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Brydon, Lavinia and Jenzen, Olu and Nourse, Nicholas (2018) 'Our Pier': Leisure activities and local communities at the British seaside. *Leisure/Loisir*. ISSN 1492-7713. (In press)

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'Our Pier': Leisure activities and local communities at the British seaside

Journal:	<i>Leisure/Loisir</i>
Manuscript ID	RLOI-2018-0033.R3
Manuscript Type:	Special Issue Article
Keywords:	seaside resorts, pleasure piers, youth culture, leisure spaces, popular culture
Abstract:	<p>The seaside resort has long held a distinctive position within the history of British leisure. Its peculiar physicality whereby the natural landscape of sea and sand combines with distinctive architectural elements, such as pavilions and piers, has accommodated many and varied leisure activities across the years. However, to date, the majority of research on British coastal resorts considers these activities solely in connection with tourism. Using a combination of contextual archival research, participant observations, semi-structured interviews and oral history narratives, this article attempts a deliberate shift in focus where the leisure activities of a young local population are brought to the fore in the history of British seaside entertainment and, in particular, their experiences of pleasure piers in the post-war era. The article also explores the potential for the concept of the 'community pier' in terms of nurturing seaside leisure cultures in the present and future.</p>

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3 **‘Our Pier’: Leisure activities and local communities at the British**
4 **seaside**
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5 The seaside resort has long held a distinctive position within the history of British
6 leisure. Its peculiar physicality whereby the natural landscape of sea and sand combines
7 with distinctive architectural elements, such as pavilions and piers, has accommodated
8 many and varied leisure activities across the years. However, to date, the majority of
9 research on British coastal resorts considers these activities solely in connection with
10 tourism. Using a combination of contextual archival research, participant observations,
11 semi-structured interviews and oral history narratives, this article attempts a deliberate
12 shift in focus where the leisure activities of a young local population are brought to the
13 fore in the history of British seaside entertainment and, in particular, their experiences
14 of pleasure piers in the post-war era. The article also explores the potential for the
15 concept of the ‘community pier’ in terms of nurturing seaside leisure cultures in the
16 present and future.
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25 Keywords: seaside resorts, pleasure piers, youth culture, leisure spaces, popular
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31 **Introduction**

32
33 The seaside resort has long held a distinctive position within the history of British
34 leisure. Its peculiar physicality whereby the natural landscape of sea and sand (or stone
35 or shingle) combines with distinctive architectural elements, such as pavilions and piers,
36 has accommodated many and varied leisure activities across the years. These extend
37 from the health practices of the Regency era through the Victorian interest in popular
38 entertainments to the hedonistic pleasures pursued in the early decades of the twentieth
39 century—including the ‘dirty weekend’ of the inter-war years onwards—and, then, the
40 later rebellious actions of a post-war British youth (Shields, 1991). As such, the British
41 seaside resort provides a clear illustration of Sam Elkington and Sean Gammon’s
42 introductory statement to their work on landscapes of leisure, namely that ‘[l]eisure
43 patterns are necessarily spatial; their spatial structures settings for certain activities to
44 take place’ (2015, p. 1). The untroubled popular understanding of the seaside resort as a
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3 site in which a quiet, therapeutic beach stroll can sit alongside the lively performance of
4
5 a Pierrot troupe or the thrills of an illicit sexual encounter also makes manifest that
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7 ‘place’—as defined by lived human experience—is fluid and flexible. This non-
8
9 essentialist conceptualization of place, championed by cultural geographers such as
10
11 Doreen Massey (1994, 2005), has certainly been taken up by social and cultural
12
13 historians, including John Walton (2000) and Fred Gray (2006), when considering the
14
15 British seaside resort’s survival into the late twentieth century and beyond.¹ Some of the
16
17 key dynamics of the seaside include the combination of the tame and the wild (Corbin,
18
19 1994) as well as the familiar or mundane and ‘the other’ or spectacular. These concur
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21 perhaps most patently in the phenomenon that is the pleasure pier.
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29 However, the positive connections between the British seaside resort’s
30
31 flexibility and its durability are typically considered through the lens of tourism. The
32
33 assorted leisure activities sketched above primarily relate to a visiting population—
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35 whether the long-standing tourist, week-long holidaymaker or fleeting night-time
36
37 visitor. This is understandable: British seaside resorts responded and contributed to the
38
39 rise of mass tourism in the nineteenth century with newly-built railways—fast,
40
41 convenient and ever cheaper—ensuring that the natural and cultural delights of the
42
43 seaside were now available to all.² Moreover, the strength of this association has
44
45 resulted in a particular kind of ‘nostalgia-fuelled heritage tourism’ that many of today’s
46
47 surviving resorts rely upon as they battle decline and deterioration—‘a valuable lifeline’
48
49 according to David Jarratt and Sean Gammon (2016, p. 123). But the narrow scholarly
50
51 focus on tourism and holiday culture means that the ways in which the British seaside
52
53 resort’s local population have contributed to its identity and, indeed, resilience as a
54
55 leisure space are often side-lined. Attempts to offer an understanding of seaside leisure
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3 that acknowledges and draws attention to the lives of the local community are sporadic
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5 at best.³ Recent work by Nicolas Whybrow who has considered the role of the arts in
6
7 regeneration work in urban areas and specifically ‘a reconstituted identity’ (2016, p.
8
9 671) for Folkestone, a port town in south-east England, offers one example while Anya
10
11 Chapman and Duncan Light’s consideration of how employees in the tourism industry
12
13 in a northern England resort ‘respond to, and negotiate, the behaviour (and
14
15 misbehaviour) of tourists who are enjoying a period of liberation and release from the
16
17 strictures of everyday life’ (2017, p. 183) offers another.⁴ This article seeks to further
18
19 develop this move towards an understanding of the seaside in which the local
20
21 population’s perspective is given due attention. To do this, it will show how the
22
23 favoured youth cultural activities of residents have been particularly influential in
24
25 sealing the seaside resort’s position in histories of modern British leisure, with a
26
27 particular focus on post-war events that occurred on (and around) pleasure piers.
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35 The overall research questions we have worked with revolve around how
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37 different groups in the community experience and engage (or disengage) with the local
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39 pier; and what the challenges and opportunities for contemporary pleasure piers are, as
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41 at once living heritage sites, commercial seaside amusement venues and municipal
42
43 leisure and entertainment environments. Working in collaboration with two community
44
45 partners—The Hastings Pier and The Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust—has allowed
46
47 the research team unique insight into the many ways the local seaside communities have
48
49 affiliation and attachments to their respective piers. More than just wanting to showcase
50
51 their (popular) cultural heritage to tourists, the community partners participating in this
52
53 project were interested in understanding the significance of the pier as a leisure space to
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55 various local groups across the decades and, concurrently, thinking through ways in
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3 which to engage today's under-represented users, such as young adults. In the next
4
5 section, we will discuss some of the diverse methods and methodologies we have
6
7 employed in this research in order to explore what connects seaside resort communities
8
9 with their heritage. Focusing on the lived experiences of the local youths who looked
10
11 forward to letting loose on a Friday night during the 1950s and 60s emerging seaside
12
13 youth culture, the article offers a critique of 'taken for granted' notions about what
14
15 constitutes seaside heritage. The article then goes on to situate the case studies
16
17 historically before discussing leisure activities of the local population, drawing on oral
18
19 history narratives that illustrate both the cultural significance and everydayness of it all.
20
21 'Ownership' both in terms of a financial transaction and that which comes with strong
22
23 emotional attachment—'ownership through living' (Crouch, 2015, p. 15)—emerges as a
24
25 strong theme in this research and is explored in greater detail towards the later stages of
26
27 the article, as we further contemplate the pleasure pier's potential appeal as a
28
29 community leisure space in coastal resorts today.
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38 The concept of the 'community pier' is key to this aspect of the research, with
39
40 Hastings Pier offering an exemplary case study given its decision to launch a
41
42 community share fundraising scheme in 2013 and subsequent adoption of 'the people's
43
44 pier' epithet.⁵ Community ownership enterprises are often regarded as an outcome of an
45
46 existing community's collective effort and ability to rally around a common interest.
47
48 Our research takes a different view by considering how communities connect and
49
50 emerge through community ownership and related processes such as collective action to
51
52 recall, restore and develop their leisure spaces, which includes mediating their histories.
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54 Such processes involve both connections and disassociation and may be understood as
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56 community-making processes in themselves.
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As we write up this research, we are aware that this has become a particularly urgent line of inquiry with regard to Hastings Pier following its sale in June 2018 by administrators to an individual private owner, entrepreneur Abid Gulzar. It is a development that requires reflection on some of the vulnerabilities of community funding models often driven by grassroots involvement and the challenges of delivering on both a heritage preservation plan and a sustainable commercial operation in line with the realities of a seaside economy. The pier's ambition to contribute to the cultural regeneration of the area goes beyond that of a traditional heritage preservation society, evident in its entrepreneurial outlook and desire to enrich local life. But, despite a grassroots movement engendered by civic pride and strong support from the local community, this community pier's offer in terms of leisure activities and experiences of value to local audiences has not been able to respond fully to expectations. It is indicative of the uneasy shifts in pier culture more generally, which seem to oscillate between the outdated or purely nostalgic on the one hand and the very progressive on the other (as exemplified by Hasting Pier's radically modern and prize-winning architecture⁶). While the complexities of regeneration are not the central concern of this article, they feed into some of the distinct instances of leisure culture emerging from or evolving around seaside piers that we wish to discuss. This is important because we think a better understanding of a local population's perspective may help future developments of seaside resorts to regain relevance to their respective communities.

Researching local leisure lives

Seaside popular entertainment and leisure culture are under-researched areas, as noted by John Walton and Jason Wood (2009) who refer to the 'shortage of credibility' (p.

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2
3 121) afforded to the recording, preservation and historical recognition of the importance
4
5 of popular seaside entertainment, and Howard Hughes (2011) who refers to research
6
7 about historical seaside entertainment as being ‘incidental’ (p. 83). As a contribution to
8
9 this much-needed area then, this study brings together both contemporary and
10
11 historically situated case studies. We note that researching the *cultural* history of
12
13 seaside piers has value in itself, particularly as the vast majority of literature on British
14
15 leisure piers focuses on their architectural and engineering history.
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22 In this article we combine historical contextual archival research with participant
23
24 observations, semi-structured interviews and oral history narratives (Ritchie, 2014). The
25
26 oral history narratives were collected via interviews with members of the local
27
28 community in Clevedon, Somerset (summer, 2015) following a targeted call for
29
30 individuals who had grown-up in the area in the post-war era.⁷ Oral history allows us to
31
32 link the individual narrative, the micro level of history, with the cultural, historical
33
34 context (macro level) (Leavy, 2011, p. 5). By allowing for narratives of lived
35
36 experiences to be part of the research process, we attempt to avoid a top-down
37
38 perspective by making our ‘investigative starting point the memories of groups or
39
40 individuals and to ask how these might be related to the wider culture’ (Radstone, 2000,
41
42 pp. 11–12). This is particularly important in relation to researching British seaside
43
44 culture and history, as it is a history dominated by the tourist perspective and
45
46 holidaymakers as the ‘major consumers of the seaside’ (Gray, 2006, p. 12). The social
47
48 knowledge produced in this research process is less about discovering unknown
49
50 histories and more about a deliberate *shift of focus* onto the experiences of the young
51
52 local population in the history of seaside entertainment, though we remain mindful of
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54 the potential problems of romanticizing the past. It also represents a move away from an
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3 overwriting of the lived experiences of the coast with dominant narratives of quaintness
4 and placidness as the main associations with seaside culture (see Pearson, 2005 as one
5 example).
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12 At Hastings, Sussex, we similarly sought to engage local residents who could
13 recall the seaside youth culture of decades past. Here, though, we adapted our approach
14 to take account of the fact that at the point of data collection (summer, 2015), the pier
15 was not yet open to the public following years of restoration, and the sustained lack of
16 access to the space might affect response numbers and depth of discussion. To mitigate
17 these issues, we conducted secondary data analysis on a set of individual interviews (n.
18 37) previously collected by Archie Lauchlan, a member of the larger project team, for
19 the purpose of researching a documentary.⁸ We also collaborated with the community
20 partner to design outreach activities such as an immersive silent disco event to take
21 place on (and below) the nearly repaired structure, exclusively featuring music from the
22 pier's long and impressive repertoire of gigs and dance nights (Image 1). This allowed
23 our participants to mobilize memories that subsequently fuelled a roundtable discussion
24 where we interrogated their connection to the pier.⁹ We also attended various events on
25 the pier once it had opened (from spring 2016 onwards) to obtain vox pop style short
26 interviews with relevant audiences and conduct participant observations. The balance
27 between planned discussion, capturing mainly music enthusiasts, and spontaneous
28 interviews, capturing a broader spectrum of views, serves to ensure a productive
29 comparative analysis with the work undertaken at Clevedon while acknowledging
30 Hastings' persistent sense of local distinctiveness.¹⁰
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56 **[INSERT IMAGE 1 HERE. (SILENT DISCO). CAPTION:]**
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3 Image 1. Some of the silent disco participants at Hastings Pier venture under the pier. Image
4 supplied by Olu Jenzen.
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10 Our methodological flexibility and eclecticism resonate with Les Roberts's
11 (2016, 2018) observations regarding work in the developing fields of spatial humanities
12 and spatial anthropology, in particular that which seeks to 'deep map' locations in order
13 to better understand the human processes and interrelations that are integral to their
14 formation. In the adoption of a multi-modal approach we are not simply advocating that
15 researchers 'make-do' with available resources but, rather, anticipate 'tackling'
16 situations, in however much detail and nuance they may assert, require or happen'
17 (Crouch, 2018) drawing upon a team's interdisciplinary make-up and differing skill-set
18 as required. While Roberts outlines some of the negative responses to the concept of the
19 'researcher-as-bricoleur' (2018) we suggest that the complexity of leisure space—as,
20 indeed, all space with its fissures and contradictions—makes clear the necessity for
21 open, multifaceted and adaptable research methods. For us, the oral history approach
22 used in combination with other forms of historical, ethnographic and cultural studies
23 research has allowed for cultural tensions to emerge and yields a deeper and richer
24 texture to the research in that it often straddles official and unofficial heritage discourses
25 permitting the intricacy of the mundane to surface.
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49 **Case studies: The pleasure pier, the community pier**

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51 By the end of the nineteenth century, piers had become integral to the British seaside
52 resort with the country once boasting over 100, most of them centred on the English and
53 Welsh coasts. Often constructed as little more than wooden jetties to serve as landing
54 stages for passenger steamers, these distinctive coastal structures quickly developed to
55 facilitate and encourage a whole host of leisure pursuits from relaxed promenading over
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3 the sea, through the daring acrobatics of pier-head dives, to recreational fishing. Further
4
5 development of piers as an amenity for leisure resulted in ornate pavilions and other
6
7 covered entertainment venues being built on the piers' wooden slats. These additions
8
9 signalled the arrival of the pleasure pier proper, as described by Walton: a
10
11 'promenading area and a place of assignation, with its distinctive architecture of eclectic
12
13 frivolity and its musical, comic and dramatic entertainments' (2000, p. 94). Although
14
15 almost half of these piers are now lost (according to the National Piers Society) and
16
17 others—like Birnbeck Pier in Weston-super-Mare in Somerset—are derelict and closed,
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19 the remaining piers continue to offer a defining structural component for the British
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21 seaside resort and a focal point for its leisure activities.
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30 As the photographer Simon Roberts's comprehensive survey of these
31
32 architectural curiosities in his exhibition and book *Pierdom* (2013) attests, the pier's
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34 unusual make-up is a potent visual referent for the admiration and decline of seaside
35
36 resorts. While we do not deny that these predominantly Victorian structures offer a clear
37
38 manifestation of the 'arrival' of mass tourism via industrialization, we are keen to
39
40 emphasize the plurality of meaning that resides in these spaces. As Massey (1994) has
41
42 explored, places are complex in their specificity which is not 'some long internalised
43
44 history' but, rather, 'a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving
45
46 together at a particular locus' (p. 127). The intersection of trajectories that piers offer is
47
48 no doubt intensified due to the liminal nature of the structures, both geographically and
49
50 culturally. Stretching out into the sea, often with an intricate sub-deck structure of stilts
51
52 and rods, they offer us a different visual perspective on the towns to which they belong,
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54 looking back at a slant, and a sense of being 'at sea'—suspended from life on shore.
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56 The distinctive material and spatial characteristics have also shaped developments in
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3 pier culture since Victorian times, with the earlier physical leisure pursuit of
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5 promenading increasingly giving way to popular cultural consumption that encompasses
6
7 a heterogeneous mix of entertainment genres and styles (Hughes & Benn, 1998). These
8
9 include popular performance acts (drawing on a longer history of circus and sideshow
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11 exhibitions), music performances and dancing, shops and food outlets, optical
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13 entertainments and amusement machines as well as the more substantial and capitalized
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15 offering of theatres, ballrooms and resident funfairs.
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22 The above broad overview of pier entertainment that emerged in the late
23
24 nineteenth and early twentieth centuries makes it clear that piers are a central part of
25
26 seaside leisure history, though local variations in pier culture should not be overlooked
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28 (Bull & Hayler, 2009; Purce, 2017). In some cases, as with Blackpool in north-west
29
30 England and Brighton on the south coast, they have been thoroughly commercialized,
31
32 achieving economies of scale, and appear more or less fully integrated into an ever
33
34 adaptable, mainstream popular culture with roots in working-class entertainment. These
35
36 piers thus fuel the development of resorts, as ‘spectacular sites of consumption that need
37
38 [...] to be both produced and reproduced’ (Gray, 2006, p. 45). In other cases, piers have
39
40 progressed along the lines of a heritagization of popular culture (see, for example,
41
42 Roberts, 2014), promoting such seaside heritage as a new form of leisure activity with
43
44 new demands and commercial opportunities for providing a nostalgic version of pre-war
45
46 popular entertainment. The heritage experience as a new form of leisure activity has
47
48 largely been taken up by piers with particularly intricate architectural work, such as the
49
50 spider-legged Grade 1 listed Clevedon Pier.¹¹ This response to market demand aligns
51
52 with a broader programme of seaside regeneration efforts, as ‘increasingly, culture is
53
54 being used as a tool or catalyst for regeneration initiatives’ (Smith, 2004, p. 20).
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3 However, it needs noting that the heritage experience, as leisure consumption, is often
4 heavily curated. It foregrounds particular narratives of British seaside history so, though
5
6 keen to display some of the curiosities of its cultural past, it rarely recognizes the piers'
7
8 continuous history up to the present day and neglects to attribute the role of the pier in
9
10 the lives of the people in the local area. It also means a degree of 'sanitation' of the long
11
12 and enduring alternative—or illicit—leisure culture associated with piers and the
13
14 seaside. In this research then, we begin to redress this issue by foregrounding local
15
16 youth culture and by engaging with post-war popular culture, though we acknowledge
17
18 that the experiences of certain sections of the community remain under-explored in our
19
20 research, not least those of the black and minority ethnic population.¹²
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29 We have focused our attention on two seaside towns that have embraced the
30 label 'community pier' in recent years due to the sustained support from the local
31 population. Residents have celebrated and ensured the survival of their local piers in
32 spite of the continued popularity of holidays abroad and the detrimental effects of sea,
33 storms and fire. Hastings Pier in Sussex, on England's south coast, and Clevedon Pier
34 on the north coast of Somerset have undergone physical repair and improvements and
35 continue to operate thanks to community intervention in the form of grassroots
36 campaigning and community ownership funding models. Working in collaboration with
37 the pier organizations as project partners, we have conducted research around a set of
38 themes relating to this notion of a 'community pier', including investigating the value of
39 the pier to the local community, its function as a community 'hub', issues of access and
40 outreach, and more specifically how and if the piers have used their popular cultural
41 heritage to engage particular audiences and overcome negative associations with
42 dereliction and declining and stifled leisure forms.
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6 Our two case studies, Clevedon Pier and Hastings Pier, were originally built as
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8 passenger terminals to serve pleasure steamers. In this respect the two bare distinct
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10 similarities; where they differ is that Hastings was conceived purely as a pleasure pier,
11
12 complete with extravagant 2,000-seat pavilion, whereas Clevedon's pier, although not
13
14 without its diversions in its earlier years, would have to wait almost 50 years for its
15
16 distinctly less elegant and far smaller pleasure 'pavilion'. At Clevedon, bands—most
17
18 probably brass, military or wind bands—were regularly advertised as playing on the
19
20 pier during public holidays and on summer evenings from the 1890s onwards. That
21
22 Hastings Pier was to be a place of entertainment was more clearly stated from the
23
24 outset. A year after its opening on 5 August 1872 pier-head entertainment included
25
26 George Grossmith, a prominent one-man cabaret show, which helped achieve audiences
27
28 of 'some thousands' (*The Era*, 1974, 20 September). In the same year, the Pier
29
30 Company also reported that 482,000 tickets had been sold, attributing much of that
31
32 success to their having a 'good band' (*Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 1873, 6
33
34 September).

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42 The enthusiasm for pier-head theatres, pavilions and concert rooms lasted well
43
44 into the twentieth century, with their popularity reaching its peak in the inter-war years.
45
46 At Clevedon, the pier's 'pavilion' was erected as best we can tell in 1912 or 1913
47
48 during another rebuild of the pier-head. But, unlike Hastings Pier with its Eugenius
49
50 Birch-designed extravagance (Image 2), Clevedon's version was a small, plain and
51
52 incongruous hut wedged between two existing shelters; it is best described as
53
54 resembling a Second World War-era Nissen Hut (Image 3). Nevertheless, the new
55
56 building would appear to have benefited from the general enthusiasm for such spaces,
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3 and between 1921 and 1931 the local newspapers carried annual notices of applications
4 made for temporary music and dancing licenses. Although such notices stop in the
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7
8 1930s, these dates lie on the very edge of living memory. For example, one 97-year old
9
10 interviewee on the BBC's 2017 *Inside Out West* feature on Clevedon Pier remembers
11
12 ballroom dancing in the pavilion aged 18, which extends the dance hall era of
13
14 Clevedon's pavilion well into that decade (BBC One, 2017, 11 September). This is a
15
16 part of the pier's heritage that has been under-represented in its more recent marketing,
17
18 which has heavily emphasized a genteel Victorian image and focused on the pier's
19
20 original architecture and status as the only surviving Grade 1 listed pier in the country.
21
22 Yet, youthful dancing was a core part of the narratives collected from locals which
23
24 underscores the importance of understanding the seaside from the local population's
25
26 perspective.
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30 **[INSERT IMAGE 2 HERE (Interior of Hastings Pier pavilion). CAPTION:]**

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33 Image 2. Interior of Hastings Pier pavilion ca. 1905. Image courtesy of The East Sussex
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35 Libraries.
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37 **[INSERT IMAGE 3 HERE (Clevedon pier showing the pavilion). CAPTION:]**

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39 Image 3. Clevedon Pier head and pavilion. Imaged courtesy of Clevedon Pier and Heritage
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41 Trust community archive.
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46 Hastings Pier's first pavilion burned down in 1917, but was rebuilt in 1922, and
47
48 other than during the Second World War—when seaside piers were closed or turned
49
50 into military defences—the concerts, dances and variety shows continued into the
51
52 1960s, by which time cheap foreign holidays were clearly having a detrimental effect on
53
54 the British seaside holiday and resort. The time, however, coincides with a new era for
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56 pier-head entertainment, with pop, and rock 'n' roll having a significant impact on local
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58 youth culture. The differences in scale at our two case studies are, not surprisingly,
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3 marked. At Hastings Pier, live gigs began in the mid-1950s, but the next two decades
4
5 were a veritable ‘golden era’ as a who’s-who of 1960s and 70s artists filled the theatre:
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7 The Hollies, Tom Jones, The Kinks, Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, The Who, Pink
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9 Floyd, The Clash and The Sex Pistols. At Clevedon, the town’s youth had to settle for a
10
11 20-disc jukebox. The mechanical music arrived around 1958 after the then pier master
12
13 Bernard Faraway had seen one in place at nearby Weston-super-Mare’s Grand Pier.
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15 Anecdotally, the first jukebox was thrown into the sea one night during an argument but
16
17 it was replaced with a much grander 200-disc BAL-AMi box in polished chrome and
18
19 pink illuminated plastic. The jukebox music entertainment at the end of the pier
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21 attracted mainly the town’s teenagers who, at the time, would have been barred from
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23 entering public houses. It is this emerging youth culture we will turn to next.
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30 **The pier and emerging youth culture**

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32 As Walton (2000) notes, by the 1930s piers have ‘ceased to be fashionable’ (p. 106),
33
34 and, although the rise in domestic holidaying due to the war partially brought visitors
35
36 back to the British seaside, seaside culture after the war was significantly changed. The
37
38 fact that the seaside towns and their entertainment no longer had the mass appeal they
39
40 once had did not stifle the importance of piers and other seafront establishments to local
41
42 communities, however. One aspect to explain this incongruity is the role of piers as a
43
44 focal point around which 1950s and 60s youth leisure cultures developed. As narrated
45
46 by one of the project participants, Mary, who grew up in Clevedon, the pier was very
47
48 attractive to the local youth. She describes how her teenage years,¹³ having just left
49
50 school, routinely involved hanging out with friends at one of the seafront establishments
51
52 and then going onto the pier for evening entertainment: ‘We used to go into Fortes [a
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54 cafe on the seafront] first for a coffee, a little crowd of us, [...] and then we would
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3 always go on the pier. And dance and have a wonderful evening' (Mary, interview,
4 August, 2015). Similarly, another participant, Jenny, remembers going on the pier
5 several days a week: 'We used to just live on there, every evening we would go down.
6 And, well, just loved it! Just paid our admission, I don't think it cost us any more
7 money. We may have had a Coke out of a Coke machine or something but that was
8 about it' (Jenny, interview, August, 2015).¹⁴ These narratives illustrate that the social
9 practices of the everyday determine and shape the seaside as a leisure space and should
10 not just be understood as a construct of and for tourists. Derek's comment about the
11 familiar group of people at the dance hall similarly shows how it was the local youth
12 that regularly came to enjoy themselves on the pier and how it was predominantly
13 conceptualized as a social space: 'we knew everyone who was on here... they were
14 from Clevedon and you knew everyone ... and yes there used to be quite a crowd on
15 here' (Derek, interview, August, 2015).

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33 **[INSERT IMAGE 4 HERE (Clevedon pier pavilion interior). CAPTION:**

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35 Image 4. Teenage girls photographed inside Clevedon Pier pavilion ca. 1961–1962. Digital
36 image donated to Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust community archive by participant.
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42 We can note that it is the introduction of the jukebox, and the renewed
43 opportunity for dancing that it brought on the pier, that facilitated the formation of an
44 entirely new, local youth leisure culture based on popular music. Dancing on the pier
45 was established as a more regular event and one that had a whole culture emerging
46 around it:
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55 My friends and I who had not long left school, I think about 1958... 59 to 60 ...we
56 heard there was this wonderful thing at the end of the pier called a jukebox. And this
57 sounded... we must go and see this [laughs] so we went to the end of the pier to see this
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3 wonderful jukebox ... to the strings of Elvis Presley of course [giggles] and we were
4 allowed to dance in a little pavilion at the end of the pier ... we were allowed to dance
5 which we did do and there was a little counter to sell coffee and cake, that sort of
6 thing... (Mary, interview, August, 2015).
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14 This memory is influenced by the popular narrative of youth entertainment in post-war
15 Britain, but it narrates the fusion of the ‘wild’ American music and the sometimes-tame
16 setting of public seaside spaces, which are domesticated through design practices.
17 Public spaces like these were particularly important to young women as they enabled
18 them to socialize outside the home and ‘express a cultural identity’ (Osgerby, 1998). It
19 is interesting to note here Mary’s choice of words: ‘we were *allowed* to dance’, which
20 indicates that this new youth culture emerged out of a past that had a sense of parental
21 or societal restrictions associated with it. Increasingly young people were beginning to
22 realize that they needed to ‘discover and to “own” places of enjoyment and retreat
23 where they ha[d] the freedom to relax and pursue “leisure” in the old meaning of the
24 word’ (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2015, p. 125). Mary’s phrasing also suggests a
25 developing awareness amongst the youths that certain spaces were more
26 accommodating of their social interactions and play. The space at the end of the pier
27 facilitated dancing in a way that the seaside cafes did not, in this instance. While music
28 and dancing were central to the site’s attraction, the accompanying atmosphere and the
29 marking of the environment as a youth space (for example, through the centrality of the
30 jukebox and pinball machines) was thus also a huge part of its appeal to Clevedon’s
31 teenage residents. As another research participant, Derek, confirms when admitting to
32 not being much of a dancer: ‘I never danced, but I used to go down [to the dance hall on
33 the pier] with my friends, we used to go down just to be in amongst there and sit in a
34 little recess and just watch everything—watch the world go by really. [...] watching the
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3 girls and boys dance.’ (Derek, interview, August, 2015). In this way, the pier served the
4 town’s youth population in much the same manner as parks, plazas or squares continue
5 to do in the UK’s non-coastal areas, offering them a space distinct from the home or
6 work (or education) environment where they could congregate, intermingle and have
7 fun (see also Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2015).
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17 Mary’s description of the simple pavilion at the end of the Clevedon Pier that
18 served as the dance hall indicates that the lived experience and the culture built up
19 around the music and dancing over time were the main draw for the town’s youth. This
20 was not a grand dance palace to pull in the tourists but it was functional. Mary describes
21 how the jukebox was a novelty at one point but soon became a whole way of life for
22 them. To an extent this leisure time revolved around the consumption of popular music
23 but, also, the routine of going out to these youth-focused spaces with friends. Previous
24 key studies of jukebox culture, perhaps most famously Richard Hoggart’s work (1957),
25 have been both detached and negative in tone. As David Fowler (2008) comments,
26 Hoggart ‘saw no good at all in the British teenager’s interest in American popular music
27 [...] chiefly heard away from parents in the milk bars and coffee bars of provincial and
28 southern England’ (p. 116). But, of course, the carving out of a youth space was the
29 whole point.
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49 The interviewees above also comment on how the local culture formed because
50 it was accessible in terms of being affordable to young people. As Fowler (2008) notes,
51 it was during the inter-war years that the ‘teenage consumer’ (p. 115) emerged. And
52 then, in the post-war period, the American popular music industry established itself in
53 the British consumer market which fuelled particular formations and expressions of
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3 youth culture. As teenagers, our interviewees would have had some disposable funds,
4 although not a lot, and the entertainment on the pier and hanging out in the cafes on the
5 seafront was relatively inexpensive: admission to the pier was 6d. It should be noted
6 though that for a commercial leisure culture, the drive for profitability was not very
7 strong. Derek comments: ‘I wonder why the proprietor [of The Express cafe on the
8 seafront] allowed us to stay because we didn’t spend any money really’ (Derek,
9 interview, August, 2015). These findings point to the distinctly small-scale but steady
10 leisure economy of the modest seaside resort like Clevedon and, also, to the value of the
11 seafront establishments to the local youth.
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26 As public youth spaces, seaside piers are simultaneously providers of
27 commercial youth leisure consumption and the spaces youth informally create
28 themselves by occupying them in a more organic or sporadic yet social way, and not
29 infrequently there are tensions around prescribed, proscribed and non-legitimate uses of
30 the space. Unsurprisingly then, some of the youth cultural experiences that occurred in
31 the post-war era were confrontational. The clashes between ‘Mods’ and ‘Rockers’ that
32 took place across several seaside resorts, like Brighton, Hastings and Margate, in the
33 1960s, and caused a moral panic in polite society, have shaped subsequent notions of
34 seaside culture in the south of England. Public opinion about these clashes was mainly
35 based on sensationalist journalistic reporting, as written about in Stanley Cohen’s
36 seminal *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1973) and immortalized in the film
37 *Quadrophenia* (Roddam, 1979). These clashes were often simply spats between local
38 groups of youth. Altercations also occurred in small-scale but recurring challenges
39 between groups of youths about the claim to ‘their’ local pier. Our Clevedon
40 interviewees remember the ‘Weston boys’ from neighbouring seaside town Weston-
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3 super-Mare causing trouble and minor vandalism, such as smashing lights down at the
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5 pier. Norman narrates about his own experiences of the ‘Weston boys’ coming to
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7 Clevedon:
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12 Well you know we were all down there—all—there were loads on that night. We were
13
14 all told that the Weston boys were coming to sort the Clevedon boys out. And that’s
15
16 when somebody came running down the pier and said: the Weston boys are at the other
17
18 end! [...] but when we got to the end the police had locked all the gates up and chained
19
20 them up and we couldn’t get off. To get at them. And they ushered the Weston boys out
21
22 of Clevedon. (Norman, interview, August, 2015).
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27 This was very different from the clashes that gained media attention and resulted in the
28
29 allocation of extra police forces to coastal towns to clamp down on what was seen as
30
31 youth delinquency and disruption. Referring to these particular mass events, Fowler
32
33 (2008) writes, ‘the Mod culture of the seaside resorts [...] was hardly a culture at all’ (p.
34
35 136) by which he means they were very temporary and loose gatherings. The vast
36
37 majority of the large numbers of youth that came together in clashes in Clacton,
38
39 Bournemouth, Hastings, Brighton, Margate and elsewhere, were not from these areas.
40
41 Unlike the rivalling local youth described above by our interviewees, they were
42
43 transient visitors travelling to the coast for the weekend and only coming into contact
44
45 with each other on this occasion. Also, each clash reported by the press involved almost
46
47 exclusively different people (Fowler, 2008, p. 138). The narratives collected from
48
49 Clevedon residents, who spent their teenage years on the pier and in the adjacent coffee
50
51 shops in the 1950s and 60s, show not only the significance these leisure spaces have had
52
53 to the local youth but also illustrate a very distinct local culture that was about *them*
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55 rather than the visitors or tourists.
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Indeed, to various degrees the interviewees who spent their teenage years on the pier in the 1950s and 60s felt they were part of something new that erupted in the otherwise very quiet and genteel seaside resort. The following statement about Clevedon Pier from Norman emphasizes this: ‘... it was rock ‘n’ roll! You can say that that pier was just rock ‘n’ roll’ (Norman, interview, August, 2015). Sartorially, youth also marked themselves out as making their own culture, different from their parent’s generation, but not necessarily fitting the neat categories of youth fashion styles that have been fixed in time from today’s perspective looking back. Norman, again, describes his dress style as emerging from the Ted era, and on a typical night out he would wear: ‘[a] long jacket, black drainpipe trousers, tight, and beetle crushers’, but noting that he was not really part of Teddy boy culture: ‘[We were] not really Teds as such then. Teds, really, were going out’ (Norman, interview, August, 2015). The mediation of teen styles in the 1950s and 60s no doubt contributed significantly to their development and popularization. However, the flux between local seaside youth cultures, such as those discussed here, and the commercially more important cities also shaped the style and look of youth cultures. As described by interviewees in Archie Lauchlan’s documentary *Re: A Pier* (2016) about Hastings Pier, because of youth’s increased mobility there was a lot of going back and forth between London and Hastings (and other seaside towns in the south-east, such as Eastbourne) and influences were not one-directional. Influences, in terms of leisure, fashion and music were brought back to the metropolis as well. Fashion entrepreneur Lloyd Johnston, for example, describes growing up in early 1960s Hastings where he observed the ‘hangover’ from the trad jazz scene before embracing the local Mod style that led him

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3 into London's clothing industry, first with a place in Kensington Market and, later, with
4
5 a successful shop on the King's Road.
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10 Lauchlan's research for his documentary repeatedly reveals how important
11
12 Hastings Pier was to the development of local teens' sense of self and community via its
13
14 vibrant music scene. The film gives a valuable insight into the significance of its former
15
16 pier ballroom as a major music venue for a period of time that stretches beyond its rock
17
18 'n' roll heydays all the way up to the 1990s when it became a key venue for the UK's
19
20 emerging rave scene. Alongside interviews with musicians and figures from the music
21
22 industry, his discussions with locals who grew up in the coastal town paint a vivid
23
24 picture of lived memories that include attending The Rolling Stones' concert in 1964—
25
26 and seeing the band members smuggled to and from the pier in the back of an
27
28 ambulance—and unexpectedly bumping into The Kinks' frontman Ray Davies at a
29
30 cigarette machine post-show. As journalist David Quantick acknowledges in the film, it
31
32 was 'extraordinary' that these big names played Hastings regularly 'when loads of
33
34 major cities in Britain never saw these bands—and that's because Hastings was part of
35
36 the ballroom scene circuit which was really [...] the first rock circuit'. He continues, 'if
37
38 you lived in Hastings you were seeing the best bands. It's unique. No other seaside town
39
40 occupied such an important position in the history of British live music, and it's because
41
42 of the pier'. Hastings thus challenges the easy assumption that all British seaside towns
43
44 had a similar post-war entertainment offer (cf. Bull & Hayler, 2009)—a seasonal one
45
46 that primarily served a visiting population—and, instead, stands out because it ensured
47
48 its local audience was catered for all year round.
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3 It is notable, however, that the then youth population not only valued the pier for
4 hosting big names but also its commitment to inclusionary programming that
5
6 championed local bands up until its closure in 2007. For example, Lauchlan's research
7
8 includes an interview with Dave Carter who reveals that local band Factory was just as
9
10 much of a draw for him as The Spencer Davis Group whom they supported in 1973.
11
12 The significance of the pier's role in developing the local music scene is a theme that
13
14 also emerges in the roundtable discussion that followed our silent disco event in late
15
16 summer 2015. With a view to triggering strong memories about seaside leisure activity
17
18 in the post-war era, our compiled track listing focused solely on the most famous artists
19
20 that had performed on the pier—Jimi Hendrix, T-Rex, The Sex Pistols, Madness and so
21
22 on—but the participants voiced disappointment that local bands had been neglected.
23
24 This suggests that more localized music experiences and band interactions are equally
25
26 important to understanding the development of Hastings' music scene and its place
27
28 within the town's history of youth culture. These issues are precisely articulated when
29
30 the participants talk about their vision for the pier as a revived live music venue. One,
31
32 for example, states that the present-day live music scene should continue to draw from
33
34 the town's historical model: 'Every band, big band, generally had a local band for
35
36 support' (Group interview, September, 2015). Another participant expands with the
37
38 emphatic statement, 'That's a real Hastings thing' (ibid.), which tells us that the
39
40 interviewed local community see the history and position of the town as exceptional
41
42 within the UK live music scene not least because of this sustained emphasis on local
43
44 talent. This distinction complicates the above explanation that Hastings was 'unique'
45
46 due to its impressive accommodation of established and celebrated performers and,
47
48 rather, suggests that the town's uniqueness lies with how its many music venues—
49
50 including the pier's former ballroom—have long engaged its more immediate audience
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3 by involving home-grown artists and promoting their spaces as a fundamental part of
4 the town's social fabric. The focus group's vocal approval on this point with its telling
5 employment of the word '*real*' also hints at how the Hastings locals feel that they
6 possess a true understanding of the town, one that is unavailable to outsiders no matter
7 how frequently they visit.
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17 **Youth ownership and a sense of belonging**

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19 In his consideration of how leisure identities are negotiated in place, David Crouch
20 (2015) asserts that '[s]pace where leisure is done can feel "belonged" through how we
21 express and feel' (p. 15). Drawing on the work of Andrew Radley (1995) and John
22 Wylie (2009), he continues that this 'ownership through living' is built upon multi-
23 sensual experiences where 'immanence and possibility draw practice and possibility of
24 spacetimes into remembering, presence, absence and loss' (Crouch, 2015, p. 15). His
25 reflections resonate with the collated oral history narratives of this research in that our
26 local interviewees frequently produced accounts of their youthful activities at the
27 seaside in terms of a haptic encounter centralizing upon the notion of a playful
28 navigation of space and, concordantly, a negotiation of their teenage leisure identity. At
29 Clevedon, for example, one interviewee vividly recalled how the pier planks proved
30 problematic for the high heels she wore to the 1960s dances (Jenny, interview, August,
31 2015), while at Hastings the roundtable discussion produced a lively recollection about
32 how the 1970s ballroom crowd would often stamp their feet to encourage an encore
33 from whoever was performing. An explanation of this communal performative act
34 unfolded as follows:
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3 Participant One: [...] everybody who was stamping their feet for an encore was doing it
4
5 in unison.

6
7 Various: Yeah [followed by murmurs of agreement]

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9 Participant Two: Which was scary wasn't it?

10
11 Various: [Laughter]

12
13 Participant One: [...] on the pier we were all doing it in rhythm, and so it was [...] it was
14
15 quite something (Group interview, September, 2015).

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20 Such accounts of togetherness are key to understanding the history of leisure at the
21
22 seaside, and the local residents' continued attachment to public areas, such as the pier,
23
24 that were particularly significant in facilitating their youthful pursuits and sense of
25
26 community. They emphasize how the interviewees' younger selves embraced the
27
28 peculiarities of the space and engaged in the arranged and improvised seaside
29
30 entertainment with all their senses, giving rise to embodied experiences that instilled a
31
32 deep sense of ownership which has not been lost over the decades. Formed by *living* in
33
34 the space, this kind of youth ownership can thus account for the financial commitment
35
36 many residents happily made as adults when they engaged in Clevedon and Hastings
37
38 Piers' community share schemes. As our vox pop interviews with Hastings Pier
39
40 shareholders in 2016 corroborate, the decision to take part in such schemes is fuelled by
41
42 'memories of what [the space] used to be' (Stephen, interview, May, 2016). Affective
43
44 engagement as a driver in such action is also evident on the public Facebook group
45
46 'Bands we have seen on Hastings Pier' (www.facebook.com/groups/196962362327/)
47
48 created around the time of the restoration. Here a nostalgic discourse dominates.
49
50 Members share memories, photos and memorabilia such as recordings and press
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52 clippings. There is a fan hierarchy in place (Roberts & Cohen, 2014), dictated by a first-
53
54 hand lived experience of bands on the pier and specialized knowledge about the local
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3 music scene that authenticates participants' attachment to the pier's cultural scene.
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5 Members also fantasize about what the future pier could be like as a music venue—
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7 expressed in comments such as: 'So is there going to be a ballroom on the new pier?
8
9 Wouldn't it be great to see some really big names come to Hastings?' Another
10
11 commentator muses that 'if Adele came to perform on the pier it would probably sink
12
13 due to the size of the audience'. This is said in the tone of everyday banter, for sure, but
14
15 also constitutes an example of aspirational imaginings for their local pier. In these
16
17 exchanges, the former pier is cast as something that gave the town an attractive image
18
19 but, also, as a more democratic venture serving a local audience whereas the plans for
20
21 the restored pier's design and amenities are perceived as excluding locals. This small
22
23 window on a wide-ranging and multilayered debate illustrates that a venture like a
24
25 community pier brings with it an array of ambiguous relationships and competing
26
27 agendas that reflect 'inequalities of resources and power' (Cairns, 2003) both culturally
28
29 and socioeconomically. However, it also shows the ways in which popular cultural
30
31 heritage can connect and engender communities.
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40 The enthusiastic and, admittedly, romanticized recollections of past popular
41
42 music events at Clevedon and Hastings not only reveal how attachments to these seaside
43
44 resorts first formed for many locals, however. They also suggest how certain public
45
46 spaces encourage young individuals to connect with each other, forming a positive
47
48 sense of local community that includes an appreciation for collective leisure time. For
49
50 teenagers this may begin with performative group gestures, such as stomping in unison
51
52 at a gig, but it can be seen to develop into actions and interactions that demonstrate civic
53
54 responsibility and pride. Beyond recent engagement in the Hastings Pier's community
55
56 share scheme, the roundtable discussion revealed other ways in which the participants
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3 have previously articulated their sense of belonging to a community and, accordingly, a
4 collective leisure identity. One key example occurs when the group discussed the pier's
5 former bar, the Gritti Palace.
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12 Participant Five: The Gritti Palace was a huge part of my experience.
13

14 Participant Two: That was...

15
16 Various: [murmurs of agreement]
17

18 Participant Two: ...that was a community. You know, the kind of, 150 people you got
19 the night it closed [in 2006] showed you that, didn't it? It was amazing.
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21 (Group interview, September, 2015).
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27 From one perspective, it is questionable how this highly nostalgic return to a sense of
28 past collectivity can be generative of a 'community pier' movement today. It suggests
29 that the locals' current togetherness is structured in terms of the loss of a communal
30 leisure space, rather than in its construction. However, the rhetoric on display here is
31 commonplace in diverse grassroots efforts; it is about generating the idea of an
32 otherwise dispersed critical mass coming together to challenge the generally dismissive
33 attitude to the value of the place. At Clevedon, the much smaller pier might not attract a
34 crowd of this size to their events, whether the jukebox dances of the past or the
35 'Summer Serenades' of the present (<https://clevedonpier.co.uk/event/summer-serenades-8-weeks-live-music/>), but the importance of local community and collective
36 agency with regard to the town's leisure offer remains. Moreover, it too can be traced
37 back to the residents' teenage years on the pier when attendees at the 1960s dances had
38 to take joint responsibility for ensuring a constant supply of change for the coin-
39 operated jukebox.
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3 For both our case study resorts then, leisure that centres around popular cultural
4 activities on piers has clearly been significant in developing the local populations' sense
5 of civic engagement from their teenage years onwards and facilitated an exciting post-
6 war youth social scene outside the UK's major cities. Yet, as the Hastings roundtable
7 discussion evidences, lively pier entertainment still sits alongside the more obvious
8 everyday pleasures of the seaside resort. For one participant, the Gritti Bar on Hastings
9 Pier was as much about a good place where 'you can watch the sun go down' as it was
10 about music and drinking (Group interview, September, 2016). Another participant
11 mentioned that the pier, in its 'community' manifestation, should be a space for more
12 routine interactions: 'part of your daily life [...] well maybe not daily life [...] but, you
13 know, [...] to be able to come down and sit in a deck chair with a cup of tea' (Group
14 interview, September, 2016). These diverse and opposing leisure activities return us to
15 Corbin's theorization of the seaside's allure which, in part, relies upon the synthesis of
16 the wild, always present in the unpredictable sea, and the tame achieved in part through
17 aestheticizing the natural elements. The comments underscore that while piers have
18 often been a focal point for the more spirited element of youth leisure and instrumental
19 in solidifying the local population's sense of belonging, their function as social spaces
20 for the quieter pleasures afforded by the seaside still requires protection as further
21 development plans for these coastal resorts, and others like them, progress.
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49 **Concluding remarks**

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51 This article aimed to shift focus onto the leisure history and popular cultural heritage of
52 local populations in British seaside resorts. We have deliberately sought to let a
53 multitude of voices and sources do the work of narrating—both critically and fondly—
54 what the entertainment and wider leisure culture of the seaside mean to local
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3 communities. There is, of course, vast diversity, complexity and competing perspectives
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5 in such accounts. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that seaside culture is not
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7 simply a ready-made product available exclusively for tourist or visitor consumption.
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9 Seaside leisure culture is produced and, also, consumed by ‘locals’. Specific post-war
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11 seaside youth cultures have been a focus in our research helping us understand how
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13 coastal towns continue to survive in today’s increasingly atomized world, which
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15 includes recognition of how they pull heavily on the emotionally (as well as physically)
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17 attached local community for support. In the different discussions, affectionate
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19 memories and animated exchanges about seaside youth leisure in decades past goes
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21 some way to explaining why so many residents have offered financial support to their
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23 struggling areas, via the community pier ownership model, and, indeed, been so keen to
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25 partake in this research. But, in light of the continued difficulties that British seaside
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27 towns face today, and especially the migration of later generations who are not tied by
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29 this rich history of youth entertainment, more research into how to sustain a strong local
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31 identity and seaside culture is required. We advocate that better understanding of what
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33 entertainments appealed in the past is one step forward to helping nurture the leisure
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35 cultures of the seaside in the present and future.
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45 **Acknowledgements**

46
47 The authors would like to thank Matt Brennan (University of Edinburgh) and Archie
48
49 Lauchlan (University of Brighton) for their contributions as part of the larger research
50
51 team working on ‘The People’s Pier’ project. The authors would also like to thank staff
52
53 and volunteers at The Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust and The Hastings Pier Charity
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55 for their help and encouragements.
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Funding

The research for this article was supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, reference AH/M009300/1.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors

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36 ¹ This is a field dominated by a focus on British seaside history and architecture but Fred Gray's
37 work takes an international perspective with valuable detailed points about pier culture and
38 seaside entertainment in several North American resorts. Other work that seeks to broaden the
39 traditional focus includes Towner and Wall (1991), which takes in both European and North
40 American histories when framing seaside resorts from a leisure history perspective, and
41 Demars (1979), which is critical when thinking on how influential British seaside culture has
42 been on the North American seaside.
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51 ² At the start of the nineteenth century only Gravesend and Margate could be argued to have
52 provided seaside resorts for the middling-, let alone the working-, classes (Whyman, 1981) but
53 the development of the railways mid-century carried those lower down the social ladder in
54 ever increasing numbers (Walton, 1983; Walvin, 1978).
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- ³ We note that the dominance of the tourism perspective within leisure studies is not exclusive to seaside culture. The editors addressed this very issue in their call for articles for this special issue of *Leisure/Loisir*.
- ⁴ See also our previously published work on seaside screenings for local audiences (Brydon & Jenzen, 2018).
- ⁵ About 3,000 shareholders invested in the project and two thirds of these were local to Hastings (communityshares.co.uk/hastings-pier-charity/).
- ⁶ Hastings Pier won the RIBA Stirling Prize in 2017.
- ⁷ The call was put out via various local news outlets and attracted participants born in the 1940s and early 1950s. The recordings are now held in the Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust community archive.
- ⁸ The larger project entitled ‘The People’s Pier: The popular culture of pleasure piers and cultural regeneration through community heritage’ ran in 2015–2016.
- ⁹ Not all the participants in the Hastings roundtable discussion provided a name, so comments from this part of the research are typically referenced as ‘Group interview’. However, in breaking down some of the discussion for further analysis we have had to resort to giving the unnamed participants numbers.
- ¹⁰ From 2015 the town’s brand has been ‘Famously Hastings’.
- ¹¹ Listed structures are protected by law. They are monitored by Historic England, a public body predominantly funded by the British government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
- ¹² For an examination of the experiences of black and minority ethnic communities at the seaside and how racial exclusion operates in coastal resorts see Daniel Burdsey’s research (2011, 2016). His work includes a consideration of how leisure activities and entertainment at the seaside ‘promote exoticized orientalist representations of the ethnic or racial Other’ (2011, p. 543), reinforced by and reinforcing the tourist gaze, combined with nostalgic representation of whiteness.

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¹³ Another interview with Norman also clearly situates the leisure time spent on the pier as a teenage activity: ‘The main age of us from there was 14 ‘til like ‘til about 18 and then you was in the pub or something like that’ (Norman, interview, August, 2015).

¹⁴ Although vending machines have a longer history, Coca-Cola machines were only introduced to the market in the early 1960s. Regardless of the type of vending, the interviewee’s comment underscores that it was a very modest outfit and, for the purposes of our argument, that it was *affordable* to young people.

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