

# Representations and identities in tourism map spaces

Vincent J. Del Casino Jr and Stephen P. Hanna

Department of Geography, University of Kentucky, 1457 Patterson Office Tower,  
Lexington, KY 40506-0027, USA

Department of Geography, Mary Washington College, 1301 College Avenue,  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401, USA

**Abstract:** Tourism maps remain underexamined in geography. Despite recent trends in critical cartography and tourism studies that redefine the relationship between space and representation, these geographic texts are rarely explored for their intertextual relationships with the spaces they claim to represent. In this article, we argue that tourism maps and other representations play an important role in the production of tourism spaces. We begin with an examination of the parallel trends in critical cartography and tourism studies and then push these initial theoreticisms further by integrating theories of identity, space and representation. We define tourism maps, spaces and identities as inter-related *processes* rather than final products. The creation of maps as processes inevitably includes the ambiguities introduced in the production of spaces and the formation of identities by changing social contexts. These ambiguities are readable in maps and they permit us, and potentially other map readers, to understand the spaces and identities of tourism in ways not fully circumscribed by a map's immediate production context and purpose. To explore this theoretical argument further we read one tourism map for the inter-related, ambiguous and therefore contested processes reproducing, but never fully fixing, tourism spaces and identities.

**Key words:** critical cartography, critical tourism studies, map space.

## I Introduction

Tourism maps remain underexamined in tourism geography and cartography literatures. These subdisciplines' reliance on positivistic assumptions has ensured that these geographic texts have been ignored. It would seem that many geographers simply dismiss tourism maps because of their blatant biases as advertisements and/or their flagrant disregard of the cartographic rules for accurately modeling reality. Within the confines of positivism, such flaws ensure that tourism maps obfuscate rather than reveal the reality of tourism sites. Since the mid-1980s, however, critical cartographers,

tourism geographers and other scholars of tourism have re-examined the relationships between space and representation (Wood and Fels, 1986; Harley, 1988; 1989; Urry, 1990; Britton, 1991; Shields, 1991; Wood, 1992; Ryden, 1993; Shaw and Williams, 1994; Del Casino, 1996; Hanna, 1996). In a variety of ways these works argue convincingly that the production of representations, including maps, contributes to the production of spaces. Extending this logic to the relationship between tourism maps and spaces is a simple step; the map helps to reproduce the space as unique, exotic, exciting, leisurely or otherwise in contrast from the everyday spaces of work and home.

Yet, tourism maps do not only play a role in the production of tourism spaces; they contribute to the reproduction of identities. Following Natter and Jones (1997), and other identity theorists (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Butler, 1988; 1990; 1993; Rose, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Gallaher, 1997), we hold that identity formation is a representational process. Identities are defined and contested, and at times naturalized, through representational practices and individual performances. Many tourism maps include images of the people or 'hosts' who make tourism spaces unique, exotic and exciting. Tourists use these images to help them understand who these people are and how they are different from themselves. Some maps portray tourists engaged in the activities for which tourism spaces are produced, thereby confirming tourists' identities and guiding their reproduction of these spaces. In these and other ways, tourism maps contribute to the production of identity and can help us understand the relationships between identity, representation and space.

We do not want to assert, however, that tourism maps and other representations completely fix the meanings of spaces and identities when they are designed and produced by advertising companies, tourism agencies or other actors in the tourism industry. While maps draw meaning from and help to define the spaces and identities of tourism, they contain uncertainties and traces of excluded others that introduce potential ambiguities in their relationships with space and identity. If we define tourism maps, spaces and identities as inter-related *processes* rather than final products, the moment of map production is no longer determinant. Rather, the creation of maps as processes inevitably includes the ambiguities introduced in the production of spaces and the formation of identities through changes in social contexts. Thus, readable in maps are these ambiguities or degrees of freedom that permit us, and potentially other map readers, to understand the spaces and identities of tourism in ways not fully circumscribed by a map's immediate production context. In this article, we use the tourism map to examine the inter-related, ambiguous and therefore contested processes reproducing, but never fully fixing, tourism spaces and identities.

We start to construct a theory of the relationship between map, space and identity as processes with a review of cartographic and tourism studies literatures focusing on the relationships between space and representation. Then, we turn to identity theory to explicate the relationships between identity, space and representation. As others have demonstrated, tourist destinations, travel writings and the relationships of tourists and non-tourists are all rich locations for exploring these relationships (Savage, 1984; Urry, 1990; Britton, 1991; Shields, 1991; Kinnaird *et al.*, 1994; Shaw and Williams, 1994; Del Casino, 1995; 1996). Drawing on these literatures, we seek to challenge the fixity and naturalness of the boundaries between map and margins, tourism spaces and non-tourism spaces, representation and reality. We conclude this work with a reading of *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*, a 1991 tourism map of Bangkok,

Thailand. Using other maps, texts, and personal observations of Bangkok and Thailand to provide the necessary context, our reading demonstrates that this map contributes to, but does not fix, the spaces and identities of tourism in Thailand. More generally, we argue that tourism maps are important documents for the understanding of tourism as well as the relationships between map, space and identity.

## II Theorizing tourism maps, spaces and identities

The critical cartography and tourism studies literatures offer productive sites for beginning our study of tourism maps and spaces. In their various approaches to understanding map production and tourism, both cartographers and tourism studies scholars have examined, implicitly or explicitly, the relationship between space and representation. In this section we focus on the parallel and divergent approaches to space and representation within cartography and tourism studies demonstrating how critiques from within and outside the boundaries of these subdisciplines have pushed both in new directions. We do this through an in-depth analysis of a relatively small number of key texts.

### 1 Space and representation in cartography and tourism studies

Throughout geography's modern history, cartography has occupied a crucial place in a geographer's education and certainly mapping is still an integral part of geographic methodology. In cartography classes, geographers are trained to overcome the technical limitations of scale, projection and generalization to produce maps theorized as simplified mirrors of reality. There is a history within both geography and cartography that notes the technical and, to a lesser extent, social limitations of this scientific and technical cartography (Wright, 1942; Peters, 1990; Monmonier, 1996). These internal critiques, however, are little more than refinements to the dominant paradigm of cartography: the science of accurately modeling the world. In such a model, representations of real space have no impact on the space they claim to represent. Throughout this century geographers have depended on this conception of cartography in order to delimit regions, map landscapes and plot patterns.

Since the late 1930s, but especially in the period after the second world war, the study of tourism has grown as a subdiscipline within the field of geography (see Mitchell and Murphy, 1991, for a more complete review of tourism geography). Embedded in a strongly quantitative tradition, the geography of tourism has developed along fairly rigid lines. In a critique Britton (1991: 451) argues:

Although oversimplifying, we could characterise the 'geography of tourism' as being primarily concerned with: the description of travel flows; microscale spatial structure and land use of tourist places and facilities; economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourist activity; impacts of tourism in third world countries; geographic patterns of recreation and leisure pastimes; and the planning implications of all these topics.

In tourism research the major theoretical question to be overcome is similar to that for cartographers: what is the most accurate approach to modeling, or representing, the current tourism environment?

The profound challenges to positivist human geography beginning in the 1970s were largely lost on practitioners in both subdisciplines. As Marxists, feminists and humanists critiqued the spatial science paradigm as ahistorical, irrelevant and/or blind to social relations of gender, race, sexuality and class, most cartographers and geographers of tourism refined their methods both to rationalize and perfect their ability to model space (for critiques, see Britton, 1991; Ryden, 1993; MacHaffie, 1995). Harley (1989: 1), among others, laments the widening gap between human geography and cartography and focuses blame on map-makers for operating 'in a tunnel created by their own technologies without reference to the social world.' In a similar way, Shaw and Williams (1994) note that much of tourism geography's traditional focus has remained on the margins of larger schools of geographic thought.

In contrast to this traditional focus a few geographers have begun to engage with critical studies of tourism emanating from a number of other disciplines (Britton, 1991; Kinnaird, *et al.* 1994; Shaw and Williams, 1994). Perhaps one of the most influential of these studies is Dean MacCannell's *The tourist* (originally published in 1976; republished in 1989). Working within a Marxist tradition and drawing from the Frankfurt school, MacCannell articulated a 'theory of the leisure class' in 1976 in which he argued that the tourist is engaged in a modern form of religious ritual. The tourist seeks out an 'authentic' other in an attempt to order and structure the world. Authenticity can never be fully realized, however, because it is constantly staged through the process of creating representations for tourists. MacCannell argues that these material and social practices banish the real or authentic to the backstage, outside the sight and reach of the tourist. Therefore, spaces of tourism hide the reality of everyday life under a myriad of representations which cover 'the endless spherical system of connections which is society and the world' (MacCannell, 1989: 56). The causal arrow for MacCannell is largely unidirectional – representations point toward and simultaneously hide authentic spaces from the tourist who can only be tricked by the representation or experience disappointment and alienation.

Fundamental critiques of cartography have come from both cartographers and critical human geographers who examine maps and map-making in contemporary and historical contexts (Wood and Fels, 1986; Harley, 1988; 1989; 1990; Woodward, 1991; Harley and Zandveliet, 1992; Pickles, 1992; Wood, 1992; Edney, 1993; Ryden, 1993; Sparke, 1995; 1998). While all these critics re-examine cartographic assumptions concerning the relationships between space and representation, J.B. Harley's works remain the most influential. In 'Deconstructing the map' (1989) and later works, Harley constructs a critical cartography, not as a science of map-making, but as a fully socialized and politicized analysis of the subdiscipline's history, discourses and practices. Harley presents a way of understanding the map and cartography as both parts and products of social discourses and, therefore, employments of power. Importantly, Harley's definition of the map is *not* confined to the area being mapped, but includes titles, legends, pictures and descriptive text usually placed at the margins of the page (Harley and Zandveliet, 1992). By looking for absences and paying attentions to the margins of maps as texts, the map critic can read between the cartographic lines and reveal how a particular map represents and reproduces the social and spatial status quo. For Harley, social power is inscribed in maps by cartographers operating within dominant discourses and institutions.

Unfortunately, Harley's focus on the map's immediate production context blinds him

to other factors affecting the relationship between map, author/user and space. He does not seem to realize that maps are intertextual. They are made and used in the presence of a broad range of existing representations of the place being mapped. Furthermore, as in MacCannell's work on tourist sites, the dialectic between space and representation is underdeveloped. While Harley seeks to break the mimetic and unidirectional link from space to representation that dominates cartography, his flawed deconstructionist method seeks to find the real power relations in some space that is outside of and concealed by the map (see Belyea, 1992; Sparke, 1995). Thus, there are no ambiguities in Harley's cartography, no possibility that the meanings of the spaces and identities represented in maps may be continually reproduced with changes in context.

Just as Harley takes on cartography's dominant paradigm, Britton (1991) challenges the geography of tourism's mimetic and a-contextual modeling traditions. He calls for a more critical study of tourism and the commodification of leisure and urges other geographers to examine how the tourism industry commodifies places and restructures the economies of tourism sites. Britton notes the importance of recognizing and critiquing the markers of tourism space (i.e., the representations of these spaces), but he does little to explore the relationship between the marker and the space it represents. While a valuable contribution to understanding the unequal nature of the production of tourism, he neglects gender, race, sexuality and other sorts of power relationships that serve to distinguish tourist from non-tourist and tourism spaces from non-tourism spaces. Additionally, as in Harley's critical cartography, his theorization of the production of tourism spaces is rigid and narrow. Capital fixes tourism spaces and there are no possibilities of meanings beyond pure commodification.

Some of the limitations we note in Britton's critique of tourism geography and in MacCannell's work can be addressed through the work of sociologist John Urry (1990). Central to Urry's work is the 'tourist gaze.' This gaze is formulated in part through the collection of already-existing representations of the tourist's destination – representations that promise a contrast from the tourist's everyday routines of work and home. Armed with such a set of 'preconceived notions' the tourist travels to seek out and collect the representations that define a particular tourist gaze. The gaze becomes a lens through which the tourist experiences sites, cultures and identities as different from his or her own. If however, the reality of the tourist site does not meet the modern tourist's defined set of 'preconceived notions,' a crisis ensues and the tourist becomes 'disillusioned'. In this respect, Urry maintains an unfortunate divide between the gaze and the spaces of tourism, between the sets of representations and the spaces they claim to represent. Again, there is little room for ambiguity here. The 'fixed' representations and reality either match or they do not.

In *Places on the margins* (1991), Rob Shields draws from Urry's understanding of the relationship between tourism spaces and representations. Shields, however, moves beyond Urry by recognizing that alternative representations produced by tourists can be appropriated and coded to produce a new cohesive place-myth. Thus, representations, spaces and the relationship between them are all subject to change. According to Shields (1991: 83), such change creates a 'discontinuity in the social fabric, in social spaces, and in history' or moments of liminality. These liminal spaces and moments exist within and between space-fixing regulatory frameworks creating tensions between the everyday and the exotic, the modern and the traditional, work and leisure,

discipline and freedom. These tensions are defined by the particular regulatory regime the tourist is 'escaping' through the practice of tourism.

Matthew Sparke (1995) provides a cartographic complement to Shield's work on tourism spaces and representations. Sparke seeks to move past what he terms Harley's 'demythologization' of cartography by employing Derridian deconstruction. Recognizing that cartography – and by extension the map – are 'dynamic components of wider social dynamics', Sparke (1995: 4) urges cartographic critics to stop claiming that their deconstructions or demythologizations lead to the final and full understanding of any map. Rather, he suggests we continue to go back to 'look for other ways in which the map, and what is supposed to lie outside of it – power relations, interpretation, the "real" world, etc. – might actually be still more complexly inter-related' (Sparke 1995: 4).

Combining Shields and Sparke allows us to understand that tourism maps and other representations are produced not just of, but as part of the tension-filled tourism spaces. This process can be captured by the term 'map space'. For us, Sparke's 'complex inter-relations' between maps, the spaces they represent and the social contexts of their production and interpretation challenge the boundaries drawn on maps, around spaces, and between maps as representation and spaces as 'outside' that representation. Drawing on Shields and Urry, the map spaces of tourism are always intertextually and relationally constructed through attempts to fix oppositions, such as the everyday and the exotic, which are reproduced through already-existing representations. Finally, any attempt to fix oppositional categories, boundaries and other meanings is always partial ensuring that map spaces remain ambiguous. In one sense, therefore, we can think of tourism map spaces as disciplining tourists: defining particular actions as the tourist experience in opposition to a representation of the everyday. Yet, their imperfectly concealed absences, exclusions, margins and other ambiguities expose the multiple and changing identities present in any map space.

## 2 Identity categories and performances

The above framework provides a first cut at examining the ambiguities and contestations present in tourism map spaces. By reading a map as part of a never fully bounded or defined tourism space, we can explore the employments of representation, capital and other forms of social power used to fix tourism spaces as well as the gaps, margins, porous boundaries and other ambiguities that ensure that resistance, contestation and reinterpretation remain possible. Yet tourism maps do not just help us understand tourism spaces. They represent and reproduce the identities of tourism as well. Therefore, we turn to recent theories of identity in feminist, poststructuralist and post-colonial literatures that challenge the fixity of spaces, representations and identity categories. By drawing on selected works within this broad body of literature, we hope to understand how social identities are constructed and potentially destabilized in tourism map spaces.

Over the past two decades challenges to essentialist identity politics in cultural studies, postcolonial and poststructuralist literary theory and, later, in geography, have posited that identities based on race, gender, sexuality and/or class are not inherent or natural, but are constructed as categories through hegemonic discourses (Morrison,

1992; Jackson and Penrose, 1993; Bhabha, 1994). In other words, identity categories are themselves representations (Natter and Jones, 1997). They hide the differences within categories, are apparently constructed in relation to an excluded other, and they deny the constitutive trace of the other, or outside, that is necessary for category construction (Derrida, 1972; Mouffe, 1992; 1993; Gallaher, 1997; Natter and Jones, 1997). As can be seen in the constitution of tourism identities an other, the working non-tourist for example, is constructed in opposition to leisured tourists. Since the sites of leisure for the tourist depend directly on the work of non-tourists, however, tourism spaces always contain within them both the dominant identity, the tourist, and its submerged other, the tourism worker. Such constructions are articulated through hegemony: the employment of social power to make categories appear to be naturalized and fixed in space (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Natter and Jones, 1997). A tourism map, for example, is an attempt to fix or identify space as 'tourist' or 'non-tourist' through a deployment of symbols marking paths, boundaries and tourist sights/sites. People within that space are identified through their representation and interactions as tourists, locals, tourism workers or as those excluded from the map and space.

The identity categories constructed through these representations are always partial, however. They never capture the complex differences that constitute a particular social actor. This allows, and is caused by, individuals who perform their identity within and beyond these categories (Butler, 1988; 1990). In tourism spaces, tourism workers perform as part of the site and thus reproduce the tourism space and their identity as 'hosts' through their actions. As individuals they are to 'become' the site, thus hiding what is, for them, work. At the same time, their performances can expose the partiality of the representational action through, for example, their resistance to the acts themselves. Their ad-libbing rewrites scripts and regulated work norms. Thus, identity categories only imperfectly capture the identities of social actors performing within and beyond these categories making the relationship between the category and any actor ambiguous and open to contestation.

Returning to Shields (1991) helps us understand the role this conception of identity plays in tourism map spaces. These spaces are tension-filled because they exist at a set of constructed boundaries between the exotic and the everyday, between resistance and regulation. Further, tourism entrepreneurs and government officials depend on the maintenance of these dualisms in order to market such spaces as 'unique' to the tourist. But while particular representations, including maps, appear to fix such dualisms, their ambiguous relationships to social actors performing their identities in tourism spaces ensure that maps and other representations may both legitimate and destabilize identity categories. This destabilization is possible because no one is merely a 'tourist' or 'tourism worker', but is instead a multiple subject constituted of many discourses and identities. Each actor exists in a variety of social spaces simultaneously – at the 'center' of one category designation and at the 'margins' of another (Rose, 1993).

The map spaces of tourism are one place where we can explore the production of category designations and the tensions produced by their ambiguous relationships to social actors attempting to both 'fix' and 'perform' particular identities. Here we would like to suggest two things. First, the collision of identity categories and the blurring of their boundaries are both enabled by and constitutive of tourism map spaces. The everyday/exotic, modern/traditional and disciplinary/resistance dualisms are not merely definitive signs of tourism, but of those who perform within, reproduce and

destabilize these spaces and categories. Secondly, the tourism map represents the tensions among these supposed dichotomies through its depiction/creation of certain identities as parts of tourist sites, its imperfect concealment of other social actors (especially tourism workers), and its images of the tourists themselves. We use these theories of space, representation and identity to construct a theoretical framework which informs our reading of *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*.

### 3 Reading identities in tourism map spaces

In the simplest sense we can examine the tourism map as a product of hegemonic discourses, as Harley does. We can analyze it for the way it incorporates texts, drawings or photographs to fix the identities of both tourism spaces and social actors in those spaces. These attempts, however, never fully inscribe the map with meaning, since the map is not limited by the boundaries set on it through production. Maps do not just fix meaning at the moment of production, but (re)present the ambiguities and partiality of space and identity categories. Thus, following Sparke, we do not simply demythologize a map. Instead, we examine the complex sets of social relationships that produce and reproduce the map and the space it is a part of as an ambiguous site of identity construction. Reading maps not just for the 'exclusions' that Harley sought to expose, but for the intertextuality of the map, tourism space and the identities of social actors demonstrates the multiple meanings that are part of any identity category.

Therefore, we read maps not just as texts but as spaces. As such, a map space is not bound by the margins of the paper on which it is printed, but is inscribed with meaning through its intertextual linkages with other texts and spaces. In addition, map spaces are sites through which we can examine the processes of identity construction, and the historically and spatially contingent social relationships that constitute identity categories. To do this, we follow other identity theorists by arguing that all social actors perform within and beyond identity categories. Map spaces, which represent these performed identities, similarly reproduce the traces of the ambiguities that are part of all categorical designations. Hegemonic discourses that seek to fix oppositional markers, leisure and work or the exotic and everyday for example, expose the intertextuality of any set of oppositions. Thus, it is important to examine how identities are disciplined within map spaces. At the same time, because traces of the other are always hidden within any category, we must examine how these disciplinary representations expose the presence of exclusions, margins and other ambiguities. It is our contention that this process is readable in any map space.

This definition of map space presents some methodological challenges. It is not enough to write a history of representing Thailand to provide context or background before claiming that the map, in this case *Bangkok, Stadtplan*, contains the same tropes we identify in the history. A map space does not contain meanings as much as it 'makes present' images, memories, spaces and other representations that readers use to interpret it (Wood, 1992). Therefore, we employ a less linear method to trace some of the many intertextual connections through which *Bangkok, Stadtplan* contributes to the reproduction of spaces and identities. Beginning with the symbols or icons that make up the map itself, we identify the oppositional categories that this map attempts to fix by reading through the map to other well-known representations, both past and



present, that are structured around the same dualisms. At the same time we note how the map space – comprising *Bangkok*, *Stadtplan* and the other texts and spaces it recalls – reproduces the tensions and ambiguities between and within these oppositions. Further, we illustrate how these work to undermine the categories of space and identity that this map space is intended to fix and reproduce.

### III Ambiguous identities in tourism map spaces of Thailand

Using the theoretical framework and methods outlined above, we now explore the reproduction of tourism identities and spaces in *Bangkok*, *Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*, a 1991 map produced to guide German sex-tourists to and through a thoroughly sexualized city of Bangkok. This map of sex-tourism spaces, identities and performances is cartoonish, off-color and potentially offensive, making it a perfect example of the type of map dismissed or ignored by most cartographers and geographers of tourism. We believe, however, that reading this map as an unbounded space offers critical insights into the always partial attempts to fix the spaces and identities of tourism through the employments of oppositional categories. While this is, of course, only one of many different map spaces constructing Thailand and Bangkok as tourist destinations, we demonstrate how this representation of Bangkok is interconnected with some of these other markers of Thai tourism identities, both past and present. Produced by tourism capital and the Thai government, these images are represented on the map helping to define Bangkok, and to a certain extent all of Thailand, as a tourism space and to identify Thai people as the perfect exotic hosts for western tourists. We do not claim to capture the totality of Thailand's representational history, however. Instead we explore some of the common tropes that are deployed throughout the history of writing Thailand as a place and identifying it as a tourism site. These are made explicit by our reading 'through' map icons and across the map's boundaries to these other representations. At the same time, we note how this map space fails to fix the categories it recalls and reproduces, creating ambiguities and the potential for alternative interpretations, contestations and other performances of resistance.

The set of images presented in this map is only one piece in a larger series of guidebooks, videos and maps designed to guide the tourist through the sex-tourism spaces of the southeast Asian region. The map itself consists of a white-on-gray road grid overlain and overwhelmed by a color-co-ordinated icon system designating the different forms of sexual entertainment (Figure 1). The map also has, on the back, a brief introduction to Bangkok, an advertisement for various videos on southeast Asian sexual entertainment sites, and the names and descriptions of various forms of 'entertainment'. The map's cover is a reproduction of three women wearing tank-tops and bikini bottoms working in a go-go bar. In essence this map is supposed to normalize Bangkok's function for exotic sex and to demonstrate the safety of the space for the sex-tourist. At the same time the map images *fix* the tourist – normalizing the practices of the tourist as 'free from his everyday constraints' – and ease his movement from one form of entertainment to another.

*Bangkok*, *Stadtplan*'s effectiveness in fixing the everyday/exotic and discipline/freedom oppositions on to Thai spaces and identities is dependent on its explicit and implicit references to other popularly known representations employing



reproduce the tensions of a developing country actively engaged in opening up its urban areas to development, while demonstrating a lack of concern for the rural (Siriprachai, 1997). It is only in the urban map spaces of nightlife, like *Bangkok, Stadtplan*, that a tourist can find leisured cosmopolitan comforts in the site of an exotic other.

*Bangkok, Stadtplan* and other contemporary tourism map spaces of Thailand do not just reference each other. Ultimately, they become intelligible in the presence of a long history of disguising the tensions within the everyday/exotic, rural/urban and other dualisms by fixing them as oppositions. G. William Skinner (1957: 3) notes that as early as the fifteenth century southeast Asia was constructed as a sexualized space for foreign visitors:

Both Ma Huen and Fei Hsin [part of Cheng Ho's Chinese mission] were greatly impressed by the independent status of Siamese women, and above all their predilection for Chinese men. According to Fei, 'whenever [a Siamese woman] meets a Chinese man, she is greatly pleased with him, and will invariably prepare wine to entertain and show respect to him, merrily singing and keeping him overnight'. The husband in such a case,



**Figure 2** Nightlife attractions  
 Source: Redrawn from Dingwall *et al.* (1988)

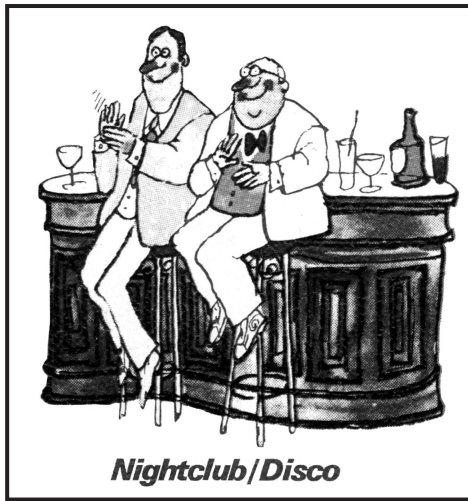
according to Ma, is not perturbed but flattered that his wife should be beautiful enough to please the Chinese. From this idyllic account, it would appear that the Chinese had other reasons than trade for resorting to Siam. In any case, the fabulous stories told by the expeditionaries after their return to China greatly stimulated trade and emigration to Nan-yang [southeast Asia].

The sexual availability of Thai women for the Chinese marks this space as an other within their geographical imagination. It is not just Thailand, but all southeast Asia that becomes a place that draws Chinese men to the region for 'resorting'. One can argue that this same myth motivates the large number of Chinese Malaysians and Singaporeans who today travel to southern Thailand for weekend vacations in the cocktail bars and cabaret lounges of Hat Yai, the largest urban center in the southern part of the country (Dingwall *et al.*, 1988). It is also possible that the early myths of the sexual availability of Thai woman spread through the trade routes between Europe, Africa, India and China and reproduced Thailand's sexualized identity for both Chinese and non-Chinese men alike.

Thus, it is not surprising that western representations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also rely upon and reproduce many of the same dualisms, as they imagine Thailand as an exotic leisure paradise and identify Thai people as sensual, beautiful, erotic and sexually available. J. Antonio's *Guide to Bangkok and Siam* (1904), for example, paints an image of a land and people sitting at the margins of civilization. He positions Thailand's unique exotic nature between the modern and the traditional, the west and the east. 'In Siam to-day one sees a country emerging from the darkness of an ancient barbarism and rapidly assimilating those western methods which alone can assure it a permanent existence as a political entity' (Antonio, 1904: 1). The emergence of Thailand as a 'modern' political entity is tempered by the iconography of this 'barbaristic' society. This tension is reproduced in the representations deployed to identify Thailand. As an example, photographs of Thai costumes highlight the multiple identities and class structure of urban and rural Thai peoples in Antonio's text. The use of women as models for these various fashions attaches Thailand to western notions of femininity and sexuality. Additionally, the image captions categorize the styles as 'traditional', 'modern' and 'hill tribe'. Traditional denotes the clothing of the dominant central Thai people, while modern dress incorporates the European styles worn in Bangkok by wealthy elites, both royal and bourgeoisie. This latter fashion statement signals that this country, or at least parts of it, is available and 'safe' for western travelers, while the traditional garb is a reminder of Siam's exotic nature and the hill tribe 'costume' represents its barbaric side (see Del Casino, 1996, for a more detailed discussion of nineteenth and twentieth-century representations of Thailand).

While tensions between the modern and the traditional are not as overt in *Bangkok, Stadtplan*, some of the map's entertainment icons call upon the east/west dualism directly to assure tourists that they can enjoy western safety and comfort in the midst of eastern exoticism. For example, the 'nightclub and disco' icon (Figure 3) represents for the tourist a comfortable and safe environment of simple leisured practices; practices that ironically can be had most anywhere. Since this is now in the tourism map space of Bangkok, however, it becomes an exotic, unique space of leisure apparently opposed to the leisure spaces of the west.

The 'coffee shop' icon on *Bangkok, Stadtplan* also reproduces the tensions between east and west, the everyday and the exotic (Figure 4). It appears to mimic an idyllic 1950s western soda shop, and is therefore a 'safe' and comfortable space in exotic 'oriental'



**Figure 3** Nightclub/disco icon, *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*  
© M. Dulk Verlag, Berlin (1991)



**Figure 4** Coffee shop icon, *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*  
© M. Dulk Verlag, Berlin (1991)

Bangkok. The two men, both Caucasian, are engaged in conversation, as the third person, a 'Thai' woman with western features and clothing but 'almond shaped eyes', sits on the side staring at the two men. This reactionary moment represents the reason some western men travel to Thailand: to reassert a position of dominance in a relationship with a woman, to have a companion who is 'seen and not heard'. The map thus contains within it traces of western feminism that, for the reactionary male tourist identified in this map space, mark western women as 'less available' and thus less exotic. Such traces of an imperfectly excluded other – western feminism – ensure that this map space contains more than just the leisured activities of a western masculine fundamentalism.

These icons' negotiations between the exotic and the everyday and east and west 'make present' images used in other contemporary promotions of Thailand produced by the tourism industry. As an advertisement for the Siam International Hotel entitled, 'Rudyard Kipling never stayed here', states:

Mr. Kipling never stayed with us at the Siam International Bangkok, because our hotel hadn't been built in his day. And as far as we know, he didn't venture as far East as Thailand. But if he had, we feel sure he would have had second thoughts about his immortal line: 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.'

Because at the Siam International we've combined the best of the East with the best of the West. Our building is of spectacular Thai design. And our service is wholly Thai. So we do everything possible to make you comfortable and we do it all with a smile. Yet we offer you the very best of western comfort, cuisine, and entertainment. When in Bangkok you owe it to yourself to stay at the Siam International.

Thus, it is through the map's icons that the map space of Bangkok is a part of other representations and spaces of Thailand's tourism sites. In effect, these icons represent the disciplining of leisure through its confinement to particular places and specific tourist rituals. The 'nightclub and disco' icon, therefore, fixes the identity of the tourist as a 'red-nosed drunk', yet passive observer of the performances of particular acts designed to attract his attention (Figure 3). He engages in the regulated map spaces of tourism

and acts within the bounds of an identity constructed out of its opposition to his 'everyday'.

The use of the exotic/everyday and east/west dualisms to fix the spaces of tourism in Thailand is practiced not only by western tour companies and Thai capitalists, but by Thai government agencies and officials as well. At the suggestion of the World Bank, the Thai government embarked on a campaign in the 1960s to promote tourism actively as a form of sustainable development (Thanh-Dam, 1990). First through the Tourism Organization of Thailand (TOT) and later through the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Thai government produced texts and images that portrayed Thailand as both a site of exotic natural human and physical beauty and of ancient traditions, all of which are safely placed within a modern booming economy, a democratic society and an anti-communist stronghold (Del Casino, 1995). These official representations of Thai spaces and identities for the purpose of tourism lend meaning to *Bangkok, Stadtplan*.

*Thailand Illustrated*, a magazine that was published by the Department of Public Relations in Thailand beginning in the 1960s and through the 1970s, is an example of official attempts to fix Thailand as a tourism space. An examination of the magazine for the period 1967–74 reveals some interesting representational consistencies and demonstrates that several ideological motivations lay behind the design of the magazine. Using representations of the royal family, archaeological sites, traditional customs and beauty-contest winners, the magazine supports tourism growth and promotes nationalism while demonstrating how these two projects are intertwined. Dignitaries, such as British royalty and California governors, are ushered through the pages of this text and place Thailand at the center of a developing southeast Asian region. The linkage between tourism and nationalism, developed discursively through representation, is materially produced in government-sanctioned festivals, markets, entertainment districts and particular cultural practices demonstrating the safe and accessible contexts for tourism travel (see Van Esterick, 1994, for a discussion of the Miss World Pageant in Bangkok, which coincided with the massacre of student protesters just miles from the site of the pageant in 1992). Protests and other transgressive practices against the government are hidden by this celebration of nationalism through tourism. *Bangkok, Stadtplan* has similar erasures. Hidden behind the cartoon icons are slums and other establishments not related to the sex-tourism industry, thus promising a hassle-free environment for the tourist.

More obviously connected to the *Bangkok, Stadtplan* map space is *Thailand Illustrated's* construction of Thailand as site of natural human beauty and sexual availability. Beauty-contest winners and other Thai women are represented on 44% of the magazine's covers from 1967 to 1974. This is not surprising considering the economic importance of the developing sex-tourism industry at this time (Thanh-Dam, 1990) and the role that feminine identities have played in the development of national identities (Katrak, 1992; Parker and Hendricks, 1994). In addition, while the government has never officially sanctioned sex tourism, their long-term benign neglect of the industry coupled with their representations of Thailand, especially those of Thai women, helps reproduce the country as a unique site for leisure activities and defines it as a space of sexual openness far away from the disciplining mores of western society. Figures 5a and 5b, entitled 'A farmhouse in the central region of Thailand' and 'A northern belle at Mae Klang Waterfalls, Chiang Mai', demonstrate the central role of Thai women in *Illustrated's* production of Thailand for tourists. The covers and the advertisements and

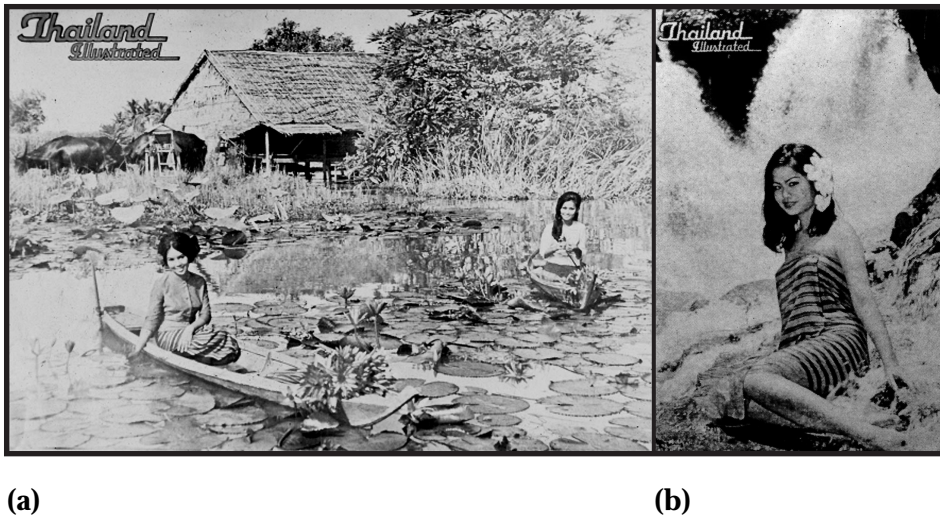


photographs inside the magazine often depict women in traditional roles and rural settings, but sacrificed accuracy for beauty by replacing farm attire with the finest *sarongs* (Figure 5a). The romanticized view of the land, and of farming in particular, is also transferred directly to the female figure. Figure 5b, on the other hand, evacuates any pretense toward setting Thai beauty in a cultural context. Instead, a woman is placed in the physical landscape: tropical beauty and human beauty are fused. Unlike the first image, the woman is removed from any form of economic or ritual activity, such as farming, and is juxtaposed with the landscape. Her wrap, a Thai bathing cloth, is as close to nude as one can become in this context: in the village no adult is ever seen without a wrap when they are bathing.

The tourism development literature produced by the Thai government thus draws on images of a sexualized past and a set of ephemeral qualities – beauty, serenity, peacefulness and exoticism – to mark Thailand as an exotic and erotic site. This process of representing Thailand through the image of women can also be noted in an advertisement for Thai International Airlines from 1971 which positions the following text above the smiling face of a young Thai woman:

What could she learn in Sweden? Every one of Thai International's hostesses is taught the trade in Sweden. That means getting to grips with the technical details involved in serving over 100 people in the confines of today's big jets. It's a complicated business and they go to the best air hostess training centre in the world to learn it. Their side of the business you see is a different matter. *To a Thai girl friendliness, courtesy and willingness-to-please are second nature. It's something they are born to have.* Other airlines talk about girls trained to be friendly and helpful. To our girls any other way of doing things would be unthinkable (Papineau, 1977: back cover, emphasis added).

The Thai flight attendant is trained in the European tradition but embodies a pure Thai sexuality that is exemplified by 'friendliness, courtesy and willingness-to-please'. It is an attempt to naturalize this identity and fix it for the tourist.



**Figure 5** (a) A farmhouse in the central region of Thailand (*Thailand Illustrated*, Vol. 185, 1971); (b). 'A northern belle at Mae Klang Waterfalls, Chiang Mai' (*Thailand Illustrated*, Vol. 163, 1971)

Returning to the 'coffee shop' icon, we can see how *Bangkok, Stadtplan* reproduces this supposed sexual availability of Thai women (Figure 4). In Bangkok, the coffee shop is a commonly accepted place to meet freelance commercial sex workers. Thus, the passive woman depicted in this 'innocent' scene is not just a 1950s throwback, but is available for sex as well. The almond eyes confirm her Thai identity, further assuring western male readers that she is friendly, courteous and willing to please. Nevertheless, women may transform this reactionary moment into a positive net effect for themselves. Playing a 'role' for tourists allows them to earn income, for example, from men who may feel that they have 'fallen in love'. They are therefore not simply victims but agents performing identities (see Walker and Ehrlich, 1992, for examples of interviews with and letters to commercial sex workers in Bangkok from their clients after clients have returned 'home'; also Van Esterick, 1994; Lysa, 1998).

In this way, a tension is created within the most fundamental set of oppositional categories in tourism, work and leisure. The coffee shop, an apparently safe and readable leisure space for the tourist, is also a space of work for women, bartenders and others performing identities. Leisure thus depends on its opposite, work, to sustain its meaning for tourists and non-tourists alike. The map space is intended to annihilate work from its image, but the very production of any leisure space is dependent on its other, work, for its identity. The map space, and the material spaces it is tied to, are both leisure and work spaces simultaneously. Thus, attempts to fix the boundaries between the exotic and the everyday, leisure and work, expose the hegemonic discourses that seek to define and maintain these differences and reveal the ambiguous and blurry natures of these mutually constituting identity categories. This is brought forth even more strongly in the icon of the go-go dancer (see Figure 1). Her face maintains an obvious grimace. It demonstrates the outward reality of this industry and the difficulty that such a job brings to someone who must sell her body and emotions on a day-by-day basis. Work, monotonous and sometimes depressing, is brought to the fore.

Also recalled in *Bangkok, Stadtplan* are some of its more immediate representational precursors. An informal set of writings that began to popularize the Thai sex-tourism industry in the 1960s highlights further the tensions existing within the dualisms – everyday/exotic and work/leisure – that are produced when these oppositions are employed to fix the identities of Thai tourism. For example, Andrew Harris's (1968) underground classic, *Bangkok after dark*, became a fantasy guide for incoming European and North American sex-tourists throughout the 1970s and served to reinscribe Thailand as a unique, yet safe, sexualized space. Harris (1968: 9) echoes the sentiments of the Thai International advertisement in his opening chapter:

But even while the plane was still in the air, there were indications of what lay ahead . . . The two hostesses brought a continual procession of drinks and food . . . they were coffee-colored creatures with almond-shaped eyes who moved with a grace I had never seen before . . . And the girls were continually smiling – not the usual smiles of airline hostesses, but warm smiles that seemed to transform the cold airplane cabin.

Like the comforts of modern air travel and the 'procession of drinks and food' mixed with the exotic 'coffee-colored creatures with almond-shaped eyes' provided by the Thai flight attendant, the map space examined here exhibits similar tensions and demonstrates the intertextual linkages between this space and other spaces. The Thai flight attendants are both the exotic and the everyday. On the map, Thai women are represented with Caucasian-image icons that constitute their bodies as sites of tension



between 'eastern' and 'western' sexuality. The poses, clothes, and hairstyles assert the comfortable – the safety of the everyday in a Western context – but the 'almond-shaped' eyes identify and maintain the idea of the exotic. The performance of go-go and the deployment of Caucasian-image icons demonstrate that these are acts designed to fit into a particular set of preconceived notions of sexuality. The icons therefore represent neither authentic nor inauthentic acts, but instead demonstrate that the practices of social actors are within (and perhaps beyond) particular category designations. Similar processes of identity formation occur on the plane and in the map space. The performances of these social actors also appear to 'naturalize' Thai female sexuality as exotic and other and expose the identification of a space of leisure as a space of work as well.

Thailand is safe, not only because of the traces of a familiar west, but also because it is a space outside the everyday routines of tourists. Thus, acts which might be deemed inappropriate are more manifest in this unique and socially distant place. It is thus not surprising that this map space, which claims to be distant and exotic, represents multiple ways in which the tourist may engage in activities not consistent with their everyday lives. Further, as a leisure space Thailand is available for a variety of transgressions from the heterosexualized norms present in everyday western – and Thai – society. The image of the 'transvestite' (Figure 6) illustrates further how this map space represents the tensions present in any identity construction. Present in the Bangkok sex-tourism landscape are the possibilities to act outside heterosexualized spaces and



**Figure 6** Transvestite icon, *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*

© M. Dulk Verlag, Berlin (1991)

within those spaces designed for 'third' genders. This icon signals alternatives to heterosexual experiences for the tourist. It is not a Thai man in drag, but a German man, goatee and all, who stands in for the image of the transvestite. At the same time, this emancipatory moment demonstrates that sexuality is not only performed but regulated through the confinement of particular practices to specific sites in the urban landscape. This moment of emancipation cannot exist outside of its other, regulation. They are mutually constituted.

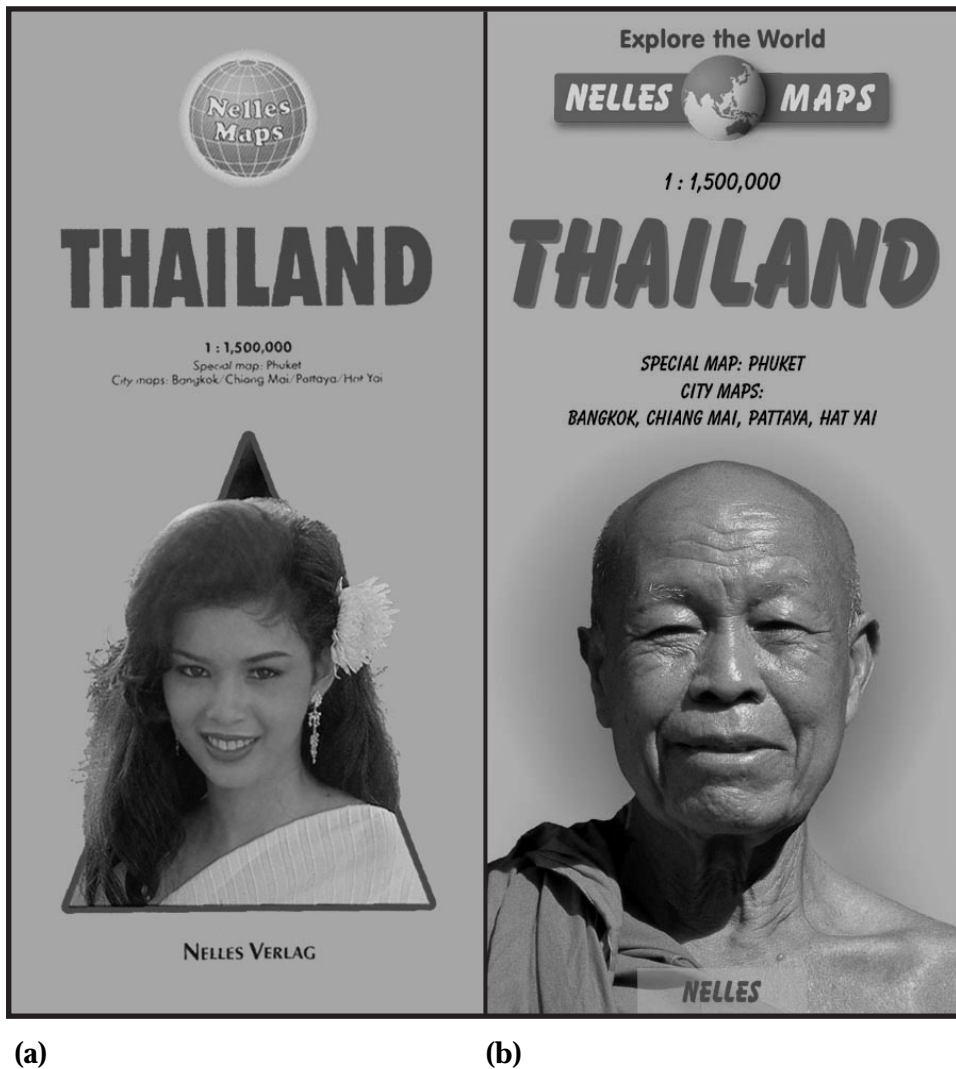
The collision of the dualisms – exotic/everyday, authentic/inauthentic, emancipation/regulation, gay/straight – within the map spaces of tourism illustrates the mutual constitution of these oppositional pairs. The exotic icons are dependent on everyday images of leisure. This is necessary so that the tourist can read and act within a set of temporarily fixed identity markers. Similarly, the staged acts of the tourism workers highlight the performative nature of identity and demonstrate that these acts are neither authentic nor inauthentic. They are instead the result of the temporary suturing of particular performances to particular identity categories in a map space. Thus, the representations that are intended to stand in their place are also constitutive of the temporary and performed identities of both tourists and non-tourists in Thailand and represent the ambiguity of these spaces.

The ambiguous identities present in the map space also mean that the map itself is open to multiple interpretations and uses that reference alternative representations of Thailand that too have always existed. Despite the power of the Thai government and capitalists (both international and national) to promote Thailand as a site of tourism bliss, their images are called upon to attract the outrage of an international audience of activists and scholars as well. Thus, maps like *Bangkok*, *Stadtplan* document and open up this space to both local and global criticism and to alternative uses, such as this article. The map space's production and existence create its own negotiations and its own opposition. Women's groups speak out against sex tourism and Buddhist monks contest what they see as the growing commodification of Thai society and a loss of moral ethics. For example, the Asia Watch Women's Rights Project (1993) has published a scathing exposé on the trafficking of Burmese women who are literally sold in Burma to Thai entrepreneurs and corrupt border police who sell these women to brothel owners in the southern and western parts of the country. In addition, groups in Thailand such as EMPOWER and Friends of Women have gained international recognition for their efforts to improve the position of women in Thailand and challenge the power of the sex-tourism industry. These challenges demonstrate that, once produced, any attempt to inscribe the map with meaning will be completely contingent on the reader him or herself and how he or she chooses to deploy the embedded images.

The international attention garnered through such critical responses to the sexualized and commodified tourism spaces of *Bangkok*, *Stadtplan* and other representations has helped activists in Thailand continue to combat the uneven relationships between men and women, rich and poor. It, along with international attention drawn to Thailand's AIDS epidemic, has helped force the Thai government to address commercial sex work and some of the economic inequalities that promote such an industry. The Thai government has re-evaluated tourism and diversified its tourism economy, a trend that is evident in the tourism map spaces of Thailand. As an example, the shift in cover representation on Nelles Verlag's *Thailand* map from the image of a woman on the 1994

edition to that of a Buddhist monk on the current edition illustrates how Thailand is being represented less as an exotic overtly feminine site to one which is more focused on the 'traditional' cultural attractions that Buddhist icons represent (Figures 7a and 7b).

One has to be careful, however, not to read counter-hegemonic discussions as wholly 'outside' the systems which inform dominant discourses. Through the reliance on models of colonialism, markers of wealth and poverty, and/or biological reductions of sexual difference, such counter-hegemonic discourses reinscribe, to a certain extent, the dominant discourses and identity categories that often hide the voices of those peoples

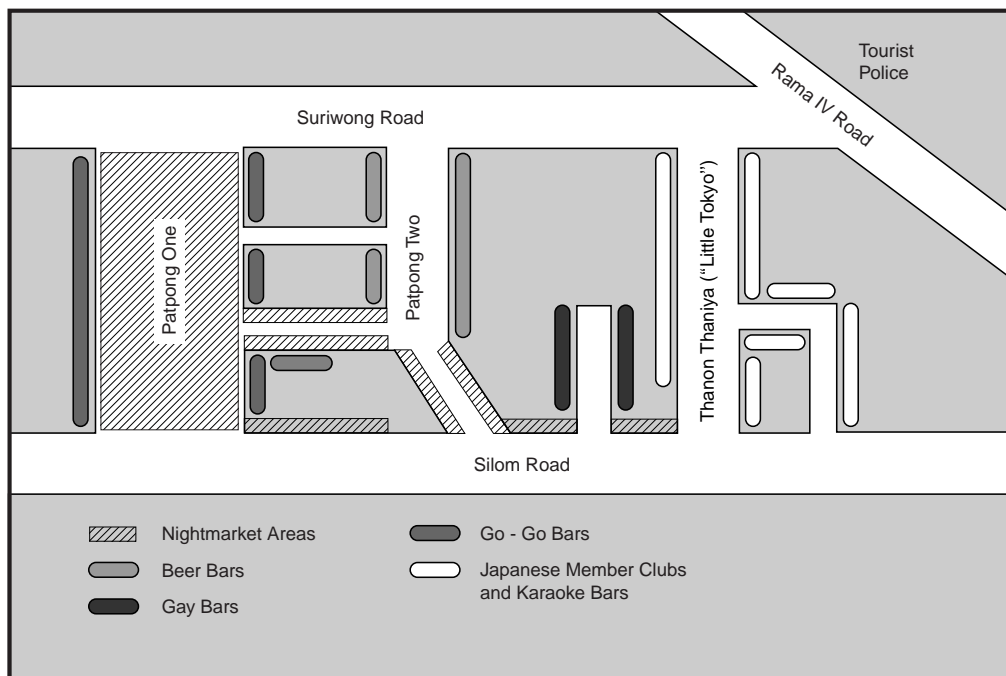


**Figure 7** *Thailand*

© Nelles Verlag, from 1994 (a) and 1998 (b). Reproduced with permission.

they are hoping to illuminate. Groups, represented as an individual identity designation such as 'Thai female prostitutes' for example, can become the stand-in for a much more complex, dynamic and individual experience of commercial sex work that varies across space, class and ethnicity (see Cohen, 1982, as an example of this form of reductionism). We can recognize, therefore, the ambiguities that exist in any set of representations and read such representations for both the absences they produce as well as those notions which are, perhaps, most present.

Further, as representations proliferate and sectors of the global tourism industry fight for a share of the market, these representations and the spaces they claim to represent are reinscribed with new meanings and juxtaposed with new spaces and images in order to maintain themselves as tourist sites. A quick look at Patpong, one of the most famous sex-tourism sites in Thailand and found as an inset on *Bangkok, Stadtplan*, illustrates these changes (Figure 1). By the late 1980s, the Thai government began efforts to shift its image as a sexualized space and diversify its tourism economy. Investment throughout the 1980s in beach resorts, ecotourism, trekking and shopping districts has altered the arrangement of the industry. Patpong has changed as well, masking its sex-tourism persona behind a government-sanctioned night market. Today, the entire site is covered with this market and serves as one of the major attractions for men, women and couples in Thailand. As the schematic in Figure 8 shows, the once exclusively sex-tourism space of Bangkok is now a tourism shopping mecca, with hundreds of stalls fronting the neon signs of the go-go bars and sex-show shops. Only Thanon Thaniya, an area that sits next to Patpong and is designated euphemistically as 'Little Tokyo',



**Figure 8** Schematic of the Patpong District and its surrounding areas  
 Source: Revised from Del Casino (1995)

escapes this masquerade. Its less visible members clubs, many located on second-floor shops, are not as overt a demonstration of Thailand's sex-tourism history. It may have not been *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife, per se*, that anchored the challenges that lead to the covering of this space, but its existence and complex inter-relationships to other representations, spaces and identities made this shift possible.

#### IV Conclusions

In our argument that tourism maps are productive sites for geographic analysis, we have examined the cartography and tourism studies literatures illustrating the ways in which these two subdisciplines use similar approaches to examine the relationships between space and representation. We have found that while both offer critical insights into this relationship and contribute to our understanding of tourism maps, the work is too static and predominantly focused on power at the moment of production. To address this lacuna, we examine the space-representation relationship in the context of identity theory in order to push the work of these two subdisciplines past the production context and toward an understanding of maps as spaces. As spaces, maps are tied to other spaces, representations and contexts. As such, a map space is part and parcel of these other spaces and the plays of power that reconstitute the identities within and beyond this map space. It is an intertextual process in which meaning is constantly being reproduced.

In this unbounded and changing map space social actors struggle to fix and challenge the constitution of various identity designations. As such, tourism map spaces are sites through which we can examine the processes involved in the constitution of identity categories, including the temporary fixing of identities as oppositions and the naturalization of particular spaces as sites for the tourist gaze. Identity theorists, however, argue that through the constitution of any identity category, tensions are produced between the category and its negation, its constitutive outside (Derrida, 1972; Mouffe, 1992; 1993; Gallaher, 1997; Natter and Jones, 1997). This being the case, representations too contain these tensions and reproduce the ambiguities that mark identity categories, the everyday and the exotic for example, as different. As such, tourism map spaces also reproduce these ambiguities in their identification of difference. These ambiguities are readable in any map space.

We work through this theorization by reading *Bangkok, Stadtplan für Männer presents the nightlife*, a tourism map produced in 1991 to guide German sex-tourists through the sexualized landscape of Bangkok, and exploring its intertextual relationships with other tourism representations and spaces in Thailand. This requires us to employ a complex and nonlinear reading method to follow some of the intertextual linkages that make a map space not just intelligible, but familiar. In so doing we illustrate the ways in which the identities articulated in the map never fully inscribe either the tourist, non-tourist or the tourism space with meaning, but instead reproduce the ambiguities that exist in identity categories. As a site of identity construction this particular map space exposes the contradictions present in the construction of any identity and highlights the ways that identities are based not on a priori biological or cultural reductions but on the performances of social actors operating in and through these spaces.

This article is not designed as an end-product, but as an invitation to geographers to

explore further the ways in which maps and other spaces are intertextually related. Further research may explore these ambiguities through the use of ethnographic case studies that demonstrate the performative and contradictory practices constituting tourism identities. Such a study may construct an ethnography of a map space itself and explore the complex relationships that exist between it and the space it seeks to represent. This work should draw the work of cartographers and other human geographers, particularly geographers of tourism, even closer and break down further the artificial divide between these two subdisciplines. Further, through the integration of crossdisciplinary research on identity theory geographers may examine the ways in which representations and identities in and of space are fully related and work mutually to constitute and contest the meanings of tourism spaces and identities.

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