

## **Proximate tourists and major sport events in everyday leisure spaces**

### **Abstract**

The local and the everyday provide a base resource for an individual to draw upon selectively in the reflexive construction of their leisure lifestyles. Through processes of tourism however, these everyday spaces can become transformed into tourist products such as through the staging of major sports events. Research often recognises the social impacts sport tourism events can have on host communities yet assume a homogeneity across these communities without considering the differentiated leisure lifestyles which characterise them. This paper explores the interplay between the hosting of major sports events and leisure spaces, community and practices of local established sporting communities who are connected to the event through their socio-cultural proximity to the leisure lifestyle and physical proximity to the event setting. The study draws upon qualitative data from interviews with 19 cyclists who live in Adelaide, the host city of the Tour Down Under, an annual professional cycle race and festival. The findings explore the ways in which local cyclists experience the event as proximate tourists drawing upon their knowledge of everyday sporting spaces, local resources and their insider status to inform their identities. The findings examine the ways in which they maintain connections with local places throughout the staging of the event, and highlights some of the tensions this creates in their ongoing everyday leisure practices. It argues that organisers of major sports events should utilise the pool of resident participant experts offered through local sports clubs and communities and ensure they benefit from their hosting.

**Keywords:** major sports events, leisure, tourism, proximity, cycling, everyday

## **Introduction**

Recent debates within Tourism Geographies have drawn attention towards the relations between the tourism phenomenon and everyday life arguing that in an era of globalised mobility the interplay between these domains is increasingly blurred (Jeuring & Diaz-Soria, 2017). Social and cultural geographers have focused attention on concepts of the exotic and the mundane as tools for understanding the tourism processes which shape understandings of everyday places, identities and culture and sought to rethink these framing dichotomies in favour of a more reflexive approach. Most notably, work on mundane mobilities has examined the regularities of the everyday experience which inform the tourist performance or tourist place (Chen & Chen, 2017; Edensor, 2007; Larsen, 2008; Mikkelsen & Cohen, 2015). A recent issue within Tourism Geographies (see Jeuring & Diaz-Soria, 2017) introduced the concept of geographical proximity to these debates by focusing attention on the meanings of tourism practices near home (Diaz-Soria, 2017) and the touristic aspects of everyday places and environments (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2016). Physical proximity to settings of everyday practices provides a frame of reference for individuals (Diaz-Soria, 2017). Other work in tourism explores the notion of socio-cultural proximity as ‘what people feel and know as part of their personal life worlds, on the one hand, and how they perceive and experience encounters with differences, on the other hand’ (Szytniewski, Speirings & van der Velde, 2017, p. 66). These analyses of proximity highlight the multiplicity of ways in which people make meaning of their environments through tourist experiences and in doing so challenge the conceptual boundaries between the tourist and the local or host community.

Theories on place attachment have been applied to a range of everyday and tourist settings identifying socio-cultural dimensions such as belonging to a group, or collective and physical dimensions such as recreational qualities which act together to facilitate feelings of rootedness and identification with a particular environment (see Lewicka, 2011; Scannell &

Gifford, 2010; Raymond, Brown & Weber, 2010). Of particular interest within this paper are those place bonds which are created through everyday leisure practices and routines.

It is argued that tourism research has prioritised the exotic and exceptional examples of tourism rather than those which are more mundane. A fundamental component of these analyses of proximity to date is premised on the notion of crossing into a tourist space or adopting a tourist identity however geographically or culturally nearby. Less attention has been turned to host communities and the activities, practices and environments which comprise the broad concepts of the mundane, the local or everyday, and their relationships with tourism performances that intersect these. The role of everyday leisure spaces as the contexts for tourism within tourism geographies are yet to be fully explored.

This paper is concerned with exploring the ways in which local (leisure) communities are connected to tourism processes through both their physical and socio-cultural, or lifestyle proximity to a sport tourism event. Where previous studies have examined the transfer of the life world through the act of tourism this study examines the process by which the space of the life world is transformed through the hosting of a sport tourism event. It contributes to debates on tourism, mobilities and the everyday in two ways; Firstly by exploring the experience of both socio-cultural and physical proximity from the perspective of a host community whereby a space is (temporarily) transformed through tourism rather than an individual or community is temporarily transported (to a tourist place). Secondly by providing a more nuanced analysis of socio-cultural and physical proximity which considers the ways in which these interplay in the process of place attachment as part of everyday leisure lifestyle practices and routines.

## **Leisure, lifestyles and place attachment**

The concept of lifestyles captures the ‘aesthetic projects’ of social actors, organised around habits, rituals, and the consumption of cultural forms, places, styles and practices as part of social identification (Chaney, 1996). In essence, lifestyles are a response to the expanded choice in late modern society and this choice becomes increasingly important in the constitution of self identity and daily activity (Giddens, 1991). Lifestyles provide a set of props which are embedded within everyday life and the spaces and places we inhabit (Chaney, 1996; Goffman, 1959).

Bennett (2005, p. 64) argues that it is ‘through their lifestyles individuals in late modernity exhibit a continued ‘tiedness’ to local spaces in which they live out their everyday lives’. The local provides a base resource for an individual to draw upon selectively in the reflexive construction of their lifestyles. Drawing upon Lefebvre, Gardiner (2000, p. 76) claims that ‘it is through our mundane interactions with the material world that both subject and object are fully constituted and humanised’. Leisure in everyday life is one such example which can provide social actors with the raw materials for the formation of meaning, identity and selfhood (Gammon & Elkington, 2015; Henderson & Frelke, 2000). As Crouch and Tomlinson (1994, p. 317) have argued:

...the physicality of where leisure happens in late modernity is very real; it contributes to the cultural identity of distinctive leisure practices: people’s geographical knowledge is significantly local. The cultural meaning of local places is constituted through everyday leisure practices in a way that resonates with other sources of meaning and identity.

Place attachment refers to the emotional bonds people feel towards a particular place (Lewicka, 2011; Seamon, 2014) and work on place attachment has explored the relationships

sport and leisure participants form with the environments they encounter. Within this literature attention has been paid to the contribution sport can make to the cultural meaning and representation of places (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Ramshaw & Hinch, 2006; Tonts & Atherley, 2010) and the sense of belonging and connectedness to places of sport that fandom can offer individuals (Bale, 2003; Brown, Smith, & Assaker, 2016; Charleston, 2009; Spracklen, Timmins, & Long, 2010). Yet it is participation in these activities, and the construction of space through the ‘doing’ of leisure (Crouch, 2000, 2015), in particular that may offer the richest source of analyses. Research has therefore recognised the embodied experience of performing sport and leisure and the lifestyle connections made between participant and place.

In their simplest forms, sport and leisure settings provide the resources necessary to support participation (Hinch & Higham, 2011). Beyond this, significant work demonstrates the interdependencies between participation, space and identity and the intimate connections recreationists can form to those local places which provide the foundations for their leisure lifestyles. Theorists on place attachment have recognised the role of repeated engagement with particular places through everyday activities and routines which take time to develop but result in a feeling of existential insideness (Lewicka 2011; Seamon, 2014). The *lifeworlds* of sport and leisure participants facilitate a socio-cultural proximity to local environments such that authenticity can be performed through commitment, local knowledge and experience. (Rickly & Vidon, 2017)

Significant work within lifestyle sports identifies a local scene attached to participants who represent the core of the community and often a coveted sports location. ‘Locals’ often feel they have more rights to spaces in relation to visiting outsiders who perform the same activity and information about access to these locations can be used as capital by members at the core of sports subcultures to indicate status or insider identity (see Beaumont & Brown, 2016;

Edwards & Corte, 2010; Hinch & Higham, 2011; King & Church, 2015; Rickly & Vidon, 2017, for examples). Others observe how the rhythms and rituals performed in everyday sports spaces inform the sense of self (Cherrington, 2014). The work of Bricker & Kerstetter (2000, p. 250) for example, argues that a leisure space which is 'not the focal point of their existence' will limit its integration into the lifestyles of committed recreationists. Therefore for those 'serious' enthusiasts (Stebbins, 2015) in particular, identity politics are played out in the everyday spaces they occupy through their ritualised leisure practices and routines. In these examples physical and socio-cultural proximity are interdependent in the embodied performance of sporting lifestyles.

### **Sport events, tourism and host communities**

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in urban spaces as settings for global processes of capital accumulation, notably through the emergence of an urban cultural economy. Culture led regeneration policies are commonplace within post-industrial cities, and consequently the hosting of major sports events has emerged as a central strategy for increasing tourism, attracting investors, improving infrastructure and revitalising communities (Gratton & Henry, 2002; Paddison & Miles, 2009). Cities compete in a global marketplace for the hosting of major events as a form of 'urban entrepreneurialism' (Belanger, 2000, p. 380) It is claimed, for example, that sport mega events are part of a 'globalising vision' for localities which conceive sport as a prominent global platform to instil civic pride, boost tourism and establish their 'global cultural currency' (Sturm, 2014; p. 77) with cities competing to gain a place in the urban status hierarchy of major sport cities (Misener & Mason, 2006; Schimmel, 2006).

The convergence of the global with the local has seen a significant impact on the everyday experience in contemporary society. As local leisure sites become transformed into tourist

products through the staging of major sports events, the sense of place felt by residents in these communities is undoubtedly affected (Misener & Mason, 2006). Through the hosting of major sporting events, everyday spaces are branded, commercialised, owned and transformed, largely for the consumption of visiting others. 'In a spectacular society, bombarded by signs and mediatized spaces, tourism is increasingly part of everyday worlds, increasingly saturating the everyday life which it supposedly escapes' (Edensor, 2007, p. 200). Major sports events are the ultimate example of the city as tourist spectacle (Waitt, 2003) as the city becomes an object of and for the consumption of others. Destination marketing and the (re)creation of place identity is also one of the core tenets of the hosting of major events (Getz & Page, 2016). Celebrating the unique cultural qualities of local spaces and selling these to outsiders forms a key component of event delivery and legacy planning (Ramshaw & Hinch, 2006). Sporting events in particular can play an important role in the construction of the place identity of tourist destinations and can enable cities to acquire status and differentiation through their hosting of them (Mason, Washington, & Buist, 2015; Sturm, 2014). These events can significantly impact the physicality of a city (Miles, 2010),

For local residents whose everyday lives are entwined with these spaces such spectacular occasions can alter their (mundane) encounters and consequently the place meanings of their local environments. Authors such as Misener and Mason (2006) have therefore argued that in bringing events to cities, the meanings of local spaces are transformed or even replaced with newly constructed meanings linked to transitory and commercial tourism strategies focused on the 'visitor class'. As a result, locals may therefore struggle to assert identity or connectedness to their own neighbourhood spaces.

There is an extensive and growing literature on the purposes and social impacts of sports events for local host communities which, whilst short lived as experiences, are often embedded within longer term strategies to improve city neighbourhoods and communities

(see Chien, Ritchie, Shipway & Henderson, 2012; Shipway & Fyall, 2012). Socio-cultural impacts can be defined as ‘ the impacts of an event on the day to day life of people associated directly or indirectly with that event, and on the values, attitudes, beliefs and traditions that determine or guide that day-to-day life’ (Sharpley & Stone, 2012, p. 349). As well as yielding significant economic benefits for the host destination, the social value of sport for enhancing communities is one of the central tenets of the hosting of sport events. It is claimed that sport events can reduce social isolation within communities and increase civic engagement (Jarvie, 2013). For example Waitt (2003) argues that international sporting events can act to generate patriotism and a sense of community. The success of a region in terms of sport performance can also provide a commonplace identity for local residents (Hinch & Higham, 2011). For local sport and leisure communities, however, it is claimed that processes of globalisation and commercialisation surrounding large scale sports events can see grassroots participants increasingly divorced from the benefits of these occasions (Jarvie, 2013). Despite an established literature on socio-cultural impacts of sport tourism events on host communities, this research assumes a homogeneity across these communities without considering the differentiated leisure lifestyles which characterise them, and consequently their experiences of hosting sport tourism events.

Graburn’s (2001) theory of secular ritual positions tourism experiences as rooted in the home life of tourists but metaphorically sacred because of the temporality of the connection and their difference from the ordinary routine. Tourists pursue renewed versions of their same selves through a ritual reversal of some aspects of their everyday lives. Experiences of bonding with other participants as part of this liminal state provides a levelling of statuses or *communitas*. Following Graburn’s (2001) work, sports tourist experiences are constructed as liminal (Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2012) with participants less constrained by the roles they adopt in everyday life in comparison to those who are from proximate locations (Smith & Stewart,



2007). It is argued participatory sport tourists experience heightened feelings of escape and may have more freedom and space to experience existential authenticity and project their true selves than in other settings (Lamont, 2014; Shipway, King, Lee & Brown, 2016). As in discussions of *communitas* within tourism experiences (Graburn, 2001), it is claimed events can offer transient versions of participatory communities (Miles, 2010) often cited as a valuable aspect within sport tourism literature for enabling an individual to prioritise and celebrate their sporting identity outside of the constraints of daily life (Lamont, 2014; Lee, Brown, King, & Shipway, 2016). Consequently it has also been argued that events should be designed to enhance the liminality of the setting and help participants to disengage from their daily life (Chalip, 2006; Lee et al., 2016). Sites of urban revitalisation strategies and image building are also, however, sites of everyday leisure and local connectivities. The interplay between ritual and place attachment, escape, and liminality have not been explored from the perspective of placed leisure communities who experience both physical and socio-cultural proximity to the event space through the ordinary patterns of everyday life formed through sport and leisure lifestyles.

This paper explores the experiences of members of the local cycling community during the staging of an international cycling event the 'Tour Down Under' (TDU) in their home environment to consider how local sport and leisure communities assert identity and connectedness to their own localities through both their physical and socio-cultural proximity to these processes. In terms of size, scale, complexity and internationalisation, the TDU fits the categorisation of a major sports event (Jago & Shaw, 1998), as it involves competition between both cycling teams and individual riders representing a number of nations; it attracts significant public interest, nationally and internationally, through spectator attendance and media coverage in South Australia; and is of international significance to cycling and features prominently on the international calendar. Previous research has examined the importance of

the TDU in building social capital within the local community (Jamieson, 2014; Mackellar & Jamieson, 2015), whilst others have argued that the event creates few tangible legacies and causes little disruption to normal patterns of life in the local area (Brown, Lee, King, & Shipway, 2015). This paper will build on these works to consider the ways in which the hosting of a major sports event is **experienced** by local individuals whose leisure lifestyles facilitate both a socio-cultural and physical proximity to the event and the event space. The interviews for local cyclists **who** were attending the event were therefore designed around three central research questions:

- What characterises the participation of local cyclists at the event?
- How do cycling experiences differ from daily practice during the event?
- How do local cyclist's interactions with local leisure spaces alter before, during and after the staging of a major cycling event?

## **Method**

The TDU is an annual professional cycling race event in South Australia and forms the context for this study. The TDU is the first event of the annual Union Cycliste International (UCI) series. The TDU is classified as a major event (Tour Down Under, 2016) based in the city of Adelaide and consists of six race stages held during six days throughout the state of South Australia. In addition to the professional race The TDU also includes a festival of cycling held within Adelaide and surrounding towns including activities such as street parties, charity challenges, tour dinner evenings and family cycle events and a mass participatory ride for amateur cyclists, which in 2014 was called The BUPA Challenge Tour. In 2014 the TDU attracted more than 760,000 spectators, including approximately 40,000

event specific international and interstate visitors (South Australian Tourism Commission, 2014). It has become recognised as the largest cycling event in the southern hemisphere.

During the 2014 TDU a research team conducted face-to-face individual or paired semi-structured interviews with both visiting and local event spectators. Individuals who attended the 2014 TDU and / or participated in any cycling activities during the 2014 TDU were asked to participate in the interviews. Participants were recruited through a purposeful sampling approach. Four cycling clubs in Adelaide and surrounding towns were contacted via email in the weeks preceding the TDU to invite club members who were attending the TDU to participate in interviews. In addition the research team employed an opportunistic approach by recruiting participants for interviews during the event at a range of locations including the start and finish lines of each stage, the Tour Village (the hub of the TDU), local cycle races, and other cycling events held in and around Adelaide during the six event days. All interviews took place during the event, often in a physical event setting such as within the Tour village or whilst spectating the race and the length of the interviews varied from thirty to forty five minutes. Importantly, situating the interviews in the research context helped to position the research as an extension of the participant's event experience rather as distinctly separate (Spinney, 2006).

In total thirty five interviews with event participants were conducted as part of a wider study on the event. Nineteen of these participants identified themselves as local cyclists from Adelaide or surrounding towns and form the sample for this work. Table 1 provides a summary of participant details including their age group, gender, distances cycled per week and indications of cycle club affiliations.

[Table 1 Here]

This local sample presents a spectrum of ‘serious’ participants (see Stebbins, 2015). For example, all respondents interviewed claimed to cycle at least 100km a week with some cycling up to 500km a week and thirteen identified themselves as members of at least one cycle club. All participants were over 35 years with over half the sample aged 55 years or over. Most respondents were male with only three females taking part in the study.

All of the interviews were recorded and consequently the first stage of data analysis was to transcribe the recorded interviews verbatim. Subsequently, research team members explored the transcripts individually to derive general structures, patterns and initial codes as a process of interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Following this process team members met to discuss their own interpretations employing an **inductive** approach rather than following a pre-existing theoretical framework or theoretical interest outside of the research questions (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The research team adopted differing roles, following the idea that adopting differing methods (in this case, observation and interviewing) may be useful in developing a more holistic and contextually grounded assessment of the phenomenon (Shipway & Jones, 2007). One of the authors, as an ‘experienced insider’ used their own emic knowledge of the social world under investigation to help illustrate and explain some key issues that may not be apparent to a more ‘scientific’ approach (Shipway, Holloway & Jones, 2013). The less experienced members of the research team, however, adopted the role of ‘outsiders’, critically questioning some of the meanings and interpretations of both the data and event setting, from the etic perspective. A coding framework was developed and applied and three core themes related to local cyclists were identified as place identity; insider experiences; and interactions with the everyday. These are presented in the results and discussion section below.

## **Results and discussion**

### *Place identity and the proximate tourist*

In 1996 the Australian Grand Prix was relocated from Adelaide to Melbourne which resulted in a strong sense of loss of status for the region (also see Jamieson, 2014). The TDU originated as a replacement for the Grand Prix and is now described as Australia's premier cycling festival (Tour Down Under, 2016). As previously discussed, major sports events such as this often act as image builders and are useful promotional tools for regions seeking to attract visitors within an environment of competitive globalisation (Hinch & Higham, 2011, Shipway & Fyall, 2012). The extract below shows how local cyclists celebrated this positioning of their everyday sporting environment as a noteworthy cycle event setting.

Mark: To see professional riders, top riders like Cadel Evans and the Australian stars here... to have the top European riders coming over here and race in our state. It's fantastic.

Seamon (2014) describes place identity as a process whereby individuals recognise places as integral to their identity and self worth. For the local cycling community, hosting a major cycling event attracting both professional sportspersons but also other committed amateur sport tourists to their home environment was as source a self validation and served to strengthen their place identity. Tom, a member of two local clubs celebrated the regions connections to other prestigious cycling events.

Tom: The TV coverage gets shown around the world its got to raise the profile of Adelaide a bit and the fact that in Australia we do have a category 1 UCI event it means we're, whilst its only for a week, not 3 weeks, but it means we're up there with France, Italy, Spain, all those better known places.

The status of a UCI event and the representation of the region through national television coverage of the event prompted a reimagination of the everyday environment for local cyclists. For example, the quote below shows how one participant adopts a tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011) despite being in a familiar environment (Diaz-Soria, 2017).

Martin: When you see them you realise how brilliant – I mean the TV coverage is very, very good – the helicopter shots I love it out here. I've got everything here I want but it's good to be able to see – when you see the shots on Tuesday of Angaston and they go through all the wineries – just think I'm so blessed to live here. I really do feel that and I know most of my mates do.

Interactions with visiting event attendees also acted to attach status to their home environment in the context of their leisure community. The participant below describes hearing visiting members of the cycling community celebrating the cycling opportunities available in the region in comparison to their usual cycling environment.

Liam: Some people come over with their clubs so they'll have large groups and they'll ride in the hills and realise how good we've got it. A lot of people come over from Melbourne and, say, "All our races now, we've got to travel at least 2 hours from Melbourne to find a road we can ride on. You guys have it so good y'know?"

Proximate tourism encounters such as those experienced by local cyclists at the TDU complicate the roles of participants as both residents and tourists and consequently the interactions between place and self (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). The hosting of the TDU focused the attention of local cyclists on their relationship with their everyday leisure space and the legitimacy of their locality for their sport. Their physical proximity to these spaces facilitated a strong sense of connection which in turn resulted in feelings of pride and self worth. The next section explores this further by examining how lifestyle proximity in

addition to their physical proximity created the role of an event insider in comparison to visiting cycle tourists.

### *The proximate tourist as insider*

Cycling events are sites of sporting significance which promote a sense of collective belonging for participants of the sport (Brown et al., 2015; Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2012). In turn, the hosting of such events imbues everyday leisure space with meaning and currency within sporting communities. The hosting of the event in their home setting was seen to provide participants with insider privileges and these formed an important part of local cyclists experiences as proximate tourists. For example, Tom described his access to the best vantage points in terms of spectator experiences of the professional race.

Tom: I had the advantage for quite a few years – well I think the last four, there's been a stage finish just a couple of kilometres from home. And they whip around through my area three times so it's quite a good vantage spot and at one stage they were going past the end of my street. Now you can't beat that!

Sport provides ways to be included, and to attain recognition and status (Vermeulen & Verweel, 2009), as such insider experiences can act as currency to be exchanged or drawn upon within the wider lifestyle community. David below describes the opportunity to demonstrate insider knowledge to visiting members of the cycling community.

David: I have a nephew from Victoria who comes across, and just on the odd occasion he'll ring me up and say I want to go to a place called Mylor", which is down, it's the other side of Stirling "What's the best way to get there? Do you know any shortcuts or do you know a quieter road?" and obviously I take him because I am able to do that.

According to both Lamont & McKay, (2012) and Shipway et al. (2016) behind the scenes access and chance encounters with professional cyclists at tour events can enhance the perceived authenticity of the event experience. For local cyclists, however these occurrences were not limited to the period of the event itself but intersected their everyday leisure practices. Participants such as Adam below spoke of opportunities to meet professional participants through local contacts or as part of chance encounters for example during their everyday cycle practice in the run up to the event.

Arnie: If you're that keen and you know the stages and you went out on the stages the week before you would bump into them. We saw Trek Racing; we were in the middle of our race going across what they call 'The Range' and they're coming the other way and they all wave at you and stuff like that.

Another cyclist spoke of meeting Cadel Evans, the Australian professional racing cyclist, whilst undertaking a casual ride along the local coastline in the days leading up to the event.

Ian: I met Cadel Evans last week...down the beach the other day drinking coffee with all his mates, I just pulled the bike up jumped off, jumped into the middle of the café, how you going Cadel Evans' nice to meet ya, shook his hand, tried to break it, said good luck and took off.

Through their position as proximate tourists local cyclists developed their own event rituals and routines outside of the packaged or formalised event offer which saw their everyday leisure spaces and practices intersect with the eventscape. Most local participants took leave from paid employment during the week of the TDU and in many ways performed similar activities to visiting cyclists such as cycling out to race stages, spectating, and browsing the tour village. Yet the intersecting experience of both physical and socio-cultural proximity gave them access to fringe activities on the local cycle scene which served to reinforce their



position as event insiders, blending the ordinary with a ritualised break from routine (Graburn, 2001).

The TDU includes a one day 'BUPA community challenge' which invites amateur cyclists to cycle one of the race stage routes just hours before the professional race riders which has grown in popularity. Previous work on cycle tourists has identified feelings of authenticity and a more empathetic connection with the professional racers evoked by cycling on the same routes as part of the event experience (see Lamont, 2014; Lamont & McKay, 2012; Spinney, 2006). For local cyclists, however, this event was constructed as a 'tourist experience' and one which was avoided by many in the local cycling community. Insider knowledge dictated this as a dangerous and unpleasant space for experienced cyclists:

Martin: I probably try to avoid the charity ride now... too many people can't ride very well and they have a tendency to make you crash because myself and the other guys I race with we go past a lot of those guys doing double their speed and it tends to freak them out, so then they get the wanders and they cause a crash. It's for the crowds really, it's not something us guys feel we need to do.

In part an insider identity was enacted through the dismissal of this event particularly for more serious riders who were connected to a network of alternative race events year round. These cyclists chose to shun this official event experience instead constructing their own versions of authenticity through alternative activities that utilised and celebrated their local connections to communities and spaces and the resulting privileges. For example the participant below describes attending a barbeque with professional cyclists through a local connection:

Mark: A mate of mine has helped out with a team so he has a barbeque around his place which is just around the corner from my place, but you meet Andre<sup>1</sup> and all these sort of guys, you have a bit of communication issues to sort of deal with but they're all very nice friendly people....a few beers and stuff with some of the guys, yeah absolutely.

Another popular element of the TDU was a street party, held on the second evening of the TDU in a suburb of Adelaide. Several participants invited the research team to attend an event taking place on the same night at a local race circuit. When asked why they would not be attending the official street party event Alice responded that:

It's the same every year, it's not for us. It's nothing but cyclists everywhere talking about cycling when you can come here and actually cycle. It's a chance for our club to compete against other clubs who are down this way for the Tour. This is where the real cyclists come.

Socio-cultural proximity to the lifestyle of the cycling community combined with physical proximity to the event spaces and places enabled local participants to pick and choose between the tourist spectacles of the event itself and alternative activities within the local leisure community, with both assuming differing importance at different times.

### ***Beyond the proximate tourist: shaping everyday leisure practice***

Active engagement between sport tourists and eventsapes can be various, personal and value rich (Lee et al., 2016). Whilst cycling the same routes as the professional riders during the TDU was an important part of visiting cyclists experiences (see Shipway et al., 2016), local cyclists used their physical proximity to the space to connect with these experiences in

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to professional racing cyclist André Greipel

different ways. Cyclists drew upon their local knowledge of the event routes to reflect upon the quality of the performance by professional cyclists at the TDU.

Rachel: You can just see how much training goes into how they do it, and you might be riding up a hill at 12 kilometres an hour and they're averaging, what 40. And you just, you compare that when you're doing it at 12 and struggling and they're just like cruising it at 40, you know.

For local cyclists, however, the process of connection and comparison with the event space and performances occurred after the staging of the event to permeate the everyday leisure experience. GPS technology such as 'Strava' which enables cyclists to record their routes and times and compare them with others was utilised as part of everyday leisure cycling and enabled local cyclists to virtually compete with both professional riders and visiting cyclists on the routes of the TDU at any time of the year. Below, Mark demonstrated to the researcher how he used the times and routes recorded during the TDU on Strava as part of training rides.

Mark: I've actually gone faster than the pros on that section because I do it all the time. I will show you that one – this is Mount Torrens so the Tour Down Under actually normally goes along this road and that time was in the Tour Down Under last year or the year before and that guy who came second well he was being motor paced but I can ride it anytime I want.

The local cyclist below also described how he could use his knowledge of the conditions and his physical proximity to the route to compete against the performance of both professional riders and serious amateurs on the sections of the TDU at anytime of the year.

Arnie: You go out and you look at the wind and you go man which way is the wind going? Right I am going to hit this section of road today because I know I am going to

create a record. As an example last year we did Shepherds Hill and I rode over there with one of my mates in my team and he said I'm feeling pretty good today. I said go as hard as you can up Shepherds Hill. The pros were going up there and my mate was like 6th fastest time out of 3,000 people and he was faster than any of the pros up there in the Tour Down Under.

Hockey's (2004; 2013) work explores how the embodied sense making of athletes which occurs during repeated training runs is employed to evaluate and inform their performance. In this case, however, participants use their embodied knowledge of the familiar terrain to challenge their own performances and compete virtually against the event performances of the elite, as well as visiting cyclists from the wider community beyond their physical presence in their locality. In this instance the spectacle of the elite event performances intersect with the mundane of the training route to participants everyday leisure practices and encounters. Therefore whilst engaging with the eventscape is experienced by visiting sport tourists as extraordinary, for proximate tourists, these became embedded in their everyday leisure routines and rituals blurring the understanding of what is everyday and what is not (also see Diaz-Soria, 2017; Larsen, 2008).

Hosting visiting cyclists in their everyday leisure space facilitated a sense of connection to a wider sporting community which also continued beyond the event. During the TDU cycle clubs invited visiting clubs to locally hosted events to give their own members a chance to compete within a wider pool of talent. Participating in such activities as part of the event helped participants feel more connected to an international cycling community and gave them a focus for training at other times of the year:

Alex: During the Tour Down Under, the club have a competitive series that's on. We have a road race, a time trial, a hill climb and a criterion race like mid week and we get

a lot of people from interstate come so it really spices things up a bit, gives the club a focus that they need to represent during this week, its great for the guys to have that to aim for leading up to the tour.

Cyclists also described how the hosting of the TDU had direct repercussions on their everyday leisure experience after the event had finished. Some participants, for example viewed the visibility of cyclists during the event as a platform for improving the overall cycling experience in Adelaide for local users.

Ian: It raises the profile of cycling in the community which is a good thing and hopefully it makes people more aware of cyclists on the road. I ride out on the open road and you need motorists to give you a bit of space and its gets a bit scary up there on the roads sometime its only a matter of educating drivers; 1 to be a bit more patient; and 2 to give the riders a bit more room.

It was felt that hosting such a prestigious and well-attended event changed the ways in which local motorists, responded to cyclists throughout the year in the sharing of road space between different user groups.

Jane: Cyclists - They're on the news, they're in the paper, they're on the TV, hopefully motorists will see riders as just normal people that have a legitimate use of the road not something to get angry with and that's going to delay them 30 seconds or something.

Nevertheless not all participants felt that hosting the event had a positive legacy for cycling in the local area. The sponsored community ride discussed in the previous section was identified as creating lasting problems for local cyclists. Respondents discussed its attraction for novice cyclists who were less likely to understand the road using etiquette embedded in cycling culture.

Tom: A lot of those people ride on the road like mainly the month leading up to it and then after that they don't ride, but they cause so much agro with the local drivers because a lot of them they just don't ride with common sense that then the day that finishes I've got to deal with that for the next couple of months before they cool down again.

The participant below also describes how the popularity of this event was seen as damaging for relations between road users and local experienced cyclists.

Ian: Like the traffic round here, it can get pretty hairy and especially around the TDU I think they get fed up with so many of us and that. All the ones who get their bikes out once a year can do real damage to the relationship between car users and cyclists for the rest of the year.

The problematic relationships between cyclists and other road users impacting the ability to participate is well documented (see O'Connor & Brown, 2010). In this case relationship between cyclists and other road users is exacerbated by increased numbers of cyclists before, during and after the event itself and the increase of novice participants from the local area is considered to heighten the problems. Local cyclists in this study felt a sense of authority through their own identities as experienced cyclists whilst also framing their concerns through a strong sense of connection to place (also see Rickly & Vidon, 2017). Such examples highlight the paradox experienced by local cyclists in their hosting of international sports events. Whilst cyclists develop connections and validating experiences during the event, event hosting can also contribute to politicise and contest leisure spaces for local users at other times of the year.

## **Conclusion**

This paper offers insights into the hosting of sport tourism events in leisure spaces of the everyday by considering the impacts of the staging of international sport events on the culture, community and practices of local established sporting communities. The research questions sought to consider the characteristics of participation for individuals who experience physical proximity to the event and subsequent lifestyle identification with both the sporting spectacle and the (everyday) place within which it is located and how these interact with everyday practice and differing temporalities.

This study shows how the distinction between the spectacular and the mundane is muddled for local leisure participants as proximate tourism intersects with everyday practice in complex ways. Indeed to separate event participants into locals and tourists may be too simplistic as the experience of the mundane or the spectacular cannot be assumed (Edensor, 2007; Chen & Chen, 2017). For those whose interconnections with event spaces extend before, beyond and between the eventscape, their locality and their lifestyles, their experiences are deeply invested with both shared and individualised notions of culture, value, community, and self.

These findings contribute to emerging work on proximate tourism by considering how socio-cultural insideness to a leisure lifestyle manifests through tourism practices in home environments. For Jeuring and Harrtsen (2017), presenting familiar places from a new angle enables people to reconstruct their own identities and those of the places they inhabit. This study considers how the proximity can be experienced as adding value through insideness and a reflection on the everyday which extends beyond the event itself. For those whose leisure pursuits provide a strong source of identity tourism experiences often provides an

opportunity to take time to participate in their preferred leisure activity but in a different setting (Chang & Gibson, 2011). Participants in this study identified themselves as committed cyclists no less involved and invested in the sporting lifestyle and the opportunities for developing their leisure interests presented by Tour Down Under than visiting tourists but had a different experience of the setting itself. Their familiarity with local people, places, and prior knowledge of the sports event itself acted as a further point of reference and insideness which was played out through their interaction with their local spaces at different times. During the event, local connections such as informal social gatherings and local events were chosen over some of the commodified authenticities available as part of the official programme. Yet once the event was over the opportunity to connect with the professional event performances through social media and technology offered a further dimension to their ordinary cycling experience which served to rework their everyday connections to place. Graburn's (2001) work on tourism as secular ritual refers to the liminal state of tourist experiences which provide some inversion of everyday conditions and routines. As proximate tourists local cyclists developed their own event rituals yet these intersected with their home lives and spaces blurring the entry and exit points of the liminal tourist state. Thus, socio-cultural proximity allows for the utilisation, celebration and reimagination of local connections, communities and spaces betwixt and between the states of host community or visiting tourist.

Diaz-Soria (2017) argues that proximate and visiting tourists share curiosity as motivation but do not have the same points of reference. The findings of this paper suggests that frames of reference are informed by leisure lifestyles of serious participants and as proximate tourists they drew upon their knowledge of everyday sporting spaces, local resources and their insider status developing capital for local leisure participants within the wider visiting tourist community. As Rickly & Vidon (2017) have also argued, leisure participants use their



lifestyle commitment as leverage to assert authority, particularly in spaces they see themselves as locals.

In addition to the proximate tourist experience during the event, these findings also show the ways in which the spectacle of a major sports event creates contestation in everyday leisure space beyond its temporality. Increases in casual cycling as a by-product of the event was considered problematic for committed cyclists who negotiate a complex relationship with road users throughout the year. Their lifestyle proximity promoted strong connections to the local environment which informed their attitudes towards its use (also see Rickly & Vidon, 2017). Thus the hosting of major sports events can be somewhat paradoxical for local participants providing greater connections to the sporting community whilst also creating tensions in their everyday leisure practice.

This paper has sought to situate the performance of everyday leisure alongside the employment of external facing place making strategies in tourism destinations. Whilst consultation and engagement with local residents is an established practice within the planning and staging of major sports events there is little evidence of the recognition of local sport participant communities as a connected and invested stakeholder group with specific place attachments and identities (also see Green, 2001). We suggest future research should consider lifestyle proximity as part of host community experiences of major sports events which may shape the proximate tourist encounter and the experiences of legacy in different ways to those who are less connected to the focus of the event.

Similarly, a focus on social and economic benefits of hosting major sports events on local resident communities is a major area of concern, yet the benefits of hosting an event which has relevance for local sports clubs and communities has not been fully examined. Major sports events organisers should recognise the value connections with local sports clubs could

offer as a pool of resident participant experts and ensure they benefit from the hosting of sports events if not materially then socially and culturally. The opportunities provided for facilitating the interaction between local and visiting members of the wider sporting community should also be considered to ensure local sports communities are represented in sport tourism event space.

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