

**Lifestyle Migration:  
Searching for the Good Life**

An Anthropological Study among Lifestyle Travellers and Migrants in Ubud, Indonesia

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**Master's Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

Ubud lies inland on the island of Bali in Indonesia, surrounded by lush rice fields, palm trees and active volcanoes. Since the early 1900s travellers have been mesmerized by its beauty and inviting local inhabitants. In more recent times Ubud have been increasingly attracting western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants who have decided to embrace the small town as their new host community.

The aim of this research has been to provide a clearer understanding of specific factors that has turned lifestyle migration into an increasingly growing phenomenon in the western world. First by locating the reasons why the lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants initially left their country of origin. Then, by observing and participating in their extensive variety of “alternative” activities. “Alternative” for the western lifestyle travellers and migrants living in Ubud means a lifestyle that mainly consist of participating in yoga and meditation sessions, attending spiritual workshops, and from being conscious of ones diet. The ethnographic fieldwork is based on six months of participant observation and interviews conducted between January and July 2015. The research is further supported by wider ethnographic literature within the Anthropology of Tourism.

This thesis shows how the western migrants have left their home country in search of the good life and how this is essentially due to four core segments. The main influential themes that were identified in my informants search for the good life were namely; Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. It is also discussed how these segments vary between the two main categories of informants, which are women in their 30s to 50s, and retired women and couples. Still, the similarities are prominent as both categories have left their mundane life in the west in search of a better quality of life.

## **Acknowledgement**

This thesis marks the completion of a project that has been on my mind since I first visited Ubud in early 2013. It would not have been possible without the people who inspired and assisted me before, during, and after my research. First of all, I would like to thank my enthusiastic and patient supervisor, Arve Sørum, for all his guidance along the way. I would also like to thank Marianne Lien and Signe Lise Howell for their useful tips before my departure. Further to that, I would like to express my gratitude for the useful insights and advice from Graeme MacRae, Scott Cohen, Erik Cohen, Nelson H. Graburn, and Ni Made Citrayanthi. Not to mention, my sincere gratitude to all my informants, without you there would be no project or research topic to write about. Also, a great thank you to all the teachers and administration at Cinta Bahasa, especially Arie Triono and Kadek Yaza, for providing me with the knowledge of the local culture and the Indonesian language. In addition, a special gratitude goes towards “Villa Kitty”, a rescue centre for abandoned cats and kittens in Bali. In this sanctuary I could always seek refuge and receive endless cuddles from the numerous cats and kittens that needed the love and attention as much as I did. Furthermore, I want to express my everlasting thankfulness to my wonderful parents. Last, but not least, I would like to express my gratefulness to the remarkable beings that came to visit me in Ubud, without you my stay and this thesis would not have been the same. Furthermore, to the ones who spend countless hours proofreading my drafts, you know who you are. Even though, this paper marks the end of this project, I sincerely hope it is not my last encounter with Ubud and its wonderful inhabitants.

Terima Kasih Banyak!

## **Preface**

After completing my Bachelor degree a few years back, I celebrated by backpacking around South East Asia. One day as I was enjoying a cup of tea and reading the local newspaper, one specific article caught my attention. The article elaborated how the population of Denmark were the happiest people on earth, while my country of origin Norway came a close second. This information was conducted and compiled in a report called the *World Happiness Report*. A report that was first published in April 2012, in support of the United Nations High Level Meeting on Happiness and Well Being. After the initial report in 2012, it has since been published twice more, in 2013 and again in 2015. This particular morning, when I first took notice of the report, my curiosity was triggered towards what specific factors that would make people happy in their everyday life. This curiosity laid the foundation of what has become the topic of this thesis, namely western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants search for the good life while residing in the town of Ubud in Indonesia.

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*Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life,  
the whole aim and end of human existence*

Aristotle

## **Chapter One – Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of the research topic, starting by stating the research aim and thesis statement. Secondly, an introduction to the field is given to provide a “taste” of what it feels like entering and residing in the town of Ubud. Furthermore, the Anthropology of Tourism and the study of lifestyle migrants are briefly discussed to provide an historical context of both Ubud and the research topic. Then, two examples related to common behaviour amongst residing westerners are given to demonstrate normal and accepted behavioural patterns amongst lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud. Finally, the thesis structure is outlined.

### **Research Aim and Thesis Statement**

This study seeks to contribute to the current academic debates within the discipline of Anthropology of Tourism and is centrally focused on Lifestyle Migration. The main objective is to examine what makes western lifestyle migration a growing phenomenon. In this paper the focus and context will remain within the small inland town of Ubud in the Indonesian province of Bali. In order to seek out answers to this question, two key aims will be addressed. First, the aspects that influence a person to leave their home environment and migrate to a foreign country will be discussed. Then, the type of activities the lifestyle travellers and migrants were involved in will be carefully examined and analysed in order to determine why Ubud was chosen as their destination. This thesis has focused on lifestyle travellers and migrants who stay in Ubud for a minimum of three months annually. Further to that, the focus will remain on individuals who have chosen an “alternative” lifestyle in their new host community. In this context “alternative” relates to people who have incorporated a regular yoga and meditation practise, who frequently attend spiritual workshops, in addition to having a non-traditional diet<sup>1</sup>.

### **An Introduction to the Field**

“Do you like American country music?” asked the taxi driver as I seated myself in his car. I did not want to ruin his enthusiasm and replied with a smile. As we left the busy airport and got deeper into the island, the streetlights disappeared and it was all black except the head lights from the car. The narrow streets were gradually filling up with barking dogs snapping at the tires as we drove past.

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1 A regular yoga practise in Ubud is practising yoga and meditation daily. In addition, most would attend workshops once a week as a minimum. A non-traditional diet is assuming that a traditional diet consist of meat. In Ubud most western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants are vegetarian, vegan, on a raw diet or on a detox. All in which will be explained at a later stage.



Distant drumming could be heard over the cheerful country music and the wheezing of the air conditioning. Even though the windows were closed, a strong, yet delicate scent of incense would seep through. As we were getting closer to Ubud, robust wooden doors that leads into family temples and compounds would start to make their appearance. They looked mystifying in the darkness, as did the full moon shining down through a thin cover of clouds. As I went to bed that night I remember thinking of a phrase that ended up being commonly heard throughout my time in the field; “There is something about Ubud...”

### **“Ubud is planning breakfast, lunch and dinner around your yoga schedule”<sup>2</sup>**

As I was looking for a vacant seat at the small café situated alongside an overgrown footpath not far from my house, I notice two middle-aged women. They have a relaxed look on their face and I overhear that they had just finished a yoga class. Both wear loose fitted clothes and the tallest of the two is gently stretching her arms out and up towards the gradually darkening sky. She starts to hum quietly and steps further out onto the footpath. She tells her friend that she feels like dancing and starts to spin around while humming a little louder. Nobody else in the open air restaurant seems to take any notice of the woman swaying and humming in front of them. I pick a spot in the corner and flip the first page of the menu, which tells me that I have located a café where “The Bliss of Bali” can be felt through their locally harvested organic food. From my slightly elevated spot in the corner, on a layer of pink and yellow cushions, I can overlook the entire café. There are a total of eight tables made from driftwood, accompanied by bamboo chairs placed under a straw covered roof. The sun is setting and the mosquitoes are starting to appear. The “mizzie coils” are carefully being lit and placed under the tables in an attempt to keep them away. A middle aged woman from central Europe is arriving. The Balinese waiter recognizes her and greets her, “Would you like your usual table mam?” “No, thank you Made<sup>3</sup>. Have you seen the magical moon tonight? It is a full moon. I would like to sit out there.” The waiter gently nods while the woman takes a seat at the standalone table placed along the footpath. After being seated she smiles gracefully while looking up at the starlit sky and the full moon shining down from above.

The island of Bali is one of the world’s most thoroughly studied societies. A number of renowned scholars and writers, such as the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, have given the place much attention. People’s fascination and attraction towards Bali and the town of Ubud is constantly growing. The place appeals not just to scholars and researchers anymore, as it did in the

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2 Quote from: [www.lifecurator.co/travel/return-to-your-place-of-last-happiness](http://www.lifecurator.co/travel/return-to-your-place-of-last-happiness)

3 Made is the name of the local Balinese waiter.

early 1900s. In addition to short term tourists and backpackers, it now attracts a diverse range of lifestyle travellers and migrants from all over the world. As this paper will detail, these travellers arrive not just looking for a warm and sunny place to unwind, but rather a new host environment to explore themselves through alternative activities while searching for find the good life.

A great variety of literature has been written on the Anthropology of Tourism and over the years several subcategories within the discipline has sprouted. Thus, literature on Lifestyle Migration, Retirement Migration, and Backpacker Ethnography, has become increasingly common. What this paper seeks to emphasize is how people's reasons for migrating is not merely due to a warmer climate or cheaper prices. In the case of Ubud, these factors alone are insufficient. I will argue that for the long term travellers and migrants living in Ubud, it is instead related to the “escapement” of personal related matters and from the mundane life in their home country. By escaping their previous life they are free to try new activities and challenge themselves through a number of self-development practises. This search for a better quality of life is seen as a personal quest towards the good life for the ones studied while doing ethnographic research in Ubud.

## **Studying Lifestyle Migrants**

Since serving as one of the central destinations along the “Hippie Trail” in the 1960s and 1970s, Ubud has remained an alluring enclave for travellers seeking something “out of the ordinary”. It has a long reputation as an enticing destination for travellers and its relaxed atmosphere has drawn an “alternative” crowd and “drifters” for decades (Cohen 1977). Going into the field I did not expect to be lying on floors taking deep breaths, breathing heavily and moaning “aaaaaaahhh”. Nor did I foresee sitting in circles holding hands with complete strangers while looking deeply into their eyes as tears were running down their cheeks. Neither did I predict discussing colonic treatments or any other bowel movements as the main topic over dinner. Nevertheless, as this thesis will illustrate, such events and occurrences were far from uncommon, it was instead normal everyday life in Ubud.

### **“Ubud is crying while hugging strangers”<sup>4</sup>**

One afternoon after a yoga class, the only male participant looked around and strides across the room heading towards my Scandinavian informant. For her, there was no escape. The arms were wide open and he flung them around her with no intention of letting go anytime soon. For someone as new to the field as I was, I panicked. His sweat was still gleaming from the yoga session and I

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<sup>4</sup> Quote from: [www.lifecurator.co/travel/return-to-your-place-of-last-happiness](http://www.lifecurator.co/travel/return-to-your-place-of-last-happiness)

had never seen this man before in my life, so for me and my “Norwegian coldness”, a hug was out of the question. The man was unaware that I lacked his enthusiasm for hugging, and after finishing hugging my informant, he had his eyes set on me. He presented me with a smile and in a friendly gesture he picked up my scented eye bag from the floor and approached me with arms open and ready for a hug<sup>5</sup>. Instinctively I ducked and got away. It took me a few weeks to get used to similar encounters from complete strangers. Moreover, to come to terms with the fact that my behaviour in this situation was the strange one, not his. Gradually, hugging became part of everyday life for me as well. Hugging strangers at road side restaurants under a full moon or receiving kisses on the cheek before and after a yoga class eventually started to feel, not just welcoming, but also a normal part of everyday life in Ubud.

### **“Give me a hug darling! We are in Ubud after all”**

As time went by I realised that I would not work up the courage to drive a scooter on my own, like most other western lifestyle traveller and migrant in Ubud. Instead, I would often be asked if I needed a ride by other westerners. One day as I was walking towards Ubud looking for a shoe repairman, a man in his late 40s stopped and asked me where I was going. I told him I was looking for someone who would be able to sew my shoes back together as a leather strap had come loose. He told me to “hop on the back” and started to tell me how he had “escaped” Australia a few years ago as it was getting “waaaaay too mainstream and materialistic” for his taste. Currently, he was performing a variety of alternative healing practises in a newly build establishment in the outskirts of Ubud. For him Ubud provides the sanctuary he was looking for when he decided to pack up and leave Australia. With his ability to speak the local language he was able to ask two Balinese men sitting by the side of the road if they knew where I could fix my shoes. They kept repeating “Jalan Hanoman, Jalan Hanoman” referring to the street where the repairman was located and pointed in the same direction as we were heading. We found the street and as I got off the motor bike, he turned to me and said: “Give me a hug darling! We are in Ubud after all.”

## **Thesis Structure**

In Chapter Two this thesis will provide an overview surrounding the different theoretical perspectives in relation to the Anthropology of Tourism. It includes an historical approach in

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5 These “home-made/sewn” eye bags were filled with black sand from the holy mountain, Gunung Agung. To add a calming effect they were scented with aromatic oils. These eye bags were frequently used at the end of each session during the “relaxation” period, and would be carefully laid over our eyes by the yoga teacher.

conceptualising Anthropology of Tourism and examines the literature of tourism while holding a firm focus on western lifestyle travellers and migrants. In addition, it pays attention to the retirees who have retreated either long term or permanently to Ubud after retiring. Further to that, it dedicates a small section to short term tourists and backpackers in order to elaborate on other arriving visitors as they are a significant part of the townscape. Chapter Two then continues to provide an overview of the four main causes why people decide to reside in Ubud, namely; Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. Chapter Three will present the methodological framework used while conducting the research. First, a brief introduction of the researcher is given and why Ubud was chosen as a field of study. Then, the selected methods of study are established, namely participant observation and the interviewing procedures. Finally, the ethical considerations are explained. Then, in Chapter Four statistical details are provided before the history of Ubud is presented. A historical journey is given from colonial times in the early 1900s, through the Hippie era, stages of mass tourism, and finally to the modern day Ubud. Chapter Five looks at specific themes that were raised by my informants during interviews and through participant observations. These themes include Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. This chapter also provides several examples from the field, including encounters with informants and extracts from their daily lives in Ubud. To provide context and meaning, the stories and extracts have been analysed and interpreted in relation to the theories presented in Chapter Two. Then, the concluding chapter will review and reflect on the aims of this research. Finally, the thesis provides further research suggestions before concluding with final remarks.

## Chapter Two – Theoretical Perspectives

As the main focus of this thesis is on lifestyle migration this chapter will first present an historical review in relation to the literature surrounding the Anthropology of Tourism. Here, four distinctive types of tourists will be elaborated, namely the “organised mass tourist”, the “individual mass tourist”, the “explorer”, and the “drifter”. Being a lifestyle traveller or migrant in Ubud goes beyond the definition of being a tourist. Hence, my informant’s reasons and motivations for leaving their home country will be touched upon in this section. Secondly, how individuals from developed countries have become able to travel more extensively is looked at. In this section there will also be a specific focus on the travel patterns of retirees, tourists, and backpackers. Finally, theories relating to the four main reasons for migrating will be elaborated on. In the context of this paper, these reasons relate to Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness as they are the core components in western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants search for the good life.

### Anthropology of Tourism

“Tourism is functionally and symbolically equivalent to other institutions that humans use to embellish and add meaning to their lives.” (Graburn 1977: 17)

Gradually tourism has been accepted as a field worthy of ethnographic study. For a long time tourism and being a tourist was seen as a western phenomenon for people in newly industrialized countries. Therefore, it was mainly seen as a field for sociologist and economists (Burns 2004: 3, Nunez 1963: 347, Yamashita 2003: 6). Things were slowly starting to change when Nunez (1963) published an anthropological article on tourism from the highland village of Cajititlan, Jalisco in Mexico. At that point in time, tourism was on a steady rise amongst an increasing number of westerners. People were travelling for pleasure and tourism was on its way of becoming one of the largest businesses in the world. Nunez predicted the need for anthropologists to be studying of tourists and tourism (Nunez 1963: 347-352) and throughout the 1970s a small group of researchers started to acknowledge tourism as an important anthropological field of study<sup>6</sup> (Burns 2004: 4). Then, in 1977 Valene Smith published *Hosts and Guests*, a book that for the first time in history would provide a detailed description of the impact of tourism.

A few years later, continuing on the subject of tourism, Nash (1981) addressed the significance of studying tourism and pointed out three main reasons to why it had not been studied earlier. He

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the leading writers within Anthropology of Tourism include Cohen (1972), Graburn (1977), Nash (1977), and Smith (1977).

claimed that an ethnographer does not want to be compared to a tourist. Furthermore, that tourism has been looked at as an unimportant part of culture in which most anthropologists were not willing to partake. A final point was how tourism was still considered a modern phenomenon and therefore too recent to earn anthropological legitimacy (Nash 1981: 461).

As one of the core writers in *Anthropology of Tourism*, Cohen exemplified four distinctions between particular types of tourists in the early 1970s. The first group he referred to was the “organized mass tourist” which he claimed to be the least adventurous. The mass tourists would observe their surroundings, but not actually experience it. This type of tourist would normally buy a package tour that included a fixed itinerary. Those travelling on an organized mass tour would mostly stay within their confined group. Few decisions would be made on their own, they would join group excursions, and be transported by bus (Cohen 1972: 167). The second group, the “individual mass tourist”, is similar, but has more freedom as the whole trip is not entirely pre-planned and pre-booked. The third classification, specified as the “explorer”, arranges everything themselves, and venture off the typical tourist trails. Despite this, they still prefer to lodge themselves in relatively comfortable locations and use dependable means of transportation. Furthermore, the “explorer” is interested in the local culture and language, but is nevertheless cautious and will retreat to their comfort zone if things get too complicated (Cohen 1977: 168). The fourth and final category, Cohen named the “drifter”. The “drifter” has no well-defined goal of his travels, and meander around sharing food and shelter with the local community. Thus, keeping little of his own customs and ways of life (Cohen 1977: 168). The people I engaged with in Ubud were mostly from the “explorer” category, and emphasized how they valued the independent way of travelling and living in Ubud. Being independent travellers, it is interesting to acknowledge the fact that even though many travellers try to merge and interact with the locals, they are in fact interacting mostly with other western travellers and migrants (Cohen 2008: 106).

According to Cohen (1972), the organized mass tourist and the individual mass tourist can be seen as institutionalized tourist roles. They are both handled to a large extent by the tourist industry, such as travel agents, hotel chains, and bus companies. Cohen describe the last two categories, the “explorer” and the “drifter”, as non-institutionalized tourist roles, since they have little to no connection with the tourist industry (Cohen 1977: 168-169). As mentioned, most of the lifestyle migrants I encountered were “explorers” thus trying to avoid the mass tourists altogether. The lifestyle travellers and migrants often seek a more authentic experience. They prefer to enjoy the host culture at their own time and leisure, but most do not fully immerse themselves in their host

society. However, some will try to identify themselves with the locals by learning the language and participate in local ceremonies (Cohen 1972: 174-175). Mass tourists, on the other hand, come to Ubud mainly for the classic tourist attractions (Cohen 1972: 169-171), such as a visit to the Sacred Monkey Forest Sanctuary, visit temples, or to witness a traditional Balinese dance performance.

## **Lifestyle Travellers and Migrants**

“... modern man is more loosely attached to his environment, much more willing to change it ... and is remarkably able to adapt to new environments. He is interested in things, sights, customs, and cultures different to his own, precisely because they are different.” (Cohen 1972: 165)

Being a lifestyle traveller or migrant goes beyond being a tourist and takes the concept one step further, as some even become permanent transnationals who live their lives in two or more locations throughout the year (Kershen 2009: ix). The concept of lifestyle migration has been analysed thoroughly by O'Reilley and Benson (2009) who have been studying lifestyle migrants from different nationalities and social groups. From these studies and data the following definition was reached:

“Lifestyle migration is the spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life.” (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 2)

As western life has become more hectic, western lifestyle travellers and migrants often come to Ubud seeking solitude and privacy, a commodity of high value in many modern western societies. In order to avoid the mass tourist crowds, the migrants locate themselves in the outskirts of Ubud centre. There they enjoy trendy restaurants and comfortable accommodation at reasonable prices, whilst feeling close to nature and the local people, culture, and customs. Most western migrants and travellers rent a one or two story stand-alone houses with rice fields and mountain views. In recent years privacy has become a requirement for many travellers and especially among western travellers who have a high regard for personal space (Hottola 2005: 10-11).

People's motivations for leaving their home-country differ. Lifestyle travelling or migration can take place at any point in one's life, thus the migrants come from a wide range of social backgrounds and family situations. Some relocate due to high unemployment rates in their home country, others have been through divorce or a personally related problems (O'Reilley and Benson

2009). Others feel they have an unstable working environment, or they have a fear of a national economic downfall. Whatever the reason, what ties them together is the common dream for a better, simpler life with freedom from prior constraints. Such a constraint can be discrimination or feeling excluded. However, if treated fairly and with respect one is one step closer to the good life (Fischer 2014: 7).

Some return to their chosen destination yearly, while others made the decision to live in their new location permanently. One of the reasons for leaving their home country is to avoid the mundane everyday life (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 4). Lifestyle travellers and migrants are mostly individuals from the developed part of the world who are both willing and able to escape to what they believe to be a better life (O'Reilley and Benson 2009:1). D'Andrea (2007) discovered a culture of “expressive individualism” in expatriate communities in Goa and Ibiza. Similar to Ubud, these communities manifested themselves in a number of different “alternative” practices, such as yoga, meditation, and spiritual workshops (D'Andrea 2007).

## **Retirement Migration**

A study on Japanese Lifestyle Migration and Tourism in Southeast Asia, Ono (2009) explains how there has been a change in the way people travel. What used to be a short vacation has developed into an extended holiday period that lasts for month, years, and sometimes even as a permanent retirement plan (Ono 2009:43). The nature of retirement migration are often related to financial situations. As many western societies have become increasingly affluent, its population travel farther and for longer periods of time, spending their income abroad. In addition, factors such as a higher life expectancy and early retirement plays a significant role (Diaz 2009: 87). One way of rationalizing retirement migration is people`s accumulated travel experience, thus the concept and boundaries of what constitutes being a tourist or a migrant has become somewhat blurred (Diaz 2009: 88). Therefore, Boroco (2009) gave modern long term tourists a different name; leisure migrants<sup>7</sup>. A term that explains how people travel at their own free will, seeking a different lifestyle in a different country in search of variation in their life (Boroco 2009). These variations often include making performing activities and making changes that is meant to be an improvement to the life one left behind. Thus, leading you in the direction of what is personally perceived to be the good life.

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<sup>7</sup> A term that I have chosen to call lifestyle migrants throughout this paper.



## Tourists and Backpackers

In 1977, Valene Smith defines a tourist as follows: “A temporary leisure person who voluntarily visit a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change” (Smith 1977: 1). Ubud consist of a wide range of travellers, and sometimes it is difficult to determine whether the foreigner is a tourist, backpacker, a long or short term traveller, a permanent migrant, expatriate or retiree<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, permanent lifestyle travellers and migrants are often regarded as tourists, even though most prefer not to be classified as one (Nash 1981: 461). Nevertheless, they all Smith`s definition and the description of being a person at leisure and away from their usual habitat. Most people arrive in Ubud on a tourist visa, but often find themselves enjoying the activities and facilities the town has to offer and decide to prolong their stay<sup>9</sup>. Western tourists and backpackers are a highly visible part of the townscape in Ubud, as are the tourist groups from China, Japan, Malaysia, and South Korea<sup>10</sup>. However, the focus of this thesis remain on western long term lifestyle travellers and migrants who are staying three months or more, as the ones staying shorter are, in the context of this thesis being classified as tourists. Being a former stopover on the “Hippie Trail”, Ubud has over the years developed into a comfortable place for travellers to retreat to, also known as enclaves. While doing research in the town of Pai in Northern Thailand, Cohen (2008) explains how research on tourist and backpacker enclaves are a rather recent phenomenon. The idea to study these arenas was a result of researchers and anthropologists being travellers themselves. Backpacker ethnographies would study the travellers' motivation, their interactions with other travellers, how they travelled, and whether or not the trip intention had a deeper personal meaning (Cohen 2008: 106). These are some of the questions this thesis will seek to find answers to.

## Escapism

Initially, the focus for this thesis was to encircle the food and eating habits among lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud. However, I soon realised that the food was just one of the components related to people`s movement to Ubud and that the food scene was not separate from the other elements. Instead, their reasoning for moving was complemented by four core components, namely; Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. These segments were all related to the

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8 An expatriate, commonly referred to as expat, is a person who temporarily or permanently live in a country other than the one they grew up in.

9 Upon arrival in Indonesia one is issued a Tourist Visa that lasts for 30 days.

10 These tourist groups are often seen in big crowds walking in a long line behind a small flag being held by the tourist guide. The four countries mentioned are specified as they have the highest numbers of non-western arrivals in Bali according to government statistics: <http://www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2>

western lifestyle traveller's and migrant's search for the good life.

People leave their home country for various reasons. The westerners seeking spiritual enlightenment and self-realization in Ubud are migrating to escape something. Bateson refer to a statement made by a representative from Alcoholics Anonymous showing how alcoholics use alcohol “as an escape from personal enslavement to the false idea of a materialistic society” (Bateson 1972: 317). Similarly, the western lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud are in search of rediscovering themselves and are on a quest to self-fulfilment (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 3).

People travel to relieve the ordinary, to end their routine for a certain period of time. However, their reasons for doing so are diverse and plentiful. According to Smith (1989) there are three key elements that needs to be in place before one decides to travel; time, money, and peer group approval (Smith 1989: 2). After the Second World War people in the west have increasingly been working less, hence, being left with more leisure time. What used to be a 60 hour work week, in the United States post war, is in some places today halved. During the Second World War, women started taking on paid work. This left the combined family income with a greater surplus that would often be used on holidays. Finally, the element of peer group approval relates to how ones community, friends, and family see your holiday destination as appropriate or not (Smith 1989: 2-3). Put another way, “the journey you set out on needs to be morally justified by one's home community” (Graburn 1977: 24). If ones destination is not found appropriate, the peers find that the money should have been spent on a more suitable material investment, such as redecorating the house or buying a new car (Graburn 1977: 24). Over time, the aim of travelling has changed. In traditional societies, a pilgrimage would bring dignity and honour to the person's home community. However, in modern western societies, people will instead travel to gain status among their peers by seeking out exotic places, while others will travel to (re) gain mental or physical health (Graburn 1977: 24, Leivestad 2007). Among the western lifestyle travellers and migrants that I interviewed in Ubud, the latter was in many cases their reason for leaving their home country.

According to Graburn, being a traveller or migrant adds meaning to one's life and is a “ritual” that stand in opposition to peoples mundane life at home and at work (Graburn 2001: 23). How it adds meaning however, depends on certain components; such as gender, occupation, and life stage. These factors help determine *where* a person decides to spend their time away from home. It also dictates *how* they have experienced their time in their chosen destination (Graburn 2001: 24). Throughout our lives we experience different events that mark a change. It could be the transition from being a University student to becoming someone's employee, or from being single to becoming someone's

husband or wife. Arnold van Gennep (1960) referred to such events as a “rite of passage”. In such a transition period the lifestyle migrants I encountered expressed a need to “escape” from whatever was happening in their life. Thus, making the decision to leave their home country for an indefinite time<sup>11</sup>.

## **New Challenges**

During a “rite of passage”, the transition from one state to another is divided into three stages. To begin with, people go through a “separation phase”, a process in which people are freed from the routine of the mundane and ordinary in ones life. Next, is the “transitional phase”, here a person no longer feel connected to the previous stage, but is not yet incorporated into the new one. The British anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) referred to this phase as “the liminal period”, a time when ordinary life cease to exist, and those involved strip themselves from their previous identities<sup>12</sup>. This also relates to Bateson's “Theory of Alcoholism”, as the migrant are only able to see that there is a need for a change until they have “hit bottom” (Bateson 1972: 319). In the cases of western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants in Ubud, many found themselves to be “neither here nor there” and that they were “betwixt and between” (Turner 1969: 95). When being in such a state of mind people often decide to stretch their own personal boundaries and search for their “true self”<sup>13</sup>. This state can be seen as a “low”, as peoples' reasons for leaving their home country is often related to a rather significant life change, such as retiring, loosing ones job, going through a divorce, or personally related problems. In the state of liminality, one actually need to experience a “low” in order to experience a “high” (Turner 1969: 97, Bateson 1972). Thus, indicating that whatever comes after the “liminal period” is an improvement to their previous state of being. This way of perceiving life is a common perception among western lifestyle travellers and migrants. When going through a “liminal period”, one will easily relate to and find people who are going through the same process (Turner 1969: 95-96, Nash 1996: 41). As a result of being in comparable situations people find recognition and community through symbolic behaviours, such as dressing similarly, and from wearing the same type of jewellery. A special fellowship is being formed by exploring new challenges together. In the case of Ubud this relates to eating similar food, from attending the same yoga sessions, meditation courses, and by participating in related spiritual workshop. Through these exercises a social bond, to otherwise unknown beings are being formed, thus creating a state of

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11 The issue of Escapism will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

12 Liminality means being “in the middle”, in this case, in the middle of a ritual, or a process. The participants are in other words on a “threshold” on a path towards something else.

13 This is done in a number of different ways, which will be exemplified and analysed in Chapter Five.

“communitas” (Turner 1969: 96). The third, and final stage in the process, is “reintegration” (Gennep 1960). In this stage people enter back into a more structured way of life. However, for the lifestyle traveller and migrant that were encountered in Ubud, the reintegration process back into a western way of life was yet to come and will therefore not be discussed in this paper.

## **Freedom**

In 1961, Leach demonstrated the division between work and travel and the “sacred and profane”. By drawing on Durkheim’s theory from 1912, Leach showed how an event, such as a holiday, ends the normal and instead constructs something “out of the ordinary” (Leach 1961: 133-134). It is interesting to acknowledge how the western lifestyle travellers and migrants who reside in Ubud have been able to extend the “sacred time”, thus shorten the time they spend working. According to Leach, the western view on time is seen as something that repeats itself. Repetition reminds people of work, obligations, and pressure to perform, hence repetitive behaviour is something people try to avoid while residing in Ubud. Instead, they seek out new activities that they would have been unable to perform in their home environment. Since the west also sees time as something that passes, the migrants and travellers try to prolong the feeling of the “sacred” by performing activities that allow them to forget that time is circular and repetitive (Leach 1961: 132). Overall, most westerners living in Ubud have a considerable amount of leisure time, a freedom and a luxury most people in western societies only get to experience when they are on vacation.

## **Happiness**

The word vacation stems from the Latin word *vacare* which means to leave one's house empty (Graburn 1977: 18-19). Graburn explains how being a tourist means that you are not working, and that it involves travelling. He also elaborates on how the western concept of travelling is contested, and that the western society is under the impression that “work and play”, should not be mixed<sup>14</sup> (Graburn 1977: 18). What the lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud seek is activities to make them feel good, both physically and emotionally. In short, they are searching for the good life and happiness. When analysing how lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud deem well-being, I will draw on Fisher's (2014) conceptions. Fischer finds that being safe from harm and one's health to be two key factors to a person's well-being, in addition to solid family and social relations (Fischer 2014: 5). However, he does not find these factors to be sufficient. Aspirations and the opportunity to pursue one's aspiration is also needed. Further to that, believing in the success of a project that goes

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<sup>14</sup> “Play” in this instance means time spent not working.

beyond ones self-interest will provide meaning and direction in a person's life (Fischer 2014: 7-8). How my informants were searching for the good life and trying to achieve happiness was highly individual. Consequently, the *World Happiness Report* (2012) was purposely used as a template in order to seek out the essential criteria that make people happy. The most relevant aspects for this thesis was related to four categories. Namely, age, gender, family relations, in addition to work and income. Further to that, the lifestyle travellers and migrants I will describe in this paper, was seeking to integrate both leisure, and spirituality. These components combined construct a holistic lifestyle in their search for happiness and a foundation for what they consider to be the good life in their new non-western habitat (D`Andrea 2007: 4).

## **Summary**

To sum up, this chapter has reviewed a number of key concepts within the Anthropology of Tourism. For the purpose of this paper, the focus remained primarily on concepts related to lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants from countries in the western part of the world. However, it also addressed retirement migration, tourists and backpackers. Further to that, this chapter provided an historical approach to give an overview of travel patterns and to clarify some specific and distinctive categories of travellers. Finally, a review of the four concepts; Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness was highlighted in order to establish a conceptual starting point for the empirical examination. This thesis will now turn to the methodology and methods used to advance this research agenda.

## **Chapter Three – Methodology**

The two previous chapters have introduced the aims of this thesis, in addition to the theoretical framework that will be used in this paper. The purpose of this chapter is to present a reflective account of the main methods and techniques used while conducting ethnographic research in Ubud in Indonesia. Firstly, Chapter Three will resonate on my own background and role in the field, and also why Ubud was chosen as the preferred field of study. Moreover, an introduction on how the informants were initially encountered and approached is given. Then, the participant observations and interviewing procedures are elaborated on. Finally, the ethical considerations are discussed.

### **Background of the Researcher**

My interest in lifestyle migration and what influences a person to leave their home country for longer periods of time, stems from my own experience as a long term traveller. A few years back I made the decision to move from Norway to New Zealand for three years to pursue my Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology. After completing my degree I purchased a one way ticket and travelled around South East Asia, exploring new countries and cultures. During my travels I met a great number of westerners who had retreated from their former life. My encounters with these long term travellers triggered my curiosity towards what would influence such decisions. The eagerness to find these answers contributed to framing the research topic of this thesis.

### **Why Ubud?**

Ubud is a gathering point for long term travellers in South East Asia. While the south is dominated by mass tourists, bikinis and discos, Ubud is a place which attracts travellers and migrants interested in something other than the sun, sea, and parties. Instead, it appeals to a crowd interested in yoga, meditation, relaxation, and spirituality (Citrayanthi 2015: 38). Ubud lies inland, making it more of an effort to get there compared to the easily accessed beach towns in southern Bali. From the airport it takes about one to two hours to get there by car depending on traffic, compared to ten minutes to the beach.

With the increase of low cost airlines, Bali is easily accessible for backpackers and travellers coming from other parts of Asia<sup>15</sup>. Being an arena where a larger number of travellers meet, Ubud can be referred to as an enclave (Cohen 2008: 106, Wilson & Richards 2008: 190-191). Such

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<sup>15</sup> Bali is also easily reached from Australia within two to three hours.

enclaves are known as “safe havens” (Hottola 2005), a place to retreat and rest after travelling for longer periods of time. In modern day Ubud there is a large network of social spaces where only other travellers and migrants congregate with hardly any interference from the host community. Within these arenas the visitors feel in control and relaxed. Thus, they are able to recover, regain control of their lives, and absorb the culture confusion they have encountered while travelling. (Hottola 2005: 2-3). Enclaves like these first made their appearance in locations around the world in the 1960s. They sprouted in little developed locations along popular stretches, who were not yet overrun by mass tourism. Here, temporary communities were developed by travellers who needed affordable accommodation and services (Cohen 2008: 106). Ubud as an enclave can also be seen in relation to Turner's “communitas” (Turner 1969: 126). Enclaves have sprung up in places where the social structure, as western travellers know it, is absent.

My encounter with Ubud came while backpacking in South East Asia. After hearing about a “relaxing and alternative place” in Bali from various travel magazines and by word of mouth from fellow travellers, I ended up in Ubud. This “safe haven” provided me with all the comforts a traveller could want; friendly locals, clean and cheap accommodations, and an excellent food and drink selection from various cafés and restaurants. Being a rural paradise (Hottola 2005) for all kinds of visitors, this paper targets the ones who have decided to stay in Ubud long term, or to make the place their permanent home.

## **An Anthropologist in the field**

During my time in Ubud I rented a house among the lush green rice fields along a narrow concrete footpath. Altogether there were three houses situated after one another on a Balinese family compound. To get to the houses one had to open a squeaky iron gate guarded by the short and timid family dog. The houses and land was owned by an elderly man who had initially showed me the house. He lived with his family back in the village, while his son, daughter in law, and their two teenage children were living on the premises. On their compound was a vast collection of caged birds, many of whom were speaking English phrases, such as “I love you”, and “how are you”, followed by a morbid laughter. In the back of the compound was the family temple where the landlady would lay out the daily incense and offerings. The next two houses were rental properties which were rented out on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. I rented the second house, made from bamboo on a concrete foundation. It had a bedroom with sliding glass doors onto a veranda upstairs overlooking the rice fields and the mountains in the distance. Downstairs there was a kitchen area and an open air bathroom. The third house, being slightly larger and with a private swimming pool,

was occupied by a single female lifestyle migrant from America. After being neighbours for five months, she was replaced by another western single female shortly after her departure.

It turned out that I had positioned myself in an area congregated by lifestyle migrants and long term travellers. The houses in this area was not built for the locals. My compound was the rare exception of having the family living on the premises. In most cases the locals would live further afield<sup>16</sup>, but still tend the premises. Every morning at dawn my wake up call was by the gentle sweep of a broom, accompanied by the roosters in the distance. Later, as the rainy season was coming to an end, the roosters were replaced by the quacking of geese left to stomp the ground of the newly harvested rice field. On the very first morning in my house I discovered that the unopened bag of peanuts had moved from one end to the other on the kitchen counter. I noticed little bite marks. Then, as I looked up, a pair of grey mice were looking back at me. Realizing they were unlikely to move, I came to the conclusion that we can share the house, but we are not sharing the food. From then on, everything went into the fridge, even plates, cups, and cutlery. One morning as I was writing up my field notes, I noticed a creature of considerable size outside the window. On the roof only a few meter from where I was sitting, a monitor lizard was basking in the sun. Living by myself, he felt undisturbed and came back most mornings before the tin roof became too hot and he sidled back down into the trees. I had no choice but to embrace his company. The wild life is part of every day life in Ubud. Living *with* nature in this way feels authentic and something lifestyle migrants claim their western society has lost.

## **Studying Lifestyle Travellers and Migrants**

The lifestyle migrants I encountered in Ubud can roughly be divided into two categories. Namely, women in their 30s to 50s, and retirees. The former, for the most part, arrive as single individuals and do not have any children. The retirees, on the other hand, more often come as couples and have children. Since the age span stretched from early 30s to late 70s, my informants have a diversity that fits well with O'Reilley and Benson's definition of a lifestyle migrant being individuals of *all* ages (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 2). I set the minimum length of stay for my informants to three months, to exclude tourists and short term travellers from my study. Generally lifestyle travellers and migrants sojourn would last for three to eight months. However, most would prolong their stay if job commitments and family obligations would allow it. To live in Ubud for longer periods of time, one needs to be relatively affluent (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 2) in order to cover air fare,

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<sup>16</sup> These houses were built on previous rice fields. The owner would no longer be able to afford housing in the same area as travellers or migrants.



visa costs, and living expenses. Due to Indonesian laws, buying property is problematic for foreigners. Consequently, most rent a house or parts thereof. The rent often include the house being cleaned several times per week, and some even include served breakfast. Breakfast normally consists of freshly cut seasonal fruit, vegetable omelet, and a large thermos of hot water for tea or coffee.

My research was conducted between January and July 2015. Initially I did not have a gender preference for my informants, but soon realized that the female to male ratio was favouring women. Men have not been excluded from this thesis, neither are they explicitly mentioned as my focus is not on gender. My informants were predominantly of western origin. However, the west is a rather broad term. Smith (1989) discovered that most lifestyle migrants come from the world's most industrialized countries, such as the United States, Canada, France, Germany, and Sweden (Smith 1989: 3). Being close to Bali I have also chosen to include people from Australia in addition to North America and Europe (Sørensen 2003: 852). As we will see in Chapter Four, these nationalities were among the first to visit Bali in the early stages of tourism.

In order to distinguish a short term traveller from a long term one, one of my initial questions were how long they intended to stay in Ubud. Visa restrictions provided certain limitations as you normally only receive a 30 day tourist visa upon arrival<sup>17</sup>. This visa can be extended twice before you have to leave the country<sup>18</sup>. This gives you a total of 90 days. Based on these limitations, I decided that 90 days would be the minimum length of time an informant intended to stay.

The first four weeks in Ubud I attended Indonesian language classes for two hours a day in order to learn Bahasa Indonesia, and to meet potential informants<sup>19</sup>. The language school was only a 20 minutes walking distance from my house. The walk followed the narrow pathway, passing a yoga studio, several restaurants, an organic café, and massage parlours along the way<sup>20</sup>. Here, I would meet travellers and migrants on their way to breakfast, a yoga class, or going shopping. In either end of the path there were shops where groceries and organic local produce could be bought. Thus, making this part of Ubud a preferred place to live for many lifestyle travellers and migrants as

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17 It should be mentioned that the visa rules can change at any given moment and are under constant re-evaluation. Therefore, I can only speak of the rules that were in place during the time of my research from January to July 2015.

18 However, other options are available, such as the Social/Cultural Visa. Being a single entry visa that is valid for up to six months, it supports the idea of foreigners learning Indonesian way of life, such as the language and customs. This particular visa need to be obtained before entering the country and also applies to foreigners visiting friends and family.

19 Bahasa Indonesia is the official language spoken in Indonesia. In Bali, both Bahasa Indonesia and the Balinese language are spoken.

20 From one end to the other the footpath was about one kilometre long.

opposed to the hectic tourist centre of Ubud. On my way to school I would also pass locals working on construction sites carrying bags of cement on top of their heads and strong necks. After a week, and from keeping the words of Frøystad in mind, to participate as much as possible while in the field, I worked up the courage to greet those who passed me with a cheerful “Selamat Pagi” instead of bashfully looking down on ground<sup>21</sup>(Frøystad 2003: 249).

Being a western female in a society largely based upon tourism can be a challenge, because it is easy to be categorized as a tourist (Nunez 1989: 270) and be targeted by touts charging higher prices. To my advantage, I had been to Ubud twice before<sup>22</sup>. Hence, I knew the area and where to look for information regarding activities and workshops around town. Three times a week I would go to different bulletin boards to see if any new activities had been posted. In addition, I would pick up the weekly *Bali Buzz* and monthly *Ubud Community News* in search for seminars and workshops. Every Friday I would buy the weekly newspaper, *The Bali Times*, to keep up with the local news.

After initially being regarded as a tourist, I would receive a number of different names from both westerners and locals. At the language school I would be a student of the Indonesian language and culture, in addition to a student of Anthropology. As I started to attend yoga classes more frequently, I would be referred to as a Yogini<sup>23</sup>. After a couple of months, I would be called an expat by other lifestyle travellers and migrants.

## **Participant Observation and Interviewing Procedures**

In order to establish an understanding of the movements and activities performed by lifestyle migrants and travellers, my main method for collecting data was participant observation and interviewing. All observations and interviews were carried out in Ubud in areas where lifestyle travellers and migrants would congregate. After leaving Ubud, some additional information has also been retrieved via email and social media correspondence.

### **Participant observation**

My initial approach in locating informants was shaped by a series of spontaneous choices and

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21 Selamat Pagi means Good Morning in Bahasa Indonesia. A phrase later shortened into just “Pagi”, as this version was a more common way of greeting one another.

22 On both my previous visits to Bali and Ubud I stayed on a 30 day tourist visa.

23 Yogini is a term referring to female yoga students.

random encounters. Other than students and teachers I encountered at the language school, informants would repeatedly emerge in yoga studios. In Ubud there are three main yoga studios. Normally, I attended yoga classes and workshops once or twice per day. Another beneficial arena to meet travellers and migrants and conduct participant observation was in café's and restaurants where lifestyle migrants would gather. In a warm climate place, such as Ubud, most westerners enjoy their meals in a café or restaurant. People with similar interests gather in this social space, not just for a meal or a drink, but to discuss anything from everyday problems to the meaning of life with like minded people (Hottola 2005: 14, Riley 1988).

As I became increasingly accustomed to Ubud I attended a wide variety of holistic, spiritual, and alternative workshops in addition to seminars and meditation courses. This did not only make me feel more connected to my informants, but it also provided me with a better understanding why these activities were performed. Two weeks after my arrival, I also started to volunteer at “Villa Kitty”, a shelter for abandoned cats and kittens. I would visit once or twice a week, normally staying for four hours in the morning or early afternoon. The place was operated by an Australian woman and local Balinese. Every Sunday a vegetarian lunch was served in the courtyard for volunteers and workers. This setting provided me with the opportunity to meet both locals and westerners. From the number of locals working there, the visits also helped improve my language skills. Not to mention that I thoroughly enjoyed giving cuddles to the 130 cats permanently living on the premises.

Other than the contact I had with the locals at “Villa Kitty”, I made sure to support local businesses by buying water and by using laundry services run by Balinese women<sup>24</sup>. Whenever possible fruit and vegetables were bought from road side stalls rather than from big supermarkets. Not just to interact with the locals, but also to practice my bartering skills in Bahasa Indonesia. I would also use the local scooter services several times a week. Local men of all ages would be sitting on bamboo platforms in strategic places around town asking foreigners if they needed transportation. Once I knew the *correct* fare to different location, I ended up using them frequently. This was yet another way for me to practice the local language. In addition, it provided answers to any questions I had in relation to local customs and culture.

## **Interviewing procedures**

As most of my encounters with informants happened randomly I would in most cases not ask for an

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<sup>24</sup> Water is normally bought in a 19 litre reusable water container being brought to your house and put on top of a water dispenser.

interview at the initial encounter, in order to not come on too strong. However, in many cases these random encounters and conversations turned into valuable data. Ubud is a small community and as a white westerner you are being observed and noticed by lifestyle travellers and migrants. I did not work up the courage to drive a scooter which was very common amongst my informants, even though I assimilated into their social world and daily routines (Cohen 2009: 81, Sørensen 2003). Instead I walked the streets of Ubud making myself visible, which I believe increased my access to informants. It turned out to be a useful conversation starter and on a number of occasions westerners would stop and offer me a ride<sup>25</sup>. Seeing me walking around, people would approach me and ask where I was from and if I had moved here. Automatically a trust had been established and I had become “one of them” (Cohen 2009).

In the process of building relations and gaining acceptance from my informants I had no intention of hiding my role as a researcher. Like Sørensen (2003), I found that most people considered the project interesting, sometimes asking for a copy of the final product. Nevertheless, I did experience withdrawal from some interviewees after learning the full scope of the research topic. Apparently, some western migrants receive money from the government for locating expatriates that have overstayed their visa (Citrayanthi 2015: 25). After realizing this aspect, I made sure to point out that the interview would be purely for anthropological research purposes related to my thesis.

The location during an interview would normally be at a restaurant or in a café This is a common setting while conducting research among travellers and migrants (Cohen 2009, Riley 1988, Sørensen 2003). Other interviews would be conducted at the informants home. During an interview the informant would often recommend other migrants as a source for information, which is known as the snowball effect. Many informants would be found at yoga studios after a yoga class. As these studios would have a café on site or nearby this would be a natural place to conduct informal, unstructured interviews. Thus, I made sure to bring my pen and notebook everywhere I went. Even though a digital voice recorder had been purchased for this project specifically, none of the interviews were recorded. Electronic devices is part of the western material world that many of my informants were escaping from<sup>26</sup>. Often, they were seeking an authentic “feel” from the nature around them. Their “back to basic” way of life was not consistent with this electronic device. Therefore, all interview were conducted without any modern help. Instead I jotted down keywords during the interview and transcribed it later the same day, or next morning at the latest. I never felt

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25 Walking the streets of Ubud is normally something only a tourist would do.

26 Even though, laptops and cell phones were used, its use was minimal compared to a modern western society.

this method hindered my collection of data, and agree with Stoller (1999) who believe formal interviewing methods can sometimes interfere with a fieldworker's collection of data.

Even though my interviews were rather casual and informal, I still had an interview guide, and would carefully take notes when suitable. Initially, the interviewees would be asked the same questions. The most common opening questions among travellers are nationality and length of stay (Cohen 2009: 83-84, Sørensen 2003) which I used extensively. Follow by questions regarding their motives for coming back after an initial visit and reasons for leaving their home country. I was also interested in their marital status and whether or not they had any children. However, for those being interviewed a second time or more, a more semi structured approach was taken. For these interviews I would determine if they had any dietary restrictions, such as being a vegetarian or teetotaler<sup>27</sup>. Further to that, their whereabouts and activities was compiled in order to determine the structure of a “typical week”. Namely, their physical activities, where they would eat, if they participated in any local cultural activities, and if they knew how to speak any Bahasa Indonesia<sup>28</sup>.

The interviews would vary in length and form. The informal unstructured interviews would last for 30 minutes or less with open ended questioning. While the semi- structured in depth interviews could sometimes last for up to four hours. All interviews were intentionally conducted to feel more like a regular conversation rather than an interrogation that might intimidate them. Admittedly, I sometimes felt a more formal and structured way of interviewing was expected. Nevertheless, I found the style I chose most appropriate. This casual way of conversing felt natural for both the informant and myself.

## **Ethical Considerations**

In this thesis all of my informants have been carefully anonymised. No names have been mentioned nor nationalities, age, or gender. Even though all informants gave their consent, I can not fully guarantee that they were aware of the broadness of the thesis. Neither can I guarantee whether or not certain informants will be able to recognize themselves or others. Interviews and conversations that were in English are retold in English, while the ones done in a Scandinavian language have been translated into English<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Teetotaler is someone who abstains from alcohol.

<sup>28</sup> Such as attending a funeral ceremony, or how they would celebrate Nyepi Day. Nyepi Day is an annual Hindu holiday, commonly known as Day of Silence

<sup>29</sup> As a number of my informants were from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, some interviews and conversations were in the informant's

## Summary

In summary, Chapter Three has provided an overview of the methodology used while conducting research in Ubud, Indonesia during the months of January to July 2015. Before pointing out the preferred methods, the chapter discussed parts of the researcher's background which have shaped and influenced both the topic and the location for the research. As the aim of the thesis is to provide a better understanding of western lifestyle migration as a growing phenomenon, the preferred method for this research was participant observation and interviewing. In relation to the strategies used, it is important to envision Ubud as a place with a high density of yoga studios and “alternative” eateries. These arenas proved to be the best locations for performing participant observation and interviews, since they are regularly frequented by western lifestyle travellers and migrants. This was mainly because these environments made the respondents feel “at home” and “at ease”. The focus of this thesis will now turn to the history of Bali and the town of Ubud where the fieldwork was conducted.

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language and the author's mother tongue, Norwegian, as this was understood by both parties.

## Chapter Four – History of Ubud

This chapter gives an account of the history of Bali and the town of Ubud. This will provide a better understanding of how and why this exotic place became such a compelling and fascinating destination to study and to reside in. Perhaps most importantly this chapter will show how Ubud, as the spiritual heart of Bali, is not a recent tourist destination. Since the early 1900s, it has been a favoured place to conduct fieldwork and to settle down for people of all life stages and social groups. Thus, the chapter starts off by providing specific demographic facts to Bali and Ubud. Then, an historical account is given from the colonial times in the early 1900s, through the Hippie era in the 1970s, through mass tourism, and to present day Ubud with its extensive and increasing focus towards “alternative” travellers and migrants.

### Demographics

Ubud lies inland on the Indonesian island of Bali in South East Asia. The inland town is surrounded by rice field terraces, palm trees, and fast flowing rivers. At an altitude of around 200 meters the place has cooler temperatures than the hot and humid south. The official Balinese religion is Hindu Dharma which is a mix of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism<sup>30</sup> (De Neeffe 2003: 99). Ritual practices, such as home-made banana leaf squares filled with rice and incense as offerings, are a daily spectacle around Ubud. These practises seek to maintain a harmonious relationship with invisible beings and forces (MacRae 1999: 125). The main source of income for Ubud is from the tourist industry, while a smaller percentage is derived from agriculture (Citrayanthi 2015: 32, Mann 2013: 147-149).

The number of tourists have been on a persistent rise since the beginning of tourism in Bali. While conducting my research in 2015, the number of tourist had exceeded four million people<sup>31</sup>. Statistics show that nearly 17.000 tourists visited Ubud in 1987. Ten years later, in 1997, the numbers have risen to well over 86.000<sup>32</sup> (MacRae 2014: 5). Statistics in Indonesia are neither specific nor consistent and numbers related to foreign residents in Ubud are even harder to come by<sup>33</sup>. However, according to Citrayanthi, the number of people residing in the Ubud district in 2011, was nearly 71.000 people (Citrayanthi 2015: 32). Nonetheless, statistics in Indonesia is organised in a way

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30 In the view of Animism, plants and animals carry a spiritual essence within them.

31 According to [www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2](http://www.disparda.baliprov.go.id/en/Statistics2)

32 MacRae retrieved these numbers from Dinas Pariwisata and Ubud Police Statistics while doing his doctorate in 1997.

33 Based on information via e-mail from MacRae on January 19th 2016.

which makes it difficult to decode the number of expatriates living in the country. Long term travellers and permanent lifestyle migrants often rent houses and do not sign a formal lease. According to MacRae, statistics in Ubud only refer to those who have formally registered into an accommodation (Dinas Pariwisata 2014, MacRae 2014: 7). Therefore, a large number of long term travellers and lifestyle migrants are not counted as expats in the statistics, since they have only been registered upon arrival into the country on various types of visa. Most foreign visitors come to Bali via Ngurah Rai Airport, located in the southern part of Bali. It is one of the busiest airports in the country averaging more than 47.000 domestic and international passengers every day. During my time in the field, The *Bali Times* reported that more than 17 million domestic and international passengers arrived through the airport in 2014<sup>34</sup>.

## Bali and Colonialism

“The Bali scene of the 1920s and 1930s was an escape from Europe and America, from the values of the West to a spiritually deeper and richer world.” (Vickers 2012: 175)

In 1906, the south of Bali was conquered by the Dutch, which was followed by the opening of the Official Tourist Bureau. The intention was to make the Dutch East Indies more accessible for tourism (MacRae 1997: 21, Pollmann 1990: 4). In 1924, the KPM shipping company inaugurated a weekly steamship service connecting Bali with other Indonesian islands<sup>35</sup> (Picard 1999: 40). Furthermore, the KPM has monopoly of the official trading between the islands in the Dutch Indies (Pollmann 1990: 2). KPM's weekly steamships would stop along the northern shore of Bali providing the visitors with enough time to circumnavigate the island by car. In the early 1920s, only a few hundred tourists came to visit Bali. Then, by the late 1930s the number had risen to several thousand (Picard 1990: 40, Mann 2013: 99). From this point on, a steady flow of artists, anthropologists, and elite tourists kept arriving and created a small community of foreign residents, also known as expatriates (Picard 1990: 40).

After the colonials came broad-minded travellers from all over the world, members of an international upper class looking for artistic thrills from exotic native life, or seeking an alternative to the stale European culture of the early decades of the twentieth century. These people lived in elegant simplicity in a country where even moderate wealth could buy servants, cars, art collections and picturesque Balinese-style houses in little native villages.

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34 The *Bali Times* March 20-26, 2015: 1.

35 KPM (Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij), also known as the Royal Packet Navigation Company.



Ubud's emergence as an artistic, cultural centre, and as a tourist destination first started in the late 1920s. Until then, the small settlement at the foothills of Bali's central mountains consisted mainly of a palace and a local market surrounded by ravines, hills, and gorges (Mann 2013: 8). In 1927, the artist Walter Spies moved to Ubud (Vickers 2012: 151, Mann 2013: 54-55, MacRae 2014: 4, Pollmann 1990: 2). Spies became an influential figure for the future tourism of Bali and to the beginning of the expatriate community in Ubud (MacRae 2014: 4). As a homosexual, Spies and like minded men found Bali to be a heaven of spiritual refuge and tolerance in an anti-homosexual world. There they could escape the strict and narrow minded rules of Europe (Vickers 2012: 151, Pollmann 1990: 13, Yamashita 2003). Spies hosted a number of guests from the intellectual and artistic aristocracy in Europe and America (MacRae 1997: 21). Amongst his guests were Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson who were at the forefront of modern anthropology developing it into a profession (Vickers 2012: 167). They arrived in the mid-1930s and Spies showed them the “real” Bali, upon which Mead stated the island was “teemed with excessive ritual and artistic excess” (Vickers 2012: 170-171).

In the early 1940s Bali was occupied by the Japanese. Following the occupation was five years of political and economic dispute (Howe 2005: 29, Hobart, Ramseyer, and Leeman 1996: 210-211, MacRae 1999: 134). As a consequence, Bali and Indonesia as a whole did not see many tourists before General Suharto became president in 1967. With the new president, an international airport in the south of Bali opened up in 1969. In addition, a new development plan was in place for attracting larger numbers of tourists. One of the suggestions were to build a large tourist resort in the south, along with a network of roads linking the southern part with the rest of Bali (MacRae 1997: 23, Mann 2013: 99, Hobart, Ramseyer, Leeman 1996: 215-216). The development plan along with the new airport succeeded and the number of foreign visitors rose from less than 30,000 in the late 1960s to over 600,000 in the late 1980s (Picard 1990: 41).

## **Backpackers and the “Hippie Trail”**

The tourists that arrived in the late 1960s and 1970s were a different group in contrast to the affluent and artistic crowd that came prior. The new crowd, also known as “Hippies”, was young, often on a tight budget, and in search of adventure (Mann 2013: 99)<sup>36</sup>. These young backpacking travellers set out from the west in search of new experiences, spiritual enlightenment, and to

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<sup>36</sup> The “Hippies” are comparable to what Cohen (1973) refer to as the “drifters” (Riley 1988: 317).

experience a culture that seemed to offer something missing from their own (MacRae 2014: 4). They travelled on the “Hippie Trail”, also known as the Asian Highway (Vickers 2012: 19, Mann 2013: 118), a route that started in Europe, went through Nepal and India, and continued on to Bali, some reaching as far as Australia. This group of travellers respected the Balinese culture and in their interest to learn more about it, they slept and ate like the locals (MacRae 2014: 5). To accommodate the growing demand, the locals living in Ubud started to open up their homes and provided home stays. Attached to their home stay, some would build small restaurants, called “warung”, that would provide local, home cooked meals for their guests (MacRae 1999: 138, Vickers 2012: 19, Mann 2013: 99-100). A great number of these home stays are still around today, along with some of the original warungs. However, many owners have expanded and modernised their business to align with the most recent trends, and to keep up with the increasing number of tourists.

## **Mass Tourism**

The backpacking hippies and the expatriate community who came in the 1970s moved on. During the 1980s and 1990s a more mature crowd of lifestyle migrants from Australia, North America, and Europe started to emerge (De Neeffe 2003, MacRae 1999: 138). Some were in search of a permanent place to retire or a temporary escape from the winter in their home country. At the same time, the community of Ubud received a number of young western women who married Balinese men. Many started a business together providing services for western travellers (De Neeffe 2003, MacRae 2014: 6). For the first time, a combination of Balinese and Western style cafés, restaurants, and shops were being built. These establishments developed a scene catering for the western palate and trends (MacRae 2014: 6). Thus, making a stay in Ubud even more enjoyable and satisfying for long term traveller and migrants.

## **Modern Day Ubud**

For many years the tourist industry in Bali was blossoming. Then, in 2002 it all changed. Two bars in the southern part of Bali suffered several sets of bombings<sup>37</sup>. Consequently, the number of tourists were drastically reduced. The effects were not as dramatic for Ubud as it was for the beach towns in the south. Nevertheless, Ubud still had to reinvent itself in order to attract the few tourists who did come to the island (MacRae 2014: 6). De Neeffe explains in her book, *Fragrant Rice* (2003), how devastating the bombings of “Sari Club” and “Paddy's Bar” were in the southern tourist town of Kuta. They quickly realised how reliant many parts of the island had become on

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<sup>37</sup> In 2005, there were yet another bombing that also took place in southern Bali.

tourism (De Neefe 2003: 8, Howe 2005). A year after the bombings, unemployment was still on a rise, shops and businesses were closing down, and the streets were nearly empty. As a result, De Neefe initiated the inaugural “Ubud Writers and Readers Festival” in 2004 (De Neefe 2003: 14-15, Mann 2013: 131-132). The festival attracted yet another type of tourists, and in its first year it received around 1.000 visitors. Since then, the audience have continued to rise and in 2015 the festival attracted more than 30.000 participants<sup>38</sup> (Wynn 2013).

The social and economic impact after the bombings had been devastating. Therefore, another initiative was formed to attract visitors. Since 2008, “The Bali Spirit Festival”, has been an annual event attracting spiritually oriented locals, migrants, and tourists from around the world. The initiative was promoted by the owner of one of the biggest yoga centres in Ubud. She is an American woman, who like De Neefe, married a Balinese man. The inaugural festival was an attempt to build and support the community through yoga, music, and dance (Mann 2013: 133, MacRae 2014: 6). In 2012, “The Bali Spirit Festival” attracted 6.000 visitors from 50 different countries and 1.000 Indonesians over its five day period<sup>39</sup>. Many of the festival's foreign guests are from the expatriate community in Ubud. A community which during the last decade, increasingly consists of single, western females. These women initially came to Ubud to exercise yoga and live an alternative way of life (MacRae 2014: 6). Yoga, in its own right, has long roots on the island. Balinese priests practise yoga and for many locals yoga is a part of their holistic way of life (Mann 2013: 135, Hobart, Ramseyer, Leeman 1996). With this in mind, the woman who initiated “The Bali Spirit Festival” and her husband, started what has become one of the biggest yoga centres in Ubud. The place now offer more than 85 yoga classes a week and host a variety of workshops. In addition, they provide massages, colonic treatments, healing and various holistic practices and treatments. On site there is also a restaurant which serves organic food stocked by their on-site farm, as well as a separate Ayurvedic menu<sup>40</sup>. From originally starting their business in a small venue hosting a few yoga classes a week, they have grown into an enterprise which attracts yoga and spiritually oriented tourists to Ubud from all over the world. Consequently, Ubud has turned into a town where yoga and western alternative living are amongst the biggest businesses catering for lifestyle migrants (Mann 2013: 135, Citrayanthi 2015, MacRae 2014: 7).

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38 <http://www.ubudwritersfestival.com>

39 <http://www.balispiritfestival.com/about-us/the-story>

40 Ayurveda is an old holistic healing system where the main goal is to promote good health from eating healthy food:

<http://www.theyogabarn.com>

## **Summary**

This chapter has given a detailed description of the history of Bali and the town of Ubud, in order to provide a better understanding of the field. However, the main purpose was to show how the development of Ubud is not a recent phenomenon. Instead, artists and spiritually inclined individuals have been attracted to Ubud for decades. In more recent times however, it is important to acknowledge that Ubud provides a safe and comfortable sanctuary for westerners. With the increasing number of arrivals to the island, this tropical paradise could soon be lost. Nevertheless, the focus will now turn to why western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants residing in Ubud permanently or semi-permanently. Therefore, the following chapter will interpret the empirical material that has been compiled in the town of Ubud.

## **Chapter Five – Searching for the Good Life**

The following chapter is dedicated to four separate themes that is considered to be the main factors in the search for the good life for western lifestyle travellers and migrants, namely Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. These factors are seen in relation to one of the key aims in this thesis, which is to discuss aspects that influences a person to leave their country of origin. Furthermore, this chapter will elaborate on specific activities that the residing westerners perform and implement into their daily life while residing in Ubud. First, Escapism, as a contributing factor for leaving ones home country will be examined. Throughout the research, two main groups of residing westerner were discovered, women in their 30s to 50s and retirees. The various reasons for why these two groups “escaped” will be discussed. Through explicit examples it is shown how their “escape” is in many cases related to personal issues. As a consequence, they made the decision to “remove” themselves from the familiar and mundane and instead “start fresh” in a new environment abroad. Secondly, New Challenges will be discussed. For the people I encountered in Ubud, they all challenged themselves by participating in “alternative” activities. It will be argued that these activities would not be performed in their home community as they would be considered as deviant behaviour and not seen appropriate by their family and peers. This, brings us to the matter of Freedom. Being in an environment, such as Ubud which has a high concentration of “alternative” practises and workshops on offer, the westerners residing there would feel liberated from the rules and constraints of their home country. Thus, feeling free to explore both “hidden” and new sides of themselves. The fourth and final factor is related to the search for the good life and is seen in relation to Happiness. It examines specific core components, such as age, gender, and family relations, in addition to work and income. These aspects are then linked and compared to the informants that were encountered in Ubud, to see if these criteria applied to them. Finally, this chapter is concluded by linking the four main factors, Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness, in order to distinguish how the western lifestyle travellers and migrants commence and undertake their search for the good life.

### **Escapism**

“Many Americans in the 1920s sought for an escape as single individuals from a society which denied them self-expression. Many in the 1930s sought for a formula by which we could build our society into a form which would make possible, on a firm economic base, both simple happiness and complexity of spiritual expression. Of such a dream, Bali was a

fitting symbol.” (Mead 1970: 340)

The front page of the weekly newspaper *The Bali Times* stated that “Foreign Tourists Flock to Bali for Spiritual Comfort”<sup>41</sup>. However, it is not just tourists who flock to Bali<sup>42</sup>. In the last decade there has been a steady increase in lifestyle migration and international retirement migration from western countries (Benson and O`Reilly 2009). The reason behind these trends amongst people from western countries are varied, but there are still similarities. With internet and low cost airlines, travelling overseas has become accessible and cheap (Gustafson 2009: 69). Those from the northern hemisphere often refer to themselves as “climate refugees”, since they are escaping the winter. In many cases this shift to a warmer climate provides the migrant with a better and improved quality of life (Gustafson 2009: 69). In the *World Happiness Report* aspects of the climate, such as sun and heat, is examined to evaluate people's levels of happiness (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012:73). As an example, one of my informants had arthritis and living in Ubud increased her state of well-being (Benson and O`Reilly 2009: 2). Living transnational lives is not something new. According to Deacon, Russell, and Woollacott (2010), transnational living have been crucial to the development of the modern world. As an illustration, transnationals helped the progress and advancement in the technologies of transport and communication. They also helped suppress certain mind sets relating to colonialism, slavery, education, and politics (Deacon, Russell, and Woollacott 2010: 2). Moreover, a number of people work for companies abroad and have acquired a taste for a life overseas. In addition, there are an increasing number of digital nomads<sup>43</sup>. The benefits of being a digital nomad is that they can conduct and manage their work from anywhere in the world as long as there is internet connection (MacRae 2014: 9). A few years back, digital nomads struggled in Ubud as the internet was slow or non-existent. However, in 2015 most cafés, restaurants, hotels, and home stays were connected to high speed fibre optic internet. In the centre of Ubud a designated working environment has been built, which caters specifically to digital nomads. The place claim to have the fastest internet in Bali and provide information for people new to Ubud. In addition it offers yoga and language classes, and has its own organic café in an open green garden area<sup>44</sup>.

For a number of my interviewees the main reasons for migrating were related to escapism. What they were escaping from differed, but common reasons were personal problems and escaping from everyday life. O`Reilly and Benson describe how lifestyle migrants want to escape the routine and

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41 *The Bali Times* May 8-14, 2015: 1

42 Tourist in this case is referring to short term tourists.

43 A digital nomad is someone who makes a living via telecommunication technologies.

44 <http://www.hubud.org>

monotony in their previous lives. Furthermore, they try to bypass the materialism and consumerism of the western contemporary life (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 4). In order to break from these problems and routines, they found it necessary to remove themselves from their familiar home environment. D`Andrea (2007) found this to be the case amongst lifestyle migrants he interviewed in Goa and Ibiza. His interviewees felt that their new home allowed them to be themselves without being judged. In the same way, my informants did not feel judged in Ubud by their appearance or the activities they performed. They were living within a community of like minded human beings from all over the world. According to D'Andrea, this helps them to grow as a person and acquire a deeper understanding of the new and unexplored sides of themselves (D`Andrea 2007: 50). Similarly, these aspects were also discovered by Waldren (1997) in the village of Deià on the island of Mallorca. The village attracted individualists and turned into a sanctuary for independent travellers and migrants who viewed themselves differently from the people living in their home community (Waldren 1997: 57).

A few of my informants had a rather negative perspective on the western society, and especially towards their home country (Cohen 2009: 91). They found that they could no longer relate to the western way of living. Thus, expressing a great dissatisfaction towards what they considered to be a detached and impersonal lifestyle (Citrayanthi 2015: 45). One of my Northern European informants would regularly compare her home country to Ubud. Being on a tropical island Ubud is naturally sunnier and warmer, and it is also cheaper. My informant's conclusion was that as you get older and retire, one does not have much of a social life in a western society with cold winters. The cold climate keep people inside for months at a time, and the cost of living further isolate people from interacting with one another. All the retirees I interviewed mentioned how their savings would last far longer in Bali. Even though living expenses such as food, accommodation, and activities are generally greatly reduced, lifestyle migrants still have to be relatively affluent individuals to be able to afford living in Ubud (Benson and O'Reilley 2009: 2).

## **There is something about Ubud**

When answering one of my opening questions, “Why did you come back to Ubud after your first visit?”, no one was able to pin point exactly why. Still, everyone gave similar replies, “There is something about Ubud”. They felt that Ubud was “calling them” and that they were being pulled by the energies surrounding the place (Citrayanthi 2015: 45). Many people come to Ubud in search of what they perceive to be the good life. The following example illustrates how a single female transnational lifestyle migrant lives in Ubud. As a former digital nomad she was currently

unemployed, and had sold all of her material possessions in order to spend as much time as possible in Ubud.

The tall, lean Scandinavian woman comes towards me with a big smile on her face, her long blonde hair swinging and blue eyes sparkling. It was a sunny Sunday afternoon and brunch was about to be served at “Villa Kitty”, a refugee centre for stray cats. After the meal we headed towards the fenced off *cat flu* area. We sat down on the sun drenched concrete floor and started playing with the cats. Shortly after she started to tell me her story. A few months back she had sold her apartment. She found it hard to pinpoint, but there was “something about Ubud” that kept “pulling” her back. Previous memories from Ubud would not let go, and the idea of returning felt like the only sensible thing to do. The woman is in her mid 40s, single, previously unmarried, and has no children. She is also a vegetarian and while living in Ubud she has been attending yoga classes two to three times a day<sup>45</sup>. She rides a pink “Snoopy” scooter and wears casual and comfortable clothing<sup>46</sup>. The house she rents turns out to be situated in the same area as mine. It is also made out of bamboo and surrounded by rice fields. Included in the rent is a cleaner that comes three times a week. Breakfast is not included as she has a kitchen. However, she “cannot be bothered” to cook and instead goes out for meals three times a day. Being a vegetarian has not been a problem for her in Ubud, which is one of the reasons why she finds the place so easy and comfortable to live. In addition to the “excellent variety of eateries”, Ubud offers a wide range of activities that she wants to incorporate into her life. Having easy access to yoga classes any time or day of the week is by far the biggest plus. Furthermore, there is a vast selection of workshops, seminars, and courses that you can regularly attend. She continues to tell me how Ubud provides her with a “feeling of belonging and that anything is possible”.

When I first met her she had been in Ubud for nearly two months. She had no desire to return home and was making arrangements to prolong her stay<sup>47</sup>. She wanted to continue to enjoy Ubud and explore further the activities the town had to offer. At the same time, she was also making plans to come back the following year to work in Ubud as a digital nomad.

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45 As one yoga class is normally 90 minutes, she would sometimes do yoga for 4.5 hours a day. One of the main yoga studios have weekly passes and you can go as many times as you would like. In order to get ones money worth, it is common to attend two, three, or more classes every day.

46 “Snoopy” is a commonly ridden scooter amongst long term travellers and migrants and is one of the cheapest options for long term rent. In relation to clothes lifestyle travellers and migrants would usually wear baggy clothes, often long, loose pants, with a cotton top and a scarf wrapped around the shoulders. The fabrics would most commonly be made from “natural” fabrics, such as cotton, linen, or hemp.

47 As she came to Indonesia on a 30 day tourist visa, which can only be extended once, this meant that she needed to leave the country in order to receive a new tourist visa.



## **Betrayed, Hurt, and Vulnerable - *Escaping Personal Matters***

In *No Pain, No Glory*, Leivestad (2007) details how people on “Camino de Santiago” were escaping a variety of personal matters in their lives<sup>48</sup>. Common problems would often be related to studies, a working situation, depression, or failed relationships (Cohen 2009: 97, Leivestad 2007: 38).

Regardless of the reasons, the person felt the need to step back to reflect on their current life for a longer period of time. In one of the workshops I attended, I met a woman who started to cry when asked to describe three emotions she were currently feeling. “I feel betrayed, hurt, and vulnerable”, she uttered. Several failed relationships had caused her to “pack up and leave” for Ubud. Another participant told me how she was “stuck” in a “dead end job” that eventually made her depressed, and shortly after made the decision to migrate to Ubud. These examples relate well to Bateson's theory on alcoholism (1972). Before leaving their home country they had both “hit bottom” (Bateson 1972: 319). One through a series of failed relationships, while the other was unhappy in her work environment which in turn led to depression. According to Bateson, the only time a person is able to see the need for change is when they are at an ultimate low.

Another interviewee, a European woman in her early 40s had not yet “reached her low point”, but was in desperate search of her “breaking point”. As this was her ultimate goal, she had travelled to Ubud in order to “break down”<sup>49</sup>. To achieve her goal, she attended yoga classes up to three times per day, in addition to meditation, healing massages, and workshops. Through these exercises she experienced numerous emotional states. Most times nothing would happen, but sometimes “something” would, but she found it hard to describe. Trying to explain her inner emotional uproar often left her speechless. Nevertheless, her willingness to reach her goal was exceptional. In addition to the extensive number of yoga classes she did each week, she also attended a ten day silent meditation retreat, which was preceded by a four day stay in an ashram in preparation for what was to come. On top of this, she also attended a three day follow up meditation retreat shortly after the ten days, followed by Sound Healing and other Healing Therapies of various kind.

Then one day she came up to me all ecstatic after a meditation session. She had visualised a beam of golden light bursting out from her heart. She felt as if something had “caved” and that something within her had finally “opened up”. The “walls” that she had constructed around her were slowly being torn down. From having lived in the “liminal” phase for several months trying to strip herself from previous identities, she had now hit her “low”. According to Bateson and Turner one needs to

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48 “Camino de Santiago” is a pilgrimage route in north-western Spain.

49 By “breaking down” she meant being able to cry and letting go of built up frustrations.

experience what it is like to be “low”, in order to experience a “high” (Bateson 1972, Turner 1969: 97, Van Gennep 1960). It is at this point one can start to reconstruct ones life. Her conclusion for not being able to reach this state sooner, was that she was trying too many activities at the same time. Thus, not allowing herself the time to absorb and process what she was experiencing. Therefore, she had finally come to terms with the fact that there was no “quick fix” to her problems.

## **Retirees and Retirement Migration**

Over the past decades there has been a steady increase in the number of retirement migrants from the western world. Ono (2009) discovered how lifestyle migrants who moved to countries in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, did so in order to have a better quality of life. One can create a feeling of meaning and make life worth living by integrating activities one finds enjoyable in ones daily life (Ono 2009, Benson & O'Reilley 2009, Mathews 1996). Retirees describe their new lifestyle as more relaxed and leisurely. They can now live and experience the best of “two worlds” (Gustavson 2009: 69). By living long term in a country at a lower cost, the migrants found that their money last significantly longer. In Japan “The Long Stay Foundation” was established, as a consequence of the increasing number of people leaving the country for longer periods of time. The foundation came up with the following definition for long-stay tourism and international retirement migration:

“...is staying overseas for a relatively long time but not migration or permanent residence in a foreign country, with the premise of returning to Japan; it is not staying in a hotel but owning a property or renting a residence; it is to be voluntary and aims to make use of one's leisure time; it aims to seek “life” rather than “travel” and the source of income should be from Japan and income from working at the destination should not be necessary.” (Ono 2009: 95)

The definition is not exclusive to retirees originating from Japan, it also applies well to the retirement migrants I encountered in Ubud. Most retirees I observed and interviewed were staying for longer periods of time, thus dividing their time between Ubud and their country of origin<sup>50</sup>. As previously seen they would rent a residence and would seek “life” rather than “travel”. Their time would be spent practising yoga, attending workshops, and by socializing with like minded people. Their source of income would come from their home country, suggesting there is no need to work while away (Ono 2009: 95).

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<sup>50</sup> These migrants are referred to as “longstayer” or “second homer” (Ono 2008: 157).

## Escaping the Mundane

The following case describe the life of a retired Scandinavian female in her late 70s. She first came to Ubud 15 years ago after initially visiting the place with a few friends from work. Since then she has been coming back every year and is now a part time resident of Ubud.

I climb the wooden staircase leading up to the section of her rented wooden house. We sit down on the verandah overlooking the mountains in the distance and make comments on the fascinatingly green rice fields. It is the same verandah she sat on when she first came to Ubud 15 years ago.

“Back then, all I could see was rice fields. There was nothing else here, no buildings, no walls, just me and the rice fields”. We taste the freshly cut papaya from the tree below and drink Javanese tea in a tea pot with a meditating Buddha carved into it. “I instantly enjoyed the peace and quiet in Ubud, besides I wanted to escape the winter months back home”. After retiring she wanted to pursue her artistic desire and Ubud provided her with the opportunity to do so. In her home country she would not have been able to be an artist. It would simply be too expensive. The cost of going to courses and the cost of material would simply not suffice on her pension. She stays in Ubud for six months of the year going to art classes, gathering new ideas, and painting. These paintings are being exhibited throughout the summer in her country of origin, contributing to funding the next trip to Ubud.

She is the sole occupant of the bungalow, but has frequent visits from friends and also her son. In the first few years she would make some of her own meals, as the place has a small kitchenette in the corner. With a big smile she tells me that she now prefer to have her breakfast brought to her every morning, then points out that the fruit stem from the trees in the garden surrounding the premisses. It is being picked every morning by the local Balinese running the household. For lunch and her evening meal she walks over to one of the nearby restaurants. In previous years she used to bring detergent from her home country for doing laundry. However, she had come to realise that one of the main reasons why she enjoyed living in Ubud was the fact that she did not have to perform mundane tasks like laundry any more. As we are discussing laundry matters, there is a subtle knock on the door and a gentle “hello?”. A Balinese lady comes up the stairs and hands over a transparent plastic bag of freshly ironed clothes. The bag is still warm from the newly ironed clothes. My informant happily pays and thanks her. The lady had no trouble filling her time in Ubud. Three times a week she attends painting classes. Here, she meets people from all over the world with an interest in art and painting. Normally, the participants sit on the grass in a large garden around the model who they paint and sketch. On most occasions, the participants would have lunch and

socialize afterwards. She also attend yoga classes several times a week, which is conveniently located a five minute walk from her house.

The case above represents how some retirees live their lives in Ubud. Often their time would be spent deepening their yoga practise, or as seen in the previous case, to broaden their artistic skills. In addition, most would have frequent visits from their adult children, and otherwise spend their time socializing with like minded people going to café's and restaurants, or by joining a workshop. The friendly locals and their openness towards foreigner's activities and way of life contribute to making Ubud the perfect escape (Citrayanthi 2005: 43-44). Even though, age, life situation, family background and length of stay varied, the lifestyle travellers I encountered were all relatively affluent (Benson and O'Reilley 2009: 2). They were all in good health, and had the spare time to live abroad for longer periods of time<sup>51</sup>.

The majority of the retirement migrants I encountered were female in their mid-50s to late-70s. Some had spouses or partners, however, they would not always be living in the same location. Some partners would live as a lifestyle migrant in another region, which they preferred to Ubud<sup>52</sup>. One female informant, in her mid 60s, had tried to live in her partners preferred location. This location had a high population of lifestyle migrants, but otherwise not much of what Ubud had to offer. She described her attempt as follows:

“I have been a lifestyle migrant in other countries previously, but I am much happier when I am in Ubud just sitting by myself looking at the sky or meditating. I find it far more satisfying than sitting through hours of not so interesting conversations with people I cannot relate to or have much in common with.” (French female, 64)

In her partners location she found herself “neither here nor there” (Turner 1969: 95). In Ubud however, she describes how she would be able to create social bonds with people previously unknown to her. As the familiar social structure is deprived from the western lifestyle travellers in Ubud, a bond between travellers is quickly created<sup>53</sup>. This in turn forms a state of “*communitas*” of like-minded people (Victor 1969: 96). None of my informants referred to themselves as “hippies”. However, some retirees pointed out that Ubud reminded them of California during the “Hippie era”

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51 These stays that would normally last between three to eight months.

52 This is not uncommon for lifestyle migrants. Ono (2008: 156) discovered how male Japanese lifestyle migrants would have their wives stay in Japan while their husbands would spend half the year in Malaysia doing volunteer work or playing golf.

53 I am here referring to the social structure that they are familiar with from their country of origin.

in the 1960s. Except for tourists, most foreigners in Ubud will be wearing “light hippie like clothes” (D`Andrea 2007: 1). The lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud construct similar identities through the clothes they wear. Their clothes would in most cases be “yoga style clothing”, which are either tightly or loosely fitted pants accompanied with a top. These garments would be in a “natural”, earthy colour. Same style earrings, rings, and necklaces would also be worn. These jewelleryes would often come in the shape of a lotus, the Ohm sign or other Hindu or Buddhist symbols<sup>54</sup>.

As mentioned, retirees migrate to Ubud for various reasons. One of my informants had lost nearly all of her assets during the financial crisis (Benson and O`Reilley 2009: 4). In need of a cheaper place to live and retire to, she retreated to Ubud. A place which has provided her with a far more comfortable lifestyle for less money than she would have been able to in her home country. For others, Ubud is an escape from the winter, or a place where they are able to explore their dreams and aspirations. A great number of my informants had artistic skills they had come to develop. Some would be in the process of writing a book, while others were composing music, sketching out an idea for a painting, or making jewellery. Some again would explore their business qualifications by setting up a business, such as a restaurant, a café or constructing villas for rent. Being retired, they had the time, health, and money to pursue their ambitions. Every lifestyle traveller that I encountered attended regular yoga classes and spiritual activities, such as healing massages, or having their tarot cards read. Additionally, they all enjoyed the simplicity of living in Ubud. Life is made easy by not having to make your own meals, or do house cleaning or laundry. Ono (2009) found that the absence of these domestic chores were extensively used by men to entice their wives to join them into becoming lifestyle migrants (Ono 2009: 48).

## **New Challenges**

Many of my informants first settled in Ubud, because they were escaping the mundane or more specific aspects, such as the climate or personal problems in their home society. While in Ubud they acquired a desire to develop themselves, thus deciding to embrace new challenges. The initial challenge was settling into a new host society and culture. However, in this section we will take a closer look at certain activities the lifestyle travellers and migrants participated in Ubud. First through different workshops they attended. Then, through what type of nourishment they put into their bodies. In this section it is important to keep in mind that a large number of my informants,

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54 The Lotus flower represents purity and enlightenment. The symbol of “Ohm” is both a spiritual sign and the “sound” which is chanted in unison at the beginning and/or end of a yoga class or a meditation session.

especially the women in their 30s to 50s, were in a “transitional” phase. Finding themselves “neither here nor there”, they were to a greater extent “open” to new challenge (Gennep 1960, Turner 1969).

### **Letting it all out at a “Women's Circle”<sup>55</sup>**

“I love these circles” says the woman with the large blue feather in her hair. “We can be ourselves without thinking about what a man would think. It is so liberating”, she continues as her hips and arms swings from side to side while her flowery dress wraps around her body. As an ethnographer it is my first time attending a “Women's Circle”. Other than being a workshop for women I have no idea what that consist of and admittedly I am somewhat nervous. I close the door to my bamboo house, and walk the short distance along the overgrown path towards the venue. After paying the entrance fee I hesitantly climb the long staircase and open the narrow wooden door. Sixteen women are already sitting in a circle on the dark wooden floor with their legs crossed. I give them a gentle nod as I pick up my blue sun faded bolster and join them in the unified lotus position on the floor<sup>56</sup>. In the centre, on a red velvet cloth, lies a jade coloured yoni on an elevate pedestal<sup>57</sup>. It is sprinkled with rose petals and surrounded by candles.

The workshop is about to begin and we are first asked to say our names and three emotions that will express how we feel at this particular moment. I was not the only one who mentioned nervousness. Our teacher then starts to reveal segments of her life. She comes from an isolated part of the United States and felt somewhat secluded from the rest of the world growing up. After joining a Christian community as a teenager, she met a boy and soon started to explore sexually. However, as the community did not allow sexual acts before marriage there was no penetration. Nevertheless, she always felt a lot of guilt and shame for the things that they did do. Being unable to fully explore her sexual desires she decided to leave for a more populous city. Here, the sexual exploration became more extensive. She had intercourse with men several years her senior and started to explore S/M, dress up, bondage, multiple partners, and partner exchange<sup>58</sup>. Further to that, she started to work in a massage parlour giving erotic massages. In spite of presuming the clientèle would be sleazy old men, a regular client would instead look and behave like a typical family man. Interestingly, the

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55 “Women's Circle” is one of the many workshops on offer in Ubud.

56 A bolster is a long “pillow” that is used for support during yoga and meditation. They come in many different shapes, colours, and sizes, but at this particular studio they are round and blue.

57 Yoni is the Sanskrit word for vagina or womb and also the symbol of Goddess, the Hindu Divine Mother.

58 S/M is short for Sadomasochism which is giving or receiving pleasure from inflicting pain.

clients themselves all shared the idea that everyone else who came to the massage parlour would be “the bad guy”, while he would be the gentle and nice one. Abruptly, the story came to an end as if she was reminiscing an unpleasant part of a past life. We were instructed to turn to our neighbour and elaborate on how we felt at this exact moment. The woman next to me revealed her nervousness for coming to the workshop and confessed that her goal for the evening was to better understand her feelings in relation to sex. She struggled to apprehend how women are objectified. Having this perception, has made it difficult for her to enjoy her femininity in the presence of a man. Therefore, hoping to gain a wider sexual awareness and a more open mind she had been pushing herself to attend workshops like these. Her western upbringing had taught her that sexuality was a taboo. However, she admitted that hearing the teacher's story had not shocked her. Instead it had triggered a curiosity towards the sexual world. Such thoughts were the complete opposite of how she had felt just a few weeks earlier. In other words, these workshops were changing her way of perceiving a previously forbidden subject.

After a short break the teacher encouraged the participants to share any thoughts, feelings, or stories with the group. A dark haired woman in her early thirties spoke of how she had been sexually abused by her father from an early age. This went on for several years and at the age of seventeen she finally stood up for herself, and was kicked out of the house. After living on the streets for a while, she eventually decided to pick herself up (Bateson 1972, Turner 1969: 97, Van Gennep 1960). She started practising Healing Yoga to deal with her own emotional pain. Through her healing process she developed healing skills and became a Healing Yoga teacher, and is now helping others. To deepen her practise in yoga and to continue her healing process, she had come to Ubud specifically to attend workshops like the Women's Circle.

Another participant sharing her story detailed her frustration about being unable to expand her sexual horizon, as a number of emotional blockages restricted her from doing so. She kept attending similar workshops in order to free herself from previously established thought patterns. After being married for several years, she felt the sex life had become stagnant and was slowly evaporating. She blamed her upbringing in a cold climate country for her inwardness. However, their intimate life had improved after residing in a warm climate country.

Next, music is turned on and we are asked to get up and dance. The instructions are simple; float around and let the music “take you away”. Next we are to visualize having gigantic labia lips and to drag them along the floor. This, to connect with the feminine being that we are. Throughout Ubud similar workshops are being held specifically for women every week. As western women represent

the majority of lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud, there is a constant and steady demand for these events. The common denominator for these women seems to be their need for an escape from previous thoughts, mind sets, and patterns, or as Bateson (1972) puts it; an escape from personal enslavement. By attempting to rediscover themselves, these women have laid a new course in their quest for self fulfilment (O'Reilley and Benson 2009: 3).

## **“Embodied Intimacy Circle” – Emotional Release**

A couple of months after attending the “Women's Circle” I received a personal invitation to participate in a workshop called “Embodied Intimacy Circle”. My fear of attending this workshop overwhelmed me and it took me several days to accept the invitation.

## **Just Another Day in Ubud**

I turn around to see what the loud moaning was. Next to me on the warm wooden floor, a guy is spanking his own buttocks. I recognise him as the same guy who rushed over to me when he heard one of the “newbies” had arrived. He asked if he could give me a hug, and he did. A really long hug, while he was uttering a discrete “mmmmmm” through his closed lips. A few hours after the hug and the spanking, I see him removing his clothes before he starts to walk around naked on the grass. After some time he decides to jump in and cool off in the blue rectangular pool. No one seems to be paying much attention to him, it is everyday life. Everyone else is just relaxing in the garden, gently biting into their freshly cut papaya while enjoying the rice field view. It is just another day in Ubud.

One sunny afternoon I had finally worked up the courage to attend an “Embodied Intimacy Circle”<sup>59</sup>. This particular circle was by invitation only and takes place in a private household. The invitation came from one of the many yoga teachers working in Ubud. I had been attending her yoga classes regularly for a few months, and we would often stand around and chat after class. Soon after my arrival in Bali, following my very first yoga class in Ubud, she told me that she was living on a compound with eleven other western lifestyle migrants and their teacher<sup>60</sup>. They had all agreed to live together on the expansive compound for one year. Fascinated by this alternative way of living, I wanted to know more, and to see and experience her living arrangements. Finally, here I was in their house where they all had been living and exploring themselves for several months.

All of the eleven on site residents are free to invite anyone they feel would enjoy or benefit from

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59 Also known as “belly to belly” and Tribal Tantra training.

60 The teacher is also referred to as their leader.



attending the “Embodied Intimacy Circle”, which is held for outsiders once a week<sup>61</sup>. The ones living on the compound however, practise these exercises three times a week as a minimum. This particular day, there were a total of twenty five westerners who had gathered at the vast open compound. On a grassed area in front lies a rectangular pool. The partially walled area consist of three separate living quarters in addition to a main building for eating, socializing, and for the exercises we were about to perform.

After everyone's arrival and continuous hugging we started off by standing in a circle holding hands, taking a deep breath in, and on the exhale, a long, loud sigh “aaaaaaaahh!” Most had their eyes gently closed. The “newbies”, such as myself, were then welcomed and embraced for their courage to come here to explore, breath, and moan with total strangers. We partnered up and laid down on thick red cushions on the floor. The teacher told the participants to snuggle up and get nice and close to their partner. Then, to interlock our legs, hold each others hands, and look into each others eyes. My first partner was my yoga teacher. It felt strange, weird, and awkward, all at the same time. My partner on the other hand, seemed completely unaffected; she simply kept looking deep into my eyes with her usual calmness. She was gently smiling at me while squeezing my hands. We are in position and ready to begin. With our faces and bodies no more than a few centimetres apart, we again start to take a long deep breath in and a long breath out with a loud aaaaahh. We are asked to look into the eyes of our partner with love and compassion, while continuing the deep and heavy breathing. Then, we are asked to snuggle up even closer, while the leader walks gently amongst us and continues to give us instructions.

After 25 minutes lying on the dark, wooden floor, we are asked to put our own reactions into questioning and share our experience with our partner. How did we feel? Did we come to appreciate anything in particular about the other person? During the exercise, the teacher was the only one talking. There had been no talking amongst the participants, but now we were encouraged to express our emotions. In a previous conversation with my yoga teacher she had told me that a great variety of emotions could arise during such a session. Anger, hate, lust, frustration, happiness, calmness, desire, sadness, and anything that you might have stored and buried deep within you can arise to the surface. After sharing our inner thoughts, we thanked each other for the intimate experience. Then, it was time to find another partner. My yoga teacher asked me if I would like to partner up with her husband, I gently nodded and smiled.

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61 Outsiders are the ones not residing permanently on the compound.

Throughout the evening there would be constant waves of emotions arising. Some participants would be laughing, others would be moaning, some would release little high-pitched screams, while others would cry for a while. The twelve couples were scattered all over the spacious living room; on the sofa, against the wall, under tables and in the middle of the floor. The only one observing us was the teacher, an elderly grey haired man who had been doing these exercises all over the world for several decades. He kept instructing us through four partners of different ages, nationalities, and gender. At the end of the day I felt exhausted, but at the same time very light and happy. After some fresh watermelon and mingling on the dry, delicate grass, I caught a ride with a Scandinavian woman back to my side of town.

From the back of the woman's scooter I reflected on the events of the day. We both agreed the exercises and instructions had started to feel “normal” after a while. As I came back to my house I could not help but wonder if the exercises relate to Bateson’s theory on alcoholism. While talking to different participants at the “Embodied Intimacy Circle”, several stated that this was actually the correct state of mind. Furthermore, people's behaviour at the compound was in fact how we were all supposed to act and feel. However, in the restricted western world we are just too afraid to acknowledge it. Consequently, this relates well with Bateson's theory on how one's alcoholic intoxication can provide a more “correct” state of mind for some people (Bateson 1972: 309).

The exercises performed at the “Embodied Intimacy Circle” lie within the framework of expressive individualism. The practice allows for the exploration of personal capabilities in creative, pleasurable, and transcendent ways (D`Andrea 2007: 17). Being away from their home environment and in a new host community, they no longer feel constrained by moral restrictions. Behaviour and emotions expressed at workshops like the “Embodied Intimacy Circle” and at the “Women's Circle”, can be seen as deviant behaviour in their home community. Giddens wrote his definition on deviance as follows: “non-conformity to a given norm, or set of norms, which are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society” (Giddens 1989: 118). This way of not conforming to norms, as it is viewed in many western societies, is widely accepted and often encouraged in Ubud. Being and feeling uncomfortable for shorter or longer periods of time will eventually transform you into a freer being, which the examples above illustrate. These workshops and this type of behaviour create a feeling of community among the lifestyle migrants and long term travellers. They learn how to connect with others without the use of words, and instead use touch, sound, and body language (Brøgger 1999: 47). This way of sharing an alternative way of life with like-minded people reflects a desire to transform their old self, and a desire to be better at receiving

and giving pleasure (Barratt 2013: 138). Experimenting through sexuality and pleasure is a common way of self transformation and expressive individualism (D`Andrea 2007: 17). Even though, such reasoning were not pointed out at the “Embodied Intimacy Circle”, some people who had snuggled up did end up in the bedroom. As I was looking for a restroom I accidentally walked in on a couple who had shifted from lying on the floor to a more comfortable position in a big soft bed. As I quietly apologised and backed out I was confronted by my yoga teacher who simply smiled and explained how these exercises bring on all kinds of emotions. Physical attraction and sexual arousal are some of them. She gave me a wink, grabbed my hand and showed me to another restroom.

A few days after the “Embodied Intimacy Circle” I contacted my yoga teacher and arranged to meet. The exercises had left me with more questions than answers, especially regarding her relationship with her husband. From previous conversations I had been informed that she had an “open” mind towards marriage and relationships, and I was curious to learn more about her thoughts and mind set. We meet in a typical café for western short term travellers and most are deep inside the digital world in front of their laptops. So is my teacher as she had to make some final booking arrangements before heading off to renew her visa. We greet each other with a long big hug and order ourselves some freshly squeezed pineapple and beetroot juice. Being a small and popular café there are people all around us. However, the topic of polygamy does not seem to bother her. They have what she refers to as an “open relationship” and both knew that coming into the marriage. Nevertheless, for the first five years of their time together they stayed monogamous. After they moved to Ubud they agreed to take on other partners as well. However, they still have rules which basically consist of telling the other person as soon as the animal lust and a sexual desire for another person arise. She continues to explain that every human being feels this way so it is only natural. Moreover, it is unnatural for our bodies to restrict our desires, and better to act on how we feel and get it out of our system. They have now both had sex with other partners, but there is no jealousy involved according to her. Having multiple partners is not a new thing for her. Before she met her husband she was swinging three partners at the same time. However, she prefer the current lifestyle of having one steady husband, but still be able to follow her natural instincts when it comes to having other sexual partners.

The main goal of workshops such as the “Embodied Intimacy Circle” is not primarily linked to pleasure and sexuality (D`Andrea 2007: 17). It is first and foremost to explore and expand ones old self, and to establish or re-establish the connectedness with other human beings. In Ibiza, D'Andrea discovered an expatriate community that consisted of independent women who did not travel or

experience other cultures and lifestyles (D`Andrea 2007: 55). As seen with the examples from the two workshops above, the ones who travel and migrate are undertaking a rite of passage from their old self via a holistic self-shaping process. In many instances, such a period of transition is filled with “intoxicating elements of orgiastic sensuality” (Weber 1913). These activities heighten the senses and thus generally overtake reason. The type of activities vary, but are often explored through sexual experimentation, music, and dancing (D`Andrea 2007: 29).

## **Challenge through Nourishment**

For lifestyle travellers and migrants food and drinks are an especially important component of daily life. Going out to eat, drink, and socialize with like minded people is a large part of life in Ubud. Not only because it is reasonably priced, but mainly due to the fact that most lifestyle travellers and migrants who live in Ubud have a special interest in what type of nourishment they put into their bodies.

### **“A clean inside makes for a happy outside”<sup>62</sup>**

Following an afternoon yoga class, I start talking to a woman in her early 30s from Central Europe. After a few minutes she reveals how she came to Ubud due to a stomach bug she contracted, while backpacking in Asia a couple of years ago. Recently she had not been feeling well and believed the bug to be the root cause. Through word-of-mouth she had learned how treatments in Ubud could heal people in a number of different ways (Wilson & Richards 2008). Before leaving her home town she had been given the name of a therapist who does cleansing and detox programmes in Ubud. The European woman had only arrived in Ubud a few days ago and was very excited to get started on her cleansing and detox programme<sup>63</sup>. After arrival she had contacted the therapist and was told she could stay in the therapist's home as a live in patient. Her goal was to finally get rid of the bug and an improved quality of life. In order to reach her goal, she had been told by her therapist that she would need to go on a cleanse. This would mean that she would only be drinking detoxifying juices for a while<sup>64</sup>. On occasion she would be allowed simple soups and broths, but no solid food for as long as it would take to rinse and “clear” the digestive system and potential blockages. In addition to a complete change in diet, she will be having colonics several times per

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62 Quote from a flyer from one of the main yoga studios in Ubud.

63 Per definition the woman is a lifestyle traveller and not yet a migrant. She is however a classical example of how a migrants initially find their way to Ubud.

64 Drinking vegetable juices is part of most detox programmes in Ubud.

week accompanied by healing massages, yoga, and daily meditation sessions<sup>65</sup>.

Two weeks after our initial talk we arranged to meet at a local raw food café. Since I last saw her, this particular café had turned into her regular hang out spot. They were growing their own organic vegetables and everything on the menu would be freshly made on site. Everything on offer was home-made, raw, vegan, and organic. From looking through the number of juices on the menu, I could see why my informant was not yet not bored by drinking juices. Altogether they offered over twenty different juices. They were categorised as “Inspirational Juices” or “Wellbeing Juices”. In addition, there was a selection of twenty “Awesome Smoothies” with names such as “Die Hard” and “Like A Virgin”. Furthermore, there was an assortment of yet another twenty drinks if one was to include hot drinks and pre bottled home made drinks. My informant is now an expert on the drink assortment of the place and happily shows me around. While explaining the different juices, she tells me her current favourites, and points out the ones she is looking forward to try once she is allowed the bottled ingredients of a particular juice. She is currently prohibited by her therapist to drink certain fruit and vegetable juices as they can be hard for her body to absorb and digest. Before we seat ourselves, she picks up one of the pre made juices from the fridge and brings it over to one of the bamboo chairs and wooden tables. She takes a few sips before handing me the bottle. I smell and inspect. It is a 650ml glass bottle of a cloudy dark green juice and I start to read the ingredients out loud; cucumber, kale, spinach, celery, bok choy, parsley, apple, and lime. She looks at me with big wide eyes as if she is about to cry; “NOOOOOO! I got the wrong one! I am not supposed to have anything with sugar in it, and the apple in this juice has a high sugar content! I cannot finish this, it will ruin everything I have worked so hard for”. She seems bewildered, then gets up and starts walking back and forth in the restaurant, circling the fridge. Finally, she approach me and reveal her decision; there was nothing else to do but to buy another bottle without the apple and lime.

### **“I have had sooo much release!!”**

After buying the new bottle, she calms down and as the conversation continues, the topic turns to colonics. Over the last few days she have had ten colonic treatments and reveals; “there is just so

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<sup>65</sup> Colonic or Colon Hydro Therapy is said to cleanse the colon of unwanted waste and toxins while rebuilding the system and establish bowel regularity. Colonics are also believed to clear blockages in the body and provide a better flow of energy. Blockages are commonly mentioned by therapists in Ubud and the “opening” of these blockages can be done by various techniques, such as massages, yoga, or detox programmes.

much coming out and when you think it is empty, there is even more coming that is completely black. That is the toxins that has been stored in my body. I have had sooo much release!” In addition to the physical matter that is released from her body, she tells me that there is a lot of stored emotional residue that come to the surface as well. While finding the process fascinating, it is also emotionally painful. Nevertheless, she tries her best to embrace the emotions that surface and to tackle the personal blockages as they are being removed from her body, mind, and spirit. At this point the woman has been in Ubud less than three weeks. Hence, she is considered new to Ubud and in the early stages of the transitional phase (Turner 1969: 95). Her activities and experiences are early in the process of personal cleansing and the search for self. In an otherwise harmonious community of lifestyle travellers and migrants she could be perceived as out of balance, due to her outburst like the one in the café. As seen in relation to Bateson`s theory of Alcoholism, the woman decided to leave her familiar living environment when her body had deteriorated to the point of not working. She saw it as the only way out of her misery and discomfort. The power to make such a profound change is only accessible when a person feel like they have hit bottom. According to Bateson, this is the most favourable moment for changing ones life (Bateson 1972: 330). Still, such radical changes are difficult to go through alone. Thus, it is important to be in an environment surrounded by like-minded individuals with similar goals and interests, or guided by a therapist (Bateson 1972).

The previous examples with the woman on the detox programme, participants at the “Women's Circle”, and the “Embodied Intimacy Circle” illustrate how they had come to Ubud to balance something in their life. This something is difficult to describe, since for the most part it is not a physical ailment. More often it relates to emotional wounds, sometimes stored for years, or even decades as the case with the woman who had been sexually abused. They come to Ubud to perform a kind of self therapy hoping in the end to feel better both emotionally and physically. Giddens explains how self therapy is grounded in continuous self observation (Giddens 1991: 71). When asked to drag our labia lips across the floor, no explanation was given as to why we were doing so. Several weeks later, I learned from a conversation with my yoga teacher that such exercises would help release stored pain, enable bodily self awareness, and better connect with our inner being. This explanation fits well with Giddens idea of how self therapy through self observation works. However, self observation alone is not sufficient. According to Rainwater (1989), the process of self realisation and self therapy needs to be guided by a therapist or counsellor. Furthermore, she explains how self therapy can only be successful when the individual's own reflexivity and active participation is involved (Rainwater 1989: 9), as shown in the example with the woman on the

detox programme.

## Ubud's Food Scene

The following extracts are taken from cafés and restaurants around the town of Ubud:

“We do not use MSG or hidden MSG in sauces or spices. MSG is a synthetic flavour enhancer used in almost all cooked food in Indonesia. In further consideration of your health we do not use aluminium cook ware or microwave.”

“We serve heritage rice varieties organically grown in fertile volcanic soil of Bali – although these type of rice takes longer to grow and twice the price of the commonly eaten hybrid white rice, they are much more nutritious, delicious, and heirloom.”

“For sweetness we mainly use locally grown village palm nectar. We do not support big palm plantations by buying their sugar or oil as they are the main contributors to the destruction of Indonesia’s ancient rainforest.”

One evening while enjoying my meal at one of the organic restaurants, six middle aged men and women sat down at the table next to me. Being a small restaurant I had no trouble eavesdropping on their conversation. They had been to a workshop practising yoga and meditation, and received information on types of nourishment that would be beneficial for their bodies. While looking through the menu, they all had a somewhat confused look on their faces. The fact that the place did not serve any soft drinks, such as Coca Cola, or any alcoholic beverages was pointed out. This is often the case in Ubud and as such can be seen as a way of guiding the customers on the path to a more healthy lifestyle. Three of the women ordered turmeric drinks, as they had been told it would be good for them<sup>66</sup>. The rest of the group ordered various fruit juices. Most cafés and restaurants in Ubud will offer a freshly pressed juice from seasonal fruits. You have the choice of composing your own, or choose between a number of juices categorised as refreshing, cleansing, revitalizing, and nourishing. Everyone in the group ordered a vegetarian dish as their main meal, except one of the men. He justified his choice by the menu's claim that the chicken was a happy organic, free range bird, who had not been fed antibiotics or growth hormones. This follows Barthes theory that food, being a signifier, constitutes information about the person who consumes it (Barthes 1971: 24). The fact that the man felt the need to comment and defend his choice, indicated the underlying

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<sup>66</sup> Turmeric is a plant said to help digestion, reduce inflammation, and fight infections.

importance of food and peoples eating habits in Ubud.

It is not uncommon in a restaurant regularly frequented by lifestyle travellers that the first few pages of a menu will provide its customer with information on their philosophy and vision. Often specific examples will be given of what they do in the interest of your health, the well being of the producers, and to benefit the island of Bali. Some will state their support of local organic farmers by purchasing their free range chickens<sup>67</sup>. They claim free range chicken costs four times as much as conventional chicken, but is worth the price. Not only is free range chicken better for your health according to them, but it also means that the chicken has been treated better. Such philosophies have become increasingly common throughout Ubud as new trends and tastes have developed and spread throughout the western world.

According to Lindholm and Lie (2013), the enjoyment of food is learnt and culturally specific. It also creates a feeling of communal spirit. Having a meal together is a shared ritual that gives a sense of closeness and fellowship with one another, particularly when living in a foreign country (Lindholm and Lie 2013: 60-61). Since the enjoyment of food is learnt, ones acquired taste can change. For lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud, a green juice consisting of ingredients locally produced, organically grown, and hand-picked by locals is seen as more authentic and culturally specific, than a mass produced hamburger. Thus, making it a preferred item to choose from the menu amongst lifestyle travellers and migrants (Lindholm and Lie 2013: 62). Although the green juice has a rather distinctive and peculiar taste, one can learn to appreciate it by knowing the potential health benefits. As such, the food and the drinks one consume, communicate and label who you are in Ubud and serve as identity markers.

“Can I eat my banana with my muesli if I boil it?” The question comes from a man sitting next to me in a circle at a Holistic Healing Centre in Ubud. He is in his mid 40s with his partially grey hair tied back with a green and yellow striped bandana. His hands are softly formed in mudra position in front of his second chakra, the Swadhisthana<sup>68</sup>. The answer given to the man's question is yes and he looks very pleased with the answer. Nine westerners have gathered to listen to one of the weekly health talks. The topic of the evening is how to use the food we eat as medicine for the well-being of our bodies. Earlier in the evening we have been told that eating raw fruit would be hard on our digestive system. However, if it is slightly cooked it will digest much easier. The man continues to

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67 There is a large number of meat free travellers and migrants living in Ubud and a number of restaurants are vegetarian. However, the ones who offer meat pride themselves by offering good quality meat.

68 The mudra position is a symbolic hand gesture. The second chakra is situated just below the navel, also known as the Sacral Chakra.



ask about fasting on water only. Previously he had been fasting on water for twenty one consecutive days, and was curious if there was an advisable limit to how many water fasts you could do each year? He wanted to fast on water more often as it made him feel absolutely fantastic. The water fasting made him loose a lot of weight, which made him feel slightly concerned. On the other hand, the fact that his face started to turn yellow was of no concern to him. Even though his friends and family kept telling him how awful he looked, he was not bothered by his appearance as he felt better than ever both physically and emotionally.

“In a number of world religions, fasting is thought to confer the spiritual merit. One reason for this is that it betokens the victory of the spiritual over the material need such as hunger.”  
(Caplan 1994: 12)

What is food? asks Roland Barthes. We all know it has nutritional value, but what makes the food scene in Ubud so special? According to Barthes (1971), food is a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour. He finds a food item to be a signifier and to constitute information about the person who consumes it. Barthes also claims that all food serves as a sign among the members of a given society (Barthes 1971: 24). As an example the only ones seen drinking Coca Cola in Ubud are the tourists coming on a day trip or the short term travellers. A lifestyle traveller or lifestyle migrant living in Ubud will not be seen polluting their bodies with a drink with such a high sugar content or a substance they consider to be highly unhealthy. Having a Coca Cola would be seen as deviant behaviour (Giddens 1989) as it interferes with the unwritten rules of the do`s and don`ts among this specific social group in Ubud. When living as a lifestyle traveller or migrant in Ubud, drinking a soft drink with processed sugar and artificial flavouring is not part of the diet. Consequently, the marked for processed food, such as hamburgers from any of the major fast food chains are non-existent<sup>69</sup>. Food has the power to define and unite communities of people, especially when they are living in a small scale community (Lindholm and Lie 2013: 53, Turner 1969: 96).

## **Freedom**

As previously discussed many of my respondents first came to Ubud as an escape from something. However, after settling in Ubud many became increasingly aware that they had indirectly been seeking freedom as well. One of my informants, an American lady in her mid 60s, expressed how

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<sup>69</sup> At the time of research there were only one well known franchised coffee company present in Ubud. A place which was mainly visited by tourists on day trips, in addition to a number of short term travellers.

she simply loved the freedom Ubud provided in the following way;

“I embrace the sensation of freedom that Ubud gives me, no two days are the same. You wake up and the day is yours to explore. The days seem longer here, but in a good way. Here, I get so many different things done in just one day. When you are in your home country, you wake up, go to work, go home, make dinner, sit in front of the TV or the computer for a few hours, and then it is back to bed. To me, that is not living.” (American female, 65)

For her, it was not just the freedom to do what she preferred to do every day, but also the freedom from her restrictive home environment. She kept growing increasingly fond of the place and every year she would prolong her stay. When I first met her after an early morning yoga class, she had decided to lengthen her stay to a total of five months. She had no desire to go home just yet, and from being retired, she had the freedom to do so. For the past seven years she had been coming back to the same two storey house. Her bedroom was upstairs overlooking the valley below and the sacred mountain Gunung Agung in the distance. Most mornings she would start her day by sitting in her hammock with her eyes partially closed gazing towards the mountain and meditating as the sun rose. She had made the place *hers* by gradually doing simple repairs and by painting it, as it was in pretty bad shape when she first moved in. Like so many other lifestyle travellers I encountered, she would store boxes of goods while not in Ubud. These would contain Buddha statues for meditating and various household items, such as a kettle, toaster, and various crockery.

### **Freedom “from” gives freedom “to”**

The participants in this study would describe how they felt that living abroad gave them a sense of having no obligations. They felt free to structure their day any way they liked, without having to justify choices to anyone. One felt liberated from the constraints of modern society (Cohen 2009: 103). Amongst the lifestyle travellers and migrants I met, there was generally a universal conception that the western world is too materialistic, and as such most bring only essential items when arriving in Ubud. One of my interviewees expressed the freedom she felt from being able to just hop on her scooter and head to the ocean for a few days. It made her feel free to just “shoot off” while feeling the wind in her hair and just watching the lush landscape pass by. In addition, to simply being able to go to the airport and take a plane anywhere in the world provided her with the sensation that “anything is possible”. To her, life felt simple and easy in Ubud, no commitments, pressure, or constraints. Besides, living in Bali was cheaper and far more comfortable than where

she came from originally. One can easily rent a whole house and go out for your meals three times a day. Having the freedom to choose what you do with your life and its direction is an important factor in order for a person to feel truly happy (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 70).

As mentioned previously, western women by far outnumber the western men in Ubud. Quite a large proportion of my informants mentioned how they were attracted to Ubud due to its lack of men. One participant at the “Women's Circle” expressed how she felt more liberated and free without the presence of men around her. Similar statements were expressed by other women. A western European woman in her early 40s revealed that she was repulsed by the very thought of having a man next to her in bed. His sweat, body hair, cells, and odour made her feel nauseated. While a married Australian woman in her early 60s embraced the fact that she was able to live by herself in Ubud for six months of the year, her husband found Ubud to be too feminine to his liking and decided he would live in another part of Asia while his wife enjoyed Ubud (Ono 2009: 48). According to her, this worked out for the best for both parties and she also believed it kept their marriage *alive*. As seen with most of my interviewees, they would have the freedom from work, a partner, or any children which provided them with the freedom to enjoy their existence in Ubud.

## The Art of Slowing Down

“At its heart, slow living is a conscious attempt to change the current temporal order to one which offer more time, time to attend to everyday life.....*Having time* for something means investigating it with significance through attention and deliberation. To live slowly in this sense, then, means engaging in *mindful* rather than *mindless* practises which make us consider the pleasure or at least the purpose of each task to which we give our time.”  
(Parkins and Craig 2006: 3)

“I live here....“ said the yogini while slowly laying her hand upon her heart. Before the yoga class the yoga teacher asked whether she lived in Ubud and her reply indicated that she resided first of all within herself. A number of my informants had rejected their former lifestyle, because they felt alienated in their western home society. Instead they wanted to reconnect with themselves and find out what mattered in their lives. Thus, often starting on a journey towards personal growth and rediscovery. One described Ubud as a place where they would search for a home within themselves. Besides exploring their inner beings, a common discovery was realising how much they enjoyed living *with* nature. How the rice fields would change in colour, admiring the sun rise and set, and watching the change in the seasons. It was stated by the informants that these matters made them

feel a stronger connection to the place they lived in (Hoey 2013: 36-43). They would live in harmony with nature thus realising they were not in need of all the material assets you think you need from watching TV commercials or by receiving advertising material. Instead they adapted to a more simple life. On a similar note, Hoey (2013) discovered related developments while doing ethnographic fieldwork among middle class workers in the United States. His informants had moved out to the rural mid west to feel a part of the outdoors. In doing so, the participants in his study had no problem downsizing or relocating themselves from a metropolitan area. Instead having a smaller house and being closer to nature surrounded by “therapeutic landscape” made them feel free (Hoey 2009: 31).

## **Freed by Sound**

“One reaches a state of music as in meditation where nothing exists, not even oneself. Totality can thus be achieved - oneness with everything. One becomes energy. Sound. Light. Music.” (Svami Purna)

These words greet me as I enter the residence of my Sound Healer. After a few weeks in Ubud was gradually starting to see a pattern related to the activities my informants would act out. One activity that several informants spoke well of was an exercise called Sound Healing and there was one man in particular that was exceptionally good. One day I decided to experience what Sound Healing was all about. Early in the morning I knocked on the door of a two storey house amidst the rice fields. The middle aged man is dressed in white when he opens the door. After a tender handshake and a gentle hug, he guide me upstairs to his “office”. A massage bench stand next to one of the windows providing expansive views towards the mountain and is covered with a flowery sarong. On a table beside it lies a number of “tools” or “instruments” that are to be used during the session. I lay down on the bench and the sound healer lays a lavender scented eye bag over my eyes and a soft pillow under my head. In addition a bolster is laid under my knees for support. What happens next is difficult to describe. Mostly because I do not know what is happening since my eyes are covered. However, there is singing, both from the healer himself and from a recorder. They were not words, but sounds<sup>70</sup>. In addition to the singing, a vibrating instrument was placed occasionally on the soles of my foot. I could smell the incense burning and as the session was coming to an end as he lightly

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70 I was later told that these sounds are related to each of the human being's seven chakras, also known as Chaklra Sounds or the Sacred Vowels.

massaged the area between the eyebrows<sup>71</sup>. “Come back to this world” he whispered as he started to massage my feet to “give me a soft landing”. I felt exceptionally relaxed which is the sensation my informants had told me they came here for. On top of that, the music and the vibrations he has “left” in my body will apparently continue to circulate for several weeks. Now I knew what my informants were talking about. He provided them with the sensation of being freed from obligations. He took care of you while you were there. He would listen to your body and *work* on the areas that needed working on. As one informant said, “he looks after me. I can feel his caring being surrounding me. His very presence fills me with security and well-being He makes me feel free and alive”.

## **The Pleasure of Limited Choices**

Even though Ubud has a lot to offer in relation to yoga and self enlightening workshops, everyday shopping is made easy compared to the seemingly endless choices in modern western society. Having the freedom from constantly having to choose, provides the time to conduct other tasks. In *Culture of the Slow*, Osbaldiston (2013) discusses how “through technology and modernisation, our lifestyles have become increasingly hectic, fast, complex, and immediate” (2013: 1). This type of environment was precisely what my informants were trying to escape. As an example, shopping for groceries take far less time when there is only one brand of shampoo, or one type of cereals to choose from in the supermarket. To the lifestyle travellers and migrants of Ubud, the common perception was that these limited choices was a welcoming relief. The town itself was for many residing westerners a place to retreat from modern materialistic consumerism. In Ubud, they could “be still” and instead spend more time reconnecting with themselves and with the nature around them.

Korpela (2014) discovered that lifestyle migrants claim that they are unable to feel “true freedom” in their home country. Some even claimed that “real” freedom would not be possible to obtain in western society today (Korpela 2014: 41). However, when living abroad a sense of freedom and individuality is highly present and one of the main reasons western migrants decide to live in another country. These feelings arise because they are outsiders in their new environment, thus not feeling the restrictions from the local social norms (Korpela 2014: 41). These feelings of freedom is only logical since the social, administrative, and economical rules and restrictions of their home country are no longer present (Korpela 2014: 41). Nevertheless, this freedom can be seen as a

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71 This area is known as the Ajna, the Third Eye Chakra.

temporarily one. Bauman (2001) explain that “people make their lives but not under conditions of their choice” (Bauman 2001: 7). By this statement Bauman means that even though separate individuals make the decision to move from their home country, it does not mean that they are free to do as they like. It only means that new and interesting choices have become available to them.

## **Happiness**

Previously in this chapter we have looked at three main aspects of what lifestyle travellers and migrants use as their reasoning for making Ubud their home. Namely, Escapism, New Challenges, and Freedom. In this section however, we will examine some of the factors that contributes to peoples sense of happiness. In addition, how these components are linked to the search for the good life among long term lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud will be analysed.

“The goal of lifestyle migration is happiness and individual satisfaction.” (Korpela 2014: 41)

In the inaugural *World Happiness Report* (2012) specific key factors were determined in order to establish what causes human beings to feel both happiness and misery (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 58). The Happiness Report establishes two main features, namely genes and environment. In relation to this paper, I have focused on the environmental factors that influences the informant. The environmental factors are separated into external and personal features. Among the external features the focus will first be on matters related to work and income, and then community and values. Finally, the personal features will be discussed, which in this case concentrates on age, gender, and family relations (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 59).

## **Happiness in relation to Age, Gender, and Family Relations.**

“I love children, I just never wanted any of my own. Besides, so far in my life I have not found a man that I want to raise any children with.” (Scandinavian Woman, 45)

As the largest number of my informants were unmarried females in their 30s to 70s, whom did not have children, most workshops were catered specifically for female participants. The following example describe a heart opening workshops called “The Seeds of True Self. The Journey of Truth and Purity.”

We are greeted by two women. One is a Balinese High Priest all dressed in white with a red piece of

cloth tied around her waist. Her long dark hair covers the shoulders from her seated position slightly elevated in the front of the room. The other woman has a more masculine approach. She wears pants and her hair is cut short. She presents herself as an Archangelic Shaman and explains how the three hour session is divided into three parts. First the mission is to open up our heart chakras, followed by letting go of all the “bad stuff” that has accumulated in this region. Finally, the heart chakra will be closed after being freed from negative emotions. After the introduction, we are blessed with holy water from the High Priest as we sit in a circle on individual mats on the wooden floor. Two dashes of water in the face and one above the head. The High Priest concludes the ritual by laying her hand on each of the participants heads while singing along to the music in the background. We are now being told to lay down while the High Priest will come to each and everyone of us and lay our hands upon our heart chakras. Our hearts were now open to release whatever emotional issues we might have. Then, in a calm manner the Shaman told us to get up from our mats and dance. “Dance like you have never danced before! Listen to your heart! Follow the music and let goooo!” People seemed to be trying, but most looked a bit confused. We were individually guided by the Shaman to raise our hands above our heads and to move our legs more. “Let it all go! Waive your arms and shake your legs. Close your eyes if you want to, but shake and move and dance!” After half an hour we were told to lay back down on our mats. For the next 45 minutes we were to lay still and simply feel and reconnect with our bodies. The sound from the Tibetan Singing Bowls would gradually start to fill the room<sup>72</sup>. This was the final stage of the session and the bowls were used to close up our heart chakras after “our release”.

Walking out of there I did not know what to make of the workshop. I made my way to the organic café on the premisses and ordered myself an “Energizing Beetroot Drink” contemplating what had happened. Unable to reach a conclusion, I decided to write an email to the Archangelic Shaman to hopefully get a better understanding of what we had all experienced. In short, her reply stated the following; “thank you for your trust in my energy and for coming to my workshop. The first step was opening your heart through the energy Love and Compassion through Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion and receiving the energy of magical Bali through Shiva, the God of Gods. Then we integrated the energy received. We continued with a healing process that released your blockages that has prevented you from going deeper within yourself. Finally, you received restoration from the Gods that were present. I also shared a brief understanding of how you can continue to allow your true self to unfold.” Admittedly, the email did not initially make things clearer for me. However, as

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72 An “instrument” that is used to relax and calm the body. These bowl are also frequently used before or after a meditation or yoga sessions. In addition they are being used in workshops like the one described, after a “release”.

time went by and after attending several similar workshops, I came to understand that these events made people feel better about themselves and left them “wanting more”.

The participants in this workshop were in their 40s and 50s, which is known as a mid-life low or a mid-life crisis. According to Layard, Clark, and Senik (2012) a person's happiness level would reach a “low” when between the age of 40 and 50. After the age of 50, people would once again start to feel more content. Then, as people reached their 70s, when health related issues normally starts to appear, yet another “low” would occur (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 78-79).

Interestingly, the largest proportion of my informants were within these two categories, known as “the lows”. Moreover, in relation to gender, western women have a higher level of satisfaction than men. Still, these women have the highest rate of mental illnesses and suffer more often from psychological stress (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 78). This reflects why there is a higher representation of women in Ubud. Many females who arrive have identified their “problem” and come looking for a “solution” that will provide them with a better quality of life.

Most of my informants in their 30s and 40s believe that being married and having children does not equate to happiness, which is likely a contributing factor as to why many have chosen neither. However, the informants that had reached retirement more often than not had adult children. According to Layard et al. (2012) the presence of children in a household does not appear to be associated with a higher life satisfaction, which is in agreement with the belief of many of my informants. In other words, having children does not guarantee a higher level of happiness (Layard, et al. 2012: 77-78).

While attending a “Femininity and Tantric Sexuality Workshop” the female participants were told that unhappiness and loneliness are an increasing problem in the western world. The ultimate goal of the workshop was to achieve a higher self love and inner peace. Being able to love and to feel loved are two key conditions to human happiness. In Layard et al. (2012) study for the *World Happiness Report* they argued that if this is the case, then marriage must be the best way to promote those feelings (Layard, et al. 2012: 76). From their survey they found that being married is indeed associated with a higher level of happiness. Not only does married couples experience companionship and love from their partner, but there are also economic benefits to being married. Whereas, unmarried people are generally in a worse physical and psychological condition and often surrender to substance abuse and depression (Layard, et al. 2012: 76).



## Happiness in relation to Work and Income

Most lifestyle travellers and migrants were enjoying the freedom of not working. They would spend their days by just “being”, attending yoga classes, and workshops. Yet again, other lifestyle travellers and migrants would bring work with them. As an example, there is a small but increasingly growing band of digital nomads who are arriving in Ubud to live and work abroad. Many of my informants also relied on contact with, not just family members, but also paying clients through electronic voice and video calls. Several of my informants came to Ubud specifically to buy goods to sell at festivals and fairs throughout the summer in the northern hemisphere. Some came in order to acquire inspiration for their art projects, while others, as we will see in the following example, would perform healing on couples and individuals in the privacy of her home.

## Tantrism next door

“I was a little nervous hosting the tantric sessions on the verandah at my house as it can get really loud sometimes.” (Canadian female, 63)

My next door neighbour was in her early 60s from Northern America. One day as she passed my house, she stopped and asked if I wanted to join her for a cup of tea. She had been staying in the house for five months, and she only had a few days left before she was heading home for the summer. The next day I stopped by for a visit and we seated ourselves under a shaded tree in the garden. As she was pouring the herbal tea, made from little blue flowers from the garden, she started to elaborate on how she made a living while in Ubud. She was currently in the process of writing a book. It would provide a detailed account on women's sexual development. It would elaborate on western women's improved ability to become more “open” in expressing their wants and needs in relation to their own sexuality. In order to acquire a livelihood, she hosts Tantric workshops at one of the yoga studios in Ubud<sup>73</sup>. As she had been coming annually to Ubud for a number of years, she recognised the growing demand for tantric workshops such as the ones she were offering. She believed the number of participants for these workshops had more than doubled in the last few years. Her assumption was that women today have a more open dialogue regarding their own sexuality, and a growing interest and curiosity towards tantrism. In the house she is renting she performs private Intimacy Coaching sessions for both men and women. In addition, she would also guide couples. She admitted to being a little scared of having these sessions at this particular house as the sessions are up on the open verandah on the first floor. As the goal of a

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<sup>73</sup> Tantra and Tantrism is an ancient Hindu Tradition.

session was to provide a “full release”, also known as a full body orgasm, this could sometimes get really loud. During her time in Ubud, she had not had as many clients in the home as she had hoped for, but it was still enough to cover the cost of living in Ubud for five months. Initially, she was introduced to tantra in India nearly 30 years ago. Since then, she has been expanding her interest in tantrism and eventually became a sexual educator and a sacred tantric sexuality teacher. During the summer in her country of origin, she performs these workshops as well, in addition to Women's Sexual Healing Circles.

Due to government laws and regulations, most western travellers and migrants are not able to take on any paid work while staying in Bali. In order to make a living, workshops like the one offered by my neighbour, would instead frequently happen in private homes around Ubud. These workshops and sessions would often be donation based, thus avoiding the government rules. When living abroad for longer periods of time one will eventually need to find ways to make a living. Being unemployed for longer periods of time will eventually have an impact on a person's self esteem. Furthermore, it provides a feeling of losing one's identity, social status, and social network amongst previous co-workers (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012: 66-67). They also start to feel a lack of structure in their life. One of my main informants proclaimed her frustration one day over lunch;

“I have no rules in my life. I need some structure and be told what to do everyday. Some structure would make life easier for me, that way I don't have to make all the decisions myself. Preferably I would like to be in a place where I could simply follow a schedule that hangs on the wall.” (German female, 39)

From living in Ubud for the past five months, the woman was growing restless from having the freedom to do what she wanted. Unlike my other informants she wanted some structure. After resigning from her job and selling her house, she had both the time and money to do what she pleased, but unlike the others she was not happy with the situation.

## **The Good Life**

“If well-being is more than just being well, then perhaps the good life is not a state to be obtained, but an ongoing aspiration for something better that gives meaning to life's pursuit.” (Fischer 2014: 2)

As I was passing one of the advertising boards in the centre of Ubud, I noticed the statement; “Ubud is trying to become the girl you want to fall in love with”. What I discovered amongst the lifestyle

migrants in Ubud was what Fischer describes as “trying to live a life that one deems worthy, becoming the sort of person that one desires” (Fisher 2014: 2). In Fischer's (2014) book *The Good Life*, he describes how people are motivated by culturally embedded conceptions of what they perceive to be the good life. He discovered how people cross culturally envisioned a certain future for themselves, and how they believed that they would have control of its outcome (Fischer 2014: xi). The good life is not acquired solely through income, physical health, social relations, and security, as these factors alone are inadequate. Desires, imaginations, fairness, opportunity, hopes, fears, and aspirations plays a significant role as well (Fischer 2014: 5-8). For many of the lifestyle travellers and migrants living in Ubud, these factors were often fractured or torn. Therefore, they made the decision to move to Ubud as this seemed to be a step in the right direction towards what they perceived to be the good life.

The following example portrays the life of a retired married Scandinavian couple who have found what they consider to be the good life. They have divided their time equally between their country of origin and Ubud, and are what Ono describes as “longstayer” or “second homer” (Ono 2008: 157). This particular couple fit all the above categories in the analysis. They are escaping the winter to enjoy a warm place where they can pursue their preferred leisure activities. They are devoted to biking and enjoy the Balinese culture from biking through remote villages. They take on New Challenges by learning Indonesian and attending local ceremonies. Additionally, they have Freedom from work as they are retired. They also have the Freedom from family obligations as their family and peers approve of their way of life and regularly come to Ubud to visit them.

My first encounter with the Scandinavian couple was when they came riding on their fold up bikes to the Indonesian language school. Pearls of sweat were dripping from their foreheads, but with big smiles on their faces. “It is all uphill coming to school” he says. “That means it is all downhill going home” the wife replies as she gives me a wink while wiping her face gently with a small white cloth. They first fell in love with Bali in 1997 after joining another Scandinavian couple for a three week bike trip around Java<sup>74</sup>. As the two islands are just a short boat ride apart, they decided to “hop on the ferry” and continue their bike ride for another two weeks. Since then, they would continuously compare the scenery, culture, and people to what they had previously experienced. However, there was no “going back” after the beauty they had encountered in Bali. Here, they had found it all; lush mountains, dense jungle, crystal clear rivers, the ocean, palm trees, bird life, majestic volcanoes, and rice fields. Furthermore, they were fascinated by the Balinese culture and

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74 Java is an Indonesian island just west of Bali.

found the locals to be harmonious, easy going, and happy.

For the past six years they have folded their bikes into their suitcases and travelled to Bali shortly after Christmas. They rent the same bungalow every year. The place has an airy terrace in a secluded valley overlooking the jungle, and a swimming pool a few steps down from their bungalow along the river. The bungalow has a kitchen in one end and a king size bed in the other. There is also a sofa and a table where they do their homework and stay in touch on their laptops with friends and family back home<sup>75</sup>. The rent includes a housekeeper three times a week, electricity, water, and gas. Sometimes they make their own meals, since the bungalow includes a kitchen. They have located a good bakery which provide them with decent wholemeal breads in addition to a variety of spreads for breakfast and lunch. Whenever they feel a bit homesick they cook a typical Nordic stew with vegetables sourced from local organic markets. Back home they have two daughters and several grandchildren, who alternate visiting every year with their families. As retired lifestyle migrants, to them this is living the good life and they believe they have found the perfect balance for enjoying their retirement.

## **Happiness for All?**

“Tourists, being people at leisure, are free of primary obligations, while their hosts, having to serve them, are not.” (Nash 1981: 467)

The host community plays a dominant role in the well-being of any traveller or migrant. Thus, happiness should not be seen from a travellers perspective alone. Even though little anthropological attention has been given to a host community, it is important to acknowledge its importance to westerners in enclaves such as Ubud. Without the ones who transport, cook, and clean their experience would be very different (Cohen 2009: 106).

The westerners residing in Ubud enjoy the freedom from primary obligations, such as cooking and cleaning as they are trying to escape the mundane everyday activities they usually perform in their home environment. The host community however, are not in this position and instead serve those being at leisure, as they need to be lodged, fed, entertained, and transported (Nash 1981: 462). Many host societies have experienced how tourism “take” instead of “give” to the local community (Waldren 1997, Fountain and Hall 2002). Further to that, westerners seem to agree that they find it

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<sup>75</sup> The Scandinavian couple would attend Indonesian language classes annually, not only to keep their minds active after they retired, but also because they are interested in the Indonesian culture and language.

difficult to converse or socialize with people from the local community. Even if the host community is welcoming and does everything in its power to make the foreigners feel welcomed, westerners will still rather spend time with other travellers and migrants. In addition, travellers and migrants often exaggerate minor flaws within their host community. This is not simply due to an unfamiliar social setting, but some of my informants claimed that it was due to the locals becoming increasingly greedy. When travelling or living abroad complications caused by other travellers or migrants are to a large degree overlooked, whilst nuisances from locals are exaggerated. According to Hottola (2005), this stems from the impression that we need the company and comfort from fellow travellers and migrants (Hottola 2005: 13). As one respondent expressed in disbelief;

“They raise the rent every single year. I have been coming here for thirteen years now, and I actually thought we were friends. At least in my mind, I had started to see them as family. She continues; one year they wanted to nearly double the rent. I could not believe it. I simply could not believe it. I did not know what to do and I just started to cry. Not because I could not afford it, but because I considered them family. From this moment I realized that they saw me as nothing but a bag of money. I still live there, but it has completely changed my love for them. I am just business to them, nothing else.” (Australian female, 79)

Experiences such as these are common in Ubud. Not just from negotiating rental prices, but from buying fruit and vegetables at the market, and for transport around town. Bargaining and haggling for better prices is part of everyday life in Ubud and thus part of living in Ubud.

As seen in Chapter Four, on the History of Ubud, the town has attracted artists and spiritually inclined people since the 1920s. For many westerners the reason for staying in Ubud was often related to the artistic and spiritual image Bali and its inhabitants radiated. Vickers (2012) described the island and its people as follows,

“...an artistic people in harmony with nature; a vibrant, erotic atmosphere; and an exotic ancient history. Bali has become the most exotic of exotic locations, a fantasy of all the splendours of the Orient and the beauties of the Pacific.” (Vickers 2012:17)

Throughout this thesis I have exemplified and shown how the clientèle in present day Ubud to a large extent has remained the same. Even though there are a steady flow of day tourists from the south of Bali, those staying long term or permanently living in Ubud are typically people with an interest in yoga, spirituality, and alternative health food. Consequently, Ubud cater for them by

establishing cafés and restaurants with a profile related to the newest trends within healthy food and drinks. At the time of research, raw food and juice cleanses were highly popular. Thus, raw salad bars and items such as raw vegan ice cream, organic beetroot juice, and wheat grass shots could be seen throughout town. Being a small island, those visiting and living in Bali acknowledge the need to use local resources. Another trend is therefore, to use local, organic ingredients as much as possible. Furthermore, the food is made without the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) or Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)<sup>76</sup>. As Nash (1981) proclaims, the host society can create a layout for how they want their society to work. Thus, the community can influence the type of travellers and migrants they appeal to and attract. In this sense, Ubud have succeeded in keeping the attention of artists and the spiritual travellers and migrants and at the same time the Balinese culture have managed to remain much the same.

“If anything, tourism has pumped more life into the Balinese cultural Renaissance that began earlier this century.....There are probably more superb artists and craftsmen in Bali today than at any time in its history. With the infusion of dollars from tourist’s performances, village dance companies have been able to afford new costumes that inspire continual pride in their art.” (Zack 1986: 9)

Mead (1970) stated that the average tourist would not leave Bali talking of undressed maidens, but instead of happiness and art (Mead 1970: 331-333). While Ubud has been able to keep its joyous image, it could decay rather quickly if the increase of tourism continuous. Every week, in *The Bali Times*, there would be at least one article related to the growing number of foreign arrivals or how the government would help increase the current numbers. After Indonesia decided to extend their visa free policy to thirty countries, the Minister of Tourism estimated that there would be an increase of another two million visitors annually (*The Bali Times* June 19-22, 2015: 1)<sup>77</sup>. In 2015, the average number of tourist arrivals was around three million tourists. This is a rather hefty increase for such a small island. Furthermore, the administration of the Bali province has set a new target to be reached within the year 2029, with the aim set to receive 30 million tourists annually (*The Bali Times* April 24-30 2015). In the article, the governor of Bali compares the island to Singapore. He justifies this based on Bali being seven times larger than Singapore, which is capable of accommodating 37 million tourists every year. He further announces how the increase will not

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76 The reason why most travellers and migrants in Ubud are avoiding GMO and MSG is due to their potentially harmful side effects. They want their food to be as “clean” and “natural” as possible.

77 Visa free policy means that certain countries do not need to pay for the initial 30 day tourist visa to enter Indonesia. During the time of research, the number of countries were gradually being extended in order to attract more tourists.

result in mass tourism. Instead, the ones entering the island will be selected individuals. Their aim is to be a classy, environmentally friendly destination, which is healthy, beautiful, and green. In order to spread the tourists more evenly throughout the island, the construction of four major highways are planned to better connect the north with the southern part of Bali (The *Bali Times* April 24-30, 2015: 1). This might be good for business, but those who initially came to the island seeking a peaceful, authentic lifestyle may not be able to recognize the magic and charm any more. As one lifestyle migrant pointed out; “tourism will kill tourism”.

The development in recent years has left many to believe that tourism will eventually destroy tourism. Then again, Picard has claimed that Bali is resilient to foreign influences and that “The Balinese have been readily praised for their ability to borrow whatever foreign influence suits them while nevertheless maintaining their identity over the centuries” (Picard 1990: 37). Though, being a strong statement, especially after seeing the waves of tourists pouring in over Bali during this time, Picard continued on a similar note a few years later; “it is as though, thanks to tourism, the Balinese have discovered that they have a culture, something that is at the same time precious and perishable, which they ought to preserve as well as promote” (Picard 1999:16). Nevertheless, if the numbers keep rising like they have in the last few decades, the lifestyle travellers and migrants who came to Ubud seeking a peaceful and tranquil environment in their search for the good life, may soon be looking elsewhere. However, for the time being Bali and Ubud is still being portrayed as a tropical paradise containing the mystique of the east with its lush landscape and influence of Hinduism.

## **Summary**

On the whole, this chapter has interpreted four main themes, Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. These themes were linked and seen in relation to the two core categories of informants that were observed and interviewed in Ubud; western females in their 30s to 50s and retirees. The first theme, Escapism was often related to an “escape” from personally related issues in their home country. Through examples taken from different workshops and encounters in the field, it has been highlighted how these personal problems are linked to their decision to reside as a lifestyle traveller or migrant in Ubud. The second theme, New Challenges, elaborated on specific behaviours and activities performed and implemented by the informants in their regular lives in Ubud. These activities were often related to self exploration or to profound changes in ones diet. By showing these examples the intention is to put forward how these exercises are seen as a way of feeling free, which is elaborated under the third theme, Freedom. Within the community of like-minded westerners in Ubud, they have discovered a sense of freedom that they have been unable to

find in their home country. Their inability to locate this freedom is arguably due to their fear of performing deviant behaviour in the presence of family and peers. The fourth factor, Happiness was linked to discoveries presented by the *Happiness Report*. The report showed that the people between the age of 40 and 50 reach a “low”, more commonly known as the mid life crises, and that women were more susceptible to psychological stress and mental illnesses. Drawing on these discoveries, my female informants within this age group were representative of these findings. In addition, my informants were for the most part unmarried, which the report found to be associated with a lower level of happiness. Furthermore, the retirees who were in their mid 60s to mid 80s were in the age group where the average sense of happiness would drop once again. To sum up, my informants were “classic” examples of individuals who desired to “start over” and look for happiness and search for the good life in a place outside their country of origin. This thesis will now turn to its final chapter, the conclusion.



## **Chapter Six – Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to seek answers to what makes lifestyle migration an increasingly growing phenomenon. As such, the subculture of western lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants in the town of Ubud in Bali, Indonesia have been observed and analysed from January to July 2015. In finding answers to this question, I first looked at the different factors that influenced the lifestyle travellers and lifestyle migrants in Ubud to leave their country of origin. Then, the variety of activities that they engaged in was examined to determine why Ubud was chosen as their preferred destination. A detailed analysis of these findings was presented in chapter five. This chapter will conclude the thesis. First, by providing a final example from the field, then by summarising how the research aims were met and how they relate to previous research on the topic. Finally, ideas for further research are suggested before concluding with final remarks.

In the introduction I mentioned how I did not expect to be holding hands while looking deeply into the eyes of complete strangers while tears would be running down their cheeks. The following example is from the last workshop that I attended on one of the final days before leaving the field. It was held at one of the largest yoga studios, lasted from morning until evening, and was taught by a French tantric yoga teacher living in Bali. Altogether there were thirty five females from various parts of the western world. Throughout the day we had been attempting a number of exercises individually, in pairs, and in groups. For the final exercise we are asked to form two circles on the floor. Then, the women in the inner circle was asked to turn around and face the women forming the outer circle. We were invited to hold each others hands and look into the other person's eyes. It is early evening, the sun is setting, and the regular choir of frogs and insects begins. Incense and candles are being lit around us. The lights are dimmed and tranquil music is being played softly in the background. The women in the inner circle does not move, while the outer circle keeps rotating to the right. A graceful woman with long, dark hair and brown eyes sits down in front of me. Her eyes are filled with tears that keeps coming and gently runs down both her cheeks. I recognise her from an exercise we did as a pair earlier in the day. She keeps squeezing my hands while her lips are trembling and trying to smile. After the workshop had finished, I meet her on her way to her motorbike. She gives me a nod and a smile and softly whispers “thank you”.

### **Addressing the research aims**

Ubud has for several decades been known as a place that attracts people with an inclination towards an alternative and spiritual lifestyle. Being an inland town surrounded by gorges, terraced rice

fields, holy mountains, and active volcanoes, it is hard not to be mesmerized and fall under the “spell” of Bali's spiritual heart. However, in recent years the increasing number of travellers to the island, both long and short term, has reached new heights. Along with the short term tourists is a large group of western lifestyle travellers and migrants who have selected Ubud as their new host community. Within the confined group that I studied, a large number had a previous interest in the alternative and spiritual. From providing a large number of high quality yoga studios, a vast selection of healthy eateries, and a wide range of spiritual workshops on offer, Ubud is not a random choice, but rather a specific destination chosen when searching for a better quality of life.

Based on interviews and participant observation, the findings from the field was divided into four sections, namely Escapism, New Challenges, Freedom, and Happiness. In Chapter Five the theories and literature presented in Chapter Two was reflected on and provided context through extracts from interviews and examples from the field. These examples showed how lifestyle travellers and migrants had different perspectives and reasons for living in Ubud. The informants provided a wide variety of replies, thus one unified conclusion could not be reached as this would portray an inaccurate picture of the westerners living in Ubud. One of the primary themes that arose from interviews among my informants was “Escapism”. They found that Ubud provided them with a sense of community in which they could escape the monotony and the personal enslavement of a materialistic environment (Bateson 1972: 317). They felt “protected” from being surrounded by like-minded people with similar interests. Instead of feeling like an outcast, they felt secure in a place where they could “be themselves” without feeling the judgement of others. In other words, a social bond has been formed, creating a state of “communitas” (Turner 1969: 96). From living in an enclave such as Ubud the residing westerners would commonly attend workshops and activities in search of new and unexplored sides to themselves. These activities were often related to the development of their artistic skills, deepening their yoga practise, or by learning the local customs and language. The examples in Chapter Five illustrated how a common reason for escaping their previous life was related to deeper personal problems. These problems would stem from failed relationships, an uninteresting job, or from emotional issues such as depression (Cohen 2009: 97, Layard et al. 2012: 76). For the retirees, the climate was often mentioned as a contributing factor, but more commonly was the mentioning of the lower cost of living. With a decrease in the overall living expenses they were able to afford private chauffeurs, laundry and house cleaning services. This also made them financially able to socialize more often, thus being able to go out for meals several times per day. In turn, all these activities would separately or combined provide the lifestyle traveller or migrant in Ubud with a better quality of life.

From escaping various aspects in their home country and from settling in Ubud, my informants then started to explore New Challenges. From the wide variety of activities on offer in Ubud, it is a matter of finding activities that would suit specific needs in order to make improvements to the previous life. From the life that was left behind, my informants were now in a “transitional phase” or in a “liminal” period. Their ordinary life has ceased to exist, and they were in a phase that makes a person feel “betwixt and between” and “neither here nor there” (Turner 1969: 95). Such a radical change in ones life happens when one has “hit bottom” which was the case with a great number of informants that I encountered in Ubud. From interviews and observations I discovered that my informants had been going through comparable processes in their former lives back in their home country, and that their behavioural patterns were therefore similar to one another. From having reached their ultimate “low”, my informants realized the need for a change and made the decision to “pack up” and make Ubud their new home. (Bateson 1972: 319). When in a state of liminality and from having reached their “low”, my informants started to practise activities that would gradually improve their sense of well being. Especially since the only time one is able to reach a “high” is after “hitting bottom” and reaching “the low” (Turner 1969: 97, Bateson 1972). In the case of my informants, this initially meant attending yoga classes and meditation sessions regularly<sup>78</sup>. Furthermore, they would frequent alternative and spiritual workshops. On top of that, they would visit cafés and restaurants several times a day to socialize with like-minded people and to explore the extensive selection of health foods.

From the examples given throughout this thesis, the challenges lifestyle travellers and migrants engaged in are related to finding ones true self. From attending different workshops my respondents claimed to have become more “open” and free from old thought patterns that were acting as restrictions in their former lives. However, the new challenges were not all about attending self realization workshops, as they were only one part of the holistic approach that my informants had in their search for the good life. Another way of exploring new challenges in Ubud was through nourishment. To complement the emotional nourishment provided by the workshops, one will find local, organic, and whole food cafés and restaurants attached to the yoga studios or in close proximity. They would often be strictly vegetarian, vegan, or raw food. They would all provide an extensive selection of fresh fruit juices or vegetable drinks for the ones on detox. Doing a detox or a fast on drinks only is common in Ubud as it will help clear both mental and physical blockages. It is a common belief among lifestyle travellers and migrants in Ubud that a balanced, healthy diet combined with physical activities and mental challenges will create balance in ones life. In its own

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<sup>78</sup> Regularly in Ubud would in most cases be attending yoga sessions on a daily basis.

right this is not something new. However, it is uncommon to have such easy access to all these aspects related to a healthy and alternative lifestyle within such a confined area.

After living in Ubud for a certain period of time, my informants discovered a sensation of feeling free and revealed how they initially did not leave their home country looking for freedom.

Nevertheless, the feeling of freedom would gradually arise after living in Ubud for some time. Not only did they feel free from expectations from family and peers, but they especially embraced the freedom from waking up in the morning not feeling restricted by obligations or chores.

Furthermore, from not having to justify their choices or doings to anyone, they discovered a slower pace of life. Thus, finding the time and space to rediscover themselves.

The final aspect when analysing what makes lifestyle migration to Ubud an increasingly growing phenomenon, happiness played a significant role. As stated in Chapter Five a large number of my informants were unmarried and had no children. Being a specific choice, this added to their sense of happiness. In relation to work and income, the informants I interviewed were either retired and living off a pension or working and in their 30s to 50s. Many would work as a digital nomad, or an artist selling art in festivals and exhibitions throughout the summer in the northern hemisphere. A few others would host workshops in order to cover their living expenses while residing in Ubud. From feeling free to explore ones artistic skills or to “broaden” ones yoga practise, provides meaning and direction in life. Drawing on Fisher's definitions of well being, these aspects relates well to my informants. Not only have they located themselves in an environment that provides activities and food that promotes good health, they also feel safe from harm Fischer 2014: 7-8). Further to that, they have the opportunity to pursue their aspirations, all in which set out a new course towards the good life.

To better understand the search for the good life among western lifestyle travellers and migrants, this paper have researched the different aspects of that makes lifestyle migration to Ubud a growing phenomenon. Initially, by looking at conditions that would influence a person to leave their home country. Then, by reviewing the activities my informants attended. From participant observation and interviews the following conclusion was reached. For the western lifestyle travellers and migrants in their 30s to 50s, the search for a better life was commonly related to an escape from personal related issues. After settling in their new host community they would attend regular yoga and meditation classes, in addition to various workshops. As a large number of these workshops would be considered out of the ordinary and behavioural patterns considered abnormal, most of my informants would not attend such workshops in their home environment. In Ubud, however, they

have the freedom to perform these activities without the sensation of acting or behaving deviantly. The alternative and spiritual activities in Ubud were accepted by the other western travellers and migrants within the community, thus making it easier to “act out” ones fascination towards the “unknown” (Giddens 1989: 118). Put another way, the absence of family and peers cleared the path for the exploration of new sides to ones being (Graburn 1977: 24). Among my informants, the retirees would also frequently attend yoga classes and workshops of various kinds. However, these are not the only factors that draws them. Commonly, the warm, sunny climate contributed to a greater sense of well-being. However, they enjoyed the reduced prices, compared to their home country, and the social life they were able to obtain from socializing with other western retirees. In summary, several factors combined provided my informants with an increasingly sense of well-being while searching for the good life.

## **Further research suggestions**

“You are doing anthropological research among us expats in Ubud? How wonderful! I would love to understand why I am here and what I am doing here!” (Scandinavian female, 32)

As the quote above indicates, the western lifestyle travellers and migrants do not necessarily know how or why they came to settle down in Ubud for longer or shorter periods of time. As such, I believe I would have been able to provide a clearer picture of everyday life among westerners residing in Ubud, had my time frame not been limited to six months. I assume that since the informants knew of my limited time in the field, they behaved differently than they would with a westerner permanently residing there. A longer stay would create a stronger connections with my informants, which would provide the trust to “open up” and elaborate further on their personal issues and problems they were initially escaping from in their home country. My impression is that I only “touched the surface” of their underlying problems during my time in the field. Locating people's reasoning for migrating would be beneficial for countries with a high density of migrants living abroad in order to better understanding their “escape patterns”. In understanding a migrants reasoning, its home country is better equipped to provide solutions in keeping their citizens within their respective countries if they so desire.

## **Final remarks**

The present research and its findings provides a specific, yet increasingly relevant perspective

within lifestyle migration and the Anthropology of Tourism. Initially, my belief was that the western lifestyle travellers and migrants residing in Ubud were content and happy beings who were living their dream life in paradise. Instead I came to realize that most westerners living there had come due to physical issues or emotional scars. Even though my informants travel and migrate as a way of life they are doing so because they are escaping from personally related problems and issues in their country of origin. It is thus interesting to reflect on the fact that the ones encountered and studied in Ubud originated from western countries and were affluent individuals of all ages (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 2). Being born in a developed country does not equate to feeling happy or living a good life. As this thesis has pointed out, one's state of happiness is highly individual and is unrelated to living in a materialistic society. Instead, depriving oneself of modern day conveniences and escaping excessive consumerism seem to be the preferred choice among lifestyle traveller and migrants in Ubud in *their* search for the good life.

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