Las Vegas.

Their project relied on various strategies of movement and relation designed to counter, critique, and undermine the spatial planning and temporalities of consumer society. Members engaged in *derives*, “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances”
(Debord, 1981a, p. 50), moving through the city according to deliberate alternative paths and agendas, intentionally departing from programmed itineraries and interpellated instead by captivating visual and auditory stimuli. This was an attempt to deconstruct modernist planning and reinvigorate the more creative, mystical, and revolutionary dimensions of the city that had inspired so many counter-cultural groups, from Italian futurists to Parisian surrealists. The ultimate aim was detournement, the act of playfully seizing, plagiarizing, and recontextualizing elements of daily life and the built environment in an effort to turn the capitalist system against itself. For example, Debord and collaborator Gil Wolman “outlined an ambitious plan for transferring whole neighborhoods from one city and inserting them exactly as they were into another” (Wollen, 2001, p. 135). They might have been intrigued by the plagiarism of Doge’s Palace and St. Mark’s Square in the Venetian resorts in both Macau and Las Vegas, or the transplantation of these motifs again in Dubai’s Mercato Mall.

The Situationists idolized eccentric figures such as “Mad King Ludwig”, the nineteenth-century Bavarian “fairytale king”. Ludwig squandered his fortune building fantastical palaces, precursors to the hyperreal simulations found in tourist cities today. What fascinated Debord and his comrades was that Ludwig’s opulent architectural accomplishments seemed driven by the singular madness of his creative imagination rather than the logics of sovereign rule or accumulation that prevailed in their own time. Among these constructions were Herrenchiemsee, a copy of Versailles, and Schloss Neuschwanstein, which would later provide the architectural inspiration for both the iconic Cinderella Castle at Disneyland and the Excalibur Resort on the Las Vegas strip. (Indeed, Brian Berg set his original card-stacking record building a model of the Ludwig-inspired Disneyland palace.) Though Ludwig’s fairytale castles served no rational purpose during his lifetime, these structures attract so many visitors today they have ironically made Bavaria the most popular tourist site in Germany. Ludwig’s creative vision inadvertently produced the infrastructure of a tourist utopia.

The Situationists’ critical urban programme employed King Ludwig’s creative eccentricity to reinvent the homogenized European cities of post-war industrial capitalism that were constructed according to the functionalist planning of Le Corbusier and other proponents of the International Style. The SI’s oppositional urban programme was inaugurated in an essay written by collaborator Ivan Chtcheglov when he was 18 years old and published in the first issue of the Situationist Internationale as “Formulary for a New Urbanism”. In this fascinating document, Chtcheglov wrote of an experimental city which might be designed for heightened ambiance rather than utility. To detourn – or recontextualize – both Chtcheglov’s imaginative essay and these existing tourist enclaves, is to reveal the diagram of a utopian post-world city latent within the precarious built environments and biopolitical regimes of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau. This approach acknowledges the possibility that the finance capital and real estate speculation that produce these cityscapes are not merely destructive, but also harbour “spectres of the common” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 156), externalities of value embedded in the metropolis, which may be mobilized for alternative futures of the tourist city.

5.3. The utopian Situationist city

“We are bored in the city, there is no longer any Temple of the Sun”, Chtcheglov (1953) laments in the famous opening lines of “Formulary”. Of course, he did not live to see temples such as Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, the Macau Tower, or the Luxor pyramid in Las Vegas, see Figure 4. Nevertheless, he suggests that the key to a revitalized humanity is
the built environment: “A new architecture can express nothing less than a new civiliza-
tion”, he says. In Chthcheglov’s imagination, the ideal city “could be envisaged in the
form of an arbitrary assemblage of castles, grottos, lakes, etc.” He calls this “the baroque
stage of urbanism considered as a means of knowledge”. The themed environments of con-
temporary tourist cities are remarkably consistent with his vision, offering such an arbitrary
yet integrated simulated landscape – reconstructed Egyptian pyramids, ancient Roman
ruins, and a miniature Eiffel Tower; underground Venetian canals, illuminated dancing
fountains, and animatronic Italian statues, see Figure 5.

In his manuscript, Chthcheglov suggests that “The districts of this city could correspond to
the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life”. His
utopian city would comprise self-contained enclaves, each with a singular function:

Bizarre Quarter – Happy Quarter (specifically reserved for habitation) – Noble and Tragic
Quarter (for good children) – Historical Quarter (museums, schools) – Useful Quarter (hospi-
tals, tool shops) – Sinister Quarter, etc.

This burghal vision anticipates the “new urban paradigm” (Easterling, 2005, p. 31) of
enclaves and other spaces of exception that characterizes the tourist utopia. Indeed,
Dubai’s archipelago of geo-juridical trade zones, while based on a functionalist partition
of space, is reminiscent of Chthcheglov’s arrangement, with each district devoted to a par-
ticular outcome: Knowledge Village, Healthcare City, Media City, Humanitarian City, Silici-
one Oasis, see Figure 6.
Figure 5. “This city could be envisaged as an arbitrary assemblage of castles, grottos, lakes, etc.” Faux Roman Ruins at Macau Fisherman’s Wharf. The property also features simulated Tang Dynasty Chinese architecture; reconstructed building styles from Portugal, Holland, Miami, and New Orleans; an “Afrikana” village; a Victorian hotel; Aladdin’s Fort; Babylon Casino; statuary copied from Mussolini-era Italy and London’s Trafalgar Square; and an imitation volcano. The planned phase 2 development will add a Czech-themed hotel, a Middle-Eastern themed hotel, a yacht club, and a dinosaur museum.
Source: Author.

Figure 6. “The districts of the city could correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings . . . ”.
Source: Author.
5.4. The tourist enclave as new, New Babylon

The ideal Situationist city was perhaps most fully envisioned by Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys in New Babylon, a “concrete utopia” (Stanek, 2011, p. 220) he explored over two decades in a wide variety of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and lectures. Initially, inspired by transient European Gypsy communities, Constant conceived of a post-industrial society dominated by *homo ludens*, where technology renders work unnecessary and humans are liberated to travel, explore, and play. “We would arrive at a new kind of urbanization”, he predicted, a city designed for mobility where people will “become acquainted with a nomadic way of life in an artificially, wholly constructed environment” (Nieuwenhuys, 1974).

New Babylon would be defined not only by transience but also by physical, visual, and olfactory mutability, with personalized spaces, colours, and odours that could be called forth at whim. This is reminiscent of Dubai’s indoor desert ski slope, the perfumed lobbies of Macau’s resorts, and the electrified audio-visual streetscape of Jon Jerde’s Freemont Street Experience in Las Vegas. Indeed, the retail science and environmental psychology behind the designs of themed environments might be understood as an instrumental application of what Debord (1981b) called *psychogeography*, “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment . . . on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (p. 5).

5.5. Tourist utopias (redux)

Like the tourist enclave today, the Situationist city was designed to enable ludic mobilities. But what differentiates today’s metropolis from the city of Debord’s time is generalized planetary urbanization (Lefebvre, 2014) and the subsumption of the modern industrial city by the biopolitical metropolis.

Tourist enclaves like those discussed here exemplify the way in which the metropolis may serve as “the inorganic body of the multitude” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 249). The intensification of capital in these locales creates “a geography of interstices and thresholds” (p. 257), producing a phantasmagoric body whose itinerant inhabitants construct an “artificial common”, those “languages, images, knowledges, affects, codes, habits, and practices” (p. 250) which together comprise the regime of immaterial labour that characterizes the tourist city. The dilemmas of Fordism that prompted the subsequent compensatory intensifications of finance capital, affective labour, and productive leisure have inadvertently enabled the tourist utopia.

Negri, Petcou, Petrescu, and Querrien (2008) contend that the biopolitical metropolis has only materialized with the contemporary transformation of capitalism itself. “With the mass worker, thirty years ago, it was impossible to attempt or even imagine, such associative forms”, they argue. But the “new forms of production, communication, and circulation of languages and knowledge” that animate the post-industrial economy – the elements that are so evident in the tourist cities we have reviewed – are what enable this productive, even potentially revolutionary, urban feature. The practical problems in realizing this utopian vision for the biopolitical city, however, stem not only from capital’s exploitation of labour value, but partly from the very nature of tourist and worker mobilities. The forms of encounter that might utilize the urban commons and create oppositional communities require co-habitation of the same metropolitan space. “[F]or resistance to be cumulative, there must be recurrence, repetition, continuity and long-term social temporalities” (Negri et al., 2008). That is, residents must inhabit urban space collectively over time to create opportunities for recurrent encounters, not merely circulate through urban attractions following programmed itineraries detailed in guidebooks or tourist maps. Tourist cities
often lack such repetitive interactions among urban dwellers. Tens of millions of tourists cycle through Macau but the average tourist stay is only 1.4 nights; in Dubai tourists are generally segregated from local Emeratis, and may also even be prohibited by edict or practice from contact with the large population of workers who build the attractions.

At the same time, the tourist city’s very logics of mobility create enhanced opportunities for the “felicitous” and “aleatory” encounters that Hardt and Negri (2009, pp. 254–255) contend are crucial to producing a new social body. The “aleatory” encounter is an “encounter with alterity”, the random, unpredictable meetings among strangers, the workers and visitors in the tourist city “who come from elsewhere, with different cultures, languages, knowledges, mentalities” (p. 252). Indeed, a casino city such as Las Vegas or Macau is an appropriate site for such contingent, chance encounters. This feature distinguishes the tourist enclave from that other spatial product of the finance economy, the megacity (Castells, 2000). If the most significant detriment of the megacity is its lack of a “dense differentiation of culture” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 253), the exceptional tourist enclave is characterized by heightened cultural differences and potential rendezvous with the other. Minca (2010) highlights the haptic contact zone of tourism, “a zone where ideas about life, class, habitus, gender, sexuality, the body, etc. are negotiated and where the very concept of work is questioned and may take unpredictable expressions” (p. 91). In fact, it is this intersubjective “encounter with alterity” that for MacCannell (2012) constitutes the very ethics of tourist practices.

How might Hardt and Negri’s vision for the biopolitical metropolis be realized? Perhaps if financialization was to one day expend itself in predatory debt cycles, and ultimately abandoned the secondary circuit of capital invested in the simulated built environments of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau; if those structures ceased to be a calculated means to a consumer end, liberating their inherent “spectres of the common” to serve ludic or progressive ends in themselves; if the post-civil multitude of mobile tourists and workers deviated from pre-planned routes proscribed by tour guides and the retail science of resort design strategies; if the solitary members of the multitude constructed their own derives, their counter-movements against the logics of the capitalist city – these wanderers might find themselves comprising a “new social body”, inhabiting a biopolitical “post-world” tourist New Babylon.

“The main activity of the inhabitants will be continuous drifting”, Chtcheglov wrote of the Situationist city, in words that seem prescient in the contemporary environment of tourist-driven urbanization. Perhaps he envisioned the eventual liberation of the peripatetic global population of migrant workers who currently are not so much “free to be nomadic” as they are “condemned to be wayward” (Kavanaugh, 2008, p. 266). In Chtcheglov’s vision, “Our first experimental city would live largely off tolerated and controlled tourism”, see Figure 7.

Of course, this is only a speculative and imaginary exercise, and the crowds of tourists and workers moving through Las Vegas and Dubai appear frankly contrapositive to an oppositional multitude. My aim here is merely to take seriously the idea of the tourist enclave as laboratory of urban futures – to bring together the SI’s playful utopian spatial design for a coming city organized for transience and ambience, and Negri’s programme for an intensified biopolitical metropolis of productive felicitous encounters. The phantasmagoric environment of the tourist city offers a convergence of mutable urban infrastructure and an immaterial commons. The tourist city might constitute the very “lasting organizational structure to create a new form of life” that is generally missing from social uprisings and revolts, as well as from Hardt and Negri’s theory of the biopolitical metropolis (Passavant, 2010). If we understand utopia as less an actual
place than “an operation calculated to disclose the limits of our own imagination of the future” (Jameson, 2009, p. 413), then looking forward from these exploitative and patently ridiculous urban phantasmagorias where the vast wealth expropriated from labour value is squandered to build simulated Venetian shopping malls and Eiffel Tower replicas, it seems that Jameson (2005) is correct: “the best utopias are those that fail the most comprehensively” (p. xiii).

6. Conclusion

In this review, I have endeavoured to centralize urban tourism, and the tourist city, on the agenda of both tourist and urban studies, suggesting that tourism research may play a productive role in developing and testing the concerns of urban and social theory. In an effort to create a dialogue among scholars in tourist and urban studies, I have analysed the design and operations of the contemporary tourist cities of Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau. But I have looked beyond the role these cities play as mere destinations for leisure travellers, and suggested that they also function as laboratories for imagining and testing new types of design, regimes of governance, forms of labour, and modes of encounter that may be important components of a radical politics. As such, urban tourism practices may reveal immanent metropolitan transformations.

I first called attention to the tourist city as exceptional, enclavie biopolitical laboratory of urban futures. Then, I drew on the world city literature to explore a set of seven axioms of the post-Fordist tourist city and attendant biopolitical production regime. I next considered the contradictions of an urban development scheme that predominantly serves a transient population of tourists who have no actual stake in the city. Finally, I turned to utopian speculation about how this contradiction might be imaginatively resolved in production.
of a future possible tourist city. As such, I share Minca’s (2010) tentative hopefulness about “the interstices of the unexpected” (p. 106) that may emerge among visitors and workers in the tourist city. Minca contends

it is in these interstices that the capitalist exploitation of (but also dependence on) tourists’ and workers’ desires, of their real life, of their creativity, of their bodies in place, of their willing suspension of disbelief thrives. But it is also here, in the space of creativity and real life that this strange biopolitical machine needs to survive and to be credible, it is here that a subversion of this rule of power can begin. (p. 106)

Starting from Ashford’s prescient critiques of urban tourism research, I have tried to take his concerns as far afield as possible, from the environment of the total tourist city, to the outer limits of urban theory. If the tourist enclave is a laboratory for testing new protocols of design, development, and governance, then it is also a useful site for imagining possible urban futures. That is, with their intensified, exaggerated, and hyperreal characteristics, Las Vegas, Dubai, and Macau may foreshadow dystopian and utopian valences in the coming global metropolis.

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Notes
1. The economies of Las Vegas and Macau are almost completely reliant on tourist dollars, whereas Dubai leverages tourism to diversify its economy and decrease its dependence on transfers of oil rent from Abu Dhabi.
3. For a competing view, see Judd (2003).
4. While Dubai and Abu Dhabi share visible similarities, they also have “very distinct development strategies” and “markedly different roles within... the UAE federation and within the international system” (Davidson, 2007, p. 34). However, as with Las Vegas in the USA, or Macau within Southeast Asia, characteristics which initially were indicative of Dubai’s exceptional status are increasingly normalized across the UAE and the region.
5. “Ong’s focus on production also leaves those enclave spaces oriented towards consumption (such as enclaved tourist resorts) largely outside her vision” (Sidaway, 2007, p. 334).
7. The characterization “post-world” is similar to what Chaplin and Holding (2002) call the “post-urban”, referring to the examples of Las Vegas, New York’s Disneyfied Times Square, and City Walk in Los Angeles. “Post-urban” implies that “the urban has entered into a critical self-aware stage, both historically and conceptually, with regard to the marketable status of the image of the
city” (p. 185). This self-consciousness has emerged “largely through the actions of marketing executives, brand managers, political strategists, tourist board directors and financial analysts” who play an increasingly important role in urban development (p. 185).

8. In a quite different, but equally instructive, example of pedagogical tourist enclaves, Graham (2012) describes an archipelago of third-world themed urban sites, mostly located in the USA, a “shadow world urban system” (p. 93) of simulated cities that American soldiers visit as “tourists” to rehearse future foreign military engagements and anti-terrorist operations.

9. Arrighi (2010) contends that financialization is not a new stage of capitalism, but a recurrent phenomenon that has occurred in the “autumn” of each previous “long century” of capitalist accumulation, and indicates the coming displacement of the global economic hegemon by a new regime.

10. I have resided for more than a decade in Macau, and experienced first-hand the city’s transformation from economically depressed colonial backwater to global gaming paradise. In addition, I have made numerous trips to Las Vegas, and two week-long research trips to Dubai, to study iconic and themed resort architecture in both locales.


12. This exercise is also consistent with Lefebvre’s method of “transduction” and utopian reflection on “the possible” (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 147–159; see also Coleman, 2013; Pinder, 2013).

13. Jameson (2009) demonstrates this method via a utopian interpretation of Walmart, “the purest expression of that dynamic of capitalism which devours itself, which abolishes the market by means of the market itself” (p. 421).

14. Abandoned theme parks, shopping malls, and even entire cities in China perhaps provide a glimpse of what that world might look like (Lam, 2014).

References


