



Tourism Imaginaries and Mobilities

*Dutch and Belgian Intern Tourists
in Suriname
and the Unpacking of
a 'SU Fantasy'*

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'SU fantasy'*

Master thesis

Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship

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> Photographs cover by author



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Abstract

The following ethnography explores the dynamic and relationality between tourism imaginaries among Dutch and Belgian intern tourists in Suriname and manifestations and practices of mobility, shaping Suriname as a tourist destination. I explore hegemonic tourism imaginaries, and the subsequent creation of a ‘SU fantasy’ and ‘bubble in the jungle’, by which connections are made between circulating tourism imaginaries and concrete activities and performances of intern tourists in Suriname. I analyze how mobility practices, structured by tourism imaginaries, establish the tourism experience and tourist destination, and reproduce idealizations of it through embedded representations that are trapped in privilege and power. Furthermore, how this also relates to spatial and social imbalance in Suriname as mobilities are determined by its connections to the bubble and flows of the fantasy.

Keywords: *tourism imaginaries and performances, tourism mobilities, Suriname, Paramaribo, intern tourists, tourist bubble, anthropology.*

Acknowledgments

When the Master programme started, I already knew I wanted to go to Suriname for research, partly driven by the desire to finish my years of study abroad. I was drawn to the country by its rich diversity and colonial history, fascinated by its politics, and curious about the experience of living in a country characterized by its history with The Netherlands, however, now a (developing) multicultural and multi-ethnic independent nation. My interest in tourism was triggered by studies in the past as well as conversations I had with people about Suriname, in which I sometimes had to explain that Suriname is *not* an island nor part of the Dutch Antilles. My interest in imaginations of Suriname was awakened, and pursued into a study.

Following my interests and conducting research on it would not have been possible without some people, whom I like to thank here in particular. A special thanks to my (main) research participants Louise, Marie, Jolien, Sanne, Suzan, and Eva, as well as the friends they introduced me to, for giving me a warm welcome in Suriname, sharing your stories and opening up to me, and making me part of your life and experiences. Also thanks to other participants I met during fieldwork, like Tony, the maintenance worker of our student house, or Gregory, the taxi driver who was always there for me. Thanks for all the pleasant conversations about Suriname and the many aspects of life in which we shared and enriched our visions, as well as your help in times of crisis. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all the people I have met in Suriname; each integral to my journey of becoming an anthropologist.

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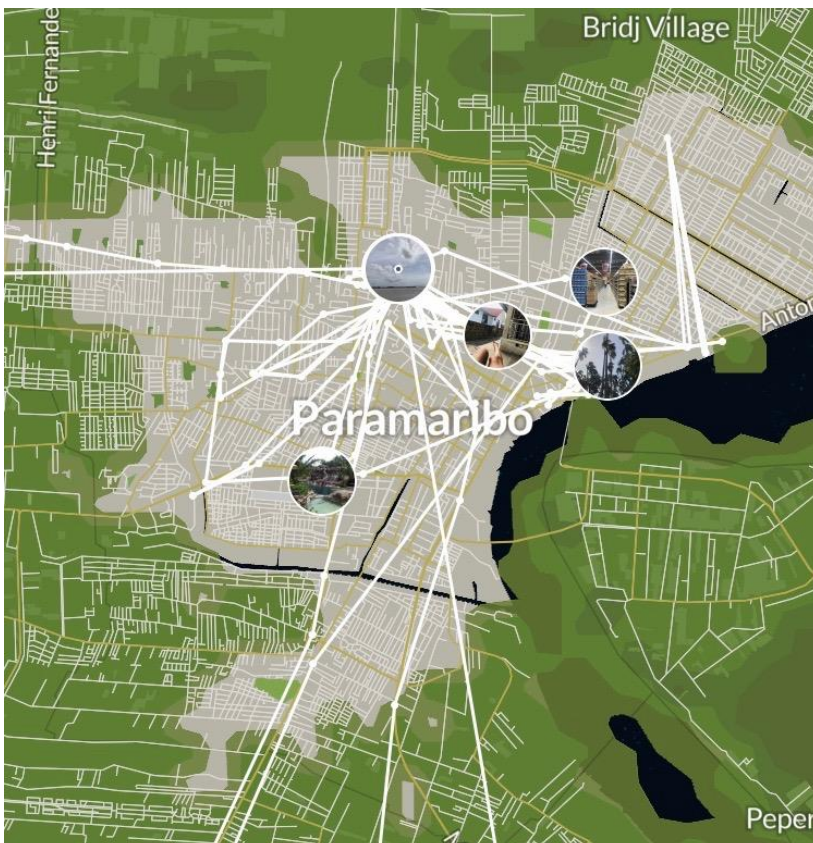


> Photograph by author

Suriname on the Map



> Map of Suriname (left) and the location of Suriname on the South American continent (right) (source: Delvoe et al. 2018, 150)



> Map of Paramaribo from PolarSteps (app), tracking my movement through Paramaribo while conducting research with intern tourists

Republic of Suriname

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Geography

On the northeastern Atlantic coast of South America. Bordered to French Guiana, Guyana, and Brazil. Tropical country dominated by Amazon forests. Total area of 163,821 km².

Population

Estimated 575.990 in 2018. Multiple ethnic groups and religions.

Languages

Dutch (official), +22 other languages.

Capital

Paramaribo; largest city, inhabiting almost half the population.

Currency

Surinamese dollar (SRD).

Annual number of tourists

215,833 in 2017; almost half for family visits. Annually 2000 to 6000 intern tourists.

Tourist card required.

Flight options

Direct flights between Amsterdam and Suriname, by KLM and Surinam Airways. Also between SU and the USA, and within South America.

Source: Stichting Planbureau Suriname. (September) 2018. "Jaarplan 2019".



> Hotspots of Suriname (by research participants), e.g. *Colakreek* and *Parabello*

Prologue

Suriname ('SU'), located on the northeastern South American coast, forming the continent its smallest country, has been an independent country since 1975. Until then it was a Dutch plantation colony, to which Suriname its rich diversity in cultures, ethnicities, and religions can be traced. The country is a creation built by European hegemonies, in which history nowadays still plays a role; politically, socioeconomic, and in the constitution and shaping of a narrative and image of 'touristic Suriname'. Also its intact Amazon rainforest and tropical climate, due to the country its geographical location, contribute to Suriname as a known tourist destination. Most of the country consists of an almost uninhabited intact jungle. This compares with Paramaribo, located in the north, which is the capital and largest city of Suriname. Paramaribo is inhabited by half the population and equipped with (global) modernities such as Internet and shopping malls. Indigenous tribes still live in the Amazon, while in Paramaribo the contemporary great variety of cultures and ethnicities and rich (colonial) history can be explored. For example by bicycle, which conjures another inevitable image of Paramaribo: that of sunburned and overheated Dutch and Belgian students moving through Paramaribo on their bikes, bending their ways over busy, chaotic roads in the opposite direction as accustomed to. They form a significant group of tourists in Suriname, not only featured by their bikes but also by their presence and performances in tourism and leisure activities, by which they create and maintain a narrative and image of Suriname as a tourist destination as well.

February 12, 2020, I entered Suriname, full of excitement influenced by promising stories, information, and images I gathered in advance to start my research into intern tourists and tourism development in Suriname. Once settled at the fieldwork location (Paramaribo), it became clear to me what the exact context was of the destination that I was entering, and in which tourism took place. At the time of entering the field, there was political and economic unrest in Suriname, which had in part to do with the elections that were coming up in May 2020. The government led by Desire (Desi) Bouterse and his *National Democratic Party* (NDP) was about to be re-elected or replaced, both with the necessary consequences to the future of Suriname and its people. A sequence of incidents around Bouterse that have happened in the past to recent years had resulted in an increased mistrust in the current government, on both global and local scale. Support and loans from other nations had come under dire strain, with the corresponding (socio)economic impacts and issues. Tensions were noticeable during

fieldwork and had an impact on (intern) tourism in various ways. For example, it resulted in a very attractive exchange rate for tourists (1 EU = 10 SRD¹) and great interest in foreign currency, by which tourists had a lot of purchasing power compared to local people. On the other hand, the political-economic situation caused banks to run short in money and a continuous rise of prices, which put mainly local people in a tight position but was also noticeable to tourists through (undesired) encounters with poverty or criminality. The political-economic situation also involved a number of protests from the local population against the government that took place during fieldwork, and resulted in overcrowded (tourist) places and strikes of transport. Concerns around money, politics, and criminality (of rulers) were frequently expressed by both Surinamese people and intern tourists in conversations; the political-economic situation formed an inevitable condition of tourism in Suriname, which was sometimes opposing to the promising picture I had painted myself before I entered the field yet fundamental to the eventual experience.

Political and economic mechanisms were triggered even more by the COVID-19 pandemic, which reached Suriname halfway March and disrupted the fieldwork, forcing me (and tourists) to rapidly leave Suriname (on March 20, 2020 instead of May 2020) and continue the research from The Netherlands. I provide this brief context sketch of Suriname as it was during my fieldwork as ‘background’ to the rest of the thesis, since this political and (socio)economic reality dominated daily life of people in Suriname, and therefore that of my research participants, which impacted their experiences and stories. As a result, it cannot be left out and will recur throughout the thesis as it is inseparable from the whole and integral to understandings.

¹ To illustrate: a can of Parbo beer costs around 9 SRD, less than 1 EU, and a taxi ride through Paramaribo of approximate 10-15 minutes (provided by an official and registered taxi service) costs around 20-30 SRD, which is between 2 and 3 EU.



Introduction

It is in the evening as I walk through the hall of the Surinamese Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport in search for my transfer to my student house in Paramaribo. I meet Tony, a maintenance worker from the housing organization I am renting from, who occasionally takes on the transfer rides as well. He takes over my suitcases and says we have to wait for two more interns who were on the same flight. While waiting, Tony asks me about my internship, so I tell him about my research (instead of internship) and purposes. Once I tell him about my interest in intern tourists, he starts to laugh and tells me there are more and more of “those” in Suriname these years. Soon, the two interns, Eline and Bibi - both from the same study and already befriended with each other - arrive as well, and we move towards the car. On our way to Paramaribo, their enthusiasm is unrivalled and evident in their laughter, comments, and questions about Suriname. They ask Tony about the (weekly) party bus, where to drink beer and if it’s really that cheap, and about the three tours that were recommended to them by former interns, among which the ‘Fredberg’. Both of them also have questions about their safety while in Suriname, since they were informed that it is not always that safe in Paramaribo. Tony says it’s not all that bad, but it’s better not to be on the streets alone, especially in the evening, and to be careful with crossing roads – “it’s not the same as in The Netherlands” Tony concludes. Eline and Bibi turn out to stay in a house around the corner of mine, where they are awaited by a group of their friends who are also in Paramaribo for an internship. The group is now complete, and the adventure together in Suriname can begin.

To Eline and Bibi this was the day that their tourism imaginaries – their mental ‘previews’ on and ‘fantasies’ of the awaiting Suriname experience – were about to become lived experiences at the destination. Their questions about (e.g.) the jungle interior and Friday night party bus, along with concerns of safety, illustrate the ideas (from fun to danger) that were in their minds about the awaiting places and people, and the world they would wish to inhabit (together with fellow interns). Tourism imaginaries are important “meaning-making and world-shaping devices” that both produces meanings *and* is a product of produced meanings (Salazar 2012, 2), in which politics and economy are triggering mechanisms in the individual’s inclination to produce imaginings. Tourism imaginaries interact with personal and wider circulating imaginaries, and ultimately form socially transmitted assemblages of representations (Salazar

2012; Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016; Salazar and Graburn 2014) – of for instance people, places, and cultures in Suriname, and can invoke cultural frameworks that determine interactions, worldviews, images, or stereotypes (Leite 2014). Individual and shared imaginaries exist on implicit understanding and on representations, and can acquire various institutional forces (Salazar 2012, 2); for instance college institutions in the case of Dutch and Belgian ‘intern tourists’. Though initially traveling to Suriname to conduct an internship, what makes it a popular destination among interns is the awaiting tourism opportunity, as also Eline and Bibi remarked by saying it rather felt like a vacation. Signified by their ‘touristic ways of life’ and temporary movement to a place signified by tourism and leisure (O’Reilly 2007, 3), I call this group of interest ‘intern tourists’ throughout the thesis.

Tourism imaginaries among intern tourists in Suriname have the power to establish it as a tourist destination through the (re)production of meanings and representations, with the accompanying consequences to (local) lifeworlds and (re)productions of (destination) fantasies (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016). Tourism imaginaries play a prominent role in shaping and developing mobility practices at tourist destinations (Hannam et al. 2013; Salazar 2011), which results in reproductions of power structures (Salazar and Smart 2011) in which the fantasy is fundamental. In order to understand how tourism imaginaries among intern tourists relate to mobility practices (that are imagined and experienced) requires first of all a deep understanding of the imaginaries that circulate. They become visible in the form of discourses and images (that embeds representations of Suriname) that circulate through multiple conduits that link to intern tourists, such as social media (Salazar 2012, 4). Then, imaginaries can be “operationalized as real (networks of) social practices” (Salazar 2012, 4). Circulating tourism imaginaries among intern tourists of fun and parties, for instance, resulted in them visiting those places that were represented to them, such as *Havana Lounge*, and the tendency to stay among themselves; involving conceptions and set expectations of (socio-cultural) sameness and difference. What emerges is a ‘bubble in the jungle’, related to the concept of the “tourist bubble” (Jaakson 2004; Adiyia et al. 2015), which denotes the exploration of an environment from a familiarity ‘bubble’ as well as the tendency of intern tourists to be socially ‘outside’ the Surinamese culture while they are physically ‘in’ it (Ros-Tonen and Werneck 2009, 60), enhanced by circulations of imaginaries, memories, stories, and images.

Moving fantasies (either tourism imaginaries at play) and mobility practices – involving material mobilities, technologies, imaginary, social and corporeal mobilities – inform intern tourists *and* is informed by intern tourists (Hannam et al. 2013). Both the tourism imaginary and mobilities are sociocultural constructs that are experienced and imagined, and result in

practices and modes of consciousness that (re)produce structures (Salazar and Smart 2011, v) – or a ‘SU fantasy’ – by the connection of (only) privileged imaginaries, performances, and mobility practices fundamental to the desired experiences (Salazar 2011; Baerenholdt and Urry 2017) and inherent to (set) contradictions. I provide insight into the dynamic between tourism imaginaries and mobilities, and the presence of power structures and patterns, through telling and analyzing intern tourists’ stories and experiences, enhanced with an autoethnographic analysis, by which I unpack the ‘SU fantasy’ – the tourism imaginaries among intern tourists ‘at play’ and performed. The following research question is herein central:

How do tourism imaginaries among Dutch and Belgian intern tourists in Suriname, Paramaribo, mediate in practices and the (lived) experience of tourism mobilities?

As briefly introduced above, this thesis therefore draws on and contributes to the concepts of tourism imaginaries and mobilities, and how both are inextricably linked, placed within the context of intern tourists in Suriname. I follow a relational approach rather than seeing both as mere facts, to illustrate how both are experienced, enacted, and given meaning as social constructs, and transmit representations of Suriname as a tourist destination. The aim is to explore the ‘SU fantasy’ among intern tourists in Paramaribo and their manifestations of mobility to pursue and fulfill the fantasy, in order to shed light on the power relations at play as well as the power of relations, and to understand the ‘how’ and ‘why’ in regard to this group of tourists in Suriname (and their establishment of a credible tourist destination and experience), as well as what that implies to developments of the Surinamese tourism industry and impacts on society.

Research Methods and Position

Data was gathered during fieldwork by the use of multiple qualitative research methods: participants observations and ‘hanging out’, semi-structured interviews and informal (guided) conversations, online and visual ethnography, literature reviews, and the autoethnographic method, which were used in triangulation to make the sometimes contradicting perceptions, practices, and representations visible and explore its stratification. I gained access to (groups of) intern tourists by the choice to live in one of the intern/student houses in Paramaribo during the fieldwork period. This was arranged by SuriHousing – an organization owned by a Surinamese Dutchman that focuses on offering accommodations and services/activities to

Dutch and Belgian students, which I heard of via an acquaintance who had been to Paramaribo for an internship in 2017. As soon as I entered my (temporary) house in Paramaribo, I was directly and continuously part of the lives of six intern tourists – Louise, Marie, Jolien, Sanne, Suzan, and Eva – who became important research participants and ‘gatekeepers’ (O’Reilly 2012, 91), and hold a prominent role throughout the thesis. To respect the privacy of research participants (O’Reilly 2012, 68) they have all been anonymized (in some cases also on images) and given fictional names. Also in case of the prominent organizations involved, SuriHousing and SuriXperience, I use pseudonyms in order to respect privacy and prevent exposure of research participants. The whole process of access and expansion went by means of the snowball effect (O’Reilly 2012, 44), by which contacts generate new contacts. Most important, through my roommates I came into contact with other intern tourists, as well as the places they go to (together). Ultimately, during my fieldwork in Suriname, my research participants and I were largely intertwined in each other’s lives.

This enabled me to listen to, participate in, and guide numerous informal conversations and chats with and between intern tourists, while hanging out with them on a daily basis. Over 40 informal conversations took place that involved a total of 20 research participants. In addition, 6 semi-structured (group) interviews took place with intern tourists, which turned out to be a less appropriate method in this highly informal setting, and of which its process was disrupted by COVID-19 (more on this impact below). The conversations mainly took place between Dutch and Belgian female intern tourists; some of them in Suriname for a couple of months already, others only a few weeks. Additionally, I had and observed conversations with tourism workers, such as guides or taxi drivers. Expressions and insights were jotted down quickly in notebooks, after which I wrote extensive reports about it on my laptop. Through informal conversations and interviews I was able to gain insight into ideas, desires, and concerns, and (in triangulation with other methods) how experiences were negotiated (by the fantasy).

I also made use of participant observation in the lives of intern tourists, which involves “observing, asking questions, taking notes and collecting other forms of data” (O’Reilly 2012, 113) over a period of time. Because the lives of participants and myself were very intertwined, mostly by living together, participant observations were in continuous motion. However, not only by living together. I also actively engaged in lots of leisure activities; from visiting student houses, to joining the party bus or doing tours together. This enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of their daily lives in Suriname, and also what was important to the Suriname experience, how this was pursued, performed, and with whom. It also offered insight into how

their activities related to ideas, desires, and concerns that were captured in conversations. In addition, I directed the ethnographic lens into myself, which is called an autoethnography (O'Reilly 2012, 130; Wall 2008), and involves a reflexive account of my personal experiences when I was participating in the daily lives of intern tourists, or when I was not. During fieldwork, I was often seen myself as intern tourist, which enabled me to research myself in relation to Others as well, and to deepen understandings by not hiding matters as emotionality, subjectivity, and (own) influences on the research but rather acknowledge and accommodate them (Marak 2015). It provided a richer research engagement, in which subjectivity became constructive, and it deepened connections between me and my participants through mutual appreciations. Being seen as a tourist myself was, however, sometimes an obstacle in creating a connection with local actors/individuals and when moving myself through certain (non-tourist) places; on the other hand, it enabled me to experience the relationality of such a construction and what this meant in particular to intern tourists and how their fantasy is manifesting and impacting mobilities. It also contributes insights into an ethnographer's (im)mobilities when researching tourism and being seen as 'the same' as the target group of the ethnography, which influenced interactions during the research.

I also made use of the online and visual ethnographic method, which had partly to do with the COVID-19 pandemic that meant I had to leave Suriname halfway through fieldwork (on March 20, 2020). After this I had to continue the research from The Netherlands; 'being there' was now related to the online. This is also how I was able to maintain contact with research participants from then on, which was no longer on a daily basis. I observed websites and (social) media important to intern tourists, as well as promotion material, documents, and articles on the themes and subject; all conduits through which imaginaries are mobilized (and materialized). It enabled me to explore and analyze narratives and practical possibilities of the 'SU fantasy', and impacts and utilizations of visual media and materials that circulate and represent Suriname. Throughout the thesis I make use of this visual exploration; to not only describe imaginaries and fantasies but also show them, through images made by research participants themselves and supplemented with images made by myself, all contributing to an imagery of the 'SU fantasy'. In this sense it also forms a point of analysis, since the visual linked to photography creates a (closed) circle of visual representation (Garrod 2009, 346), and is central in the representation of places, both reflected and informed by destination images and imaginaries – showing patterns in the (socio-cultural) construction of 'reality'. In triangulation, it shows a particular performance of the 'SU fantasy' that replicates and (re)configurates

assemblages of the experience, whereby (certain) people and sights are excluded whilst they form a fundament for understanding the experience.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic also redirected the focus of the research, which did not initially focus on mobilities but was in the first place concerned with tourism imaginaries, ‘sustainable’ tourism development, and commodification processes. The focus on mobilities arose during fieldwork and its disruption; from mobility its connections to tourism and the way intern tourists gave meaning to it, also in times of crisis. I rather see this as an advantage of this ethnographic research into tourism imaginaries and mobilities, as it enables to reflect different interpretations on the issue that emerged during research, instead of replicating its problems by giving attention to mainly key questions and extremes of (im)mobility (Salazar and Smart 2011, vi).

Outline of Thesis

The thesis consists of three main chapters, in which the first focuses on tourism imaginaries, the second on mobilities, and the third brings both together in an autoethnography. Drawing on both theories and empirical data, the chapters show that the ‘SU fantasy’ structures different intersecting mobilities (material, social, physical, imaginative), depended on connections to the ‘bubble’, which results in practices that reproduce power relations and replicate an idealized (imagery and representation of the) tourist destination.

The first chapter describes and illustrates tourism imaginaries among intern tourists, and the development of a ‘SU fantasy’ and elements it consists of, such as jungle adventures, fellow intern tourists, and parties. I describe the trajectory of this development, from college intermediaries to the experience itself, and the emerging of a ‘bubble in the jungle’ that stabilizes the fantasy and shapes to who, what and where it connects. The chapter shows the power of tourism imaginaries and a ‘SU fantasy’ when encounters with reality are contradicting, and how privileged imaginaries shape perceptions on Suriname as a tourist destination as well as the activities intern tourists undertake there.

After this exploration and analysis of tourism imaginaries and the ‘SU fantasy’ among intern tourists, Chapter 2 explores how the ‘SU fantasy’ relates to particular manifestations and practices of mobility. It reveals different mobilities – material, technological, social, physical, imaginary – that shapes the places, community, and capital around the ‘SU fantasy’, determined by flows of the fantasy and structures related to the bubble; also indicating structures of power that ultimately form Suriname as a tourist destination.

Chapter 3 expands on the dynamic and relationality between tourism imaginaries and mobilities through an autoethnography. Through personal experiences it shows how the sought difference is destroyed by fixations of (socio-cultural) sameness and difference set in the fantasy and circulating imaginaries that turn it rather into a unified experience of intern tourists, which also evaluates the presence of power.



Chapter 1

The 'Bubble in the Jungle'

> Photograph by author

This chapter illustrates and describes tourism imaginaries among Dutch and Belgian intern tourists in Suriname and the development of a 'SU fantasy' which they pursue. Situating the tourism imaginary as a point of analysis enables to argue the connections between circulating imageries, perceptions on Suriname as a tourist destination, and concrete activities intern tourists undertake during their stay. I first explore and visualize the (online) representations and circulations of imaginaries of Suriname, and the trajectory in which the 'SU fantasy' develops and mobilizes, to show how and by what elements the fantasy composes. Hereafter, I explain how to understand 'intern tourists' as a significant yet not homogeneous group that is united by the 'SU fantasy' that in turn signifies their performances and encounters in Suriname. To get a better understanding of this, I draw on the concept of the "tourist bubble" and the different aspects it relates to, such as expectations of (cultural) sameness and difference and representations of privileged imaginaries that resonate with the 'SU fantasy'. Finally, I describe the context in which the 'SU fantasy' takes place; the reality as affective force against the fantasy that involves concerns of risk and security, and is in contrast with circulating imageries and imagined mobilities. This enables to highlight the power of the imaginary and fantasy in intern tourists' experiences and performances, and the "bubble" herein as stabilizer.

1.1 Imagining Suriname: Developing a ‘SU Fantasy’

A significant feature of humans is their capacity to ‘imagine’ (Salazar 2012), in order to understand their identity and place in the world. Its function is to produce meanings, while simultaneously the imaginary is a product of produced meanings (Salazar 2012, 2). It is triggered by multiple mechanisms, such as politics, economy, and family environments, and contains important features of value (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 1), such as adventure or safety. Nowadays, imaginaries are increasingly (re)produced and consumed worldwide by opportunities to travel and expanding forms of media (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 2).

A *tourism imaginary* – might be referred to as ‘fantasy’, i.e. ‘SU fantasy’ throughout this thesis - is a mental ‘preview’ of the awaiting travel experience, as much as it is about the experience and destination itself (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 2). It denotes ideas that are in people’s minds about the places and people at their (awaiting) tourist destination, and describes the world we like to inhabit or visit. Tourism imaginaries change over time and have many sources (Salazar and Grabun 2014; Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016), such as images and stories shared on social media and information provided by institutions. Imaginaries and the imaginary can be invoked in various ways, for instance as images, worldviews, stereotypes, cultural frameworks determining interactions, or as individual expectations (Leite 2014, 261).

1.1.1 *The Trajectory of a Developing Fantasy*

What is less explored, yet, are the ways in which tourism imaginaries “as a nexus of social practices through which individuals and groups intersect” shape assumptions and mobility practices in order to establish a place as credible tourist destination (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 2). Suriname, as a tourist destination, is an imaginary that can be explored, for instance by the analysis of (online) representations that support it, as for example its adventurous Amazon jungle or nightlife.

In relation to imaginaries among intern tourists and embedded representations of Suriname, a particular trajectory emerges that forms the way in which imaginaries travel, and in which the ‘SU fantasy’ is mobilized. As appeared in interviews and conversations, intermediaries (such as international offices or project agents from their colleges) form important fronts to intern tourists’ exploration of possibilities to go abroad and to Suriname. Research participants are students of, for instance, the ‘*Hogeschool van Amsterdam*’ (HvA), or follow college in Belgium. Through mediation from their colleges they decided to go to Suriname. Besides general and internship-related information on Suriname, they were informed

about what makes Suriname a credible destination through presentations and/or orientation markets. This does not only involve the promotion of an internship in Suriname, but also a representation of the destination. Examples of this are: its rich history (including the role of The Netherlands in this history), beautiful nature, a good climate, food and atmosphere, and the country's need for ('their') help – forming an imaginary of not only nature and culture, but also white saviorism. Not only were the students informed about the positives; counter-arguments were also presented by these organizations, such as the current criminal activity and tense political and economic situation in Suriname, often related to the term “developing country”, to make students aware of the context they will be entering.

Through mediation from colleges, students often subsequently get into contact with former interns that had been to Suriname. *“I knew immediately that I wanted to go to Suriname after hearing her stories and seeing her pictures and videos during one of the orientation markets,”* my roommate Jolien explains in an interview. Through visuals and additional information, such as which places to visit and what practices to ensue, a collective imaginary develops in more detail that makes sense to what they are about to experience, now that they have material to draw upon and use that reflects and shapes assumptions, expectations, and desires (Leite 2014, 261).





> Wildlife and “exotic” animals



> Bucketlist, reposted on Instagram by SuriXperience



> Hindu festival 'Holi Phagwa'



> Tours through the jungle



> Interior of Suriname



> Overbridge River Resort (Meet&Greet SuriXperience, or for beach days)



> Paramaribo (historic center)



> 'Cheap' (approx. €2), tasty cocktails



> Interior of Suriname



> Morning dawn at the *Fredberg*

> Photographs by intern tourists, composing an impression of the 'SU fantasy'

A common next step for intern tourists is to look up more general, practical information on Suriname, such as its climate, population, and currency, and to explore it as a tourist destination through travel and tour operator websites. Here they see offered tours, such as quad riding, the (highly favored) *Fredberg*, or *Bigi Pan*, which are also represented in (social) media and material from former/current interns in Suriname. A selection of privileged images and information, mediated by (social) media and intermediators, comes to build a 'fantasy of Suriname', a dreamworld, that connects to concrete practices, activities, and places. Specific forms of images and discourses that pass through multiple conduits then make visible *which* imaginaries circulate (Salazar and Graburn 2014, 2), and which not (more on this from §1.3).

1.1.2 Media Imaginaries

Intern tourists themselves strongly contribute to representing Suriname as they capture and share their experiences with others, and (virtually) mobilize imaginaries of Suriname as a tourist destination. An important conduit through which imaginaries are mobilized and circulate, and an inherent part of their daily lives and experience in Suriname, is social media. This became apparent during, for example, a tour I undertook with research participants to Bigi Pan, West Suriname.

“Capturing Bigi Pan”

It’s weekend and I’m on a tour to Nieuw Nickerie and Bigi Pan with Sanne, Jolien, and four of their friends. It is the first time this group is on a trip since their stay in Suriname, Paramaribo, and there’s a weekend filled with magnificent nature waiting for them - in contrast to urban life in the city of Paramaribo. While we are boating to our retreat on water for the weekend, surrounded by birds, (flying) fish, and caimans, I cannot stop looking around and absorbing the wildness of nature. The six intern tourists I am joining, however, seem to absorb it in a very particular way: through the screens of their phone. Almost non-stop, for two days, there’s filming and photography, sometimes with the specific purpose of creating a good Instagram post, which also includes wearing the appropriate outfits in every circumstance. On the way back, the phones are less present; after all, everything is already on the picture and can now be seen without a screen. Once back in the student house in Paramaribo, equipped with Internet again, all the highlights of the weekend are immediately put on social media, representing this experience of Suriname.





> Pictures of the Bigi Pan tour (by research participants), shared on social media

The images of the Bigi Pan tour, as well as the images previously illustrated, represent a Suriname in all its glory: nature, peace and quiet, adventuring the unknown, wildlife, fun. The media imaginary, involving social media, is an important front and conduit to focus on, as it is the showcase of the Surinamese destination and experience of intern tourists (Larkins 2015, 71), and integral to structuring perceptions of for instance places and the ‘exotic’. Circulating media imaginaries are important in shaping desires and experiences in multiple ways; it is thus not only about how images are projected, but also about their reception and the imaginaries they (re)produce (Forsey and Low 2014, 157). An ideal Suriname (and ‘SU fantasy’)

reproduces itself as it becomes something intern tourists pursue by the reception of images and discourses, reassembled in and by their own (lived) experience of it.

The ‘SU fantasy’ ultimately turns out to consist of different layers, also involving risk and a contrasting reality, which is not contained in representations yet at the root of it. More on this in the final sections of this chapter. After emphasizing the collective imaginaries that circulate – nevertheless there are as many individual imaginaries as there are intern tourists (Salazar 2012) – it is important to avoid an understanding of intern tourists as homogeneous but instead analyze their connection as individuals on a collective level, to which the following paragraph is devoted.

1.2 Dutch and Belgian ‘Intern Tourists’ in Suriname: United by Fantasy

What is a tourist, and more specifically, what is an ‘intern tourist’? A tourist can generally be understood as a person that is voluntarily traveling away from home with the purpose of experiencing something significant (Leite 2015, 3). A tourist can be typified in various, multiple ways, depending on its motives that in turn link to cultural and social factors. Ethnographic research tends to counteract stereotypes of tourists with stories and portraits of experiences and motivations, shedding light on the power of the imagination, expectation, and representation in shaping encounters by analyzing the relationality between experience and anticipation (Leite 2015, 3). The way tourists behave and interact with locals and other tourists, and why, is what ultimately makes ‘tourism’ and ‘the tourist’ what it is (Goodwin 2015, 37), and comes to shape (new) relations, dialogues, places, and communities (Bærenholdt, Haldrup and Urry 2017). Tourism and tourists its meanings are eventually signified by the imaginaries and performances that are privileged over others, and are therefore always socially constructed (Goodwin 2015; Salazar & Graburn 2014; Bærenholdt, Haldrop & Urry 2017) and tied to power relations.

In a broad academic sense, the term ‘intern tourist’ is still rare in literature. It could be seen as an addition to ‘residential tourism’. However, regarding intern tourists it is not about owning properties in other countries, as is mostly with residential tourism, but it is about temporarily moving to another country and place that signifies tourism and leisure (O’Reilly 2007, 3), initially to conduct an internship. To some extent, intern tourists rather turned tourism into a way of life, in which they construct leisured, fluid lifestyles between places and people that remain in ways outside the local community, as is with residential tourism (O’Reilly 2007, 3). This could impact social exclusion and the ability to build social networks (O’Reilly 2007,

9). In some instances intern tourists *do* participate in the local community by contributing (knowledge, skills, materials) through internships, however, segregated from the privileged ‘tourist way of life’, which consists of sightseeing, relaxation, partying, and interaction with fellow intern tourists. That is the result of multiple factors and motivations, and involves intermediaries and (online communication) technologies as previously described that promote and enable intern tourists’ stay in Suriname.

1.2.1 Intern Tourists in Suriname: “Exuberant Girls”

Intern tourists’ motivations to go to Suriname and the ideas and imaginaries that underlie this, sketch an understanding of ‘intern tourists’ in Suriname and what binds them as a group. By difference in, among others, background, interests, education, and personal desires, it is not a homogeneous group. However, circulating imaginaries, representations, and significant performances do create an identity around intern tourists and conceal their mutual differences. Going out on a regular basis, visiting tourist hotspots together, Thursdays at *Havana Lounge*, student house parties; a performance of the ‘SU fantasy’ by which intern tourists as a group get identified.



> “Every day is a celebration,” Eva said to me one of my first days in Paramaribo. Images (by research participants) emphasizing a defining performance of the ‘SU fantasy’: festivity

As was for Louise, Marie, Jolien, Sanne, Suzan, Eva, and other research participants, most intern tourists in Suriname are student girls around the age of 20 in the third year of their (Bachelor) studies. Often, it is the first time far, long, and alone (though often together with fellow students) from home. A predominant part chases the fantasy of Suriname: an unforgettable time in the jungle, without stress, full of adventure, fun, and friendship, in the midst of the unknown - though not entirely alien due to traces of the colonial past, such as communicating in Dutch, and even listening to the same or similar hip-hop music. *“Go on as many tours as possible, that is when you really experience Suriname. It is a waste to stay in Paramaribo,”* Eva and Marie said to me on one of my first days in the student house, emphasizing their fantasies of the jungle interior. Eva also pointed out to me to really build relations with intern tourists despite the temporality of it; according to her it was the togetherness that created the ultimate experience and memory of Suriname.

When being in contact with various intern tourist over a couple of weeks it becomes evident that the group is not homogeneous as differences between them appear, such as the extent to which they party and consider their impact on the environment (locals and physical surroundings), and also involves a different awareness of what is happening ‘around them’ in Suriname. Despite mutual differences and sub-group formations, the sharing of specific experiences, pursuing and maintaining the fantasy, is what signifies intern tourists as a group. The imaginaries that circulate, of for instance partying intern tourists, are not only important to the (re)formation of tourism imaginaries and the creation of an image and expectation – ‘SU fantasy’ – but also to how intern tourists see themselves presented, which in turn involves how other perceive and contemplate them. Imagery of for instance exuberant, partying girls also comes to determine the direction of encounters. I experienced this myself as I was regularly mistaken for an intern tourist. It revealed the expectations to (cultural) sameness and difference that were set in imaginaries and fantasies, and how that shaped encounters and idealizations (Theodossopoulos 2014, 58), as I illustrate in the vignette below.

“Kiss?”

“Are you writing a book?” asks a Surinamese guy as I’m jotting down notes while I sit in the Palmentuin. I explain to him that I’m conducting research in Suriname on tourism and Dutch and Belgian interns. “Ah, I could already tell you’re not one of them,” he replies. I ask him what he means by that, and he tells me that intern girls are always so fierce and exuberant, always together and chasing the Rasta guys or tour guides. Contrary to me; I was alone, writing, and willing to talk to him. Our conversation gets interrupted by a vagrant that starts

to ask for my money and laptop; an almost unavoidable phenomenon for tourists when visiting the Palmentuin in Paramaribo. After a while, he gives up begging and continues its way. The Surinamese guy continues: “So, can I get a kiss now?”

What this situation shows is how expectations of (cultural) sameness and difference could be seen as a product of the ‘fantasy’ in which conceptions and degrees of sameness and difference are embedded, which is therefore also fundamental to performances and social relations. I experienced the contrasts through physical similarities to intern tourists, which connected me to the fantasy, and differences in my performance that disconnected me from the fantasy. Expectations to (cultural) sameness and difference, set by the fantasy, also became clear in conversations with research participants. My roommates Marie, Louise, Sanne, and Jolien often talked to me about a common situation, namely being whistled at in the street. To them and their friends, this came off as intimidating and was often perceived as unpleasant. It was also opposed to (or missing in) what was presented to them through images and discourses, and the expectations that had provided of how they would be able to move through the street of Paramaribo. The fantasy nevertheless does take place in an environment where differences occur, and not all are desirable. It triggers the social cohesion among intern tourists where familiarity is found, and how and where the ‘desired difference’ is then sought. What appears is a ‘bubble in the jungle’, further explained below .

1.2.2 The ‘Bubble’

The ‘bubble in the jungle’ is a term inspired on an article in newspaper *Het Parool*² that is about a documentary³ on interns in Suriname and the boys that ‘hunt’ them (called ‘*stagiaire jagers*’) for romantic adventures. I use it throughout this thesis because it perfectly resonates with the ‘SU fantasy’ that is circulating and maintained, mobilized within a certain ‘bubble’ that is supported by a particular trajectory and conduits as previously described. Research participants also used the term ‘bubble’ themselves to indicate their stay in Suriname and how it is to some extent separated from the Surinamese society and reality. It is a term worthy to further explore, which I do drawing on literature on the “tourist bubble” (Jaakson 2004; Adiyia et al. 2015) to show how the bubble is an explanation of the collective identity of intern tourists and the different aspects it relates to. Supported by circulating imaginaries and a shared fantasy, the

² Het Parool. November 2016. “Amsterdamse documentairemaakster over de bubbel in de jungle”. Link to news article:

<https://www.parool.nl/kunst-media/amsterdamse-documentairemaakster-over-de-bubbel-in-de-jungle~bd7c70ac/>

³ VPRO. April 2017. “Soso Lobi – Nothing but love”. Link to documentary: <https://www.2doc.nl/documentaires/series/makers-van-morgen/2017/soso-lobi-nothing-but-love.html>

bubble becomes a catalyst in the formation and creation of connections and (social) relations between intern tourists, locals, and the tourism chain; it stabilizes the ‘SU fantasy’ when it is in conflict with an uncomfortable reality.

The concept of the “tourist bubble” draws on the “environmental bubble”, a term used by Cohen (1972, 166-167), who based it on the Self, own, or inner world of tourists (the *touristische Eigenwelt*) (Jaakson 2004, 44; Adiyia et al. 2015, 116). It denotes a ‘protective wall’ of a familiar environment (the bubble) through which places, people, and cultures of the destination and society are viewed and experienced (Jaakson 2004, 44). The bubble creates a physical *and* psychological (such as attitudes and motivations) space wherein a privileged version of a perceived (local) reality is presented, and forms a cushion to shocks from unfamiliar (and maybe undesirable) encounters (Adiyia et al. 2015, 116). On the destination it often implies spatial and social imbalance (Adiyia et al. 2015), as activities within the bubble (with a high degree of sameness) increase inclusiveness, but activities outside it (with a high degree of difference) are merely less successful causing exclusion – becoming clearer throughout the thesis.

With the ‘bubble in the jungle’ of intern tourists in Suriname I also denote a physical and psychological space with a high degree of sameness, wherein the ‘SU fantasy’ is central and resulting in the tendency to stay among themselves. The extent and manner in which intern tourists move inside and outside the bubble determines their experience of Suriname and how imaginaries (re)form, which was different for each participant – since individual imaginaries still underlie the collective imagination. Marie, for example, got violently robbed in one of her first weeks in Paramaribo, of which the scars were still visible. After a night out at *Havana Lounge*, she walked away from a group of intern tourists to get into a taxi. As soon as she was alone, she got attacked and robbed. After this experience, her perception of Suriname was never the same, she explains. Stories and pictures of others had presented her a Suriname she would “*fall in love with*”, something she could not comprehend now she was experiencing Suriname herself. She explains that violence and danger hold her trapped in (social) spheres separated from locality; that she is always tied to intern tourists to avoid more unwanted situations. However, she continues that it are in turn these separate (social) spheres that eventually do create a ‘love’ for Suriname; because the tours and leisure activities that intern tourists, and herself, undertake with others is what ultimately makes the experience, and what keeps them away from (most) unfamiliar encounters.

In a way, the fantasy itself becomes a ‘protective wall’ to destination experiences. It results in tight relationship between intern tourists, and determines relations with locals and businesses in the tourism industry – ones that conform with their desires and ‘SU fantasy’ (MacCannell 2012, 189). It is stimulated by information provided by tourism businesses that anticipate to concerns among intern tourists and thereby generate loyalty to selective businesses and actors. For example, the information available in student houses that advises to cross the street with at least four intern tourists and to never go with unknown guides who claim to be connected to the tour operator. In result, my research participants were mainly in contact with locals that were part of the tourism industry. For instance, Surinamese people working for SuriHousing or guides from SuriXperience (the tour operator that collaborates with the housing company) – both highly favored companies that originate in The Netherlands. Also think of the *stagiaire jagers* intern tourists encountered during nights at *Havana Lounge*; often these are guides, or men specifically there as (romantic) part of the ‘SU fantasy’. What I emphasize here is that the ‘bubble’ configures social relations from the perspective of the ‘SU fantasy’ and expectations, and stabilizes the fantasy when undesirable situations arise. In this sense, it forms an important lens to look at, comprehend, and analyze the experiences of intern tourists in Suriname.

The ‘bubble in the jungle’ also facilitates manifestations of (social) mobility, which are represented and thereby imagined within the bubble, and enable intern tourists to move through the unknown – more on this in Chapter 2. Now that an understanding of the ‘SU fantasy’ and ‘bubble in the jungle’ have been provided, I turn to the layers of which the fantasy is composed in relation to encounters within and outside the bubble as intern tourists move through Suriname and Paramaribo, to show how risk and reality play a part in configurations of the fantasy and bubble.

1.3 Layers and Backgrounds of the Projected Fantasy

To comprehend privileged tourism imaginaries – the fantasy – and subsequent social practices as well as the ‘bubble’, it is important to explore the context wherein encounters and (re)formations of imaginaries and practices emerge (Salazar 2011, 594). This will also shed light on how tourism imaginaries resonate with wider (circulating) imaginaries, of for instance risk and safety, which is in turn as well important to the understanding of the ‘bubble in the jungle’ and its relation with manifestations of (im)mobility.

1.3.1 Imagined Mobility: Constrains by Reality

When unpacking the ‘bubble in the jungle’ and ‘SU fantasy’ of intern tourists, the power of the imagination becomes clear. Tourism imaginaries underpin conceptions of mobility, as intern tourists move through the Surinamese destination to fulfill the fantasy. A fantasy that thus involves as well an imaginary of mobility – imaginaries that consists of embedded representations of movement between places, people, and experiences, and sets expectations in regard to how it is complied and compiled (Salazar and Smart 2011, v). Representations circulating in for instance media build up imaginaries of mobility – mostly self-conceived – however, crafted through a particular lens (i.e. the bubble) (Salazar 2011, 590-591). Despite these representations of how, with whom, and to where intern tourists are mobilized, the ‘SU fantasy’ nevertheless takes place in a (physical) local reality from which one cannot be isolated. Intern tourists’ touristic ways of life will always be constrained by the reality in which they live (Salazar 2011, 594); one that might differ from the one represented to them. A triangulation of methods shows that the ‘SU fantasy’ and connecting performances are mediated by concerns and imaginaries of risk and security, which in turn involves implications to the mobility of intern tourists, and adds a less ‘visible’ yet important layer to the circulating privileged tourism imaginaries and imaginaries of mobility.



> Images by two different research participants that capture their impression of risky, grey streets in Paramaribo with neglected buildings, contrasting their expectation that was created by circulating representations

Tourism imaginaries among intern tourists in Suriname are initially associated with leisure activities and pleasure – going to restaurants, spending nights out or going into the jungle. Often it is a ‘dreamworld of paradise’, however flowing over grounds of fear and anxiety, which, together with risk, are the reminders of the constant surrounding Otherness and differences (Little 2014, 236), as are the bars that secure the student houses (pictured below). Undesired differences and Otherness form affective forces against the dreamworld of intern tourists, and therefore the associated risk, unsafety, and uncertainty is rather avoided.



> An image (by Louise) of the bars that secure the student house in Paramaribo, contradicting imaginaries and expectations of free movement

“Grabbing a Safe Cab”

It’s a warm evening in Paramaribo. Surrounded by the sound of frogs and mosquitoes I’m relaxing in one of the hammocks at my student house. Louise, who is in Suriname for about four months now, comes home from dinner with intern friends at restaurant Las Tías; a taxi ride away from our home. Almost immediately she starts sharing her frustrations when it comes to taxi drivers in Paramaribo; a transport service highly favored and utilized among intern tourists to get from A to B. Tonight’s taxi driver made her wait a long time, and then required her to walk the streets by her own, in the dark. Another one, not that long ago, had started sharing details about his sex life and interests with her out of nowhere, as he was talking about his regularly hard penis when interns enter his taxi – who, according to him, don’t hesitate to act on it. Louise emphasizes it concerned ‘official’ taxi services in both instances, the ones that are registered and generally known as safe and trusted; also, promoted by their student housing

and various touristic promotions from tour operators. Though there are rumors circulating among intern tourists that robberies and rapes also take place in these taxi's lately. She also tells me about the times she had to take unregistered taxi's after late nights out when no official taxi was available. These got her to experience a fear for her life, as these taxis are known as criminal and dangerous among intern tourists. She concludes that she rather avoids taking these taxis, by choosing for an official registered one, or for one of the independent drivers that are very well known, favored, and promoted among intern tourists themselves and supported by tourism businesses they are loyal to.

Louise her story about taxi drivers is an example of how the reality and imaginary collapse in on each other; the uncomfortable encounters she has with taxi drivers between places of the fantasy. It also shows how the differences she experiences become a condition of the fantasy that encourages to search for a higher degree of sameness and familiarity, which she finds at taxi drivers connected to the bubble who offer safety and certainty, and thereby reduce risk. On a daily basis my research participants encountered unusual situations, experienced as risky and uncertain, such as confrontations with poverty or being called a 'white whore' on the streets. Experiences were intensely shared among each other, where the bubble as cushion did its work. In extension, one could argue that the bubble involves fixity of the imaginaries – the fantasy as well as around risk and safety – where a recreation of their homeland is constituted even when intern tourists are in movement (Salazar 2011, 577), which in turn influences their experiences of mobility as it collapses with the lived reality.

The power of the imagination is evident by the fact that despite these different layers of the imaginary – fun, adventure, but also risk and unsafety – still an idealized one is circulating by which the 'SU fantasy' reproduces. This final section explained how tourism imaginaries underpinned by risk and constrained by reality ultimately shape the mobility of imaginaries: which are mobilized and which are not – what the fantasy consists of and what not, and how ideas fixate. It also shows its power in the performances and manifestations of mobility of intern tourists through which they try to reduce affective forces that are not aligned with their dreamworld and fantasy, which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

1.4 The Bubble in the Jungle: Chapter's Coda

Through empirical examples, stories, and images this chapter illustrated circulating tourism imaginaries among intern tourists in Suriname that represent their tourism experience and capture the 'SU fantasy'. It consists of jungle adventures, pleasure, *no spang* (no stress), friends, and leisure time, and creates an image *and* sets expectations of their (awaiting) time in Suriname in which degrees of (cultural) sameness and differences are already set in circulating representations. The 'SU fantasy' is shown to be fundamental to intern tourists' experiences, performances and (social) relations, and forms a 'bubble in the jungle' that denotes a 'protective wall' and cushion to unfamiliarity as well as the tendency to stay among themselves and those connected to the tourist bubble that conform with the fantasy.

I also described the context in which the tourism imaginaries and performances emerge; the lived reality in which risk, unsafety, and uncertainty are rather avoided, yet forming an important though less explicit and visible condition and layer of the 'SU fantasy'. Unusual situations intern tourists encounter on a daily basis are in conflict with what is imagined (the fantasy) and how to pursue (imagined mobility). I illustrated how intern tourists attempt to stabilize the fantasy when influenced by affective forces; by staying connected to the 'bubble' and within it, enabling to (despite circumstances) maintain and pursue a fantasy. This in turn involves the manifestation of mobility, which is already imagined, crafted by (media) representations throughout the trajectory and its conduits. The focus on connecting mobilities to perform the fantasy is therefore the matter of the next chapter.



Chapter 2

Performing the Fantasy: Connecting Manifestations of Mobility

> Photograph by author

This chapter illustrates and describes the relationality between tourism imaginaries – those explained in Chapter 1: adventure, fun, parties, *no spang*, jungle, either the ‘SU fantasy’ – and manifestations and practices of mobility, to show how it establishes a ‘destination’, or rather ‘fantasy destination’, with the accompanying consequences to (local) lifeworlds, representations of Suriname, and (re)production of the ‘SU fantasy’. The community, capital, and places around the ‘SU fantasy’ are eventually shaped by the connection of different, intersecting mobilities, which is explained throughout this chapter. After a brief introduction on tourism and mobilities, first materialities and technologies of (tourism) mobilities in the context of intern tourists in Suriname are explored to show how it fuels the tourism imaginary and ‘SU fantasy’, and expands performances into digital spaces that enable to control particular experiences and representations. I describe how (social, material, and technological) mobility is enacted and given meaning to perform the ‘SU fantasy’, drawing on empirical examples such as (purchasing) souvenirs and musical encounters. Hereafter, I relate the ‘SU fantasy’ to the performance and construction of places, and describe the spatial imaginary that is set in the ‘SU fantasy’ and how that results in selected areas, places, and people that are in power of representing Suriname as a destination. Finally, the chapter concludes with connecting the different manifestations of mobility that enable to perform the ‘SU fantasy’ and how personalized and privileged circulations of experiences link to issues of tourism development and the (re)production of inequalities in Suriname.

2.1 Tourism and Mobility

Every year, tourism continues to grow globally (Hall 2015). Traveling scales are nowadays immense, and thereby the entire world appears to be on the move. To give an impression: in 2018 there were 1.4 billion international arrivals⁴ worldwide, and it is expected to grow to 1.8 billion by 2030⁵. The annual number of tourists traveling to Suriname increased as well in recent years; up to nearly 216.000 tourists in 2017, which is an increase of 22% compared to 2013⁶.

Tourism can be seen as one of the many forms in which (e.g.) people, ideas, and images are in motion; from a mobilities approach it can be placed at the center of cultural and social life and change (Hannam et al. 2013). However, tourism is not just a form of mobility; different mobilities also inform tourism and are informed by tourism, involving movement of fantasies – imaginaries that structure (im)mobility – material things, and the use of technologies (Hannam et al. 2013, 5). Tourism mobilities can therefore be studied as sociocultural constructs that are experienced and imagined, and result in practices and modes of consciousness that (re)produce structures (Salazar and Smart 2011, v) – or a ‘SU fantasy’. To explore this, I draw on the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Sheller and Urry 2006, 210) to focus on “patterns of concentration that create zones of connectivity, centrality, and empowerment in some cases, and of disconnection, social exclusion, and inaudibility in other cases”. This focus enables to track how movement is created through practices of mobility and power of discourses, and to question how (contexts of) social worlds are mobilized and/or performed through mobile material worlds and sociotechnical practices (Sheller and Urry 2006, 211), on which the following paragraph elaborates. In this way, the paradigm also helps to explore the (‘SU fantasy’) performances of intern tourists and its connection to complex relations between people and places (Sheller and Urry 2006, 212, 214; Hannam et al. 2013).

2.2 Fueling the Imaginary: Materialities and Technologies of Mobility

The ‘SU fantasy’ of intern tourists in Suriname is in movement by a range of materialities and technologies, which both involve the performance of memory (Hannam et al. 2013, 5) and highlight privileged tourism imaginaries. The ‘SU fantasy’ described and illustrated in Chapter 1, is constituted by circulations of imaginaries and embedded representations of Suriname. Its

⁴ NBTC Magazine. n.d. “Ontwikkelingen wereldwijd toerisme”:

https://nbtcmagazine.maglr.com/nl_NL/14282/202529/ontwikkelingen_wereldwijd_toerisme.html (last accessed on July 19, 2020)

⁵ NBTC. n.d. “Verwachtingen wereldwijd toerisme”: https://hollanddemo.online-magazine.nl/nl/magazine/5982/734592/verwachtingen_wereldwijd_toerisme.html#:~:text=De%20UNWTO%20verwacht%20dat%20dit,groei%20van%202%2C3%25. (last accessed on July 19, 2020)

⁶ Stichting Planbureau Suriname. September 2018. “Jaarplan: Beleid, beleidsprioriteiten en programma’s van de Regering voor het Begrotingsjaar 2019”. Last accessed on July 19, 2020: http://www.dna.sr/media/234889/Jaarplan_2019.pdf

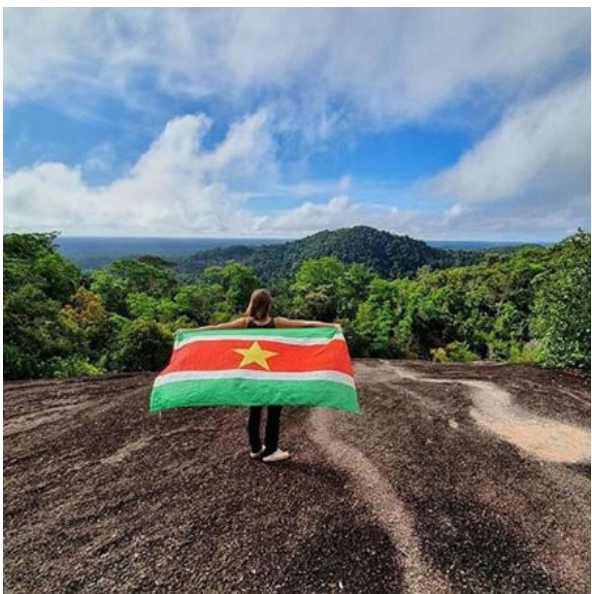
constitution involves material ‘things’ – material mobilities – such as souvenirs, photographs, images, and gifts (Hannam et al. 2013, 9) which are always in motion. Examining material mobilities helps to understand how particular practices of intern tourists involve movement of interrelated objects and their movement through space and time, and how this constitutes a performance of the ‘SU fantasy’ as well as their memory of it.

2.2.1 In Memory of the ‘SU Fantasy’

Mobilities of intern tourists in Suriname can be seen as an entanglement of (physical) movement, representations, and practice (Cohen and Cohen 2015, 9). Analyzing material mobilities helps to comprehend representations that (re)produce the ‘SU fantasy’ and how it is performed. Photographs and images are important materials that circulate through the trajectory and its conduits, from which a ‘SU fantasy’ develops as shown in Chapter 1, emphasizing the imaginary of the jungle, adventure, fun, and parties, representing touristic Suriname. Also other materialities were used as representation, such as a poster with the word *Fa’ka* (meaning: how is it) or bath towels with *No spang* (no stress) or *Lobi* (love) on it offered by SuriXperience, jewelry bought at the *Waterkant* or shopping malls, or strong alcoholic beverages and/or Parbo beer. A more creative one is a Surinamese flag with words from interns tourists drawn on it, or, very favored, a picture waving the Surinamese flag on touristic sights. An impression is given below through images widely shared by intern tourists on social media and reposted by SuriXperience, which in turn maintains the pattern around the movement of objects and practices that reproduce structures and/around the fantasy by sketching yet another ideal image and experience.



> Images of souvenirs (re)posted on Instagram by SuriXperience



> Images (by intern tourists) with the SU flag (on social media), reposted by SuriXperience

During my last week in Suriname the representative importance of such materialities and images to intern tourists and their experienced ‘SU fantasy’ became extremely obvious. Both me and my research participants, and lots of others, unexpectedly entered our last days/week in Suriname due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Every day until the departure day was used to collect enough material around and to support the lived ‘SU fantasy’; all gaps that were still there, such as missing souvenirs, pictures, or adventures, were filled in acceleration during the last week by means of shopping and even undertaking last minute tours.

One of my last days I joined Louise, Iris (from another student house), and two other befriended intern tourists on such last minute ‘memory-making’. We went to the *Waterkant* to eat ‘*saoto soep*’⁷ together one last time, after which Louise and her friends bought themselves jewelry at one of the stands along the ‘promenade’. Some last pictures were taken along the *Waterkant* (e.g. of the ‘I love SU’ monument), and we visited one of the casino’s to spend the last Surinamese Dollars that would otherwise remain unspent. What besides such activities appeared very important to make the (lived) ‘SU fantasy’ complete, was catching as much sun as possible to optimize the tan that had to be shown to others. In addition, there were ‘farewell parties’ held in student houses to create and capture some final memories; to wrap up the fantasy in togetherness. Nevertheless, the last week of accelerated (material) remembrance was resting on a ground of unrest, uncertainty and risk, as Suriname could go into lockdown any moment. Robberies (might) increased, and the airspace was about to be shut down. By devoting the last days and moments to the ‘SU fantasy’ and its material mobility in order to represent and constitute the ideal experience and Suriname, reality was altered and circumvented once more.

What this reveals is that socialities and performances replicate in material mobilities and patterns of objects and images, which is fundamental to the understanding and experience of places and people in Suriname that intern tourists visit and encounter. The convergence of tourism mobilities, materialities and technology, creates a zone of connectivity that enables to perform and live the ‘SU fantasy’. It does also exuberate a divide between (intern) tourists and local people and actors; it crafts movement among intern tourists and allows them to pursue a fantasy (even in times of crisis), opposed to local actors who are not empowered to evade reality by (fantasy) directed mobilities (Salazar and Smart 2011; Hannam et al 2013).

⁷ A significant, delicious Surinamese soup (with chicken, vegetables, eggs and rice); very favored among research participants (and myself). A recipe of it was posted online by SuriXperience after the COVID-19 departures, so intern tourists could continue enjoying this soup in The Netherlands and Belgium.

2.2.2 Technological Mobility: Controlling Experiences

The COVID-19 spread in Suriname was a reminder of the reality that is always there. It highlighted material mobilities, but also systems of mobility in relation to (social and communication) technologies. Technologies, across space and time, are tightly coupled to networks and complex connections between people, and have the ability to make things seem ‘close’ (Sheller and Urry 2006, 216). For intern tourists, physically being in another country apart from familiar social networks is not quite the same as being absent, due to communication technologies, such as Skype, that still embeds them within familiar networks (Hannam et al. 2013, 24). This enables friends and family in their hometowns to actively engage in the (re)creation of the tourism experience as well as which imaginaries and images relate to it.

“At Close Range”

Though my roommates in Paramaribo held fluid touristic lifestyles and lived in the moment, one thing was fixed almost every day: Skype with friends and family around the hour of 16:00 (NL/BE +4-5 hours). A moment used to update on each other’s lives, SU experiences, or to simply hang out digitally. It was an opportunity to make those who were not physically there still part of the time abroad, though it was said that it was impossible to truly share and explain the experience. When COVID-19 reached Suriname, digital contact increased immensely. Throughout the day, friends and family were there to support and help research participants, with the aim of getting them home. Also, digital contact among intern tourists in Suriname increased, for instance through one of the group chats (counting +250 intern tourists). Updates, gossips, and tour requests and tips circulated throughout the day. At some times, this digital contact seemed to only increase anxieties, as the COVID-19 disaster was about to disrupt the extents of intern tourists’ mobilities.

In this way, intern tourists use technologies as separation and to distract their attention from uncomfortable experiences, such as political tensions or the emerging crisis around COVID-19, as they temporarily escape situations through the digital space (Hannam et al. 2013, 25). During the COVID-19 outbreak, technological advantages and systems of mobility also accelerated (the opportunity of) physical movement of intern tourists. It did not only allow them to be mentally and emotionally ‘at home’ during uncertain times, but also to quickly arrange a flight back home to abort the (upcoming) crisis in Suriname. Earlier during fieldwork, Marie remarked in a conversation that she and most other interns “*will be gone within days as soon as things get crazy around Bouterse; nobody wants to be here when there is trouble*”. Eventually

a troubled situation occurred, however, caused by COVID-19. Altogether, it reveals an imbalance of power in such systems of mobility, where on one hand it generates movement for intern tourists and allows them to control impacts and experiences, while on the other hand it implies the immobility of local people who are unable to control (or abort) such impacts (Salazar and Smart 2011; Hannam et al. 2013; Sheller and Urry 2006). Additionally, it also reveals the precarity of tourism, especially when a crisis emerges and fantasies fail to prevail.

2.2.3 'Talking Prints' and Musical Convergence

What should be remarked is that it is not always about separation and disconnection. Materialities and technologies can also serve to connect local people to intern tourists' fantasy and mobilities, providing for instance economic and social mobilization. A first, brief example that will illustrate this is the Surinamese brand 'Talking Prints', an initiative by Surinamese women who design, create, and sell all kinds of original bags and accessories in collaboration with indigenous communities. The brand collaborates with SuriXperience, and is widely known and favored among intern tourists. Its products involve material mobility in the sense that they carry a memory of the 'SU fantasy' and experience, and are given representative value. This also involves representing the brand (online) as trustworthy and authentic, and advocations for the initiative, which confers an extraordinary status to *Talking Prints* and connect it to the bubble and fantasy. In turn, it offers both economic and social mobilization to local communities and initiators through the status and publicity they gain by this connection.



> Photograph (by Anouk) of a visit to *Talking Prints*, shared on social media

Mobilizations also emerge through musical encounters. Music and dance are omnipresent cultural expressions, bound tightly to sociality, identities, and performances of belonging and power (Lashua, Spracklen and Long 2014, 3), and are (important, recurring) parts of intern tourists' spaces of leisure. As an expression of culture and signifier/marker of places and moments, music provides important narratives for tourists and tourism. It can shape and permeate the journey while borders are transcended by sound and notions of difference are challenged in a liminal performance, and contributes to defining identities of intern tourist as well as Surinamese locals (Lashua, Spracklen and Long 2014, 5-6), who are both (socially) mobilized through musical encounters. For instance at club *Havana Lounge* on Thursdays.

“Musical Encounters with the ‘Other’ at Havana Lounge”

It's one of my first days in Paramaribo, and I'm talking with Suzan about a previous night – one that introduced me to ‘Havana Lounge’. After 1:00 PM it is bursting here with intern tourists and ‘stagiaire jagers’ (often well-known guides) – before 1:00 PM there's salsa dancing, and there appeared to be less interest in this compared to the hip-hop after 1:00. “Did you see that ‘jager’ dancing with that Dutch girl? Both kissing in the middle of the dancefloor? We all know what happened after Havana...” she remarks, by which she implied intimacy and a chance of robbery. We continue talking about the dance that was performed by both intern tourists and Surinamese people. Suzan says that I will see that dance at every club and bar, throughout the entire evening. “You’ll hear that song everywhere too. Also at home since Sanne plays it repeatedly...”

Music and dance are significant elements of the ‘SU fantasy’ and tourism imaginary of Suriname among intern tourists; club *Havana Lounge* is not to be missed. It is an important leisure space through which intern tourists move to pursue the fantasy, and where they have encounters with the ‘Other’. Music can help to address issues of (imagined) mobility, as it suggested a distance between intern tourists and Surinamese people smaller than it really was, and became a strategy of (upward) social mobility. For instance, songs that were favored at the time of fieldwork among research participants were ‘Only you’ and ‘Wat is je naam’ by Frenna - a Surinamese Dutchman and popular artist in Suriname, The Netherlands and Belgium. Also, ‘Beleki-Beketje’ by Ghetto Crew, to which both intern tourists and locals performed the same dance⁸, and ‘On the low’ by Burna Boy (a worldwide famous artist hitting charts at the

⁸ For an impression of this dance and music, I advise to follow this link to the Ghetto Crew's ‘Beleki-Beketje’ music video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/UOXNnlhAUfY>; also creating an image of Suriname.

moment). This itself implies how relations to music and places have changed by emerging (mobile) technologies, as various styles became available (almost) everywhere.

It reveals how intern tourists were able to experience a Suriname perceived as ‘exotic’, its music, dances, and people, yet within a space (and music) that was familiar through circulations and connections to the ‘bubble’. The ‘Other’ intern tourists encountered in *Havana Lounge* were mainly tourism guides and workers, also the *stagiaire jagers*, and to an extent already connected to the fantasy and bubble. They were not entirely unknown as they were also part of tours and (online) circulating images and information. Musical encounters enabled locals to merge further into intern tourists’ (lived) ‘SU fantasy’ and even brought fantasies together. It involved an act of imagination from local Surinamese (mainly) men as well to which the features of intern tourists’ (performed) fantasies may point to an ‘utopia’ of the West (Salazar 2011, 588), also influenced by circulating (media) imaginaries and embedded representations of the ‘SU fantasy’ and intern tourists. In this sense, music and engaging in nights at *Havana Lounge* can be seen as a strategy of upward social mobility, as it confers extraordinary statuses. To intern tourists as being in connection to Surinamese people, living the fantasy, and to locals in the form of cosmopolitan mobility, positioning themselves in the liminal space of (cultural) sameness and difference. This in turn emphasizes how mobility is enacted and given meaning, for instance through music (performances), and how it is tied to circulating tourism imaginaries of fun and perceived ‘exotics’ (or ‘utopian’ West), as well as conceptions of sameness and difference (Salazar 2011, 585), in which a liminal space arises and mobilizes.

While different mobilities – material, technological, physical, social, imaginative - are thus interconnected, at the same time they are contradicting. No matter the extent of mobility on the imaginary level, it remains grounded in immobility, fed by imaginaries of risk and conceptions of difference, shaped by (power) structures (Salazar 2011). What is emphasized is that it is relations between people, and between people and objects, that (re)produce (im)mobilities and the experience of it. Relations are also ultimately shaping the ‘places’ of Suriname as a tourist destination that is experienced, inhabited, and mobilized.

2.3 Spatial Imaginaries and Performances of Tourist Places

A place is not fixed but rather itself traveling within complex networks by which people, objects, and environments are brought together to create a specific performance; a place is depended upon what is practiced within and which performances are mobilized (and which not)

(Sheller and Urry 2006; Baerenholdt and Urry 2017; Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016). A place, thus, becomes ‘touristic’ not by a specific environment, but rather by tourists’ social and corporeal performances; the way tourists engage with the place (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017, 2). This involves particular tourist systems that consist of various actors that (collaboratively) (re)produce spatial imaginaries, and define what the potential places of power are through a nexus of social practices aligned with tourism imaginaries (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 2) and the ‘SU fantasy’, which is shown in this section.

2.3.1 The ‘Here’ in the ‘SU Fantasy’: Constructing Places in Paramaribo



> Pictures of the *Waterkant* (illustrated above), the student house, and tourist map available in the student house (illustrated below) (by author)

The 'here' in Paramaribo

*Student houses | Fort Zeelandia | Palmentuin | Waterkant | Hermitage Mall | Tulip
| Choi | Bar Zuid | JOMAX | Zus&Zo | 't Vat | D-Bar | Diamonds |
Havana Lounge | Danceclub Tequila | Colors | TBL Cinemas | Bowling Center |
Jacana, Torarica, Marriot (resorts) | Aqua Sport | Chris rotishop | Las Tias | Sarinah
| De Gadri*

> *Waterkant* (by author), and overview of places in Paramaribo that were frequently visited by research participants

Jolien, Suzan, Louise, Marie, Sanne, Eva, and other research participants spent most of their time in Paramaribo, as was the case for the predominant part of intern tourists in Suriname. It is where they live in a student house, follow an internship, and spend leisure time with fellow intern tourists. During fieldwork, one theme always seemed to be prioritized: *where* do we want to go? Though the focus was mostly on going into the interior of Suriname by tours (during weekends), also within Paramaribo itself places emerged that appeared important to intern tourists and their desires. Paramaribo is therefore used here to illustrate how relationality and performances 'make' a place, and its dependence on intersecting mobilities. Some of the most significant and recurring places within Paramaribo that occurred are illustrated and listed above. Together, these places (and its circulating images and discourses) represent a spatial imaginary of the country's capital city in the 'SU fantasy', and what particular places herein possess the power to define Paramaribo as a tourist destination.





> (Four times) the *Palmentuin* (by multiple research participants)

An indispensable image is that of the *Palmentuin* in Paramaribo – one of the well-known, popular tourist sites of Suriname. Also highly favored among intern tourists; probably visited and photographed by all, some of which are illustrated above. Such a place organizes different intersecting mobilities in such a proximity that it becomes an ideal tourist place to intern tourists and their fantasy (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017, 2-3). Think of the palm trees reaching high into the blue, sunny sky; a perfect image to photograph, and thereby linking to mobile objects. The *Palmentuin* is often part of a (city) trip with fellow intern tourists, reflecting corporeal mobility. Subsequently, it is part of the idea and imaginary of sunny, warm days spent in a tropical environment full of ‘exotic’ plants, which implies imaginative mobility (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017); a tourism imaginary that is again able to circulate by material and technological mobilities, and maintains an ideal image of (places in) Paramaribo. By these proximate, intersecting mobilities the *Palmentuin* becomes a set piece for staging and performing a moment worth remembering (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017, 3), yet depended on the particular flow of objects, people, images, and memories that relate to the ‘bubble’ and conform with the ‘SU fantasy’; emphasized by the story below.

“A Place Within a Place: Disrupting Intersections”

I’m at the Jacana Amazon Wellness Resort in Paramaribo with Marie and a large group of befriended intern tourists. It is a warm weekend, and everybody is having a leisure day. Visiting one of the pools at (promoted) resorts in and around Paramaribo is then a favored activity –

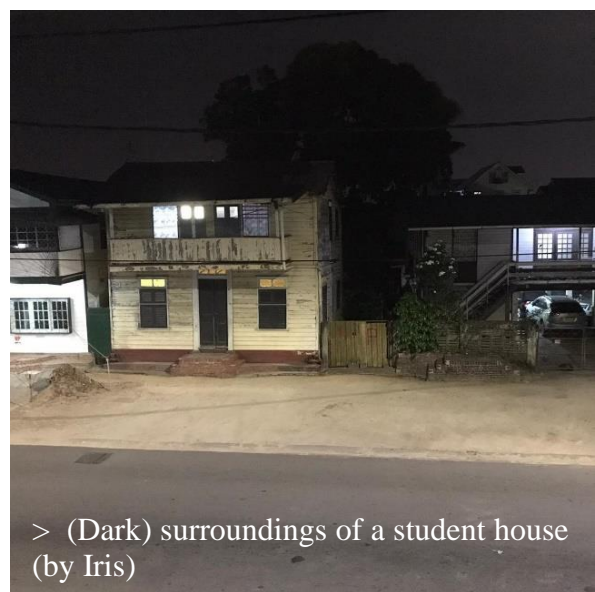
since Paramaribo does not really have beaches. Jacana is one of those places with its beautiful (well-known) swimming pool where a rocky waterfall is imitated and drinks can be bought at the bar situated inside the pool. It's not 12:00 AM yet or the first cocktails are ordered. Sitting in the pool at the bar, I'm in a conversation with one of the joining intern tourists, Ellorie. We talk about Paramaribo and how we both experience the place. Immediately, she starts to talk about her student house – forming an important (tourist) place that connects intern tourists – and how it is surrounded by an “Africa-camp”, which she used to refer to the slum houses that gave her an unsafe feeling and expressed (the omnipresent) poverty in Paramaribo. She continues that this is an issue as well when she visits other places, like Havana on Thursday night or restaurants for daily dinners. “I always have to get pass that camp, you know...”



> Jacana Resort (by author), illustrating an artificial tropical oasis located in Paramaribo



> High walls around a student house (by Ellorie)



> (Dark) surroundings of a student house (by Iris)

Such an experience of places as Ellorie's story illustrates – a safe, 'touristic' place yet surrounded by and located 'within' an undesired or uncomfortable place – contrasts the spatial imaginary that is mobilized by and among intern tourists, which often only captures the desired moments within and images of the student houses and its environments. This emphasizes that the power of a tourist place lies in performances and proximate intersecting mobilities that conform to the fantasy, which in the case of the "Africa-camp" are not aligned since slum houses are not part of the 'SU fantasy' and extend outside the bubble its 'protective walls'. The student houses offer this protection only to a certain extent (sometimes literally through high walls), constituting a tourist place. However, always located within a local, physical place where different practices are performed. Ellorie's story points towards the necessary proximity of intersecting mobilities (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017); a contrasting imaginative or corporeal mobility detracts a place of its touristic value, like the "Africa-camp" is of influence to Ellorie's value of place, and/or determines its imaginative and physical boundaries. Through imaginations and performances of a 'SU fantasy' intern tourists cannot always avoid (the lived) reality, but it does show how it possesses the power to define a place; the distinction that is then made in what is included and what not again indicates structures of power that ultimately form Suriname as a tourist destination (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016).

2.4 Connecting Manifestations of Mobility: Chapter's Coda

This chapter first of all displayed the (mobile) material worlds and sociotechnical practices of intern tourists, and how this enabled them to mobilize, perform, and control the context of their social world and 'SU fantasy'. Materialities and technologies, replicating socialities and performances of the 'SU fantasy', are fundamental to how intern tourists understand, experience, and control the places they inhabit. It enables to control experiences (of (social) mobility) and to separate from reality (*or* connect to the fantasy) when that what is experienced is in deviation with what is imagined. As a result, the physical and social world and embodied experience that is mobilized and represented is rather a collection of personalized and privileged parts, which ultimately come to represent Suriname and Paramaribo's spatial imaginary and of which tourist places it is composed. I then described the 'here' in the 'SU fantasy', and how the spatial imaginary comes to conjure a tourism space that is separated from reality, yet existing and mobilized as a tourist destination in the imaginary consisting of particular places of power. Power that depends on proximate intersecting mobilities (e.g. imaginary, corporeal, material) that are aligned with expectations, desires, and ideals set in the 'SU fantasy'.

Examining this relationality between tourism imaginaries and mobility practices among intern tourists in Suriname sheds light on the production of ‘spaces of exception’ (Büscher and Fletcher 2017), and remarks again the ‘bubble in the jungle’ as previously described in Chapter 1. The ‘spaces of exception’ that are produced by circulating (privileged) imaginaries but also by practiced mobilities, can as well be referred to as a ‘bubble’. It offers intern tourists a selection of (e.g.) places, people, and material (thus involving intersecting mobilities) that are away from ‘normal’ yet not to be disrupted with the political and/or everyday reality (Büscher and Fletcher 2017, 661). The fantasy and ‘bubble’ ultimately structure and determine flows of objects, people, and places that constitute Suriname as tourist destination and its representations.

This in turn links to issues of tourism development and the (re)production of (social, power, economic) inequalities (Salazar 2017, 707; Büscher and Fletcher 2017), in multiple ways. The tourism providers that were popular among research participants (above all SuriXperience), for instance, were featured by their origins in The Netherlands and anticipated to the ‘SU fantasy’ by ‘selling’ safety and certainty (which also meant assigning oppose ‘reputations’ to local businesses), and tours and activities that are conform to the fantasy – ‘back to basic’ tours offering pure adventure, or mud fights, or ‘glampings’, to name some examples. Research participants remarked that often the same or even less quality was experienced at popular tourism providers, which were also often more expensive due to exchange in strange currency (Euro instead of SRD). Yet, the assurance that there would be good, not *too* unfamiliar, food, friendly and widely known guides, easy and safe money transfers, and a clear overview of planned and desired activities, was what ultimately created loyalty and excluded other providers. This also related to the housing company favored among intern tourists (SuriHousing, proving the same familiarity), largely promoted by intermediaries and college institutions, and collaborating with for instance SuriXperience, which contributed to the ‘fixation’ of socialities, places, networks, companies, and activities. The power and impact of this reveals itself in a very brief example regarding volleyball, which became a very popular activity among intern tourists during fieldwork. At first, it was practiced at a small, local sport field. As soon as interest started to grow, SuriHousing and SuriXperience collaborated to offer weekly volleyball activities at other places, cutting off the local sport field. Also, the example of taxi drivers that have been provided previously illustrates the importance of connections and conformations with the ‘SU fantasy’; those who deviate from desires and expectations, or not assigned with an extraordinary status, are deprived of (opportunities of) mobilization.

In sum, it reveals the importance of (patterns of) mobility, to both local and intern tourist, and the power of imaginaries and fantasies in shaping and developing mobility practices on a (and shaping a) tourist destination, and how that relates to (interactions) with people and places. It also shows the presence of power relations as well as the power of relations, on which the following chapter will continue from the perspective of an autoethnography. This is relevant due to my assigned role as one of the intern tourists *and* my (vague) role as ethnographer researching tourism, which made me a subject to power relations.

Chapter 3

'Being There' in the 'SU Fantasy': An Autoethnography

> Photograph by author

This chapter describes and analyses personal experiences to further explore the dynamic and relationality between tourism imaginaries and mobility practices among intern tourists in Suriname. By means of the autoethnographic method (Wall 2008; Marak 2015) I acknowledge and accommodate matters as emotionality, subjectivity, and (own) influences on and within the research, with the purpose of extending an understanding of intern tourists' 'SU fantasy' and performances (of mobility). First of all, I elaborate on my role as both ethnographer *and* intern tourist and the (power) structures and positions this exposed me to. Hereafter, I describe personal experiences of tourism imaginaries in relation to my (assigned and assumed) role, and how they shaped the direction of encounters and interactions. I continue on this by describing personal experiences of mobility and how these were impacted by associated tourism imaginaries, which also evaluates the presence of relations of power.

3.1 "How is your holiday going?" – The Ethnographer as "Tourist"

When anthropologists enter 'their' field sites – especially fields with the presence of tourism – it is very conceivable that it will be mistaken for, or perceived as, a 'tourist' (Leite and Graburn 2009, 38; Wallace 2005, 5). In the case of my research in Suriname (Paramaribo) among intern tourists, it was an unavoidable misconception by both local and interns, which was sometimes hampering but also useful to the analysis. "*Are you enjoying your holidays?*" or "*which plans*

do you have for your vacation in Suriname?" were questions asked frequently. Explaining my research and role did not change much; even more, since that meant that I did not engage in *all* the intern tourists' activities during my stay in Suriname, it was often said that I did not use my time in SU very well – I was not “living the fantasy”. Also the fact that I undertook things on my own resulted in an urge of my surroundings to unite me with intern tourists. All was resting on assumptions of (cultural) sameness and difference, which inevitably placed me in a certain ‘box’, or better said ‘bubble’.

Being seen as a tourist during fieldwork in Suriname includes far more than a basically ‘host’ and ‘guest’ relationship/encounter (Leite and Graburn 2009, 47); think of the taxi drivers, local guides, workers in shops, bars, hotels (with tropical swimming pools), restaurants, as well as people living in the area however with no direct relationship, and so on. Interactions between members of the Surinamese population and intern tourists (as well as myself) revealed tensions, desires, stereotypes, and affinities that operate on various levels (Leite and Graburn 2009, 48). All who are living in Suriname are actors with individual agency that respond to ‘outsiders’ in a variety of ways, informed by imaginaries. As also intern tourists respond to the ‘unknown’ in certain, varying ways informed by (fixed) imaginaries and with the purpose to pursue a ‘SU fantasy’. My access to (intern tourists’) activities, (desired) movements, and touristic realities is what negotiated the tourism context and my ‘tourist’ role within it (McIntosh 2014); constructed by specific practices and forms of mobility (Cragg 2011), which also formed ways in which people related to me. It enabled to analyze how some local people and tourism actors actively sought contact with intern tourists in search for (e.g.) economic gain, (romantic) experiences of difference perceived as ‘exotic’, or in hope for a ‘better life’ (the ‘utopia’ of the West), by the ways interactions took place between me and Others, revealing relations of power. At the same time I was able to experience the bubble its ‘protective walls’, its exceptional spaces, and particular configurations of social relations, as well as its convergence with the lived reality. I was placed in a liminal role of intern tourist-ethnographer, in which I was intern tourists’ ‘touristic other’ through participations in their daily activities, however, aware of the (local) implications that relate to their imaginaries, desires, and practices (McIntosh 2014).

3.2 Experiencing Imaginaries and Mobilities: A Road of Recognition

I want to start by saying that I started the fieldwork period with an incomprehension of, and almost an aversion to, the ‘bubble in the jungle’ and the way intern tourism seemingly gave meaning to the Suriname experience. This was due to the impressions I got from images, texts,

social media, blogs, and preliminary conversations with former intern tourists, which painted me an image of behaviors and attitudes devoted to Western (familiar) ways of ‘having fun’ along with ‘exotic’ (perceived) adventures in the jungle and with the ‘Other’. I did not comprehend their seemingly urge to stay among themselves, as I continually saw/heard them represented in group formations. I also crossed the same (tourism) organizations each search and conversation; each constituting (and offering) the same tropical, fun, adventurous experiences. However, by participating in their daily lives and by an absent balance of being ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ – through my assigned and assumed role – I was able to understand their lived experiences as a whole, with its many facets. Once in the field, incomprehension (quickly) gave way to recognition of their experiences, which provided a richer engagement as well. Therefore, my personal experiences can be of value to the analysis of imaginaries and mobilities, as I myself was inevitably a subject to the fantasy and manifestations (of/around it). It enables to reflect their experience from my own experience, however, aware of the power relation at play concerning who is represented by who (Wall 2008, 49), which is also part of the dynamic between imaginaries and mobility practices to constitute a ‘fantasy destination’. In addition, I also want to reject the idea that ethnographic accounts produce (only) ‘new’ knowledge, as if it was not guided, while the intern tourists’ knowledge *is* guided and (re)produced (Crang 2011, 2).

3.2.1 Experiencing Tourism Imaginaries

Because of preliminary research into tourism and my group of interest, I thus entered the fieldwork in Paramaribo with certain imaginaries, ideas, and assumptions. For instance of its beautiful Amazon interior, as well as where parties take place and with whom. I collected a lot of information around my participants and fieldwork location; knowledge around places to visit, significant experiences, but also around the political, economic, and cultural context I was about to enter. This knowledge became the foundation of every interaction, and a point of reference to the ‘bubble’.

First of all, my own imaginaries, whether emerging from the (preliminary) research or personally, directly connected me to my participants. I was familiar with the ‘SU fantasy’, had an idea of the tropical adventure abroad, and by living in one of the student houses myself I became immediately part of it. In addition, it was the process of travel itself that connected me to my research participants; though I would deny that I was there as a ‘tourist’, I was nevertheless affected by the travel to Suriname (Wallace 2005, 22-23). The fact that I was in Suriname to *analyze* the ‘touristic way of life’ rather than just live it, was what ultimately did

set me apart, and sometimes confused participants as I did participate but did not always share interests and/or desires. In times, this made me an ‘asset’ to the performance and manifestation of the ‘SU fantasy’, in which I became “an agent of the object under study” (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 122), as I was there to relativize and deploy the unknown. For example, some of my roommates and their friends frequently talked to me about experiences that deviated from what they imagined, such as whistles on the streets or confrontations with poverty. My presence and position enabled them to open their hearts to someone ‘familiar’ and to ventilate impacts on their experience of Suriname – to someone who was particularly interested in it. I also shared my own personal experiences with them, and a recognition of theirs, by which I became part of the construction and control of experiences of Suriname.

Secondly, tourism imaginaries that circulate and the ‘SU fantasy’ that is pursued also positioned me in a certain way in relation to local Surinamese people who all responded to ‘outsiders’ in particular ways. In relation to intern tourists, it mostly revealed desires in relation to entering the ‘bubble’ and/or fantasy for the purpose of a kind of (social, economic) progress. Taxi drivers, for example, most of the time understood after some explanation that I was not an intern tourist but *did* have a close relation to them through my research and since I was mostly traveling from/between student houses. This in itself emphasizes how tourism is a specific practice of mobility (Crang 2011, 2) structured by tourism imaginaries that determine my position. Taxi drivers often tried to take advantage of my position in order to get in contact with and become known by more intern tourists through offers and deals in exchange for promotion (to which I did not respond). Such interactions made very clear the importance of networking and representations that circulate among intern tourist (as well as the strategies emerging around it), and how the ‘bubble’ is in power in configurations.

In addition, it reflects power relations among, and compared to, me and my research subjects, as well as the power of relations and my status within, reflecting a (still) Western supremacy in Suriname - a former Dutch colony. Both examples illustrate how the ‘SU fantasy’ and privileged imaginaries set cultural and social norms that are at the basis of intern tourists’ experiences of difference and Otherness (MacCannell 2012), also shaping socialities and what is perceived to be acceptable, which in turn may demand moderation in performances of desires. The next section elaborates more on this by my personal experiences of mobility, starting with a vignette that illustrates a personal experience in Paramaribo, which also further illustrates my experiences of tourism imaginaries, as well as the dynamic between the two.

3.2.2 Experiencing Mobilities

“A Convergence of Desires in a Clash of Imaginaries and Mobilities”

It's a beautiful, sunny day in Paramaribo, and after a first week of hanging out with intern tourists at the student house – getting a clearer idea of their imaginaries, desires, places of interest, and activities – I decide it's time to make a city tour on my own through Paramaribo's historical parts. Doing so on my own is not strongly encouraged by roommates, and also the tourism promotion material available inside our student house advises me to rather book a tour than engage on my own with people who might 'act' like guides. Nevertheless, I arrange a taxi at one of the official services and head towards the city center to explore it by myself and hopefully connect to some Surinamese people that want to talk about their perceptions on intern tourists and their inevitable presence in Paramaribo. I happen to meet a very friendly taxi driver, Gregory, and the entire way we fruitfully talk about politics, economics and social issues happening at the moment in Suriname. I get his number so I can call him directly instead of via the official central, and before I get out of his taxi I get one last warning: “be careful out there on your own”.

With my valuables properly stowed away, I start my walk. First towards the Waterkant, where I buy myself a Cola at one of the stands and take a seat at one of the tables across a Surinamese man. I start to write in my notebook about the conversation with Gregory, when the man at the table starts a conversation with me, asking me what I'm writing. I tell him that I'm a researcher and interested in intern tourists in Suriname, which he did not seem to comprehend since I was also in Suriname for my study and to travel, making me “one of them” he stated. He offers me to go for a walk along the touristic 'highlights' of the city, and I agree. We pass by Fort Zeelandia, a variety of religious and historical buildings, and the 'Centrale Markt' – where locals do their 'groceries' and tourists are overall unwelcome to come 'sightseeing', which was noticeable through the comments I received while walking through the market. After a while, I begin to wonder what the man's intentions are in walking with me as I pick up signals that he is flirting with me – perhaps misinterpreting my interest in him. Therefore, I decide to bring our interaction to an end, and we finish the tour in the Palmentuin with a final conversation on one of the benches.

While I am rounding up the talk, the man all of a sudden feels free to reach for body parts of me. Quite overwhelmed by his action I tell him that it is unwanted, after which he just moves to other body part. As I do not get through to him, I stand up and walk away in order to make the situation end. Luckily, across the Palmentuin there is 'Zus&Zo'; I heard about that place many times already as it is favored among intern tourists. When I enter the place, it is as

if I'm walking into a 'safe haven' where no one can bother me. I take a seat and call Gregory to come pick me up, so at least I'll have a desirable and quite familiar ride back to the student house after this unpleasant experience. Once back home, I cannot stop myself from sharing some of this experience with roommates. In the end I hear more of such similar stories from them, and even get responses as "yeah, well... it is the Palmentuin and you were talking to a stranger, alone, so..." – revealing to me that it is apparently not an unknown type of encounter, one that awaits those associated to the 'bubble' but who deviate from it by performances that extent outside its protective walls and familiar networks.

I share and analyze this story with the aim of illustrating how my assigned and assumed role and identity connected me to the 'bubble in the jungle' and fantasy of intern tourists, and how that determined my own (im)mobility; as well as to show the power of the bubble and (privileged) tourism imaginaries when it comes to experiencing a tourist destination and places. The story reveals the tourism imaginary as (cultural) framework that determines interactions and shapes encounters (Leite 2014; Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016; Salazar 2012; Salazar 2012b), wherein expectations and degrees of (cultural) sameness and differences are already set. It showed in the privileged version of Suriname that was represented and circulating in the bubble: through tourism material and conversations with participants, I was 'guarded' from the unknown (or the 'unprivileged'), and advised to explore Paramaribo through connections to the bubble. *Zus&Zo* was an example of such a connection, where I was able to experience the bubble its 'protective walls' and to acquire a higher level and experience of mobility again (after an unpleasant incident). Which in turn illustrates how movement is created through the performance of a (certain) social world and idealized Suriname (Sheller and Urry 2006; Hannam et al. 2013), replicating performances fundamental to (the experience of) the 'SU fantasy' and protecting it from disruptions by the everyday reality. In addition, the story illustrated how tourism imaginaries and the 'SU fantasy' collapse with this reality, which in turn constrains performances of the fantasy. The *Palmentuin*, a significant place in the 'SU fantasy', is nevertheless a real, physical place where different practices are ensued and in which the fantasy, largely imaginary, takes places. My expectations of movement both inside and outside the bubble in order to collect a broad range of perspectives on my themes were quite contrasted during fieldwork, as it seemed almost impossible to determine movements myself due to imaginaries, images, and performances established in relation to intern tourists, to which I was continually subjected. It revealed to me the power of connecting, intersecting mobilities

and its structuring by the ‘SU fantasy’ in experiencing a tourist destination, and who and what is in power of representing it.

The day described in the vignette, I had another (contrasting) conversation earlier on with an elderly Dutch tourist couple that was about to return to The Netherlands soon after almost three weeks of traveling through Suriname (with Dutch tour operator ‘*Kras Reizen*’). We talked about their travel experiences, as well as their encounters and interactions with Surinamese people. What stood out to me at that moment, was the Dutch man telling me to talk with every Surinamese on every corner of the street; all would be very willing to talk to me, as they were willing to talk to him. However, I was experiencing quite different ‘willingness’. Not everyone was willing to talk to me, but beyond that, I was mostly approached in a particular way: sexual - associated with romantic adventures and desires of pleasure – or as a ‘recruiter’ to connect people and (informal) businesses to intern tourists. The encounters of the elderly Dutch couple compared to my own experiences in encounters were obviously shaped in relation to another (cultural) framework wherein different imaginaries and performances stood out.

This day full of remarkable events ultimately revealed to me that the Suriname experience and (enactment of) the ‘SU fantasy’ all concerns certain ways of (desired vs. undesired) convergence. In several conversations I was told that within the bubble similar things happen as outside the bubble, however, with a much clearer boundary. For instance, said was that the guides – often as well seen as *stagiaire jagers* – also regularly flirt and make direct (sexually) romantic attempts, but that they stop at ‘no’ and then often ‘move on’ to the next intern tourist (enabled by the guides’ established position in the bubble). Therefore, it is considered by intern tourists as less intrusive/disturbing behavior compared to the actions by men disconnected from the bubble, who are known as much more persuasive. This shows in turn the cultural and social norms set by tourism imaginaries and the ‘SU fantasy’, and how that is shaping the sociability/sociality and its dynamics in the bubble (MacCannell 2012), and who is able and enabled to operate within. The fantasy of Suriname – ‘exotics’, (romantic) adventures, tropics – turned out to be much more appreciated by intern tourists as long as it remains a fantasy. Relationships to the ‘Other’ and unknown are (only) appreciable when the exchange remains somehow connected to the bubble (its structures) in order to avoid confrontations with ‘Others’ and the unknown that are perceived *so* different that it is causing fears or misunderstandings (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016, 122). This enables intern tourists to “successfully” bond with local people, perpetuating ‘exotic’ ideas and imaginaries of Surinamese people and places, and to accomplish “real” experiences with the ‘Other’ and

within the unknown, revealing what lessons and experiences are wished to be transmitted in representations that circulate a privileged, idealized version of Suriname.

Ultimately, it was not about experiencing Suriname, but rather about an idealized Suriname that was desired to experience, merely happening in the imagination. As long as the ‘SU fantasy’ remains imagined and enjoyed, while maintaining a certain distance from local realities, it will prevail. Additionally, shown is that the fantasy and mobility practices of intern tourists represent attempts to transcend borders while simultaneously fixating them within imaginaries and by performances. To experience difference, exchanges are restricted by a limited range of distance that protects from unwanted consequences out of difference (MacCannell 2011), which is rather destroying difference by the fantasy its ability to structure difference aligned with intern tourists’ desires and unified experience, and traps it in privileges and power.

3.3 Being Part of the ‘SU Fantasy’: Chapter’s Coda

With this chapter I intended to bring together the previous two chapters on tourism imaginaries and mobilities in order to further analyze its dynamic and relationality by means of describing and analyzing my own position and lived experiences. I argued that by analyzing the Self in relation to Others, and through autoethnography, a deeper understanding can be created between participants and the researcher and of the studied phenomena; especially when doing research into tourism and the ethnographer is often mistaken for a 'tourist'. Shown is that the epistemological and methodological stance of an ethnographer and anthropologist (researching tourism) as ‘professional stranger’ can no longer be taken for granted (Leite and Swain 2015, 5); it is just as much connected to and impacted by (global) imaginaries that set (cultural, social) norms and movements as are its subjects. It did, however, enable me to analyze mediations of imaginaries and mobilities from own experiences as well, as they were similar to my participant's experiences, which in turn led to constructive subjectivity through recognitions.

Significant representations of (an ideal) Suriname as tourist destination and ‘Other’ mediate in the experiences of intern tourists, which are trapped in tensions between the known and unknown, also trapping them in commercial manipulation. What has been proven, is that the experience of the Other (and Self through that Other) and tourist places is rather a “quest for and imposition of control and order” (Galani-Moutafi 2000, 220), manifesting itself in ‘SU fantasy’ representations and performances, and practices of mobility that enable to pursue it. Ethnographic practices can shed light on such matters, but subsequently (re)creates it. However,

by capturing all domains in regard to tourism imaginaries and mobility practices and how they inform and influence each other (Leite and Swain 2015, 1), I aimed to show its complexity and relationality. Autoethnography, in turn, mobilized an appreciation to influences and experiences; stimulated by mutual appreciation between participants and the researcher that deepened connections and enabled to research 'hidden' spaces (Scarles and Sanderson 2016).



> Photograph by author

Conclusions

“I Love (S)U”

It is one of our last evenings together – Marie, Louise, Jolien, Sanne, Iris, some more friends, and myself are drinking our last Parbo beers while we chill in the hammocks in our garden. We reminisce our time in Suriname together – the places and parties we went to, things we learned, friends we made, remarkable (and unexpected) things we saw and experienced, and how we are connected for life by experiencing Suriname together. “You were my Suriname, thank you all” Marie says, as symbolic reference to her love for and memory of Suriname.

The point of departure has been to create an understanding of how tourism imaginaries and performances among intern tourists in Suriname mediate in practices of mobility, and to explore the relationality and dynamic between both in this specific context by unpacking the ‘SU fantasy’. I first untangled tourism imaginaries that circulate through a particular trajectory and its conduits, often involving (college) intermediaries and social media. Herewith I showed the development of a (shared) ‘SU fantasy’ among intern tourists, that consists of embedded representations of an idealized Suriname. A fantasy that consists of jungle and romantic adventures, fun and parties, ‘exotics’, nature and wildlife, ‘*no spang*’, and, as Marie remarked, each other (fellow intern tourists). The ‘bubble in the jungle’ that was subsequently described is where and how the ‘SU fantasy’ manifests; virtually, imaginary and in reality. It denotes the space wherein a privileged version of Suriname is circulating, aligned with the ‘SU fantasy’, where expectations and degrees of (socio-cultural) sameness and differences are set, and in which the unknown is explored from the known (Jaakson 2004; Adiyia et al. 2015). The ‘bubble’ forms an important lens to look at experiences of intern tourists and the different aspects it relates to, as it becomes the catalysator in the creation of (social) relations and connections, and stabilizes the fantasy when in it is in conflict with uncomfortable experiences of reality. The reality, either (local) context of (re)formations of tourism imaginaries (Salazar 2011), was also described, showing how it can be an affective force against the fantasy that conflicts with for instance imaginaries of mobility; in turn showing what is included in circulating imaginaries and representations and what not, illustrating a power balance which on the destination often implies spatial and social imbalance (Adiyia et al. 2015). The wide range of tourism imaginaries (and behaviors) that are covered also point towards reconsiderations of

‘the local’ in touristic appropriation (MacCannell 2016, 348); significant, privileged tourism imaginaries and performances ultimately pressure Surinamese localities to re-package and re-define lines of (socio-cultural) sameness and difference as well as the hegemonic narratives in the constitution of a tourist destination.

The understanding of multilayered tourism imaginaries, at play in the ‘SU fantasy’, and the construction of a ‘bubble in the jungle’ enabled to visualize and grasp significant discourses and imaginaries in order to unpack the imaginaries in relation to a nexus of social practices it results in (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2016), that in turn shape (intersecting) practices of mobility in order to establish the fantasy and a credible tourist destination. Ultimately, tourism imaginaries structure (im)mobilities (Hannam et al. 2013); (im)mobilities that are in turn experienced and imagined, and result in practices that reproduce (power) structures (Salazar and Smart 2011). I explored material mobilities and technologies that fuel imaginaries and the ‘SU fantasy’, showing its mediation in experiences of (the set cultural) sameness and differences encountered at the destination and how it enables to control practices and experiences of (imaginative, corporeal, social) mobility. I emphasized that mobility is produced through relations between people, objects, and places, in which the latter involved the spatial imaginary of Suriname (Paramaribo) and the performance of places (in power). I showed that contrasting imaginative and/or corporeal mobilities detracts places of its touristic value and determine a place its imaginative and physical boundaries (Baerenholdt and Urry 2017). The community, capital, and places around the ‘SU fantasy’ is eventually shaped by the connection of different, proximate intersecting mobilities that are depended on flows of objects, images, and memories within the ‘bubble’. This gave further insight into the ‘bubble in the jungle’, which involves more than the circulation of a ‘SU fantasy’ and known (physical and psychological) environment, but also conjures a ‘space of exception’ (Büscher and Fletcher 2017) where disruptions of everyday reality are minimalized by performances of mobility and/or the avoidance of immobility. The strategies that develop, of both intern tourist as well as tourism providers, (re)produce inequalities and impact social/cultural change in Suriname, since patterns of mobility arise that exclude a (large) part of the Surinamese society (and businesses) and replicate the power relations that facilitate the inherent contradictions (at play).

Notions of (global) difference is what signifies narratives and images of otherness represented in tourism (Salazar 2012b, 35); they are in continuous circulation, of which its (uneven) spread is shaped by socio-cultural structures and political and economic mechanisms that determine movements. This circulation embeds in tourism fantasies (i.e. a ‘SU fantasy’) in which people

and places are (re)created, however, dis-embedded from the original context (of people and places). As shown throughout the thesis, the circulation is a negotiated process that involves a variety of actors that engage with tourism in their own ways to (re)produce the fantasy and create (new) subject positions (Salazar 2012b).

Social practices, behaviors, and ideologies derived from ('SU fantasy' and wider) circulations did influence how intern tourists engaged with the 'Other' in Suriname, where imaginaries sometimes clashed. Studying tourism imaginaries in relation to intern tourists in Suriname, the (im)mobility of imaginaries, and relating mobility practices reveals how representations are mixed, compiled and (re)assembled, and interpreted (Forsey and Low 2014). Its dynamic and relationality are essential in the making of place, formations of identities, and continuous reformation of culture(s). As this study emphasized, tourism imaginaries mediate from a central position in complex sets of connections that resonate in significant mobility practices, by which the circulation of a fantasy is maintained, as for the (re)creation of people and places that it relates to and empowers as representative to Suriname (Salazar 2012b) – perpetuating stereotypes, inequalities, hegemonies (in fields of power), and underlying forces that restricts to circulations of only certain imaginaries and practices.

Based on the fieldwork and findings in this research, I do think that there are some relevant and interesting issues that invite further research, especially in regard to the context of Suriname and (intern) tourism in which so far little (academic) research has been done. In particular because the Surinamese government (led by Bouterse) is strongly promoting (sustainable) tourism development in order to diversify Suriname's economic base and in favor of (sustainable) socio-economic growth (Hoefte 2019, 183; Nichols 2018, 346; HI&T 2017). However, what the government lacks to provide is proper regulation and legislation in the tourism industry (Driessen 2016), leading to a diverse formal and (largely) informal tourism sector that transforms imaginaries (either fantasies) into objects of consumption, conform with Western norms which in turn seems to determine capitalistic power relations and structures as well. More ethnographic research could be done into this (capitalistic) dynamic, involving the commodification of imaginaries, in order to understand how tourism development aligned with fantasies of Suriname impact the intended socio-economic development.

Continuous research into (the growth/development of) tourism in Suriname can also enable to work towards a constructive dialogue between tourism practitioners, destination developers, and tourism academics, in which the comprehension of tourism imaginaries and mobility practices can make a practical contribution towards sustainable developments. For

instance through more inclusive strategies and/or policies, whereby the anthropological perspective contributes to the analysis of relations between representations, experiences, and practices with close attention to (political, economic) conditions and affects (Leite 2014, 274). Also, as shown, through the analysis of tensions between the known and unknown which provides a rich framework for the study of tourism in Suriname, especially given its colonial history that has set hierarchies and the development of relations (Hoefte 2019, 177), and still plays a role in the constitution and shaping of an image and narrative of the Surinamese community and tourist destination. Such tensions can show how reciprocal imaginaries result from particular (revealing) encounters that derive from set expectations of (socio-cultural) sameness and difference, as well as how that is invoked in tourism marketing and media. Significant insights can emerge around such themes from ethnographic research, both practically and academically valuable.



Epilogue

In the elections in May 2020, a new president and political party was chosen by the Surinamese population: Chan Santokhi, from the ‘*Vooruitstrevende Hervormingspartij*’ (VHP), whose government starts with an almost empty state account after Bouterse’s reign. The outcome of the elections seems to be a strategic choice of the Surinamese population by which it is demanding change. I text with Gregory, the taxi driver with whom I frequently talked about politics in Suriname, to talk about the news and ask his perspective. “*I am so happy! FREEDOM! Everything is too expensive nowadays in SU... all those traders doing whatever they want.*” From his reaction I catch a shimmer of hope, sparked by the newly elected president. He continues that I will encounter a ‘better’ Suriname next time I visit, “*they are already working on improving and fixing the Palmentuin,*” he argues. I found this remarkable in the sense that both his concerns and those of the government go first and foremost to a touristic sight as the *Palmentuin* when it comes to a ‘better’ Suriname.

However, tourism in Suriname is currently at a complete standstill; a visit to the improved *Palmentuin* will have to wait. The COVID-19 pandemic that caused me and many tourists to rapidly leave Suriname is currently causing a (health care and economic) crisis situation in the country. In regard to tourism, there were no flights to and from Suriname for months, and travels and tours were stopped to prevent further spread (considering the critical state of health care). Lots of tourism workers I met during fieldwork are now unemployed, without earnings from tourism. Gregory also mentioned to me several times that times are hard for him without (income from) tourists in Suriname. Under these (global and national) circumstances involving the COVID-19 pandemic a ‘SU fantasy’ fails to prevail, with major impact on stakeholders and actors who are left behind with nothing but a collapse of tourism in Suriname. It is an unfortunate reminder of the precarity of (intern) tourism and those in Suriname involved and depended on it.

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