

MASS TOURISM: SHAPING THE URBAN LANDSCAPE OF SMALL OR MEDIUM SIZED TOWNS

underlined by a case study in Nesebar/Bulgaria



MASTERS THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has proven to have a significant impact on local environments and on local social and cultural traditions (urban identity), often resulting in the loss or damaging of particular local features that had hitherto determined the urban landscape. The arguably 'adverse' implications of tourism, without prejudice to the self-evident economic benefits of tourism, beg for increased awareness by local authorities and tourism organizations of the need for sustainable tourism management that aims to control and channel the impact of tourism development on the urban environment.

But the ambitions set out in the concepts of sustainable tourism prove sometimes difficult to realize in practice; most notably in the context of large-scale tourism development, i.e. mass tourism destinations, in small or medium sized towns. The inherent characteristics of mass tourism, e.g. high numbers of travellers, profit orientated businesses etc., together with the often essential need for economic development, considerably pressurizes local culture and social traditions. This implies a great influence of tourism upon the urban development process of towns and cities, which more and more seems to revolve around conspicuous modes of consumption rather than the living quality of local residents (images vs. urban identity). With images increasingly becoming important for towns and cities in their chase for the tourist, the human actions and perceptions of local inhabitants seem to pale into insignificance and with that, the notion of urban identity dwindling; strongly begging the question what happens, if the so called other culture is just a stage for capitalistic structures of exploitation?

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Important notions used throughout the thesis

Throughout this thesis several terminologies might lead to some alternating interpretations amongst the readers, as many notions often are understood differently across administrative and national borders. Therefore it might be helpful to briefly define some of the returning notions in this thesis to clarify and prevent conflicting understandings.

The urban landscape: This relates first of all to the physical elements of a town or city that can be considered as the building blocks of the urban landscape. But the urban landscape also refers to more abstract elements that make up a town or city such as, memories, history, social structures, imaginations etc. Zukin (quoted in Page and Hall 2003: 297) has described the urban landscape as follows; “the urban landscape includes the built environment and its material and social practices, as well as their symbolic representation.”

Urban identity: Urban identity reflects social, cultural, historical and political aspects that characterize a place and as such can distinguish it from other places. It is not a general accepted imaginations or description of a place (this is more readily understood as the image), but more the result of perceptions and human actions by the inhabitants of an urban area (town or city). In the opening chapter I will elaborate on this notion in some more detail as it is an important conception that runs throughout this thesis.

Small or medium sized towns: Defining the boundaries between towns, cities or agglomerations is difficult as all over the world countries have developed their own specific categorization methods for human settlements. For places that wish to classify themselves as towns in Bulgaria they must have a social and technical infrastructure, as well as a population of no less than 3500 persons. Especially this social and technical infrastructure is an important aspect of a town which, as opposed to a village or agglomeration can bend upon more autonomic freedom as most basic services are available. However, when a place assumes a central position a large region, attracting people from outside the town and becoming a centre of economic and cultural growth, then it can readily be regarded as a city which, roughly estimated, commences with approx. 30000 to 50000 inhabitants.

INTRODUCTION

Although it has been underestimated until quite recently, tourism has long been a central component of the economic, social and cultural shift that has left its imprint on the world system of cities in the past two decades.

Elisabeth Dumont, Christine Ruelle and Jacques Teller (2005: p14)

While a city's identity (as an image) may be an important draw for tourism, which in turn is a sustaining or important economic force for the vibrancy and survival for the city, it is not easy to establish a unique identity in the face of globalization, a powerful trend that cities, countries and cultures have not really had to contend with before and that tends to homogenize both the supply and demand of this urban identity.

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p15)

Architecture is so essentially a social art that no architect can talk about his medium or about his schemes without reference to how they will be used by people; and a good deal of the conscious intention behind any design, as well as various decisions about its elements, is expressed in terms of its consequences for social behaviour. This social nature has been characteristic of the architectural medium since buildings were first planned and designed and there has never been an architect who was not, in some sense, a student and critic of society.

Robert Gutman (2010: p156)

Today many people have the privilege and opportunity to travel and enjoy the different parts of our globe. The notion of the other, the new or the unknown has always been a great incentive for people to explore the world around us. Nourished by imaginations and expectations, largely due to the increasing influence of various mediums today, we set out to discover the other or, also, just to escape the familiar. Whether it is a place, a festival or a town- or landscape, we are drawn to it because there is something worth to look upon, or there are activities offered which we cannot engage in at home. Although there is no such thing as the tourist (Urry 1990), the tourism experience evolves for most people around imaginations and expectation of such 'exotic' sights. Each person will have its own particular preferences in this respect, but for increasing numbers of people, it involves the desire of being in a different surrounding or to experience another culture. These experiences, preferably, should be authentic to a certain degree (MaCannell, see Urry 1990) but diversity is perhaps an even more crucial aspect. Nowadays there exists a vast range of tourist destinations and activities that together offer a variety of sights and experiences to the visitor.



Figure 1: Tourists crossing the historic town walls of the old town of Nesebar

But as important it is for people to escape their daily lives in search of imaginary places for leisure and recreation, the concern for the originality and richness of their own living environment is perhaps only relative? It is not uncommon that tourists are better aware of the available sights in a city or town compared to the inhabitants that actually live in it. Nevertheless, the true concern of the tourist for the place of visit is only limited:

... tourists, for example, who do not readily engage with a city's political baggage or the sorts of perceptions or ennui that comes with living in the same place for a long time ...

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p16)

The exuberant self-sufficient international hotel and resort chains, spread out all over the world nowadays, are a concrete demonstration of this. The guests of such hotels and resorts are often (willingly) completely evacuated from the realities of the everyday daily lives of the local population and the built structures often appear as obtrusive elements in the native urban or natural environment, i.e. designs are highly standardized and inattentive to the social and cultural dimension of the related environment. This dichotomy, between the experiences and desires of 'guests' as opposed to those of a local 'host' community, is an important aspect that returns throughout this thesis.

In his book 'Invisible cities', the author Italo Calvino (1974), probably has described as no other, how cities and towns all possess their specific peculiarities that identify one place from another. Calvino beautifully describes the appearance of

the city or town from the perspective of an explorer, transcending the mere physical elements that comprise the appearance of towns and cities and more eminently reflecting the imaginations and memories that places can evoke in people's minds, e.g. symbolic value:

Beyond six rivers and three mountain ranges, rises Zora, a city that no one, having seen it, can forget. But not because, like other memorable cities, it leaves an unusual image in your recollection, Zora has the quality of remaining in your memory point by point, in its succession of streets, of houses along the streets, and of doors and windows in the houses, though nothing in them possesses a special beauty or rarity. Zora's secret lies in the way your gaze runs over patterns following one another as in a musical score where not a note can be altered or displaced.

Italo Calvino (1974: p15)

But the images a traveller takes with him are not to be confused with the way actual inhabitants perceive their own living habitat and identify themselves with it. Residents will have their own perceptions of the urban environment, shaped around memories and other aspects that strongly relate to their daily lives, i.e. urban identity.

Inhabitants utilize urban space very different as opposed to tourists, while the functional demands of inhabitants differ from those of visitors.

Anja B. Nelle (2005: p86)

'Typical tourism destinations' arguably most amply exemplify the often contradicting nexus between the image of a town and the urban identities (perceptions) of local inhabitants. Tourism destinations depend heavily on a strong 'transportable' image that is both recognizable and exclusive and furthermore responds aptly to the imaginations and expectations that the tourist carries. It is important for an inherent tourism industry¹ to be aware of these imaginations and expectations of potential tourists who are the object of the chase (Urry 1999). Place marketing therefore has become increasingly important for local authorities to 'sell' the local resources, e.g. culture heritage or natural splendours, in order to attract new businesses and tourists.

But tourists are not an easy target. In the increasingly competitive 'tourist marketplace', cities and towns strenuously rival each other in their chase of the tourist. "To appeal to tourists, cities must be consciously moulded to create a physical landscape that tourists wish to inhabit". (Fainstein and Judd 1999: p5) It is, however, questionable if this consciously designed image for a town in any way is an honest reflection of the realities of such a town, set in a specific space and time, and, subsequently, if this eventually will not lead to a numbing sameness

¹ Local governments, tourism operators, travel agencies, airlines etc.

(standardization) in our increasingly interconnected (globalizing) world that actually opposes the whole act of travelling itself?

Whereas the appeal of tourism is the opportunity to see something different, cities that are remade to attract tourists seem more and more alike.

Susan S. Fainstein and Dennis R. Judd (1999: p13)

It is the task of architects or urban planners to concern themselves with these issues of urban planning and architectural design, but what happens if they have little or no authority or there is only limited interest amongst the local inhabitants and economic (capitalist) motivations have the upper hand? Can in such a context, a city or town really develop as an interesting and identifiable place, i.e. develop local distinctiveness, sense of place, creative cultural development etc.? It is with these perspectives and considerations in mind that this thesis unfolds.

... intentionally staged to lure the spectator's gaze by the pure visibility of the show while veiling the appearance of a fragmented and damaged image of the city taken as a whole.

Christine Boyer (1996: p51)

The extensive development of the Mediterranean coast, the world's number one tourist destination and still the biggest tourism region in the world (EEA 2001), has proven that extensive tourism development is not all rosy and despite often acclaimed economic benefits, many other aspects, e.g. social and cultural issues, often are neglected or severely damaged as a result of tourism.

The old Palma has long ceased to exist; its centre eaten away by restaurants, bars, souvenir shops, travel agencies and the like ... Huge new conurbations have sprung up along the neighbouring coast ... The main use of olive trees seems to be their conversion into ... salad bowls and boxes for sale to the tourists. But as a Majorcan wag remarked, once they are all cut down we will have to erect plastic ones for the tourists to admire from their bus windows.

Robert Graves, quoted by Urry (1990: p111)

In many towns along the Mediterranean, tourism has developed mostly unhampered. Furthermore, many towns have become dependent upon the derived revenues from tourism which often are crucial for sustaining the local economy in these places. To cite Conti and Perelli (2003: p4): "The Mediterranean has become the swimming pool of the richer central and northern European countries and in some cases created the conditions for a real seaside tourism monoculture economic structure". As the globalization of tourism and consumerism arguably is increasingly determining the urban landscape, towns and cities are incrementally standardized and marketed as consumption spaces. Cities and towns along the Mediterranean coast are not the exception however; whether it are sun-sand, cultural or winter destinations, many tourist places around the world show

evidence of standardized and incongruous urban development that appears indifferent to the locus² of places.

The Mediterranean island of Mallorca has come to symbolize everything bad about cheap, mass tourism: crowded beaches full of drunken louts and cheapskates. Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast wants to avoid the same fate. Bulgarian vacation spots along the Black Sea however are in a quandary. They are drawn to the short-term money mass tourism brings, but do not want to make the same mistakes as the Spanish. Yet without a significant change in direction, that seems to be the way the country's coastline is headed.

**Deutsche Welle (<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,2728301,00.html>
12.08.2007)**

The Black Sea coast, Bulgaria's most popular tourism destination (BSTA 2006), is a region that, although less known perhaps, has been strongly influenced by extensive and rapid tourism development.



Figure 2: Birds-eye view of Nesebar (approx. 1920)

In the past two decades, the region has experienced extensive tourism development and increasing number of towns are showing signs of unbalanced and unsustainable urban development, e.g. loss of cultural identity, lack of a diverse cultural development and/or loss of local traditions; aspects that are

² “The locus is a relationship between a certain specific location and the buildings that are in it. It is at once singular and universal.” (Rossi 1982: p103)

important for the local inhabitants as well as for the branding or marketing of towns as a tourism destination.

Preventing damage is far from easy, especially in small and medium-sized cities that unlike large cities, lack the “mass” to absorb the effects of the development of tourism. In order to manage these potential impacts, carrying capacities must be established. Yet, to-date, carrying capacity has mostly been defined with environmental protection and physical conservation in mind rather than for the conservation and enhancement of the built heritage and quality of life, both of which are of main importance to the urban communities.

Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira, Edith Besson, Brigitte Hoffmann, Sylke Wintzer (2004: p12)

But whereas in many Mediterranean areas most damage arguably has been done, the Black Sea region might still be saved from the squander in which many cities and towns along the Mediterranean coast line find themselves nowadays.

Small and mid-sized cities however, are still lacking the attention. Missing is a cohesive guidance on how to practically manage cultural tourism that can potentially create an array of positive impacts in the economy as well as on a range of other assets, such as local heritage enhancement and urban quality of life.

Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira, Edith Besson, Brigitte Hoffmann, Sylke Wintzer (2004: p8)

This study, about the transformation of the urban landscape and the relation between urban identity (host) and the image (guests), will predominantly be set in the small town of Nesebar (approx. 12.100 inhabitants)³ at the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Nesebar has been exposed to years of extensive large-scale tourism development and as such can provide good insights with regard to the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of small or medium sized towns.⁴ The local inhabitants of Nesebar are important participants in this context as their (changing) perceptions inform about the more dynamic and symbolic aspects of the urban landscape of the town. The development of tourism has permanently impacted the spatial, cultural and social structure of the town and as such Nesebar provides an excellent real-time environment to challenge the theories and propositions developed throughout this thesis.

³ According to the latest numbers provided by the local municipality in Nesebar

⁴ See the section ‘definitions’ (page x) for an explanation

Research questions and aim of the study

Inhabitants, confronted with the ‘valorisation’ of heritage in their daily life environment can develop specific conceptions about their own culture. The analysis of such identity shifts would inform us about the local imagination and the way that social experiences are affected by the insertion of tourism.

N. Puig, quoted in Dumont, Ruelle and Teller (2005: p26)

The main question of the thesis is: How has mass tourism development influenced the urban landscape in small or medium sized towns and how does this impact relate to the urban identity of such towns? Subsequently I will ponder upon the consequences of these processes in the context of small or medium sized tourism towns and, subsequently, mediate on their future as places for living and pleasure.

Especially with regard to small or medium sized towns, tourism can have a considerable impact, both negative and positive, upon the social and cultural context of urban life, the local and urban environment as well as on the local economy of towns. Small or medium sized towns often lack the size, width and population that large cities possess and therefore are less able to absorb the effects resulting from the development of tourism (Dumont, Ruelle and Teller *et al.* 2005). Thus when considering mass tourism development in a context of small or medium sized towns, questions arise: what is the social and cultural impact (disregarding here the increasing ecological pressure on the local environment) is of such extensive tourism development and what might it imply for the urban identity of such towns? What are the physical and abstract (social and cultural) implications of mass tourism actually and how does tourism transform or shape the urban landscape of towns? How do the local inhabitants react to these transformations and do varying individuals or groups perceive this differently? In what way did the local population benefited from tourism development and has it improved their livelihoods as is argued so often? How do current urban and tourism planning policies consider tourism development and how to regard place marketing⁵ in this context?

Hypotheses

The general assumption put forward in this thesis is that extensive mass tourism development severely threatens the viability of small or medium sized towns. Extensive tourism development strongly influences the urban development of

⁵ Place marketing concerns the positioning of a place in the tourism marketplace and as such it influences urban development by, for example, emphasizing the differences of a place in comparison to its competitors.

towns which often are moulded around the imaginations and expectations of the tourists as opposed to creative activities and collective memories persistent among the local inhabitants. It is the basic premise of this thesis that small or medium sized towns, strongly dominated by tourism development, primarily are moulded as ‘playgrounds’⁶ for tourists as opposed to living habitats for local inhabitants. The following hypotheses presuppose the existence of certain direct or indirect nexuses between tourism development and the transformation of the urban landscape in small or medium sized towns:

I. Homogenization of the physical urban landscape

Although tourists search for the different or the other, many mass tourism destinations are becoming more and more alike. Mass tourism development (e.g. tourism structures) is highly capitalistic and often shows little, if any, consideration for local prevailing conditions and, as such contributes to the homogenization of urban landscapes all around the world.

II. The needs and desires of the tourist outweigh those of the local inhabitants

In order to appeal to tourists, urban planning in mass tourism destinations first and foremost focuses on accommodating the needs and desires of tourists (place-marketing), hereby neglecting the needs and desires of the local population and as such, producing an unbalanced incongruous urban landscape.

III. Historical towns as outdoor Museums

Conservation and preservation of historical town centres often can lead to a romanticized ‘urban’ experience, detached from time and context altogether. This not only could provoke a process of gentrification⁷ in the centre of towns (loss of a lively centre) but it also can potentially damage the tourist appeal of towns as authentic, cultural experiences.

⁶ Playgrounds referring to landscapes that are designed primarily to provide entertainment for tourists, e.g. theme parks, shopping malls etc.

⁷ The impact of tourism and leisure related developments can lead to the local population being excluded from the local housing market or to the eviction of residents (Page and Hall, 2003)

IV. Transformation leads to alienation

The impact of mass tourism development upon the urban landscape can produce a feeling of alienation by the inhabitants with regard to their own living environment, potentially engendering the migration of the local population away from the town.

Aims and objectives

The main aim of the thesis, in the end, is to contemplate on the future of the mass-tourist town in the view of ongoing tourism development, globalization and increasing modes of consumption. Furthermore it will consider alternative ideas regarding urban planning and place marketing that move beyond the idea of towns or cities as products (branding) and aim to strengthen the urban identity and the uniqueness of places (place development) with the local population acting as a dynamic hub. The objectives:

- To understand how mass tourism impacts the urban landscape of towns;
- To understand which factors are crucial to ensure the long-term viability of mass tourism destinations;
- To generate awareness by authorities and tourism developers for more holistic development strategies that focus on more than tourism alone;
- To examine how urban identities (perceptions) are influenced by tourism development and how both aspects relate to one another;
- To understand the role of the tourism industry in the planning process of towns;

Structure of the thesis

Part 1. Theory: Reviewing existing literature concerning issues such as sustainable urban development, urban identity, tourism and city branding. The objective of this phase is to develop a theoretical background to support the case study in part two.

Part 2. Field study: Studying the urban development process of a mass tourism destination, Nesebar, by analyzing the urban landscape of the town, the built environment, local perceptions, the inherent tourism industry etc.

Part 3. Case Study Analysis and Synthesis: Analyzing the implications of mass tourism based on the theoretical assumptions and the research findings from the

case study and as such produce a thorough overview with regard to the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of a town. The final chapter of the thesis is cast as both a general conclusion and specific proposals for the case study.

Restrictions and limitations

Throughout this thesis the units of towns and cities are often alternately used although the entity of a small or medium sized town is the focal point of the thesis. Albeit both entities of course show their parallels, there are as well differences between the two units which go beyond their mere size. But as many related literature and references often only refer to the unit of the city, it would be fallacious to instantly replace city with town even though in most cases the argumentation readily applies to both entities.

Although in many ways Nesebar has proved to be an excellent example of a mass tourism town, e.g. the sheer numbers of tourists, dominance of the tourism industry etc., the field work nevertheless has left many questions unanswered. Especially with regard to town planning and the recent history of the town it has been difficult to obtain quality and detailed information. The communication with the local municipality has been arduous due to language barriers and inaccessibility or lacking information. Recent history (the 20th century) in Nesebar is scarcely documented and a complete and objective record concerning the socio-cultural and economic aspects of urban life in Nesebar is apparently absent.

The interviews conducted on site have been a mixed success (see chapter 4). Although they unmistakably have shed some light upon the complex and multifaceted notion of the symbolic value imbedded in the urban landscape (collective memory) it remains a hard to grasp aspect, especially when extensive recordings of (recent) history are missing. Many interviews unfortunately did not surpass answers such as “yes I think so” or “no, I do not” and furthermore it has proven difficult for people to contemplate on the quality and composition of their own urban environment which arguably is not an often recurrent theme among the inhabitants of the town.

CHAPTER I

Overview of the relevant theory

Mass- tourism and sustainable tourism



Figure 1: Tourists on their way towards the historic centre of Nesebar

Isolated from the host environment and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying ‘pseudo events’ and disregarding the ‘real’ world outside.

John Urry (1990: p7)

Tourism is currently one of the largest economic sectors in the world and recent data predicts continuous growth of the sector in the upcoming years (WTO 2001). Although the industry has felt the impact of the 9-11 terrorist attacks or, more recently, the affects of the global economic depression, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that the number of arrivals in Europe will double reaching almost 720 million tourists per year by 2020 (WTO 2001).

The WTO defines tourism as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. (WTO 1995) Tourism and leisure activities distance people temporary from familiar situations and place them into

another existential context. (Gospodini 2001) This temporary 'new world' is also referred to by some authors as a counterstructure or anti-structure that represents different urban spaces and experiences as opposed to the realities of the everyday life of people. Popular urban forms of such counterstructures are for example historical city centres or theme parks (e.g. Disneyland) that have doubtlessly represented the most attractive ones in the last decades. (Gospodini 2001)

Tourism is increasingly classified into several sub-types or niche segments that correspond to a number of activities, e.g. winter tourism, cultural tourism, extreme tourism, religious tourism, wildlife tourism, beach-tourism etc. Besides the various niche tourism types there are also other (further) classifications made such as sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, pro-poor tourism, mass tourism, urban tourism etc. The latter classifications can be understood as more general descriptions that as well readily apply to the niche segments listed above. As this thesis foremost focuses on mass tourism, urban tourism and sustainable tourism, it is useful to explore these types in some more detail to thoroughly understand their inherent characteristics, and, subsequently, to understand how these types coalesce in a concept of sustainable tourism development.

From the 50's onwards, tourism, as many other industries, has been providing mass products that have been generally identified under the label of mass tourism. In the 19th century, Thomas Cook created the first pioneering forms of mass tourism and "the opportunity for the definite shift from the aristocratic forms of vacation to the mass mobility of workers spending their holidays paid travelling" (Conti and Perelli 2005: p3). Driven by technologic and economic innovations, a production market was created that was able to provide low-cost products (travel packages) to a large undifferentiated clientele, marking the initial development of the traditional mass tourism destination

Although often falsely assumed, mass tourism involves more than just the movement of large numbers of people. Mass tourism is characterized by numerous additional aspects, such as, standardization, low flexibility of the package, economies of scale, seasonality, collective consumption patterns, as well as, spatial concentration. An important consequence of the development of mass tourism has been that certain destinations often began to repeat familiar consumption patterns for developing tourist resorts or accommodations, often without much consideration for the local physical and socio-cultural environment, one of the key issues in this thesis.

...a small monotonous world that everywhere shows us our own image ... the pursuit of the exotic and diverse ends in uniformity.

Turner and Ash, quoted in Urry (1990: p8)

Mass tourism is still often related to, or linked with 'three S' tourism⁸ (Aguiló, Alegre and Sard, see Conti and Perelli 2005) which originates from the early years of mass tourism where mass tourism was predominantly developing along coastal areas (the Mediterranean Sea). Nowadays though, many ski-resorts, historic towns or capital cities as well are confronted with mass tourism development. Mass tourism thus can apply to various tourism segments and is not constricted to only one particular form of leisure activity.

According to Fainstein & Judd (1999: p262), tourism destinations can be distinguished in three basic types of tourist cities:

- Resort cities: places created expressly for consumption by visitors (tourism urbanization)
- Tourist-historic cities: lay claim to a historic and cultural identity that tourists can experience. Sometimes these cities have been sites of tourism for a long time (e.g. Venice or Athens), but in many cases a program of conscious promotion and reconstruction of heritage has transformed them into tourist cities
- Converted cities: have built an infrastructure for the purpose of attracting visitors, but the tourist space brought into being by this infrastructure is insulated from the larger urban milieu within a process of uneven development. These cities often include "tourist bubbles".

Gospodini (2001: p928) has discerned not so much cities but more the urban spaces that tourists wish to inhabit according to a concept of counterstructures. She describes the following popular urban spaces as counterstructures:

- Historical urban cores representing long living survivals from the past, constitute counterstructures to the ephemerality of fashions, products, values, etc;
- The architectural heritage of cities reflecting differences among cities—and thereby their authenticity—in terms of history, culture, society and particularly in terms of urban space morphology, constitutes a counterstructure to globalized design trends promoted by international architectural and urban design movements;

⁸ Three 'S' tourism represents sun, sea and sand tourism, which is commonly considered as the first appearing form of mass-tourism.

- Three-dimensioned and human scaled sceneries, virtual reality spaces, audio-animatronic figures, etc., create an illusionary physical environment that constitutes a counterstructure to real physical environment.

Whatever the nature of the tourism activity might be, for certain is that the urban area⁹ involved is either the purpose of visit (as the above mentioned urban spaces refer to) or it serves foremost the purpose of accommodating visitors, as in typical resort towns. Shaw and Williams (2004: p20) argue that urban areas have a “geographical concentration of facilities and attractions which are conveniently located to meet tourists’ and residents’ needs alike.” Tourism thus easily qualifies as urban tourism as it generally concerns the utilisation of urban areas in some matter. Ashworth has identified in this context an inclusive approach in conceptualising a way to view urban tourism according to the supply of tourism facilities in urban areas:

The categorisation and inventories by geographers has led to research on the distribution of hotels, restaurants, attractions, shopping, nightlife and other tourist-related services. [...] More recently the facility approach has been developed a stage further with the use of the term ‘product’ as an attempt to package together many of the discrete facilities identified on tourism inventories, to highlight the diversity and variety of tourism resources available to potential visitors.

G.J. Ashworth, quoted in Shaw and Williams (2004: p20)

The phenomena mass tourism can conceivably apply to either of the above distinguished tourist cities or areas, and as such correlates with various tourism activities. For example, (urban) mass tourism in the city of Venice (a tourist-historic city) relates predominantly to the cultural heritage in the city which is the mean purpose for tourists visiting Venice. Mass tourism in Mallorca on the other hand reflects more readily typical ‘three S’ tourism which constitutes for the bulk of visitors that descends upon the island.

Each specific type of tourism has different implications for the environment or the urban landscape, relating not only to the nature of the activity but as well to the type and number of tourists involved. Assessing differences between the impacts of various types of tourism is however complicated and additional factors need to be considered such as the size of a destination or the prevailing economic, political or social conditions. But as this study is not set out to make a comparative analysis between the various tourism types, it will concentrate on the general characteristics of mass tourism, e.g. spatial concentration,

⁹ The definition of an urban area varies amongst nations. But generally understood, an urban area is characterized by a higher population density and vast human features compared to surrounding areas. Urban areas may be entire cities, towns, conurbations or only a parts of them, but the term is not commonly extended to rural settlements such as villages or hamlets.

standardization, and concurrently to the characteristics of urban tourism as the urban environment constitutes the central unit of analyze in this thesis.

Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is, like mass tourism, not really reflecting one specific type of tourism itself, but it more provides guidelines and management practices which are applicable to all types of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. (WTO 2004) In the conceptual definition of the WTO, sustainable tourism should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation

Although it is argued that these guidelines and management practices are applicable to all types of tourism, the ambitions set out in this conceptual outline have proved difficult to realize in practice, most notably with regard to the development of mass tourism destinations. And although this certainly can be ascribed to poor leadership or lack of participation and consensus on the hand of relevant stakeholders, a more thorough understanding and analysis regarding the impact of mass tourism on the urban landscape and identity of towns will perhaps identify some structural problems with regard to mass tourism planning and development. And when properly dealt with, may pave the way for more sustainable tourism management and planning that will ensure the long-term viability of small or medium sized towns exposed to mass tourism.

The sustainable mass tourism town?

Sustainable development, then, is about recognizing and accepting our responsibilities not just for the places where we live, but more widely for the environment at a global scale. In order to do this we need to look beyond the environment itself, to the broader economic, social and political systems within which human decisions are made. Fundamentally, sustainable development is about altering behaviour patterns not just directly in relation to the environment, but about changing the broader systems which shape human behaviour.

Graham Haughton, quoted in Miles, Hall and Borden (2004: p464)

One of the final objectives in this thesis is to explore the concept of sustainable urban development that would ensure the long term viability in mass tourism destinations. Assessing sustainable urban development however is difficult when considered purely in internal terms. A town or city is nowadays even more a part of a greater global or regional system and few towns or cities function fully autarkic. As Haughton (1999: p462) argues, “with the emergence of ever-thickening and extending patterns of global economic trading, and increasingly global exchanges of environmental resources and waste streams, it is futile and indeed virtually meaningless to attempt to create a ‘sustainable city’ in isolation from its broader hinterland area.” Defining the concept of the sustainable mass tourism town than appears a futile exercise with so many additional external aspects to consider. But it is possible however to explore the most crucial aspects that ensure the long term vitality of mass tourism destinations, which requires a different approach as opposed to more ‘normal’ towns or cities, without immediately contemplating it in a much broader perspective.

Mass tourism towns have to correspond to the needs and desires of two very different ‘groups’, namely tourists and inhabitants.

Although there is not a single definition, it is generally agreed that sustainable tourism should meet three core elements: the interests of local residents, the requirements of tourists and the preservation of the resources over time.

Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira, Edith Besson, Brigitte Hoffmann, Sylke Wintzer (2004: p7)

Although tourists typically only occupy a town during a certain period of the year (seasonality), they are vital consumers in the local economy of mass tourism destinations. Without the presence of tourists, the local economy in many mass tourism destinations would almost entirely break down as it is often completely dependent and sustained by the inherent tourism industry. Tourism furthermore can reactivate the economic development of towns that are deprived of an industrial, agricultural or business sector and as such cultural tourism is

increasingly perceived as a potential means of alleviating the unprecedented crises suffered by many urban centres.¹⁰ (Law, see Page and Hall)

Although tourism does create new, often much wanted, job opportunities, it is not said that local inhabitants automatically welcome the afflux of people and transformations that take place in their living habitat. It is crucial for towns to address both needs while if not, the long-term viability of the town is threatened and either tourists or residents will turn their backs on the town.

Tourism concentrations are not static. Their comparative advantages may change over time, perhaps because of shifts in consumption (changes in tourism preferences) or because of the inherent contradictions of the process of accumulation: 'over-development' may make the destination less attractive because of noise, pollution and the sheer pressures of the increasing numbers of tourists.

Shaw and Williams (2004: p190)

In figure [3] I have schematized the particular needs and desires of both tourists and residents in a hypothetical mass tourism destination. I have explored the interconnectivity of aspects that arguably are essential to ensure the long term vitality of mass tourism destinations, i.e. constant flow of tourists and quality living environment for local residents.

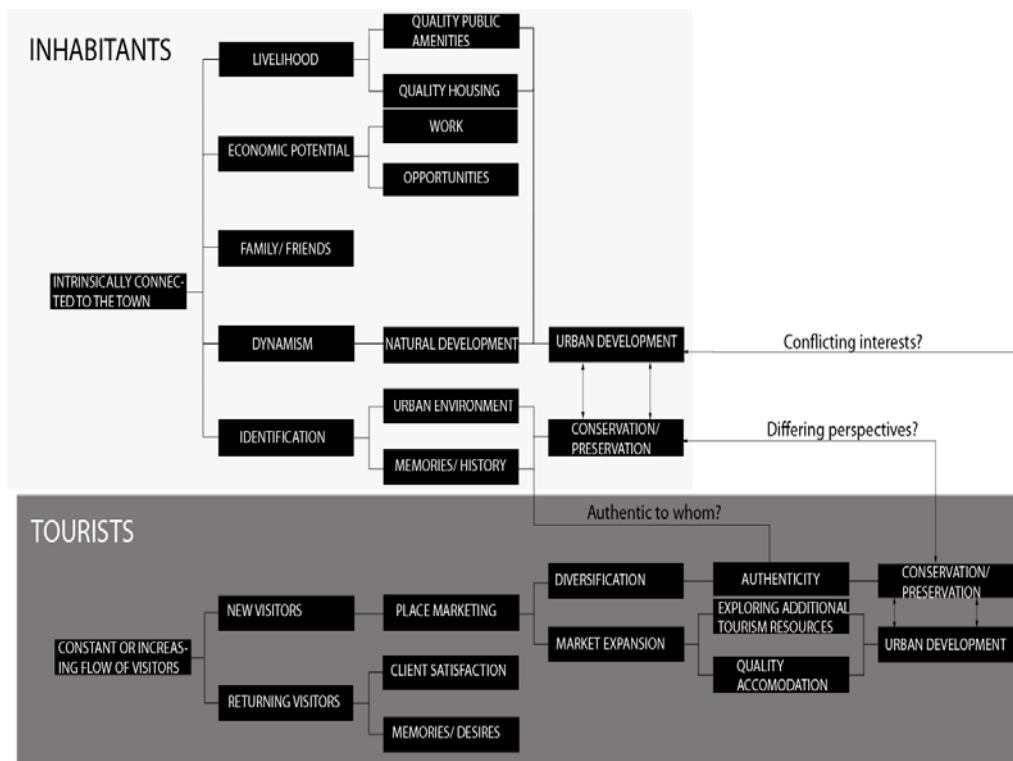


Figure 3: Schematic representation of the needs and desires of inhabitants and tourist

¹⁰ The crises relates to the classical city that used to be shaped by its industrial centre (production economy) that however has lost its function over time due to the globalization of the economy and the emergence of the information society.

Tourism as an economic development tool

More and more European cities and urban regions are actively promoting the development of tourism as a means to overcome the post-industrial crisis most of them are suffering.

Elisabeth Dumont, Christine Ruelle and Jacques Teller (2005: p14)

Economic development is often mentioned and valued first as a result of an afflux of people that descend upon a town. Traditionally the economic impact of tourism has been measured in terms of its contribution to Gross National Product and the amount of jobs created (Jamieson, Goodwin and Edmund 2004). This however is increasingly considered to be a too meagre approach. The *total* economic impact of tourism needs to be assessed as the aggregate of direct, indirect, and induced effects within a region as described by Stynes (n.d.) as follows:

Direct effects are production changes associated with the immediate effects of changes in tourism expenditures. For example, an increase in the number of tourists staying overnight in hotels would directly yield increased sales in the hotel sector. The additional hotel sales and associated changes in hotel payments for wages and salaries, taxes, and supplies and services are direct effects of the tourist spending.

Indirect effects are the production changes resulting from various rounds of re-spending of the hotel industry's receipts in other backward-linked industries (i.e., industries supplying products and services to hotels). Changes in sales, jobs, and income in the linen supply industry, for example, represent indirect effects of changes in hotel sales. Businesses supplying products and services to the linen supply industry represent another round of indirect effects, eventually linking hotels to varying degrees to many other economic sectors in the region.

Induced effects are the changes in economic activity resulting from household spending of income earned directly or indirectly as a result of tourism spending. For example, hotel and linen supply employees supported directly or indirectly by tourism, spend their income in the local region for housing, food, transportation, and the usual array of household product and service needs. The sales, income, and jobs that result from household spending of added wage, salary, or proprietor's income are induced effects.

But the *real* economic impact (benefits versus costs) of tourism development is more difficult to assess however. One has to take into consideration several additional factors in order to realistically evaluate whether the economic outcome of tourism development effectively contributes to the development of

the *local* economy. A recurrently mentioned adverse aspect of tourism is the inflation of prices (renting prices, estate prices, life price, etc) due to the renovation, rehabilitation and enhancement of built heritage, speculation or mono-sectorialisation (Drdacky, see Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005). But also environmental impacts such as additional garbage costs, conservation or maintenance costs etc. need to be assessed, as well as the organisation of the industry for example. A great share of the positive economic impact of tourism development arguably flows into external (foreign) economies whereas multinational firms are dominating much of the industry and small businesses are not always sharing in the proceeds (Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005). Under such economic conditions, tourism development will only marginally contribute to local economic development.

Similar in this context is the prospect of increasing job opportunities. Although considered as one of the most structural and direct benefits of tourism, it nevertheless fails to produce significant advantages for the local population while it often only concerns low-skilled employment with higher paid jobs reserved for foreigners with better qualifications (Urry *et al.* 1990)

There can be no doubt that tourism development does employ those in the lower social and economic classes but there is a growing body of evidence that tourism development enriches local elites, international and expatriate companies and generates low paying and low status employment.

Walter Jamieson, Harold Goodwin and Christopher Edmund (2004: p2)

As Urry (1990: p57) additionally questions in this respect: development for whom? “Many of the facilities that result from tourism (airports, golf courses, luxury hotels) will be of little benefit to the mass of the indigenous population.” Generated indigenous wealth is often unevenly distributed and as such fails to benefit the majority of a local population.

Constant or growing tourist numbers are a necessity in order to sustain the local economy in mass tourism destinations, but most destinations nevertheless, only benefit a limited period from tourism development. Typical mass tourism destinations generally experience rapid economic development in the initial stages of tourism development but structural long-term economic development often proves more difficult to realize. Figure [4] indicates that after a certain period of continuous growth, (mass) tourism destinations experience stagnation or even a decline in tourist numbers.

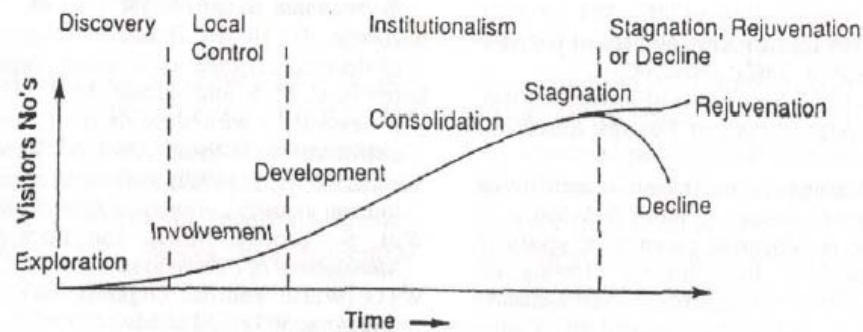


Figure 4: Hypothetical tourist area life cycle

The tourist area life circle has also been extensively explored by Butler (1980) who also divided the resort cycle into six stages or phases of development:

Visitors will come to an area in small numbers initially, restricted by a lack of access, facilities, and local knowledge. As facilities are provided and awareness grows, visitor numbers will increase. With marketing, information dissemination, and further facility provision, the area's popularity will grow rapidly. Eventually, however, the rate of increase in visitor numbers will decline as levels of carrying capacity are reached...As the attractiveness of the area declines relative to other areas, because of overuse and the impact of visitors, the actual number of visitors may also eventually decline.

Butler, quoted in Page and Hall (2002: p200)

In local economies where tourism is *the* essential factor, any decline in tourist numbers will immediately pressurize a local economy. Fewer tourists mean less direct (and thus indirect and induced) tourism revenues and an overall decline in local economic development. An economy based almost solemnly on a tourism industry is a highly vulnerable economy; a worldwide economic crises or increasing competition on the tourism market for example, with more tourism destinations emerging every year, quickly can account for a sharp decline in tourism revenues and thus immediately pressurize the local economy and community.

Subsequently there are some more structural reasons identifiable that can account for declining tourist numbers. When destinations are exposed to extensive tourism development over a considerable period of time, they often come to face several social, cultural or environmental problems as a result of the afflux of people that descend upon the area.

Tourism is a consumer of natural environments, historic buildings, urban spaces and local culture, all of which, if they are spoilt by overcrowding and overdevelopment, face the danger of being abandoned in favour of fresh and more attractive destinations

Elisabeth Dumont, Christine Ruelle and Jacques Teller (2005: p22)

In most cases the quality of the tourist product quickly deteriorates with the possible outcome that many visitors will consider exploring other, more interesting, e.g. authentic or exotic, places.

Especially in the less developed countries around the world, tourism is more and more representing a vital source of income for many people. In developing nation's tourism represents a unique chance for (re)activating a local economy that has either seen its former industries collapse or simply has not hitherto developed any industry due to a lack of available natural or human resources. The prospect of economic development is often so tempting that anticipated adverse impacts are left unconsidered, e.g. social, cultural and environmental issues, however, deserve critical attention whereas economic motivations only eventually compromise the sustainability of a mass tourism destination.

Urban identity and the image of the city

The issue of identity when applied to the city, then, floats enthusiastically and fancifully in an interesting combined medium, powered by technology, but flirting with memory, shimmering in different perceptions and of course apparently grounded in a standard lexicon of urban vocabulary and image of the city

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p11)

Identity is never monolithic, and it never exists outside man. It is not attached to soil and locations; the locations are appropriated in a cultural way by people; thus the landscape becomes a 'mindscape'.

Rooijakkers, quoted in Murray (2001: p111)

Modern urban development projects and inner-city shopping malls are becoming more and more similar. While the physical structures of a city, together with consumer products, food and large cultural events, converge more and more in style...

Klaus R. Kunzmann (2004: p387)

Tourism is a phenomenon which has grown significantly over the past years and it has increasingly developed into a more global phenomenon. As Shaw and Williams (2004) have argued, tourism is highly implicated in globalisation, as evident in the way globalized information flows influence the tourist decision-making process or in the way that globalized investments flows are creating international hotel chains and tourist attractions which foster global tourist flows. People travel all over the world these days and are less and less bounded by physical or mental borders. The presence of tourists influences the urban landscape of towns and cities, which, arguably, increasingly are shaped by the imaginations and desires of tourist and furthermore incrementally tied to current, post-modern, consumption patterns.

Although cities and towns have their own peculiarities, the forces of global consumerism and culture arguably increasingly contribute to the standardization of urban landscapes all around the world. Not only does globalization produces new forms of economic activity within a place, it also produces or reproduces a multinational/internationalised global capitalism that is reflected in the standardization of production and consumption in many aspects of the classical town or city. (Page and Hall 2003) Although tourism also reinforces the awareness of difference to a certain degree (Shaw and Williams 2004), in the majority of tourist places, the development of the urban landscape increasingly shows similarities which hence has intensified the dialogue concerning the value of urban identities and place marketing (images) in tourist destinations.

To examine the quantitative and qualitative impact of tourism on the urban landscape and respectively on the urban identity of towns, all the aspects that comprise this complex notion need to be understood. Are they the visual and architectural elements of the town, "the static layer", or does it include more

abstract, social elements, “the dynamic layer”? How is urban identity shaped and which aspects appear to be most decisive in our way of perceiving a city or town?

Cities may be read and understood like a book; they produce texts, pictures and images which collect and store physiognomy, spirit, character, atmosphere and cultural impressions. You remember each city just like you remember a person, because ‘each city is an individual being’.

Karl Scheffler, quoted in Siebenhaar (2006: p228)

The physical aspects of towns, such as monuments, streets or green spaces for example, are arguably the most common elements that represent the identity of a town but it is not only the concrete reality of a town that defines its urban identity, the activities of its inhabitants are certainly as important. Thus urban identities strongly relate to the concrete realities of cities (the static city) but in a more dynamic way, the identity of a city is transmitted through people, projects and perceptions, and the interaction of these. (Diskin 2008)

A physical place only becomes a social place when symbolic meanings are attached to it which derive from the practices and interpretations of the socially diverse groups of people who inhabit it.

Jude Bloomfield (2008: p51)

A major aspect of ‘reading’ the urban landscape is the more symbolic value that is conferred by the physical aspects of towns or cities which need to be understood as a reflection of the history and memories of a place; the collective memory of its people, or as Rossi has called it, “the Soul of the City”.

“The Soul of the City becomes the city’s history, the sign on the walls of the municipality, the city’s distinctive character, its memory.”

Aldo Rossi (1982: p130)

History however, needs to be distinguished here from memory. Halbwachs (quoted in Boyer 1996: p26) has pointed out that memory, as opposed to history, has to be linked to lived experiences “otherwise it was reduced to history, becoming abstract or intellectualized reconstructions, debased or faked recollections.” Thus to grasp the deeper meaning of a town or city we have to move beyond pure history, which is often highly selective as Benjamin (see Boyer 1996) has commented, and start to pursue the collective memories that pervade amongst inhabitants which quintessentially reflects important historic, cultural and social aspects and as such can bring us nearer to the true meaning of a place.

Therefore the memory, history and identity are not the emanation of an enclosed, hermetically sealed, ‘pure’ group and their past, but the ongoing social construction of people with diverse histories whose lives intersect in a specific place.

Jude Bloomfield (2008: p45)

Albeit the issue of urban identity and perception foremost relates to a specific urban place, it also needs to be understood in a much larger context as a city or town is always placed within a particular context and does not evolve within a space and time bound vacuum. To cite Diskin (2008: p26): "The identity of the city, apart from the day-to-day operation of its infrastructure, overlaid with the physical architectural and urban elements of buildings and spaces must certainly be viewed in the context of the much broader issue of national and regional identity." The individual perceptions of inhabitants therefore cannot be regarded separately from national or historical issues. This especially regards to smaller towns or agglomerations, that often lack the cultural wealth of capital cities and where the identities of inhabitants are often stronger influenced by national culture and national history for example. Furthermore, in our current understanding of increasing information (network) societies (Castells 1996), urban perceptions are additionally influenced by the ever more intrusive presence of advanced communication technologies, i.e. the media, internet, mobile phones, transportation etc.:

Obviously, perception is a matter of the apparatus that allows the human being to see, feel and integrate information; however, in the last hundred years, with the advent of photography and film and with the rise of vehicular transportation at greater speed, the scope and functioning of this human perceptual apparatus has been significantly challenged. Not only has the physical context changed as the result of being able to penetrate an environment dynamically, and thus take in a huge amount of information in a very short time, but various print and broadcast media have also saturated individual human and collective memories with new images, some more virtual than real, and in such great numbers that the very idea of what is real is now a factor when considering perception. Moreover, the situation opens the question of whether people are actually forming their own perceptions or digesting perceptions from the intrusive blast of available imagery and opinion

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p38)

Thus to understand the notion of urban identity, it is crucial to realize that people perceive and construct identity in many different ways. Urban identity consists out of the numerous elements that tend to give a city its unique character (both physical and non-physical) and it cannot be separated from the issue of urban perception, that are the critically important factors of exactly how the residents and visitors of cities or towns actually view or value the elements of urban identity (Diskin 2008).

Human beings read and understand cities in different ways because of different age or social background for example and identify cities or towns based upon individual perceptions:

Obviously certain elements (the tallest building, a bridge over a river, etc.) attract the curious eye, but such a perception of the city cannot be separated from the person doing the perceiving, not just from the point of view of biological perceptual apparatus, but

from memory, agenda or background (educational, cultural or political)
Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p46)

Visitors and inhabitants will have different sets of needs and desires and will each perceive the town through different spectacles, just as the student will differ from the businessman and the artist from the politician. The way people perceive the identity of a town relates to aspects that transcend the mere 'clinical' observations of a townscape and reflect more ungraspable aspects such as imaginaries and memory. With these arguments in mind, it is possible to differentiate three fundamental characteristics within urban perceptions; place, activity and thought.

This hypothetical categorization and understanding of urban perception is developed by Diskin (2008) as a working theory of three main hypothetical perceptual layers in which the city can be understood: the static city, representing the physical make up of the city; the dynamic city, that puts the city in motion and relates to the various ways in how people see and experience the elements of the static layer; the hyper-dynamic city, representing how inhabitants or visitors, consciously and unconsciously, process and digest things we perceive in our minds, relating to various aspects such as, community, education or technology.

The fact that the term urban identity can be understood and perceived in such a variety of ways makes it difficult to apply. The above presented perceptual layers however, are an attempt to establish a working theory that aims to understand the city or town as an accretion of perceptual layers, dealing with issues such as, place, politics, history, traditions, architecture and economical conditions for example.

For certain is that urban identity is intrinsically connected to historical and traditional elements, such as monumental buildings or specific cultural traditions, and as such, "it can provide us with an enduring fixed image of the city and a stable base to which resident and visitors can refer" (Diskin 2008: p15)

The demands and pressures of social reality constantly affect the material order of the city, yet it remains the theatre of our memory.

Christine Boyer (1996: p31)

But as argued, urban identities (perceptions) are not likeably static notions; they will respond and adapt to technological development and other phenomena's, such as globalization or tourism, the central focus of this thesis.

Tourists, unlike inhabitants, confront towns head on and perceive towns relatively unbothered by local political or economic conditions. Furthermore they

perceive the town without sharing the collective memories or traditions of the inhabitants of the town which makes the urban perception of tourists clearly distinct from those of inhabitants.

L A Y E R S					
	0	1	2	3	4
	Fundamental	Static	Dynamic	Hyperdynamic	Transcendent
human being	medulla oblongata metabolism	cerebellum sitting, standing	cerebrum walking, flying, feeling	conscious thinking	unconscious meditating
human knowledge	string theory	past molecule brick arithmetic statics organization	present electron wire physiology fluid dynamics recreation	future bit transistor phenomenology quantum physics education	timeless string theory
basic element		MATERIAL	EXPERIENTIAL	MENTAL	
city		structure axes walls vistas hardscape landscape street furniture land art frames/portals water	infrastructure paths roads lighting sound play walking bicycling playing vehicles travel recreation advertising pixels	perception community education program emergence randomness projection play thinking technology escape meditation communication sensors hologram	
issues		place	activity	thought	
design artifacts		plan	image	mindmap	

Figure 5: Preliminary notes for an urban lexicon emerging from the metaphor of perceptual layers

The tourist experience is generally considered as a highly staged perception, orchestrated by sign and signifiers that tell people when and where to 'gaze'¹¹.

Such gazes cannot be left to chance. People have to learn how, when and where to gaze. Clear markers have to be provided, and in some cases the object of the gaze is merely the marker that indicates some event or experience which previously happened at that spot.

John Urry (quoted in Fainstein and Judd 1999: p7)

Furthermore, prior to an actual visit, various mediums, such as the internet, television or travel literature, will influence the perception of the tourist by presenting characteristic images of the town that enables potential visitors to get some first impressions of what to expect.

...interactions with places may be "through direct experience of the environment or indirectly through media representations."

Michalis Kavararitz and G.J. Ashworth (2005: p507)

Thus in comparison to inhabitants, the identity of a town in the mind of tourists needs to be considered more as a contemporary impression or snapshot of the town, detached from collective memories and local history.

The image

Moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important as the stationary physical parts. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants. Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all.

Kevin Lynch (1960: p2)

An image is the result of various different and often conflicting messages sent by the city and is formed in the mind of each individual receiver of these messages separately.

Michalis Kavaratzis (2004: p62)

Lynch, in his landmark study "The image of the city" (1960), has been one of the first to consider not just the city as an object itself but more specifically how it is being perceived by its inhabitants or visitors. As Lynch (1960: p1) argues, "Every citizen has had long associations with some part of the city, and his image is soaked in memories and meanings". But often however, the image of a place is regarded as a kind of 'postcard' representation of the most distinctive elements of a certain place. This idea is expressed by Graham who makes a distinction between two parallel cities that exist simultaneously:

The first is the 'external city', 'which can, at least superficially, been capsulated in one or two signature buildings or landmarks'... [...] The second parallel city is the 'internal

¹¹ A term coined by John Urry which especially refers to the perspective of the tourist.

city', the city of the mind. 'This is a much more inner-directed mnemonic city, one that is concerned with social inclusion and exclusion, lifestyle, diversity and multiculturalism. It is a place of complex, overlapping and ambiguous messages.'

Brian Graham, quoted in Kavaratzis (2004: p62-63)

The 'external city' thus is considered as a simplified representation of the urban landscape or urban identity as opposed to the more complex 'internal city' which is clearly more inclusive.

But what is the difference between urban identity and the image of a place? The 'image' is probably best understood as a representational form of the physical and non-physical characteristics of a place. The image of a place is like a snapshot of the urban landscape, summarizing the most distinctive characteristics of a place from the perspective of an individual observer or as Kampschulte (quoted in Kavaratzis 2004: p63) comments, "The image of the city is best described as the link between real, objective space and its perception". Images are representational forms that become succinct records of what we consider to be present reality. These representational forms transform our sense of the real, for the image of the city is an abstracted concept, an imaginary constructed form. (Boyer 1996)

Although each individual creates and bears its own images, there arguably exists a more public transmitted image that Lynch (1960: p7) describes as "the common mental pictures carried by large numbers of a city's inhabitants: areas of agreement which might be expected to appear in the interaction of a single physical reality, a common culture, and a basic physiological nature." It is usually such a common public image that communicates the 'nature' of a place to the outer world, and which has become an accepted way of seeing, knowing and representing a place.

The tourist, as argued, takes part in the urban landscape of towns and cities quite unlike the local inhabitant and both as such perceive the urban landscape different:

A visitor typically arrives in a new city with the anticipation of the experience of its buildings and public spaces, but also with orientational questions of how to get from place to place, how to meet others (connect), how transactions work (function) and, most of all, how to "decipher" the image, or perhaps more the dynamic metabolism, of the specific urban organism.

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p39)

As Urry (1990) argues, tourism is predominantly a leisure activity for people in search of alternative experiences away from the ordinary of everyday life, and periods of residence elsewhere are usually of a short-term and temporary nature. And as Diskin (2008: p16) further comments, "tourists do not readily engage

with a city's political baggage or the sort of perceptions or ennui that comes with living in the same place for a long time." Before the actual visit to a place, the tourists usually have shaped and created certain expectations and anticipations based upon the 'projected image' of a place. The tourist not only shares different interest in the place of visit but moreover observes and experiences the urban landscape loaded with pre-shaped *images* (and prejudices) as opposed to individual or collective memories and relations that come with living in the same place over a longer period of time. The perceptions of tourists arguably are stronger influenced by various media that, especially nowadays, are increasingly responsible for communicating the images of a place.

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze.

John Urry (1990: p3)

The notion of the image is widely discussed in place marketing and place branding literature in which the image of a place is clearly regarded as the means to communicate a city's or town's identity.

For reasons emphasized in city marketing literature, the image of cities has become extremely important to attract investors, professional people and media attention

Klaus R. Kunzmann (2004: p385)

In order to develop marketing strategies for a town or city, one dominant common image, composed out of an affluence of individual perceptions preferably, generally will govern urban (tourism) planning policies. This dominant image is regarded as the most applicable image to attract investors, tourists or media attention etc. The concept of place marketing has become a crucial aspect in urban planning as I will further discuss in chapter two.

CHAPTER II

Mass tourism shaping the urban landscape

Introduction



Figure 6: Tourists at Piazza San Marco Venice

First, places do not exist as such but are actively constructed by social processes, including tourism. [...] The second point is that places are constantly changing over time, through both their internal dynamics and the manner in which these interact with external and increasingly globalized processes of change.

Gareth Shaw and Allan M. Williams (2004: p186)

Tourism can reasonably be regarded as a major contributor to the cultural cross-fertilization between societies around the world. Tourism is a provider of shared and distinctive experiences and in a certain respect creates a supranational culture by forging connections among people from different milieus, and as such contributing to the formation of a global culture. (Fainstein and Judd 1999)

Tourism, like media or other important contributors to the globalization process, reaches nowadays even the more remote or distant places around the globe, spreading 'modern culture' or often argued 'western culture' as western countries account for the largest share of tourists (Urry 1999: p53) At this point in time, there seems to be no place that has not yet been discovered by the tourist and as Tomlinson (2003: p273) has argued; "modern culture is less determined by location because location is increasingly penetrated by distance."

Tourism has clearly become an element of modern culture with the act of travelling nowadays being an ordinary experience for increasing amounts of people.

At the end of the twentieth century, travel to distant places has become an ordinary experience, taken for granted as a routine part of life. In this way tourism has shrunk the globe as much as the revolutions in telecommunications and computers.

Susan S. Fainstein and Dennis R. Judd (1999: p1)

The increasingly global phenomena tourism transforms the urban landscape of towns in a variety of ways, which goes beyond the mere physical presence of the tourist within the urban landscape and involves several additional aspects of tourism. Transformations in the urban landscape, either symbolic or material, are the result of activities and interventions by both the producers¹² and the consumers of tourism as Ashworth and Dietvorst comment:

...shows the continuing transformation of the original tourism-recreation resource (whether a landscape, a monument, an urban public space, a national park or other elements) by activities and interventions by producers and consumers of many types, wittingly or not, for a variety of objectives.

A.G.J Dietvorst and G.J. Ashworth (1995: p2)

Tourism builds upon various, often scarce resources such as land or water, or on more abstract resources such as labour, capital goods and socio-cultural aspects, i.e. history, the built environment, traditions etc., which are used as 'tourism products' but which however are also used for non-tourism activities- and often therefore not under direct control of tourism producers. (Ashworth and Dietvorst 1995)

One of the economic assets of tourism is that many tourist attractions – sea views, townscapes, fresh air, clean water – are free goods, which do not have to be paid for. But because it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish private property rights over such goods, it is also difficult to establish responsibility for maintaining these.

Gareth Shaw and Allan M. Williams (2004: p12)

The sometimes ambiguous meaning of space is an important aspect that characterizes tourism spaces. Locals have different sets of needs as opposed to tourists and therefore the tourist space can be a highly contested place in the urban landscape.

[...] the practices of different groups of tourists, and of tourists versus locals, may be non-conforming; they may be mutually exclusive in terms of enjoyment of the same place, while also threatening the viability of the local ecosystem.

Gareth Shaw and Allan M. Williams (2004: p12)

Urry (1990) has described the impact of tourism by distinguishing the numerous (social) relations that exist between 'hosts' and 'guests' communities and which I

¹² Public authorities, entrepreneurs, private organisations, local communities

have adapted and elaborated here to explore the implications of mass tourism development upon the urban landscape.

- 1) The function of the city
- 2) The object of the gaze
- 3) The number and 'type' of tourists
- 4) The organization of the industry

The function of the city

Economic activities have always shaped cities, and this is particularly the case for tourism.

Susan S. Fainstein & Dennis R. Judd (1999: p261)

...new divergent leisure and recreational urban activities appear to require for themselves and consume more and more space in our cities; tourist-historic urban cores, special museums of any kind, urban waterfronts, theme parks, etc.

Aspa Gospodini (2001: p926)



Figure 8: Albert Docks Liverpool; from industrial use to a tourism resource



Figure 7: Factory as Entertainment Park

As many towns nowadays have lost their industrial or manufacturing position within a local or regional economy, tourism embodies for many towns an accessible and promising alternative for blowing new life into the local economy. Whereas nineteenth century European or North American cities and towns were predominantly characterized by industrial urbanization, tourism urbanization¹³ is primary a late-twentieth century phenomenon whereby cities and towns have been built specially for the satisfaction of wants and desires (for fun) rather than for production (Mullins, see Page and Hall 2003).

¹³Tourism urbanization refers to the process of building cities and towns to function exclusively as centers of tourism.

Because the urban environment is a free commodity that can be sold to corporate interest and individual consumers as Meethan (see Wirth and Freestone 2003) points out, it embodies a valuable asset for economic development in many places. Urban areas can be re-imagined and invested with new (cultural) meanings to encourage greater consumption, visual and physical, as 'landscapes of pleasure' (Hannigan, see Wirth and Freestone). Tourism development arguably produces a shift from a production to a more consumption orientated economy although leisure activities are not only consumed but as well produced. It is however important to recognize that tourism development makes towns increasingly specialize in types of production in which the products are either tangible or immediately consumed (Fainstein & Judd 1999) and as such, a clear shift has taken place towards more service (consumer) orientated economies. This has brought about a significant transformation in the urban landscape of many towns and cities which is commonly delineated as a shift from industrialist towards post-modernist (post-industrialist) landscapes. Tourism development has become an integral aspect in this post-modern landscape that revolves around the fascination with consumption, commodification, social division and new forms of everyday life (Page and Hall 2003).

Tourism has been a central component of the economic, social, and cultural shift that has left its imprints on the world system of cities in the past two decades.

Susan S. Fainstein & Dennis R. Judd (1999: p261)

Boyer (1996) contemplates on this contemporary mode of consumption that is 'dictating' the urban sphere in the metaphoric "City of Spectacle":

And not surprisingly we shall find that the City of Spectacle, the city reduced to the play of pure imagery, has developed intimate tie-ins with the logic of consumption and the selling of leisure-time lifestyles.

Christine Boyer (1996: p51)

This city of consumption Boyer argues, revelling in its own imagery and display, has blocked any awareness of a reality that might differ from this spectacle of pure form and play of consumer choices; "Shop windows, packaged goods, billboards, architecture, historic preservation, television displays, came to the same focal point – the theatricalised City of Spectacle". (Boyer 1996: p63)

Sometime in the 1960s and early 1970s, the city landscape and its leisure activities began to be circumscribed by the sensuous structures of consumption...

Christine Boyer (1996: p63)

The spatial organization of tourist-destinations differs significantly from the old 'classical' industrial town or city that was specialized in producing services, distribution, and manufacturing goods. "Whereas warehouses and goods

production activities were clustered around the ports of old industrial centres; luxury hotels and high-end residential buildings usually line the waterfronts of contemporary tourist cities". (Fainstein & Gladstone 1999: p23)

But the transformation of towns and cities however cannot be solemnly ascribed to the phenomena tourism. Modern technology has clearly determined a shift in our societies towards more information based 'network societies' (Castells 1996) that nowadays have come to replace the classical production societies which until recently were the shaping forces of the contemporary city or town. And as Dietvorst and Ashworth (1995: p5) further comment; "technology and rationalization have exerted a tremendous influence on, for example, the actual morphology of the rural and urban landscape." Nevertheless it can reasonably be said that tourism has triggered or accelerated this process in numerous places around the world and as such it is strongly influencing the shape of towns and cities around the globe.

The object and character of the gaze



Figure 9: The beach as tourism resource

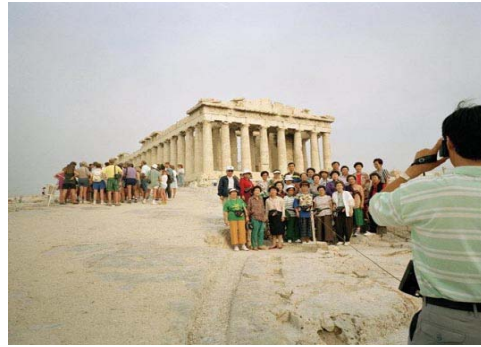


Figure 10: Parthenon in Greece, cultural tourist attraction

...the tourist trade, in a competitive scramble to uncover all places of once quiet repose, of wonder, beauty and historic interest to the money-flushed multitude, is in effect literally and irrevocably destroying them...

Mishan, E, quoted in Urry (1990: p40)

Tourism relates to a wide variety of activities that can be classified in several 'tourism types' (see chapter 1). These numerous types of tourism each involve different objects that constitute the predominant tourist gaze, such as landscapes, ethnic groups (Maoris in New Zealand), lifestyles (the 'wild west') historic centres (Venice), or simply sand, sun and sea (Mallorca) for example (Urry 1990). Each of these activities involves different levels of interactions between 'hosts' and 'guests' regardless of the number of tourists involved, and each activity creates a different set of social relations (Nash 1996) The typical mass tourist for example, who spends the greater part of his holiday on the beach, presumably undertakes fewer activities as opposed to the tourist who wants to experience 'the other' and engages in all kinds of cultural activities in order to do so. But what type of tourism activity is presumably more obtrusive and will greater impact local communities? Here Urry (1990: p51) argues; "those tourist activities that involve the observation of physical objects are less obtrusive than those that involve observing individuals and groups". When we consider mass tourism, it involves predominantly activities such as gazing upon historic monuments (e.g. the Parthenon or the Coliseum in Rome) or skiing and sunbathing, activities that are not likely to produce great social stress as opposed to those tourism activities that involve the 'real' lives of an (exotic) cultural host group for example¹⁴. But were the social interactions of mass tourism arguably are not likely arousing great social stress, the involving large

¹⁴ These tourism types are usually the aforementioned niche tourism types such as eco-tourism or rural tourism for example.

numbers of tourists obviously do, as will be discussed in the following paragraph.

The object of the gaze is often modified as to respond to the imaginations and expectations of the tourist, an important aspect of city-branding, discussed a little later in this chapter.

...cities are being remodelled, environments redesigned, and even their inhabitants' behaviours modified to create a more appealing product.

Briavel Holcomb (1999: p56)

Realizing the potential of tourism as an economic catalyst, towns analyze and stress their specific assets and intrinsic qualities which, preferably, should differentiate them from other towns and which as such can be exploited to attract tourists. Identification however is only a first step. In order to prepare sites of interest for consumption, they often need to be adapted and equipped in order to cater for the tourist. Few towns possess an infrastructure that is able to easily absorb increasing demands and therefore often needs to be refurbished and adapted in order to cope with an afflux of visitors. Besides marking the object of the gaze, people have to be told where and what is there to look upon; it correspondingly needs to be adapted in order to make it more desirable and accessible to the tourist which as a result, can have somewhat ambiguous implications.

On the one hand, identifying certain local qualities (e.g. landscapes, monuments, cultural traditions etc.) as potential tourist attractions can reattach them with (renewed) value which can lead to the conservation or strengthening of local aspects. Beaches for example, have benefited sometimes from the arrival of tourism as they became more intensively serviced and monitored as a result of tourist's demands. Another, quite different, example is the issue of cultural identity and the Polynesian cultural centre, studied by Caneen (2008). Caneen observed that the performance of a re-invented traditional dance for tourists has contributed to the proliferation of Polynesian culture and the enhancement of cultural identity.

However, the exploitation and transformation of such local assets into products for consumption as well is associated with numerous adverse implications concerning foremost issues of cultural heritage and authenticity. As mentioned earlier, many tourists seek the other or the exotic in order to escape the ordinary life at home. The experience sought is preferably an authentic one, although some find enjoyment nowadays in exaggerated staged authenticity (Holcomb 1999), which gives insight into the life of a different culture and town. Reality

however is that the authentic cultures and societies that tourists wish to experience often no longer really exist. The object of the gaze is often consciously modified and adapted to appeal to the imaginations of the tourist and as such only is merely a representation of the authentic or historical meaning formerly attached to the object. Especially with regard to the cultural heritage of towns, these transformations are considered highly controversial:

Although tourism development can very well positively contribute to the urban regeneration of towns, excessive development of tourism bears the risk of transforming our urban heritage into mono-functional spaces, threatening the long-term conservation of this heritage. This yields a risk of losing meaning and authenticity ("Disneyfication" of the city centres)

Elisabeth Dumont, Christine Ruelle and Jacques Teller (2005: p17)

Or as Orbasli comments:

Urban conservation, in connection with the growing influence of tourism, is resulting in a freezing-in-time approach and a re-recreation of past times, compromising the continuity of the urban environment. The integration of conservation with tourism has been such that tourism is no longer an outcome of preservation but conservation is increasingly a product of tourism, resulting in: a hurried attempt to re-create or even invent history; facadism and "pastiche" streetscape re-creation; over-sanitisation of both history and the life of a town; theming.

Aylin Orbasli, quoted in Dumont, Ruelle and Teller (2005: p23)

The conservation and preservation of urban historical centres often can lead to a romanticized urban experience that stages a sense of authenticity that however is detached from time and context altogether. This clearly raises the question whether these strenuous efforts of towns to appeal to the imaginations and expectations of the tourist do not conflict with the lives of the local population and the originality or uniqueness of the urban landscape? But before addressing this question let us first explore some other implications of mass tourism development.

The number and types of tourists



Figure 12: Large numbers of tourist gathering in the streets of Dubrovnik



Figure 11: Inquisitive tourists

Engaging in various activities, tourists participate in the ordinary life of 'others' and as such, consciously or unconsciously influence behaviour and experiences. The level of interaction between 'hosts' and 'guests' is of course important in this context and depends not only on sheer numbers, but sometimes more on the type of visitor (Dumont 2005). The desires and expectations tourists bring along can differ greatly amongst tourists. As Cohen (see Selwyn 1996) has pointed out, there is no such thing as *the tourist* but there are many different kinds of tourists that can be distinguished. Some tourists want to be humoured or amused, others may seek immersion in the daily, ordinary and authentic life of a culture or place that is not their own (MacCannell, see Urry 1990). Both, however, are based upon a desire to escape the ordinary experiences of everyday life which represents an important incentive for tourists to travel in the first place. It is important to realize that besides sheer numbers, tourists impact the urban landscape of towns differently relating to their background and travel incentives.

...some tourists are interested in living communities not only for their recreational value, but as signs of themselves, thereby transforming people, places and cultures into objects sui generis.

Culler, quoted in Bianchi (2003: p20)

Tourists travel for numerous reasons and draw upon various cultural and social backgrounds. Young or old, rich or poor, tourists are not a homogenous group. The wealthier, higher educated tourists are often considered as the more desirable tourist as they arguably spend more money during the time of their stay and additionally are more sensitive towards the local culture and environmental conditions. (Milne, see Page and Hall 2003) Although this thesis is not a study about how various types of tourists impact the urban landscape differently, it is important to recognize that various consumer groups influence the urban landscape of places differently.

In relation to the number of tourists it is important to stress the differences once more between the unit of the city and that of the town, and between mass tourism and small-scale tourism development (for example eco-tourism). There can be a world of difference between the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of either cities or towns. The mere size of a city provides it with a certain capacity to absorb the effects of tourism and therefore especially in small or medium sized towns the impact of tourism development is often immediately felt (Orbasli, see Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005). Furthermore, mass tourism, as opposed to other niche tourism sectors, is a phenomenon which often exemplifies all the adverse effects of tourism development such as overdevelopment or overcrowding and as such considerably pressurizes the urban landscape. Thus when regarding mass tourism development in the context of a small or medium sized town, which, as argued, is less capable of absorbing the (adverse) effects of mass tourism development, the impact upon the urban landscape can supposedly be considerable. "Some tourist places are subject to such an increase of visitors that daily life comes to be evacuated from them". (Vincent, quoted in Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005: p25)

Another important determinant is the vast differences that can exist between the visitor and the host community which can be a particularly pressing issue in developing countries where the relatively well-off tourist interacts with an, often extremely poor, host community. With western country's accounting for gross of the tourists, the differences between culture, wealth or ideologies are often vast. In many developing countries these differences are reinforced by the nature of (mass) tourism development, which often appears to be exceptionally opulent and highly capitalized, as shown in India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong and North Africa for example (Urry 1990). The usually poor economic situation in developing countries and the lack of economic alternatives often has forced local communities to commodify their own living environment and culture for the purpose of tourism development, as evidenced in East Africa for example, where Maasai Warriors are incorporated into an 'economy of performance' for tourists, de-politicizing the participants in the process (Bruner, see Bianchi 2003)

The organization of the industry



Figure 13: Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, marking 'the object of the gaze'

It is rarely self-evident that a location must be visited; thus, some significance must be assigned to it that invests it with importance.

Susan S. Fainstein and Dennis R. Judd (1999: p4)

The object of the gaze often needs to be pointed out in order to highlight elements as interesting. "Clear markers have to be provided and in some cases the object of the gaze is merely the marker that indicates some event or experience which previously happened at that spot" (Urry 1990: p10). The marketing of the object of the gaze is the domain of the tourism industry which major institutions include amongst others, airline companies, city governments, hotel and resort operators, auto rental companies, banks offering specialized financial services etc. (Judd and Fainstein 1999) The organisation of the industry can differ considerably; whether it is private or publicly owned and financed for example or involves mainly foreign investors as opposed to locals etc. can result in significant differences with regard to economic development of concerned towns or cities. In certain situations for example, tourism revenues are repatriated to companies based elsewhere, leaking most economic profits outside of the community back to the countries that control most of the travel infrastructure (Page and Dowling 2002), which is particularly the case in the developing world:

Much tourist investment in the developing world has in fact been undertaken by large-scale companies based in North America or western Europeans, and the bulk of such tourist expenditure is retained by the transnational companies involved; often only 20-60 percent remains in the host country.

Tourism Concern website, quoted in Urry (1990: p57)

Tourism is a highly internationalized industry where large scale corporations provide standardized services all around the globe. This notion is often in particular linked with the mass tourism industry that, compared with other niche tourism sectors, often strongly is governed by large-scale corporations that operate chains of look-alike and standardized establishments (Urry 1999) Local investors and developers, as opposed to international tourism developers, are deemed to keep higher levels of tourism expenditures within a local economy which however not necessarily implies wide spread local economic development as tourism revenues are often unequally distributed amongst a host population.

The tourism industry is foremost a service based industry that provides services to the customer; the tourist. As most industries, tourism is predominantly a profit sector which, as most businesses, aims to maximize economic output. As opposed to the more 'classical' production industries, tourism operates primarily in a public domain with the objects of the gaze generally concerning public assets that belong to a region or a town. As the tourism industry usually balances between pursuing profit margins, satisfying customer demands and addressing local (or national) economic and socio-cultural interests, often it produces conflicting interests. Local authorities or national governments are the bodies that should represent the local interests of their citizens and that monitor the impacts of tourism development by providing adequate planning and legislation to manage and control tourism development. The lure however, of rapid economic development is often so tempting that local authorities support the inherent tourism industry without sufficiently assessing the long-term implications upon the environment or for various socio-cultural issues.

Towns, as I have repeatedly argued now, consciously mould their urban landscape in order to appeal to the expectations and imaginations of the tourist. The physical structures that either shape the tourism product or facilitate the industry are arguably the most obvious and significant transformations that take place in the urban landscape of towns. Museums, shopping malls, theme parks, accommodations and other common auxiliary functions, generally regarded as the supply side of the tourism, comprise the physical infrastructure of the tourism industry that is crucial for towns in order to attract and accommodate potential visitors (Page and Hall 2003). Especially when we regard mass tourism in this context, transformations in the physical environment can be considerable

as a result of tourism. The supply chain that is involved to cater for large numbers of tourist is often substantial in scale and, particularly in the context of the small or medium sized town, easily can dominate an urban landscape.

In historic centres of towns there are often additional (physical) transformations noticeable. As most urban and cultural tourism is dependent on bygone rather than on present artistic achievements (Ashworth 1995), notwithstanding some apparent exceptions,¹⁵ historic (e.g. medieval fortified centres) areas are often refurbished and transformed in order to attract and facilitate the tourist. Urban spaces are transformed and existing buildings are restored and modified to enhance the experience of such areas as places of consumption. These transformations permanently transform the urban landscape of towns whereby aesthetics, intensity and integration arguably are crucial factors with regard to the impact of mass tourism upon the physical and dynamic urban landscape of towns and the acceptance amongst the local population.

The aesthetics of mass tourism architecture

Why come to Trude? I asked myself. And I already wanted to leave. "You can resume your flight whenever you like," they said to me, "but you will arrive at another Trude, absolutely the same, detail by detail. The world is covered by a sole Trude which does not begin and does not end. Only the name of the airport changes."

Italo Calvino (1974: p128)

Whether it are tourist hotels, high-end tourist resorts or related auxiliary facilities, the architecture observed increasingly shows a numbing sameness which for a considerable part is to be attributed to the standardization of the tourist product, a typical characteristic of mass-tourism. The multinational firms that supply the conventional hotels, chain restaurants, and retail establishments follow a corporate model resulting in the seemingly endless proliferation of atrium lobbies, formulaic restaurants, and chrome-and-glass boutiques selling identical merchandise (Fainstein & Judd 1999). What arguably adds to the standardization process is that mass tourism industries are profit orientated businesses. Efficient and functional constructions (maximizing space) govern the design, and aesthetics or local peculiarities are all too often neglected or commoditized.

¹⁵ The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is arguably the best known example of an urban and architectural intervention that has brought about an influx of tourist to the city.

Like all processes which act at national and international scales, tourism contains within it a set of forces which lead to increasing uniformity. Whether it is the house style of an international hotel chain, or something as simple as a national market for street furniture, tourism erodes differences but markets what passes for individuality.

P.T Newby (1994: p225)

Furthermore, many small or medium sized towns arguably lack the institutional capacity, failing or inadequate regional or local planning legislation, to properly guide tourism development. This especially applies to developing countries that often severely lack quality urban planning agencies and a regulatory framework caused by scarce financial means or insufficient qualified personal. Without proper legislation and proper planning, tourism developers (private investors) face little obstruction and urban development proceeds relatively unhampered by social or cultural constraints. Examples are plentiful of hotels or resorts that exceed maximum construction heights or obstruct scenic views.

Having been heavily criticized in the sixties and seventies, i.e. during the beginning of global mass tourism, of desecrating the coastlines of Mediterranean regions and despoiling the local character and traditional customs with the invasion of herds of tourist – that is, the modern barbarians – international hotel chains and travel companies sought for a different strategy.

Manuel Herz (2008: p274)

As a reaction to the seemingly ignorant development in the early stages of mass tourism development, a trend has emerged recently that shows the employment of more local styles, that are conceived to be less obtrusive and more respectful towards indigenous cultures and local environments. Although these local or vernacular architectural styles aspire for a sense of authenticity in their appearance, in many situations this has resulted in hurried attempts to re-create history or re-invent history, or as Orbasli (see Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005) has described it, in facadism or pastiche recreations.

The past, being over and done with, now falls prey to our imagination. It is resuscitated or resurrected in partial or iconic refiguring, subsequently reinforcing our sense of loss and detachment.

Christine Boyer (1996: p6)

When new tourism structures are conceived as actual tourist resources instead of merely supportive to the industry, e.g. the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Centre Pompidou in Paris, recent waterfronts reconstructions as Albert Docks etc., the architecture produced often is more distinctive as it is clearly intended as a kind of ‘urban boosterism’¹⁶. Not surprisingly then, the architecture applied is often highly ‘iconic’ in appearance. As Sklair (2008: p217) argues in this respect; “Iconicity is a key component of what I have termed the culture-ideology of

¹⁶ The most common rationale for deliberately created iconic architecture is to revive towns or cities that are in squander. (Sklair 2008)

consumerism, the underlying value system of capitalist globalization.” The application of architecture (often postmodern) is clearly underlining the importance of images and signs in order to promote places as sites of consumption.



Figure 14: Centre Pompidou in Metz

Quantity, spatial impact

To accommodate and facilitate large amounts of tourists, mass tourism involves extensive new building development or the re-use or re-development of existing buildings on a large scale. Without prejudice to the many cities that have the capacity to facilitate and absorb large numbers of tourist (metropolis), small or medium sized towns often cannot cope with the massive influx of visitors and additional accommodations or other supportive infrastructure need to be developed to facilitate the tourist. The wave of development that is triggered can easily take control over the urban development of a town and quickly begin to

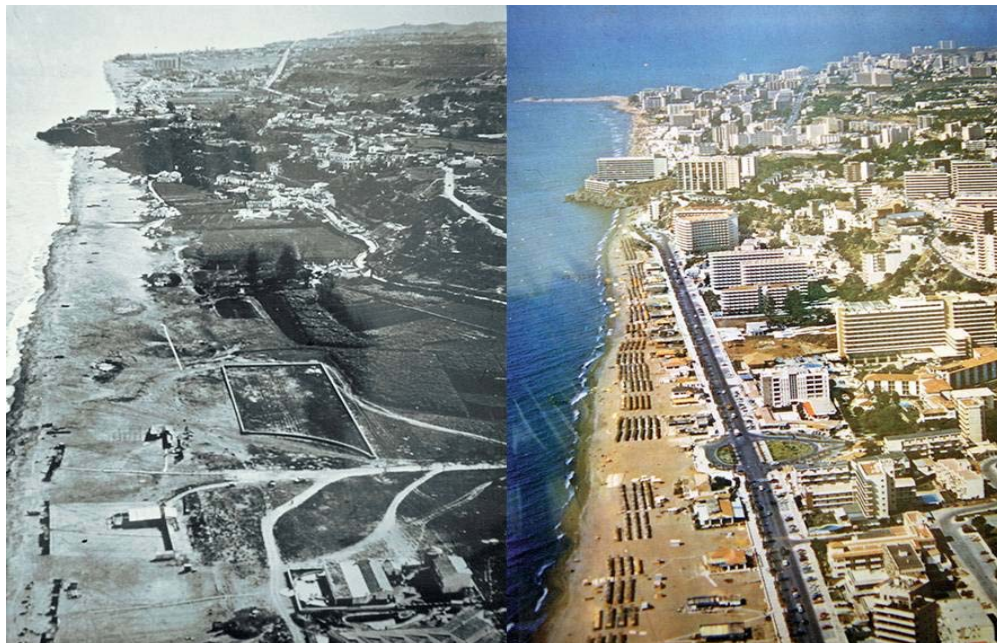


Figure 15: The spatial dimension of tourism development along the Spanish coastlines; comparative of the coastal landscape of 60's and the present one.

dominate the urban landscape. However, the spatial impact of mass tourism is not immediately of wide scope. The 'typical' mass tourism accommodations are often large-scale and high-capacity hotels or resorts, and, as Cals and Rubio (quoted in Priestley 1995: p51) have commented on the development of the Spanish Coast, "in many areas, the superimposition of low-density second-home complexes in tourist resorts have had a wider spatial impact than the provision of accommodation for mass-tourism." The volumetric sizes of many resorts or hotels nevertheless often sharply contrast with the built environment in small or medium sized towns. Large resort complexes near beaches are a typical sight in many tourism destinations and often stand out clearly against the scale of the existing (built) environment.

Implementation

It is clear that the form of a city or of a metropolis will not exhibit some gigantic, stratified order. It will be a complicated pattern, continuous and whole, yet intricate and mobile... [...] It must invite its viewers to explore the world.

Kevin Lynch (1960: p119)

A third aspect with regard to the physical impact of mass tourism development concerns the level of integration of involving structures within an existing urban area. A few tendencies appear to prevail in this context. First, there is the often referred to 'tourist bubble' (Judd and Fainstein 1999). Here tourist structures, i.e. large-scale resorts predominantly, are planned in isolated areas outside town centres, often sheltered from the realities and 'hazards' of everyday life. This explicitly relates to cities or towns where poverty and high crime rates are pervasive; issues that clearly are not envisioned as part of the tourist experience. Another often noticeable tendency is the development of tourist structures predominantly in places that offer the most favouring conditions for tourists. Whether it are beaches or historical monuments, tourists prefer to be close to it, and hence tourism structures tend to develop predominantly around places of interest (objects of the gaze). Good examples of this phenomenon are coastal areas (sun and sand tourism) which often show extensive development near the beach, or on the beach, or within the sea!



Figure 17: Burgas hotel in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria



Figure 16: Hotel Sozopol in Sozopol, Bulgaria



Figure 18: Luxury Hotel in Zanzibar, Tanzania

Souvenir stores are also a compelling example in this context as they as well strongly cluster around monuments or other tourist attractions. Although the above processes are all rather obvious and straightforward, they do highlight the standardization and predictable integration of tourism facilities nowadays, and thus, in a way, the increasing predictability of the tourism landscape.

Place marketing and branding

Because of a growing importance of private capital and private initiative, cities have been forced to sell themselves.

J. Burgers (1995: p157)

A consideration of place-marketing is a natural extension to the process of urban management and planning, which requires public authorities to consider the market context and competitive position of the city, especially in terms of tourism and leisure markets.

Michal C. Hall and Stephen J. Page (2003: p298)

Already briefly discussed at the end of chapter [1], town branding or place marketing have increasingly become important issues within the field of urban planning and tourism management. Although marketing strategies are not conceived purely for tourism purposes but as well to attract businesses or professional people for example, they are an important target of place-marketing strategies that unquestionably have gained importance for towns and cities in our current globalising and post-modern societies. As Hall (2004: p171) comments; “in an increasingly competitive environment, each location has recognized the economic benefits in establishing a clear and compelling selling

proposition". As visitors only can imagine destinations when first-hand experiences are missing, and only upon the actual visit to the destination they will gain perceptions of the destination (Selby 2004), the communicative purpose of a desirable image is evident. As Gallarza (see Selby 2004) has pointed out, the importance of the tourist destination image is universally acknowledged, due to its effect on the consumer's perception, consequent behaviour, and destination choice, and as Kavaratzis (2004: p62) further has argued; "The object of place marketing is not the place itself but its image."

Decision-making models explore the nexus between a destination image and tourist's buying behaviour and attempt to cover the whole process of the consumption experience. A widely accepted model distinguishes consumer' decision-making in five stages: recognition, search, evaluation, purchase and post-purchase evaluation. (Selby 2004) The initial stages of the decision-making process, recognition and search, are probably most crucial as the vast majority of place consumers will base their decision on secondary sources, e.g. advertising, guidebooks etc., without any first-hand experiences of the locality. (Selby 2004)

This official projected or induced image (Gunn, see Selby 2004) of a place is also often considered as the brand of a place, which derives from the notion of corporate branding and widely is discussed by Ashworth (2004) *et al*.

A place needs to be differentiated through unique brand identity if it wants to be first, recognized as existing, second, perceived in the minds of place customers as possessing qualities superior to those of competitors, and third, consumed in a manner commensurate with the objectives of the place.

Michalis Kavaratzis and G.J. Ashworth (2004: p510)

Successful branding can create distinctiveness in the highly competitive place marketplace (Page and Hall 2003) and thereby successfully communicate a town's attributes and advantages relative to its competitors. Branding has become an increasingly important practice that is used by local authorities and other intermediaries such as travel agents, tourist boards and marketing consortia all over the world nowadays.

Tourism is intimately connected to the regional differentiation of places in the global economy because of the way in which it is often used as a focus for urban development, revitalisation, marketing and promotion strategies in order to attract economic and cultural capital.

Michael C. Hall and Stephen J. Page (2003: p303)

Tourism producers sell a place as a product using an effective marketing mix that addresses the relation between producers and consumers. The target customers (e.g. tourists, investors) are at the core of every successful marketing strategy and hence strongly influence the development of the tourism product.

Kotler (see Kavaratzis 2004) distinguishes four distinct strategies for place improvements that are the foundations for creating competitive advantages; design (place as character), infrastructure (place as fixed environment), basic services (place as service provider) and attractions (places as entertainment and recreation). These strategies shape the entrepreneurial models of city governments that aim to re-imaging localities and transform previously productive cities into spectacular cities of and for consumption. (Kavaratzis 2004)

As town marketing or branding is clearly focusing on attracting people from the outside, it strongly begs the question how the inhabitants of towns are considered in these marketing strategies? The habits and customs of inhabitants are important aspects of local culture and central aspects in marketing a town. Commoditizing and marketing local culture for tourist purposes directly affects the inhabitants of a town which can have both positive and negative implications.

Because town marketing explores the cultural peculiarities of a place, inhabitants often rediscover their own history and traditions and begin to realise their own worth. (Cohen, see Boissevain 1996) And although culture sometimes is invented, it nevertheless can be easily adopted by local communities in order to successfully strengthen their cultural identity.¹⁷ But (re)discovering and promoting culture to commoditize it for consumerist purposes is simultaneously loaded with contrariness. 'Selling culture by the pound', as Greenwood (1989) has described it, is often accused of debasing culture and 'robbing' people of the very meanings by which they organise their lives. (Boissevain 1996) Marketing elements of local culture purely for consumption often produces some kind of 'staged' authenticity which is directed foremost to the imaginations of the tourist as opposed to the realities of everyday life in the town itself. Town marketing thus can have rather ambiguous implications for a local population as it either can enhance local culture or damage it.

With town marketing concepts aiming to position towns in the competitive marketplace for tourists, the urban development seen in many places has become rather standardized. The creation of a town brand is strongly governed by the forces of consumerism and appears to produce similar outcomes in the urban landscape of towns that all are consciously moulded to respond to the imaginations and desires of consumers. As Hubbard (quoted in Wirth and Freestone 2003: p3) comments, "a paradox is that the commoditization of

¹⁷ As Caneen (2008) has pointed out in his study of the Polynesian Cultural Centre.

culture often result in the heterogeneity of the town being diminished.” Burgers (1995: p157) also notices this tendency for cities to imitate each other; “Cities all over the world seem to do the same things. They all build opera houses, megamalls, multifunctional indoor stadiums, buildings as high as possible, casinos, new town halls, waterfronts and so on.” Place marketing is an increasing and vivid trend that needs to be contemplated carefully as a valid concept of urban planning and management. Considering (postmodern) towns and cities as products raises questions with regard to whether these places will be the product of their inhabitants in the end, or merely become theatricalised stages for consumption and entertainment of visitor?

CHAPTER III

Field study



Figure 19: Aerial picture of the peninsula of Nesebar



Introduction to the field

In addition to its pristine beaches, Bulgaria is blessed with four mountain ranges, including the Balkan Mountains after which the entire peninsula is named. The other three ranges are home to international ski resorts that attract winter holidaymakers from across the continent. Bulgaria is as well known among spa enthusiasts- the plenitude and variety of its mineral waters draw international visitors for both medicinal and recreational tourism. But it is the resorts on the country's eastern coastline that are the biggest lure, comparable to, but cheaper than Spain or Turkey for the cognoscenti among European tourists on a budget.

Kristen Ghodsee (2005: p2)

The ancient town of Nesebar is beautifully located on the shores of the Black Sea. As one of the older towns in Bulgaria, Nesebar is like a narrative of Bulgarian history. For decades, tourists have been descending upon Nesebar to marvel at the sight of its splendorous monuments, stroll along its cobblestone streets or relax at one of the town beaches. But tourism has not left the urban landscape of Nesebar unaffected. Extensive development in especially the last two decades has massively impacted the urban landscape of the town which, arguably, more and more is a construct of capitalist motivations as opposed to imaginaries and memories of local inhabitants.

Before analyzing the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of Nesebar and respectively on the urban identity of Nesebar, it is important to explore the context of the research environment such as the physical as well as the more immaterial elements of the urban landscape, e.g. history (memory), politics, economics etc. Tourism in Nesebar has not developed in a contextual void; the town has a rich history characterized by many different eras and cultures that have influenced the urban landscape of the town. But before exploring the *locus* of Nesebar I will first briefly introduce Bulgaria as a country whereas national identity or politics as well relate to the context of local identity.¹⁸ Subsequently I will present the methodology that has guided and directed the field study research on site.

¹⁸ Small or medium sized towns often lack the cultural richness and individuality of larger cities and as such they are more readily influenced by national identity or politics for example

A brief introduction to Bulgarian history

Bulgaria, the “bridge” between East and West as it is often referred to, is a country with a highly dynamic and diverse history. Although Bulgaria is characterized by a myriad of civilizations during the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, to the West, Bulgaria is probably still mostly known for its controversial role during the two World Wars or the long period of communism that followed.

The official history of Bulgaria dates back to 681 A.D, the year in which the first Proto-Bulgarian Empire was established. Before that, current Bulgaria used to be the territory of multiple Thracians¹⁹ tribes and many Bulgarians nowadays regard the Thracians therefore as their true ancestries. But the Greek and the Romans as well have left their traces along the Bulgarian peninsula. The East-Roman, or, more specific the Byzantium Empire, has conditioned Bulgaria’s development for almost more than a millennium (Crampton 2007) and Roman and Greek ruins are found all over the country. Many cities and towns still bear Roman or Greek names while they were founded during the eras of Greek or Roman occupation.

During the first and second Bulgarian empire²⁰, Bulgaria already had claimed its position as an independent nation on the continent. However, with the invasion of the Ottomans at the end of the 14th century this was brutally interrupted. Ottoman rule swept through Bulgaria for almost 500 years and only in the late 19th century, with support of the Russian army, Bulgaria finally was liberated from Ottoman yoke, leading to the re-establishment of the Bulgarian state in 1878²¹. Only later, full sovereignty was proclaimed and Bulgaria finally became an independent nation. (King 2006)

Because Bulgaria struggled with its neighbouring countries during the entire course of its history, the geographical borders of Bulgaria regularly have been redrawn over the course of its history. And although Bulgaria’s borders officially were marked after independence, the country continued to pursue in border struggles with Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey, as with Romania for over many years. With the treaty of Berlin²² however, Bulgaria lost a considerable part of its territory, and despite some (unsuccessful) attempts made by the Bulgarians to

¹⁹ A group of Indo-European tribes inhabiting areas in Eastern, Central and South Eastern Europe, the Thracians are often portrayed as barbarian but they however had developed advanced forms of music, poetry, industry and artistic crafts.

²⁰ The first Bulgarian empire was founded at 681 AD and the second at 1185 AD

²¹ The treaty of San Stefano marked the birth of the Third Bulgarian Empire

²² The treaty of Berlin scaled back the original treaty of San Stefano as the other ‘Great Powers’ (not the Russians) were reluctant to the idea of a large Russian client state on the Balkans

reclaim some of this territory²³, it eventually lost even more territory to end up as we know it today.

After WW II, Bulgaria quickly adopted the guiding principles of socialism which it mostly has inherited from Russia. The totalitarian regime in Bulgaria strongly began to influence the spheres of everyday daily life which remained so until the early 90's. After the fall of the communist regime and the subsequent abolition of the socialist state, Bulgaria entered a long period of transition towards a democracy and free-market economy which hitherto, arguably, is still underway. Two generations of socialism have strongly impacted Bulgaria and the implementation of western dogmas has proven a difficult, long and controversial process. Bulgarians reputedly were not prepared for the rapid and substantial changes that were required and few people were accustomed to act in the new emerged social, political and economic environment.

Since the beginning of the transition, Bulgaria gradually has tried to overhaul its institutional framework but waves of corruption and mismanagement have made change slow to arrive unfortunately. Recent admissions to the NATO and EU, however, will hopefully stimulate and support Bulgaria to solve many pending issues and as such put the country on a path towards structural economic and socio-cultural development.

Methodology

Even though I never visited the Black Sea coast prior to this case study, my attention was directed to it by a friend. After doing some basic research I quickly became aware of the scope and intensity of tourism development along the Black Sea coast. The town Nesebar immediately grasped my attention due to the many associations with UNESCO World Heritage and it quickly became evident to me that Nesebar could pose an excellent research environment due to its relatively small size, the scope of tourism development and its world heritage status; all aspects that could suggest a considerable impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of the town.

The case study in Nesebar was conceived in order to explore the hypothetical causal relationships proposed throughout this thesis. Over the course of about 1 month I have stayed in Nesebar to obtain first-hand impressions and to collect

²³ Bulgaria tried to claim some of its land back by joining the axis forces during the two World Wars.

all the information available in relation to the development of Nesebar's urban landscape. Prior to my residing in Nesebar I also briefly visited the Faculty of Architecture in Sofia to meet with Mrs Elena Dimitrova²⁴ to discuss the contents of my case-study.

The analysis of the transformations in the urban landscape of Nesebar required differing methods of research. As described in chapter [1], the urban landscape of a town can be understood as an accretion of three layers, the static, the dynamic and the hyper-dynamic layer, and each layer requires different research methods to gather the relevant evidence. In order to create a thorough overview of the impact of mass tourism development on the physical appearance of Nesebar, it was for example necessary to analyze the static and visual layer of Nesebar which required a combination of on-site observations accompanied by a comprehensive analysis of historical and recent maps. Field observations, documentation and archival records have been important sources of evidence that, however, were only limited available due to both sparse recording and inaccessibility. Especially data regarding the more recent history of the town, in particular the post-war period, proved scanty. The urban development of Nesebar during the communist years and, particularly in the post-communist years has been considerable in scope. But extensive recordings of this period unfortunately are lacking whereas most documentation is foremost concerning Nesebar's (rich) ancient cultural history.

As the above mentioned methods address foremost the static, and, to a lesser extend the dynamic aspects of the urban landscape, with regard to the third, hyper-dynamic layer, a different method was required. The hyper-dynamic layer predominantly relates to the urban inhabitants of Nesebar with their various individual backgrounds, behaviours and experiences, raising questions about who these inhabitants of Nesebar actually are and what connects them to their town? The hyper-dynamic layer gives insight into the urban identities pervasive in the minds of the inhabitants by exploring their perceptions towards their own living habitat and the development of tourism.

To explore these individual perceptions of the inhabitants, I have conducted 20 interviews with various members of the local community. Although initially I had envisioned conducting approximately 30 to 50 interviews over the course of my stay, communication with the local inhabitants of Nesebar proved to be tedious. Translators were difficult to find, let alone available, and the willingness by

²⁴ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arch. Elena Dimitrova is Professor for Urban studies at the faculty of Architecture in Sofia and has supported and advised me on this thesis.

members of the local community to cooperate or thoroughly consider the questions was varying. It furthermore appeared difficult for people to contemplate on their own living habitat which not seemed to be a pressing theme. Nevertheless have the interviews proved informative and in the aggregate some general tendencies have become distillable.

Data collection

Defining the unit of analysis signals the complexity of defining the boundaries for this case-study. A town is a rather large and diverse study object and therefore it is all the more important to understand exactly which to collect and how to collect it in order to explore the theoretical assessments? I have used the propositions posed throughout the thesis to serve as guidelines to determine where and how to look for relevant data, and, to define which questions need to be answered in the field. A careful analysis of each of the propositions can identify the specific data to explore the theoretical assessments that formed the propositions:

I. Homogenization of the urban landscape?

Exploring the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria will produce an overview of various mass tourism destinations within the region. While this particularly refers to the physical and visual appearances of towns, a photographic documentation should provide a good impression with regard to either the uniqueness or sameness of mass tourism development (architecture).

- How do new structures relate to the built environment, local traditions and the local environment?
- An impression of tourism accommodations and attractions along the Black Sea coast
- The spatial arrangement of tourism related structures within exiting urban patterns

II. The needs and desires of tourists outweigh that of local inhabitants?

Inhabitants usually have different needs in comparison to visitors and these desires often contradict with one another. Interviews with local urban planners and tourism developers should provide insights into the considerations that guide urban planning policies within mass tourism destination towns.

- How is Nesebar branded as a tourism destination and how has this determined the field of urban planning?

- Local and national tourism policies?
- How is the quality of the public amenities in Nesebar?
- Who are the main tourism investors in Nesebar and what are the current investment conditions?

III. Historical towns as outdoor Museums?

The historical town centre of Nesebar is one of the main reasons for tourists to visit Nesebar. Analyzing the various functions and activities taking place in the centre can provide relevant data here. Additionally the perspectives of the inhabitants will form an important source of evidence.

- What is the function of the historical centre nowadays (social, spatial)?
- Does the cultural heritage play a significant role within the perception of the inhabitants and how has this changed?
- Which historical and traditional elements in Nesebar still reflect their original function?

The pursued research findings thus aim to explore the theoretical assessments formulated throughout this thesis. Although given it is only a 'single case study', using multiple sources of evidence should provide a certain validity with regard to the conclusions that can be drawn from the research findings.

IV. Transformation leads to alienation?

- Which tourism related structures can be distinguished in Nesebar and how do local people perceive these new structures?
- How do the local people regard the vernacular and traditional architecture in Nesebar?
- How is tourism integrated within the urban fabric of Nesebar?
- How has the dynamic environment of Nesebar changed as a result of tourism? (traffic flow, sounds, lights)
- How are regional or national aspects important within Nesebar?
- What are important elements for local inhabitants in defining urban identity?
- How does the local population perceive Nesebar nowadays and how has this changed as compared to the time before the arrival of tourism (active or not active within the tourism industry, various social classes etc.)?
- Is there a form of collective memory shared between locals in Nesebar?
- What are the socially important spaces for the inhabitants of Nesebar?

About Nessebar



Figure 20: Entrance ‘gate’ to the old town of Nessebar

Hardly anyone will stay indifferent on their way to Nessebar, when suddenly the isthmus and the peninsula of the Old Town heave into sight – with the gates, the high fortress walls, and the roofs of the numerous houses, perched closely to each other. Thousands of visitors have marvelled at this sight through the years, trying to find words that would properly express their admiration. Some compare Nessebar to a ship that has been anchored in the blue water of the Black Sea for centuries and tied firmly up to the mainland.

Petya Kiyashkina (2007: p3)

The town of Nessebar consists of two, rather distinct town parts that nowadays are referred to as old and new Nessebar. The old town of Nessebar, often also called ancient Nessebar, is the original location of the historic settlement. Situated on a rocky, small peninsula of no more than 300 metres wide and less than 850 metres long, it were the Thracians who first established themselves on this natural defensive site. Initially the Thracians names their settlement Melsambria²⁵ or Mesambria and only from the 11th century onwards the name Nessebar came into use - the Bulgarian version of the name Mesambria²⁶ (Kiyashkina 2007).

²⁵ Melsambria, i.e. the town of Melsas; and “bria” signifying “town” in Thracian tongue.

²⁶ along with Mesamvria

The old town of Nesebar possesses an extraordinary collection of cultural heritage that bears evidence of a myriad of civilizations that once inhabited the town during the course of its existence. The earliest traces of human life on the peninsula date back to the end of the 2nd and start of the 1st millennium BC.

Today, abundant archaeological material gives ground for the specialists to assert that even at the dawn of the first millennium BC. Messambria existed as a Thracian port where many ships threw their yet stone-cut anchors.

Dimitor Susulov (n.b. p87)

Besides Thracian rule, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines and the Ottomans all once inhabited the area and thereby have left their imprint upon the (physical) urban landscape of Nesebar, which as such, can boast upon a unique mixture of cultural heritage from to the middle Ages and the Antiquity. From remnants of an ancient fortified wall to various churches built around the V-VI century or the medieval period (X-XIV century), Nesebar offers splendid architectural remnants which have made the town a beloved destination for many international and domestic tourists. Also numerous houses built during the Bulgarian national revival period (19th century)²⁷ have greatly contributed to the unique appearance of the old town and are considered as one of the best remaining ensembles of 'Black Sea Houses' along the coast. (Kiyashkina 2007)

Nesebar is only a small town if you consider the numbers of permanent residents. Currently the municipality of Nesebar has a population of 21 142 inhabitants, with Nesebar town accounting for the largest share, 10.324 inhabitants.²⁸ (Nesebar municipality) However, a considerable part of the year, i.e. the tourist season, the town actually has a much higher number of (temporary) inhabitants, with visitor numbers approaching 400.000 a year.²⁹ (Nesebar municipality)

Nesebar is situated about 35km north of Burgas and about 100 km south of Varna. Together with neighbouring resort Sunny Beach, the area is regarded as one the most prominent tourist destinations along the Black Sea coast, currently accounting for the largest tourism agglomeration in Bulgaria. (BSTA³⁰ 2006) Nesebar town is part of the municipality Nesebar that further includes towns and resorts such as Sunny Beach, Sv. Vlas, Ravda and Elenite for example. In the direct surrounding of Nesebar many quality beaches can be found such as a long

²⁷ the Bulgarian renaissance era

²⁸ Measured at the 3rd of February 2008

²⁹ see figure 30

³⁰ Bulgarian State Tourism Agency

stretch of beach along the northern end of the town (Sunny Beach) or the beach along the southern end of town towards Ravda, Nesebar's central (town) beach.

Nesebar is situated within the South-eastern Black Sea region which has Burgas as its regional capital. Burgas, the largest and nearest city to Nesebar, represents an important economic and cultural centre within the region. The international airport is also situated near Burgas and serves as a major tourism hub for the entire south-eastern region.



Figure 21: The isthmus road connecting the peninsula with the mainland; approx. early 20th century



Figure 22: Tourists in the old town of Nesebar

The socio-political landscape of Nesebar

The written history of Nesebar is almost completely dominated by the ages of Antiquity and the Middle Ages that without doubt represent Nesebar's most prosperous period, but is highly selective all the same. The contemporary urban landscape of Nesebar is shaped by many additional elements besides only the (architectural) splendours of long bygone eras. Especially the nearly fifty years of communist rule have strongly impacted Nesebar's contemporary urban landscape which as well still bears plenty of evidence from this era.

The scarcely recorded recent history (20th century) of Nesebar reflects to a certain degree the highly selective nature of the interpretation and validation of history. Murray's (2001) research on place marketing has revealed this trend as he notices that there seems to be a focus on only a limited spectrum of the built heritage of places, with the past often much more present as the present self.

...reveals a strong tendency in place marketing literature to focus on a limited view of heritage, with the past mentioned six times as often as the present. Heritage is big business in Britain, but identity is not based on the past alone, it is an evolving process.

Chris Murray (2001: p6)

In Nesebar however there is another reasonable explanation for the rather limited recordings of its recent history. The political circumstances in Nesebar, e.g. Ottoman yoke and communism, did not allow for much freedom of expression and moreover the both periods are not gladly recalled as important social and cultural periods in the evolutionary process of the town. Ottoman rule is mainly attributed for having demolished Bulgarian culture and remnants of the communist era are gradually erased. (Stiller 2008)

The socialist era nevertheless constitutes an important historical era in Bulgaria and, arguably, is a still vivid part in the (collective) memories of the inhabitants of Nesebar. Almost fifty years of communist rule have not only left its imprint upon the physical urban landscape of the town; it as well has strongly influenced the everyday lives of the inhabitant which were strongly shaped around the principles of socialism set out by the central government. This did not allow for great individual expression and strictly controlled and regulated everyday life. Centralized planning and highly regulated social life are common characteristic of socialist states (Kostinskiy 2003) and many towns and cities increasingly became the outcome of centralized national planning bodies during the communist years, as opposed the construct of the individual and/or collective actions of inhabitants. As French (see Kostinskiy 2003) has commented, planning in socialist states was based on rigid, normative understandings, fixed for each type of settlement.

In the beginning of the 90's, however, this changed dramatically with the fall of the communist regime and the introduction of 'democracy' and a free market economy. This revolutionary period represents a turning point in recent history of Bulgaria which has affected all spheres of society.

As it is well known and officially publicized, the aim of all these changes has been the transition from a planned, highly centralized economy to a free, market economy and from a totalitarian to a democratic society.

Valentin Valov Todorov (2003: p15)

The underdevelopment of civic society under socialism (Kostinskiy 2003) made the transition phase difficult as most people were not prepared or endowed to take upon the tasks that previously were managed by a central government. The abolishment of centralized planning confronted towns and cities with a considerable power vacuum and a lack of professional knowhow which resulted in poorly managed and planned urban development in many places around Bulgaria. (Stiller 2008) Moreover the underdevelopment of civic society in combination with the privatization process has massively impacted urban areas and the social and economic fabric of everyday life that clearly began to be shaped around more individual modes of thinking.

Socialism and the rise of capitalism are two important political and economic factors that have shaped the contemporary urban landscape of Nesebar and tourism has been a vehicle for development in this process, as I will discuss further on.



Figure 23: Impressions of 20th century Nesebar

Urban development of Nesebar



Figure 24: 1970-1980, the shores of the new town seen from the peninsula

Nesebar has been influenced by a myriad of cultures that all once were the leading force behind Nesebar's cultural and economic development. Nesebar has long been an important strategic and economic centre in the region; nevertheless, near the beginning of the 20th century, the town's perimeters hardly had expanded beyond the natural boundaries of the peninsula (presumably for defensive reasons).

Albeit Nesebar's rich history and strategic and economic significance over the course of its existence, at the end of the 19th century Nesebar was nothing more but a small town where people lived from fishery and agriculture.³¹ From the early 20th century onwards, however, Nesebar town gradually started to develop further, marked by the first stages of development on the main land; nowadays referred to as the new town of Nesebar. As tourism began to develop within the region in the 1950s, agriculture and fishing gradually lost their viability as economic industries. In 1956 Nesebar was officially proclaimed architectural and archaeological reserve of Bulgaria and only a few years later, around the year

³¹ As described by one of the interviewees

1959 approx., the resort town Slantchev Briag (Sunny Beach) began to develop, just north of Nesebar. (Tangurov, Todorova, Sharliev 1972)

The resort town Sunny Beach was planned as a national holiday location for Bulgarians, completely developed and financed by the government. Built along the flat coast-line to the north of Nesebar, Sunny beach was designed and planned (master architect Nikola Nikolov) as one complex, with emphasize on the general composition of the complex and modern, international design approaches. The resort town quickly became an important tourist destination for many Bulgarian holidaymakers as well as for international visitors, with the Czechs as the first to discover the beauties of the Bulgarian Coast, soon followed by visitors from Poland, Hungary, Russia, Romania and eventually the DDR.³² (Ghodsee 2005) As Sunny Beach quickly gained fame due to its lovely beaches and architectural splendours of nearby Nesebar, within a relatively short period, a previous arid coastal area was completely transformed into a major tourist location, which after the initial design stages soon encompassed more than 24000 beds (Tangurov, Todorova, Sharliev 1972). Neighbouring Nesebar wasn't left unaffected by the massive development that took place along the northern fringes of the town and the 'new town' of Nesebar as well gradually expanded during the 50's and 60's. The figure below indicates the initial development on the mainland that foremost concentrated around the town's two main arteries. (see figure 25)

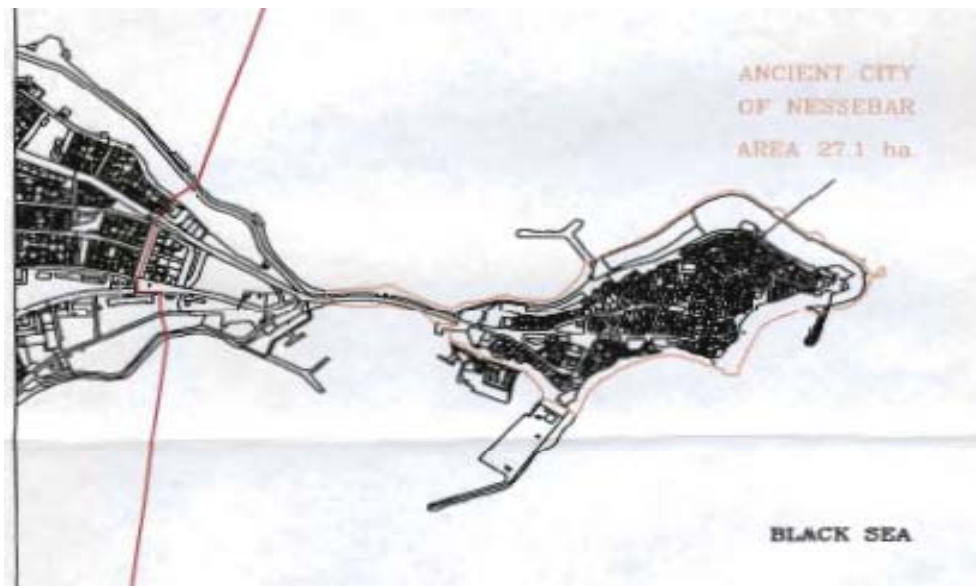


Figure 25: Map of Nesebar (1972) indicating the boundaries of the UNESCO World Heritage Area

³² In the 60s there were already around twenty thousand German visitors descending upon the shores of the Black Sea. (Appelius 2006)

The increasing development of tourism in Nesebar and the resulting pressure upon the cultural heritage of the town resulted in the decision of UNESCO to include the old town into the UNESCO list of world heritage sites in 1983. With this inclusion, the cultural value of the numerous monuments in the old town was officially recognized and Nesebar's reputation as a tourist destination further strengthened.

The privatization of the Bulgarian tourism sector in the early 90s, created a surge of new resort and hotel development along the Black Sea which nowadays has become massive in scope. The urban landscape in Nesebar as well has been swept by a wave of new development which strongly has impacted the town, as I will argue later on.



Figure 27: Satellite Image of Nesebar



Figure 26: Birds-eye view of the peninsula; approx. around the 1970's

The tourism industry



Figure 28: Tourist postcard of Nesebar with the town's prominent tourist resources; the old town and the beach

Tourism in Bulgaria

The development of tourism in Bulgaria has evolved quite differently in comparison to most other countries around the world. Especially compared to many developing countries, in which entire tourism sectors often have been financed and built with the help of foreign tourism consultants and foreign investors, Bulgaria's tourism infrastructure developed almost entirely under communist rule.

This small South-eastern European country was one of the only places in the world to develop tourism under the direction of central planners during a communist era. Totalitarian tourism in Bulgaria was organized with reference to capitalist models but independent of the dictates of supply and demand and liberated from the profit constraints of free-market competition.

Ghodsee (2005: p3)

In 1948, the state tourist organisation 'Balkantourist'³³ was formed on the model of the Soviet 'Intourist' organisation, which was set up in 1929. (Ghodsee 2005) Under the direction of Balkantourist the first tourism facilities in Bulgaria developed in Sofia and in the major cities at the Black Sea coast, (Doitchev, see

³³ Balkantourist (Bulgarian: Балкантурист) is the oldest still existing Bulgarian tour operator, established on 6 January 1948 as a state-owned government monopoly in what was then the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Privatized in 1995, it has continued to exist in the post-1989 conditions of the free market economy.

Ghodsee 2005) and by 1951, the first tourists began to trickle in from the socialist brother countries Poland and Hungary, and, soon after, also sun seeking Soviet citizens began to make the pilgrimage south to Bulgaria's shores; which gave the Black sea coast of Bulgaria its nickname in those days; 'the Red Riviera'. (Ghodsee 2005)

The arrival of German tourists in the mid 50s marked the start of international tourism in Bulgaria. However, the communist government initially had little intention to market the country as an international tourism destination and till 1989 at least fifty percent of Bulgaria's hotel capacity remained reserved for domestic tourists.

From that summer onwards (summer of 1964), Bulgaria managed to undercut the price level of the Spanish Holiday Island Mallorca, which at that time already had developed as a favourite holiday destination for West-German tourists: "The low prices, with which the National Bulgarian travel agency 'Balkantourist' have nowadays undercut almost all the other European competitors, have lured thousands of Western tourists for the first time to the 'Red Riviera'."

Die Freiheit 08.07.1964, quoted in Appelius (2006: p215)

The sudden collapse of communism in 1989, however, marked a huge milestone in the development of the country's tourism sector. The fall of Todor Zhivkov³⁴ meant the end of more than forty-five years of communist leadership in Bulgaria and, subsequently, the beginning of political change and economic reform in the country.

The implosion of communism in 1989 and the triumph of global capitalism forced the restructuring of all command economies.

Kristen Ghodsee (2005: p118)

Change though, was slow to arrive in Bulgaria and in the first years after the fall of the communist regime only few market-orientated economic changes were actually carried out. (Ghodsee 2005) Thus although the political escape from communist authoritarianism was relatively easy affected, the new Bulgaria failed to make the deep macroeconomic adjustments which the new ruling ideology of the market demanded. (Crampton 2007)

Because everyday life in Bulgaria was, for more than forty years, organized and directed by the central government, the Bulgarian society had become strongly structured by the socialist principles of "equality" or a "classless" society. The idea of having own property or taking private initiative was a new comprehension for many Bulgarians. "Privatization required to not only the

³⁴As leader of the communist party Todor Zhivkov became Bulgaria's president after the WOII and stayed in office until 1991.

physical transfer of assets from the state to the market but also the accompanying psychological processes that would make these transfers successful.” (Ghodsee 2005: p120) The major institutional reforms and the lack of a well developed civil society severely hampered the privatization process in Bulgaria and the road to full marketization in tourism was twisted and full of obstacles and challenges.

As Bulgaria was more or less forced by the international community (e.g. IMF) to quickly commence privatization of all state monopolies (also successful ones), tourism, like most sectors, also was got caught up in the maelstrom of economic and political transition. (Ghodsee 2005) Whereas under communism tourism represented a highly profitable industry in Bulgaria, which primarily was due to its central organisation by the state tourism authority, ultimately the economic transition from communism required the total restructuring of the tourism sector. (Ghodsee 2005) The eventual breaking up of Balkantourist, preluded by the necessary reforms and severe budget cuts, ultimately has proven a massive blow for sustainable tourism development in Bulgaria as such a sound demonstration of the intricateness of the transition process in Bulgaria.

Current situation



Figure 29: Tourism symbol of Bulgaria

As Bulgaria's, once vibrant, industrial sector collapsed in the early 90s, tourism emerged as one of the key power-houses of the post-socialist economy. (Ghodsee 2005)

Tourism was one of the few sectors that continued to expand despite the onset of privatization and marketization. Tourism was labour-intensive- at a time when jobs in the formal economy were disappearing, employment in the sector grew.

Ghodsee (2005: p3)

The tourism industry represents an (increasingly) important economic industry for Bulgaria, with more and more regions depending on direct or indirect revenues derived by the industry. In 2005, tourism contributed to 4.5% of Bulgaria's GDP directly and to 3.9% of national employment (111 000 jobs). Moreover, the indirect effects were even stronger; 15.9 % of GDP and 13.6% of national employment (400 000 jobs). (OPRD 2007)

The number of tourist arrivals in Bulgaria has grown by more than 80% since 1998-1999, and in 2005 reached a high of 4.8 million arrivals, with annual growth rates between 4.5 and 17.9%. Recreational visitors account for the greatest share of these arrival numbers; 4.1 million, twice more than in 1998-1999. During the decade 1995-2004 the available accommodations as well have grown considerably in Bulgaria by no less than 70%. In some Black Sea regions the accommodation supply almost doubled. (BSTA 2006)

Bulgaria's draws most of its tourists from neighbouring countries such as Greece, Romania and Serbia, with Greece gradually having become the main

market in recent years. But Germany and, increasingly, England and the Scandinavian countries are as well important markets for Bulgaria that record steady annual increases in arrival numbers.

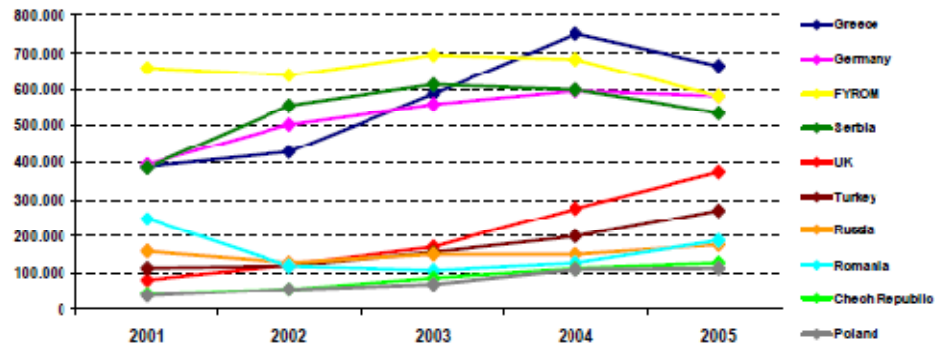


Figure 30: Tourist arrivals in Bulgaria sorted by nationality

Although Bulgaria possesses myriad tourism assets, e.g. mineral springs, beautiful scenery or archaeological sites, most of these assets have remained underdeveloped hitherto. Currently, the geographic concentration, product diversity and seasonality of the tourism product are regarded the main weaknesses of the Bulgarian tourism sector with the Black Sea coast still being Bulgaria's main attraction (BSTA 2006), followed by several ski-resorts³⁵ which have become increasingly popular in recent years.

The last few years an amazing development of new and renovated facilities has been offered to the tourist market, while the international tour operators have taken advantage of the emergence of Bulgaria's tourism services, particularly the upgraded facilities on the Black Sea coast and have been sending large numbers of tourists there.

BSTA (2006: p2)

According to the BSTA (2006), since the transition in 1989, tourism development in Bulgaria has been predominantly driven by the market as opposed to strategy or development policies which, to a degree, has prevented Bulgaria from taking full advantage of the opportunities and potential embodied by tourism. Furthermore, in recent years, the sector has been presumably more responsive to the international market instead of to the domestic market which however has significant potential. (BSTA 2006)

Thus, although Bulgaria can boost upon an impressive collection of cultural heritage or natural splendours, spread throughout the country, it still has not

³⁵ Especially the ski-resort Bansko has experienced massive development in recent years.

managed to successfully market itself as a (cultural) tourism destination and critics accuse the country for its lack of cultural policy which fails to adequately promote its unique collection of cultural heritage.³⁶ Bulgaria's share in the tourism market therefore remains insignificant in Global and European terms (OECD), and the country remains foremost dependent upon the traditional mass type markets of the coastal leisure type that "form the bread and butter of the tourism activity in Bulgaria." (BSTA 2006: p7)

³⁶ Bulgaria arguably possesses the world's most unique collection of Thracian heritage for example.

Tourism in Nesebar (municipality)



Figure 31: Tourists enjoying the tranquillity and natural splendours along the shores of Nesebar and Sunny beach (approx. 1960-1970s)

Nesebar possesses many valuable tourism resources that have made the town a beloved destination for many tourists. Besides the diversified and attractive mountainous and coastal hinterlands, Nesebar has access to long stretches of sandy beaches to the north (Sunny Beach) and south of the town. The extensive dunes and ‘yellow’ sandy beaches, and the acclaimed therapeutic qualities of the Black Sea, have given Nesebar a favourable image as tourist destination. Nesebar additionally possesses rich anthropogenic tourism resources such as numerous archaeological treasures or architectural monuments of which many still stand erect today in the old town. The municipality has officially 103 recognized cultural monuments of which 12 medieval churches, 18 archaeological monuments and 73 houses from the Bulgarian renaissance era.³⁷ Thus besides sun, sea and sand tourism, Nesebar is an attractive destination for cultural tourists.

Recent data indicates a significant increase in visitor over the last 20 years. (see figure 31) The period indexed in figure [31] represents a period that, without doubt, has shown the most extensive development since the start of tourism development along the Black Sea Coast. With Bulgarians ceasing the possibilities of the free-market economy (partly forced by the receding traditional industries), investments rapidly soared and resorts and hotels were constructed at an unprecedented rate.

³⁷ As recognized by the municipality of Nesebar in the tourism development plan for Nesebar (2005-2010).

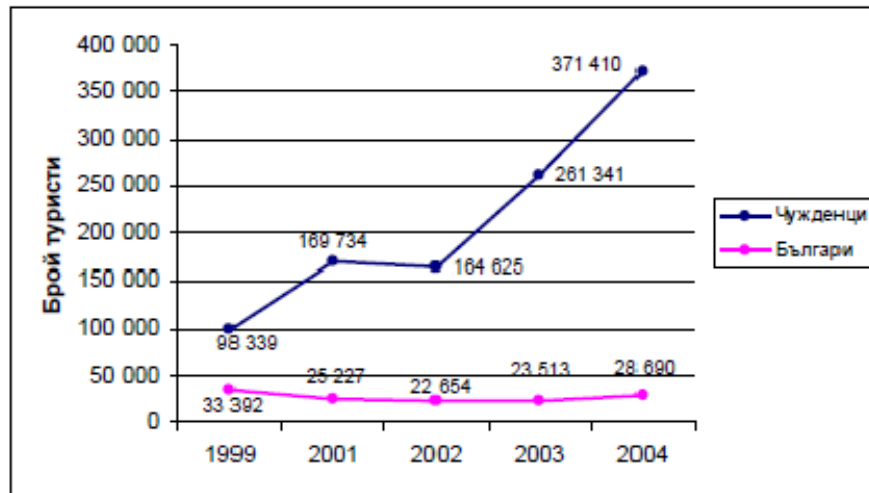


Figure 32: Tourist arrivals in the Municipality of Nesebar; blue line indicates international visitors and the purple line domestic visitors

According to an analysis made by the Municipality of Nesebar, tourists from abroad constitute around 92.8 percent of all arrivals in the municipality. The number of international tourists is more than tenfold the number of Bulgarian visitors which even indicates a slight decline during the same period.

Figure [31] (see next page) clearly indicates the massive increase of hotels in the municipality since the start of the new millennium. Although the massive development in Sunny Beach unquestionably accounts for a large share of the new development, the rapid increase of hotels has been a distinctive trend in all towns of the municipality.

The figure below furthermore shows that the number of available beds and arrivals initially dropped significantly during the early post-socialist era. As I mentioned earlier, the transition period in Bulgaria not proceeded without any difficulties. Many sectors were confronted with management overhauls, budget deficits and ongoing waves of corruption, and the hitherto relatively well organized tourism sector equally needed time to adapt and adjust to the new arisen social, political and economic circumstances.³⁸

³⁸ The political climate will have contributed to this decline as it influences the decision making process of potential visitors. Post-revolution years generally are considered politically unstable and as such it takes time for a country to regain an image of stability and security.

HOTELS IN MUNICIPALITY NESEBAR

Year	Hotels	Bed-places	Nights spent		Arrivals in Hotels	
			Total	Of which:by foreigners	Total	Of which: foreigners
1990	105	26053	3353906	2660995	376609	224336
1991	73	19299	1553599	1320765	168401	113500
1992	98	25311	1970938	1541437	221290	135067
1993	109	27350	2679772	2455869	252037	201335
1994	104	25420	2318770	2155444	217350	175675
1995	104	31268	1964900	1748891	195278	143929
1996	105	26684	2129084	1927739	198446	157612
1997	93	24189	1972370	1866007	176492	154307
1998	95	24186	1687022	1524321	163306	129221
1999	94	24203	1338640	1169324	131731	98339
2000	57	15599	950828	859954	96576	76165
2001	41	12602	932636	870593	93171	79349
2002	59	19351	1127047	1072872	120019	108040
2003	99	30770	2524585	2426131	278127	255505
2004	123	40284	3435126	3299249	393100	365089
2005	166	58009	4119688	3983039	496583	463674
2006	184	56405	4388649	4196916	555089	508742
2007	193	62177	4379557	4154638	580335	517661
2008	238	67803	4753306	4358414	644244	546946
2009	203	66958	3635768	3353458	522595	445255

Figure 33: Tourist arrivals and hotels in the municipality of Nesebar**Local tourism policies**

In what way is tourism currently organized and considered within the region and what are the aims of the municipality with regard to the development of tourism in the town and region? There are several policies operative which, to a certain extent, touch upon the development of tourism within the region or for Nesebar specific. Although most plans are written in Bulgarian, I have managed to translate some relevant parts that give some insights into current planning policies in Bulgaria.

Currently, two regional development plans are implemented for the regions of Burgas and Varna; a North-eastern regional development plan, NERP, and a South-eastern regional development plan, SERP,³⁹ which thus includes the Nesebar municipality. Tourism is considered a chief priority in the regional

³⁹ Presented in December 2005 and designed for the period 2007 - 2013

development plan SERP for the period 2007- 2013 and some of the aims set out for the region can be summoned as follows (BSBD 2007):

- income growth by 50% as a result of investments in new, and reconstruction of the existing material base, increasing the quality of services and their diversification;
- increase of the tourist flow out of the tourist season by 30% by diversification of the tourist product and complex use of the available and anthropogenic resources of the entire territory of the region;

Special measures have been envisaged in the plan, including:

- territorial development planning of the resorts and tourist villages, consistent management of the seaside zones and protected areas, implementation of mechanisms and stable criteria for responsibility and control for setting up tourism sites;
- investments in specialized tourist infrastructure – restoration and maintenance of the cultural and historic heritage; building of roads to the tourist sites; building of public parking-lots, WCs and other auxiliary facilities in the municipalities; designing and building of tourist paths, camping sites, harbours, shelters and other facilities; designing, making and fitting of information boards and road signs
- attracting Bulgarian and foreign ‘average’ class tourists by developing and offering new tourist products and ensure proper marketing strategies

In the tourism development policies composed by the Nesebar municipality similar aspects are brought forward with regard to the potential and objectives for tourism development within the municipality. The vision for tourism development in the municipality is (roughly) reflected in the following points;

- Invert the ongoing process of an increasingly segmenting international and domestic tourism market which requires the formation and use of a differentiated marketing mix;
- valorisation of natural and anthropogenic tourist resources in the municipality as the basis and potential for sustainable tourism development;
- Investments in tourism facilities already operating within the boundaries of the municipality;
- Ongoing high level of partnership with the private tourism sector, local communities;

- Positioning Nessebar municipality as a desired mark (tourist destination), embedded in the mind of its visitor as a lasting positive memory, generating incentive for visitors to return to Nessebar

This vision then corresponds to numerous quantifiable long-term objectives and tasks which are being described as follows;

- Achieve annual growth of investment in the tourism industry within the municipality with 10% ???;
- Achieving a faster growth rate of revenues derived from the tourism industry to increase the number of tourists that can be welcomed in the area;
- Save the natural tourist attractions of the municipality;
- Increase the attractiveness of the anthropogenic tourism resources of the municipality;
- Reconstruction and modernization of the supportive tourism infrastructure;
- Assistance to improve the quality and diversity of the superstructure for tourism in the municipality;
- Assistance to improve the quality of goods and services offered by the tourism industry in the area;
- Create a favourable business environment for the tourism industry by the municipal authorities and municipal administration;
- Active participation in marketing the municipality as a tourism brand

Although in most of the policies the economic potential and opportunities for further tourism development are strongly emphasizes and discussed, the need for sustainable tourism development and impact control management are as well recognized, e.g. environmental, social and cultural aspects;

- Exceeding the carrying capacity of beach tourism resources in certain places in the municipality - the southern beach of Nessebar;
- Excessive commercialization of space around cultural historic sites in the settlements of the municipality, especially in the city Nessebar;
- Insufficient and not properly maintained transport and water network;
- Uniformity of the newly built tourist superstructures;
- Strong seasonal nature of a structurally determined tourism destination product - summer and sea tourism;
- Lack of effective functioning Tourist Information reservation system in the municipality;
- Chaotic presence of information in the destination;

- Poor quality and control of the tourism product and the spatial development of tourism by specialized agencies;
- Displacement of local funds - "leakages" of funds from the local economy - and disinterest on behalf of the environment and living standards of the local population;
- The relationship of tourism and the local population are in a transition phase from "Euphoria" to a status of "Apathy";
- There is a great threat of loss of cultural and historical authenticity in Nesebar;
- Mass destruction of natural formations and green areas as a result of large-scale and not always legitimate works, especially in the resort town Sunny Beach;

The above points summarize some of the main problems Nesebar currently faces and though it is promising that various problematic issues are identified by local authorities, concrete guidelines or alternative concepts are noticeably absent. Improving tourism development requires moreover a thorough contemplation on the future of the urban landscape which should be the guiding ideology in tourism planning and management.

The built environment



Figure 34: High school in the new town of Nesebar

Nesebar possesses an impressive amount of monuments and archaeological artefacts that date back to myriad eras and are a clear reminiscence of the various civilizations that once dominated the cultural landscape of the town. In the following section I will explore Nesebar's built environment to compile an overview of the physical elements that hitherto have shaped the urban landscape of the town.

The Antiquity and the Middle Ages

Although Nesebar is merely a small town, it nevertheless can boast upon an impressive amount of churches. Whether built during the Byzantine, Bulgarian or Ottoman era, the churches are a wonderful reminiscence of the rich architectural heritage of the Eastern Orthodox world and a reflection of Nesebar's rich and diverse history. Although not all churches from the Antiquity or the Middle Ages have survived, many still stand erect nowadays. The Christ Pantokrator church (see next page) situated in the centre of the peninsula is probably the best preserved church in the old town.



Figure 35: The Christ Pantokrator church in Nesebar is one of the best preserved monuments in the old town which nowadays is used as a souvenir shop



Figure 36: 'St Sophia' basilica in Nesebar

Built in the 14th century, the church is rich in external ornamentation (byzantine), and features a rather extraordinary architectural plan.⁴⁰ (Kiyashkina 2007)

Another example from the Antiquity is the Saint Sophia Basilica which originates from the 5th century AC. Called by all Nesebar folk "The Old Metropolis", the basilica, at the very heart of the peninsula, used to be the seat of the Nesebar Bishop at the time when Mesemvria was the Archbishopric of the Black Sea. (Kiyashkina 2007) The impressive fortress wall of the old town, which loom at the end of the isthmus road heading to the old town, is another impressive monument in Nesebar. The Thracians were the first to reinforce their settlement on the peninsula with a defensive wall that already dates back to as early as the 8th century BC. Greek settlers (5th century BC.) later constructed upon the fundamentals of the town wall which maintained as such for a considerable period of time, before eventually being re-erected by the Romans in the 5th century.



Figure 37: The ancient town wall of Nesebar

⁴⁰ The naos of The Christ Pantokrator church is a peculiar combination of one-space, one-nave church and a cruciform dome one. It has three altar niches (apses), a narthex and a belfry above it.



Figure 30: Black Sea houses in Sozopol



Figure 39: Typical windmill along the isthmus road towards the old town

Apart from all the churches and other monuments of Antiquity, e.g. a Roman thermal bath or several remarkable windmills, Nesebar is strongly characterized by the numerous, relatively well preserved, 'Black Sea houses' that have been built foremost during the Bulgarian National Revival epoch. These houses in Nesebar tightly adjoin each other to shape the narrow cobblestone streets which have become a characteristic image of the old town. Most of these houses were built during the late 18th or early 19th century, the period considered as the peak of the Bulgarian national revivalist style. (Kiyashkina 2007)



Figure 40: Restaurant Kapitanska sreshta; "Captains get-together"

The two most striking Black Sea houses found in Nesebar are arguably the house of Diamandi, built in 1850, and the house of Captain Pavel (see image previous page) by the sea, built in 1760. These Bulgarian revivalist houses have several dominating and distinguishing qualities such as highly developed wood techniques or asymmetrical floor plans for example,⁴¹ (Kiyashkina 2007) giving the houses a unique and expressive appearance

Between the two world wars

The architectural discourse in Bulgarian in the period between the two world wars was strongly influenced by the development of architecture in Western Europe. Many Bulgarian scholars studied in France or Germany during this period and worked there with famous architectural professors of the modern era.⁴² After several years of working abroad, often in the architectural firms of their professors, many of the then matured Bulgarian architects returned home with the ambition to bring Bulgarian architecture up to European standards. All over

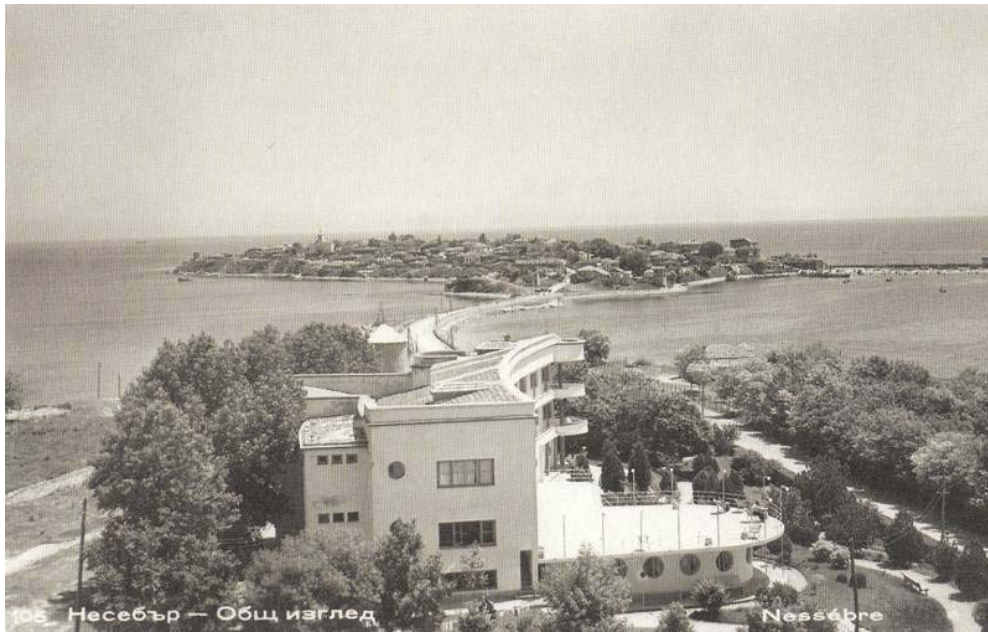


Figure 41: Summer residence of the Ministry of Finance (demolished) with the old town clearly visible in the background

⁴¹ The houses mostly comprised two floors; the first floor served a more economic purpose such as storing utensils for fishing or vine-growing for example, where the second floor represented the living area that also was usually slightly larger in size due to the bracket-supports used that allowed for a slightly cantilevered floor construction. The ground floor wall usually was built with walls of mud-joined stone that often followed the ragged outline of the plot, whereas the upper floor walls, made of wood and mud predominantly, featured more regular and rectangular proportions.

⁴² Several Bulgarian students worked with August Perret in Paris or with Hermann Muthesius or Peter Behrens in Germany.

Bulgaria examples of this modern architecture can be found and also in Nesebar, two splendid examples of typical modern architecture were built during this period. (see image previous page)

Post- war architecture

The architecture of the post-war era (1944-1989) in Bulgaria was strongly influenced by the principles of socialism. Most architecture was planned and designed by centrally organized economic and planning institutions that embraced the ideological forms and principles set out by the social and economic policies. (Stiller 2004)

Although in the early years of communism in Bulgaria the architectural 'style' was creatively captured in the ideological framework of socialism, the 1950's and 1960's gradually allowed for more creative freedom within the existing



Figure 42: The buildings above show the modern architecture that young Bulgarian architects applied to design the resort town Sunny Beach

ideologies of the communist party and as such opportunities arose for Bulgarian architects to respond and adapt to current international architectural trends that preoccupied Western European architects at that time. Neighbouring Sunny beach arguably was like a laboratory for Bulgarian architects in those years with plentiful examples of modernist architecture that were conceived to symbolize the capabilities of the 'new nation'. Typical for these modernistic buildings (mostly tourist structures) are the light, delicate and human shapes as opposed to the more massive, monumental architecture (Soviet Architecture) applied in the early years of socialism in Bulgaria. (Stiller 2004)

Other important reminiscences of the communist era in Nesebar's urban landscape are the numerous social housing blocks situated in the east side of the new town. Predominantly built during the 70s and 80s, the buildings are compelling examples of industrialised housing blocks that were built all over Bulgaria during times where the construction volume increased drastically in Bulgaria. These highly industrialised types of social housing blocks lost however greatly in architectural quality as construction methods were devised as cheap and monotonous. Notwithstanding the destitute condition of many of these buildings nowadays (a severe lack of maintenance), the architecture and ideas that shaped these buildings are nevertheless important reminders of the communist era in Bulgaria and as such intrinsically part of Bulgaria's cultural landscape.



Figure 43: Socialist housing block in new town of Nesebar



Figure 44: Hotel block built during the early stages of tourism development in Nesebar

Along the southern beach of Nesebar there are some more noteworthy examples of socialist architecture remaining built during the initial phases of tourism development in Nesebar. These hotels sharply contrast with the more recent development in the immediate surroundings and, although slightly lacking the

elegance noticed in some of the modernist hotels built in Sunny Beach, are monuments that mark the development of tourism in Nesebar's urban landscape.

Recent development

The adoption to the free-market economy in Bulgaria has had an unmistakeable impact upon the development along the Black Sea coast. The opportunities that arose for private investors in the new social-economic environment, e.g. lacking regulation and underdeveloped civic society, eventually lead to a wave of development along almost the entire coastline. This development of tourism in the last two decades unmistakably has had a major influence upon the (physical) urban landscape of Nesebar which I will explore in some more detail in the next chapter.



Figure 45: Recent architectural development in Nesebar (new town)



Figure 46: Renovations in the old town of Nesebar

CHAPTER IV

Case study analysis

Introduction

In the following chapter I will project the theory of chapter one and two on the case-study environment of Nesebar. After having set the context in chapter three, it is now time to assess the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of Nesebar whereby the post-socialist era is the focal point. Besides the more obvious physical transformations (visual) in the urban landscape, the dynamic and hyper-dynamic layer of the urban lexicon, as proposed by Diskin (see page 15), are explored to produce a thorough overview of the impact of tourism upon the urban landscape and identity of Nesebar, e.g. the individual perspectives of local inhabitants, the functioning of the town as an urban entity, the symbolic value imbedded within the urban landscape of the town etc. In the final chapter I will present my conclusions with regard to the impact of mass tourism upon the urban landscape of Nesebar and, subsequently, cogitate on the future of small or medium sized tourism towns as places of entertainment and living in the increasingly globalising urban tourism landscape.

The physical impact of tourism on the urban landscape of Nesebar

Although the name of a city may remain forever constant, its physical structure constantly evolves, being deformed or forgotten, adapted to other purposes or eradicated by different needs.

Christine Boyer (1996: p31)

Realizing that the old town on the Peninsula has developed in almost three millennia, the new town by comparison has developed overnight. Fuelled by extensive tourism development in and around Nesebar, the building volume in the town roughly has doubled in less than two decades. Tourism began to develop as early as the 1950s in Nesebar; however, a strong contrast exists between the post-war, 1944-1989, and post-socialism period, 1989 - present. Although focus of this analysis will be on the latter period, the differences between the post-war and post-socialism period briefly needs some elaboration.

Privatization of the tourism sector

Tourism was relatively well planned and organized during communism. Development was guided and managed to create favourable settings for tourists and inhabitants alike and especially in the resort town Sunny Beach, which, arguably, underwent the most extensive development during the initial years of tourism, the outcome was a carefully orchestrated landscape with an abundance of green space and a controlled number of hotels and resort complexes. The sudden end of communism in Bulgaria and the subsequent introduction of the free-market economy however have had a major impact upon the development of tourism along the Black Sea coast and other regions in Bulgaria⁴³. Although the initial years after privatization were fairly slow, as soon as Bulgarians came to realize the potential of tourism as a potential income source,⁴⁴ the industry began to expand rapidly.

Although on paper the political system of Bulgaria changed within only a matter of days, in reality the reform process was much slower and complicated. Urban (regional) planning decentralized and devolved unto regional or local authorities, however, as many of these institutions were not prepared or equipped to cope

⁴³ Ski resort Bansko, south of Sofia, has developed explosively since the transition to a free-market economy in Bulgaria.

⁴⁴ The deterioration of the traditional state industries forced Bulgarians to look for alternative sources of income.

with the new acquired tasks and responsibilities, urban planning and management was mostly ineffective in the early post-socialist years. Private investors ultimately seized the opportunities created by the new socio-economic climate and construction activities soon rocketed in several tourist destinations.

Although Sunny Beach was initially conceived as a nationally controlled and planned tourism resort, the forces of privatization quickly divided the resort into smaller parts that, subsequently, were sold to (local) private investors.⁴⁵ (Ghodsee 2005)



Figure 47: Sunny beach approx. around the 1970s.



Figure 48: Sunny Beach nowadays

The documentary “Stone Gardens”⁴⁶ has convincingly shown the rather devastating effect of extensive tourism development upon the physical urban landscape of Sunny Beach which foremost is characterized by a dramatic absence of quality urban planning and exuberant, highly capitalistic hotels and resort complexes.

⁴⁵ Dividing up the assets of a resort presumably increased the chance for more bribes due to the increased number of privatization actions. (Ghodsee 2005)

⁴⁶ The documentary “Stone gardens” was broadcasted the 28th of November on Bulgarian national television. The documentary is made by journalist Genka Shikerova and has recorded the over-development of the Slunchev Bryag (Sunny Beach) resort.

In Sunny beach, near Burgas, during the rainy summer high season of 2005, there were almost double the amounts of tourist billeted as there was beach space available. At an area conceived for thirty thousand holiday makers, sixty thousand hustled to claim a place to sunbath.

Stefan Appelius (2006: p222)



Figure 49: Resort town Albena; regulated and controlled privatization

Although similar processes are noticed all along the Black Sea coast nowadays, the resort town Albena⁴⁷ has remained a noteworthy exception. According to Ghodsee (2005) the Albena resort was, although privatized, not divided and sold too individual investors.

The original director of the resort has stayed in charge after the transition and as such has been able to prevent the resort from being partitioned and sold to eager investors. The urban development of Albena has hitherto been centrally guided and controlled and many of the original qualities of the resort have been preserved. (Ghodsee 2005)

Although the preceding is somewhat aside the essential focus of the thesis, and without disregarding the failures of urban planning and management in the aftermath of the transition in Bulgaria, it nevertheless is worth remarking that tourism development was relatively well managed and planned under communism in Bulgaria and that only with the introduction of the free market economy tourism developed without restraints and rather unscrupulously in many towns along the coast.

⁴⁷ Albena resort is situated about 30km north of Varna and was along with Golden Beach one of the first resorts that developed at the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast.

Urban development in Nesebar

Facilitating tourism requires an extensive infrastructure (see chapter two) to services and account for all the needs and desires of the tourists, e.g., shopping, accommodation, restaurants, hotels, resorts etc. In the past two decades plethora of hotels and resorts have been built in and around Nesebar. Many hotels and resorts have developed near the southern beach of the town and along the north-eastern area of the town as both are prime locations in Nesebar- offering splendid views of the old town. In the image below I have highlighted (in red) the most noticeable new development in Nesebar which indicates a concentration of tourism structures along the shores of the new town.



Figure 50: Southern beach of Nesebar, viewed from the old town



Figure 51: Tourism facilities in the new town of Nesebar

The extensive development of hotels and resorts along the southern coastline of Nesebar has significantly altered the outward appearance of the beach. Some of the new structures touch or in fact penetrate the beach area to an extent that the capacity of the beach has been reduced significantly.



Figure 52: The northern coastline of the new town



Figure 53: The southern coastline of the new town



Figure 54: The southern beach early 20th century



Figure 55: The southern beach of Nesebar currently

Also near the isthmus road (see figure 51) there has been substantial development recorded in recent years. The area offers, besides its favourable geographical location, prime vistas of the old town and as such manifests an interesting site for tourism developers.

A noteworthy exception in recent urban development has been the development of a boulevard that runs all along the northern end of the new town and the peninsula. The boulevard is, although lacking upkeep and design, an interesting new 'linear urban element' in Nesebar's urban landscape that is not purely conceived for tourism purposes and has absolute potential for further development. (see chapter 5 for a closer view on the path)

Searching for architectural expression

Excessive large scale structures, unexplainable variations in colours and uninteresting or out-of-place-and-time architecture probably sums up most fittingly the recent (tourism) architecture built in, as well as around Nesebar. Most of the latest resort and hotel complexes are dreadful attempts to reincarnate or emulate local vernacular architecture. Many complexes are

oversized, out-of-scale structures that reflect a high degree of standardization and efficiency, and where any kind of resonance of Nesebar's geographical or historical conditions (locus) appears to be completely absent.



Figure 56: Hotel and resort complex Vigo in Nesebar

The majority of the recent built hotels and resort arguably are rather succinct examples of highly capitalist architecture. Functionalism and maximizing capacity⁴⁸ appear to have governed the design process in many cases which is reflected in the massive scale of some resorts, e.g. hotel-resort complex Vigo. It can be reasonably said that the greater part of the recent development in Nesebar has clearly been market driven as opposed to the outcome of specific planning or design concepts (urban masterplan).

Beside the clear functional designed structures there are as well some recent, arguably, rather unsuccessful attempts to apply a more vernacular architectural style. A brand new hotel (see figure 59) in the new town has besides the architecture of the ancient town walls⁴⁹ of Nesebar applied the typical wooden structures seen in the Black Sea houses as well as incorporated a typical windmill from the Ottoman era.

⁴⁸ These large scale resort complexes usually aim at maximizing accommodation volumes which allows for high returns on investments.

⁴⁹ Byzantine architecture, see page 85-86



Figure 57: Arsena Beach Hotel Nesebar



Figure 58: Hotel still under construction in the new town



Figure 60: Application of vernacular style in the new town



Figure 59: Brand new resort complex in the new town



Figure 61: Renovated hotel in the old town of Nesebar

Another hotel, at the ‘funnel-end’ of the new town, draws attention for its highly controversial implementation around an historical windmill (see figure 61). An interviewee pointed out that the mill, inscribed into the Bulgarian list of cultural heritage, “somehow must have temporarily disappeared from this list in order to make way for the construction of the hotel.” (tourist guide archaeological museum Nesebar- conducted interview)



Figure 62: Historic windmill enclosed by a hotel in the new town of Nesebar

The architectural ensemble of the new town contrasts sharply with the harmonic composition that is so characteristic for the old town. Notwithstanding the individual architectural qualities of many buildings in the old town, e.g. the churches, the overall composition of the urban landscape unmistakably attributes to the visual quality of the old town and adds an extra 'perceptual layer' to the townscape.

Whilst the old town displays a distinctive architectural ensemble, the new town presents itself as a chaotic and noncohesive composition. The scale and implementation of many tourism structures in the new town does not suggest being carefully orchestrated according to a governing urban masterplan. The desires and needs of tourists arguably have been the decisive factor with regard to urban planning in the new town and the needs and desires of local inhabitants (collective memories, urban mindscapes) have been denounced subsidiary.

Tourism development along the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria

Although tourism in many towns along the Black Sea coast still is in a relatively early stage of development, similar development tendencies as recorded in Nesebar or Sunny Beach are noticed almost everywhere. Currently within the municipality of Nesebar, small towns such as Ravda, Elinite or Obzor are expanding rapidly as tourist destinations. These towns show architecture similar to what is observed in Nesebar and urban planning appears conspicuously absent. Similar trends are recorded in Pomorie for example, south of Nesebar, or, yet to a lesser degree, in Sozopol.



Figure 63: Resort complex "Santa Marina" near Sozopol



Figure 64: Resort in Elinite



Figure 65: Resorts in Sozopol



Figure 66: Resort complex in Sunny Beach



Figure 67: Hotels in Sozopol



Figure 68: Recently finished hotel in Obzor

Shifting functions; dynamic transformations in the urban landscape of Nesebar



Figure 69: The isthmus road; low-season



Figure 70: The isthmus road; high season

Tourism has not only produced significant transformations in the physical urban landscape of Nesebar. Also the dynamic layer of the urban landscape has changed considerably with the increasing presence of tourism. The town beach is not the natural and tranquil environment anymore that once characterized the beach experience as well as the old town is long not the authentic fishing village anymore where streets buzz with locals and the air is filled with the aroma of fish and figs. Notwithstanding that many historic houses or monuments of the Antiquity still stand erect today in the old town, they nonetheless merely reminisce of bygone eras:

Like statues and paintings torn from their original location in palaces and churches and then placed within the guarded walls of a museum, these restored city streets and districts turned parts of the city into new visual spectacles and revitalized theatrical decors.

Christine Boyer (1996: p54)

A distinctive trend in the old town has been the growing concentration of hotels and restaurant, shown in figure [70]. The development, mostly concerning transformations and renovations, is predominantly visible along the shores of the peninsula where impressive sea views can be appropriated by hotels or resorts to lure potential visitors. And, although not indicated in figure [70], also more and more private apartments in the old town are rented out to tourist these days and increasing numbers of inhabitants relocate to the new town.. These transformations, although not distinctively physical in character, i.e. no new structures have been added, clearly influence the dynamic experience of the old town.



Figure 71: Hotels and restaurants in the old town

Another noticeable trend has been the gradual disappearance of public amenities in the old town. Nowadays only few public functions are left, e.g. a bank, a pharmacy, a cinema, a primary school, and most public amenities have relocated to the new town. Everyday life thus, gradually is diverting away from the old town which substantially alters the dynamic experience of the urban landscape.



Figure 72: Remaining public functions in the old town of Nesebar

It can be argued thus that the historical centre in Nesebar has gradually transformed in a kind of 'outdoor shopping market', where the town presents its consumable goods such as culture and leisure, and the original, utilitarian function of the town slowly has conferred to the new town.

Without prejudice to the significant contribution of the UNESCO World Heritage status to the preservation and conservation of monuments in the old town, it can be called into question if the status of world heritage does not, to a certain degree, contribute to the above mentioned process:

The West European approaches to conservation methods in historic quarters where 'technically' balanced interventions and facade preservations have created favourable settings for tourism and shopping, have alienated local communities and users. Urban conservation, in connection with the growing influence of tourism, is resulting in: gentrification of residential areas and shopping facilities; local alienation or feelings of loss of privacy; loss of community spirit; changes to urban space use, physical urban pattern and subsequently urban character.

Aylin Orbasli, quoted in Dumont, Ruelle and Teller (2005: p25)

Increased funding has ensured the conservation of some of the architectural splendours in the historical centre but at the same time arguably has triggered a process of musealisation⁵⁰ and, to a lesser extent perhaps, gentrification. Nelle (2005: p88) distinguishes two aspects of museality: "The loss of presence of local everyday life" and "the transformation of the town into a consumer product"; both explicitly visible in the old town. Although many guide books or travel agents like to promote visiting historical centres as 'journeys into the past' or as 'being in a museum', which is understood as something of special value (Nelle 2005), Orbasli (quoted in Nelle 2005: p85) comments that "visiting an historic town is not about going to a museum or a journey into the past to see how people used to live; it is a pleasurable experience of leisure and cultural activity in a place where people still live". The utility function of a town centre, in a more classical view at least, is an urban space for social interaction and activities, which thus goes beyond the sphere of mere visual consumption. Inhabitants interact in urban spaces and as such animate towns with their activities and habits.

...in planning and management processes it is important to consider that urban interaction between local inhabitants has effectively been wiped out on the sub-level of this street and it must be reviewed if it is a good idea to take further action to enlarge the musealised zone.

Anja B. Nelle (2005: p92)

⁵⁰ When urban space is used with a strong focus on the visual consumption of an 'historic image', this has many parallels to a visit to a museum.

Also the character of the beach area in Nesebar has transformed considerably. The formerly natural and open surrounding of the beach has been permanently transformed by the 'concrete wall' of hotels and resorts that now dominate the background and which, arguably, has altered the dynamic experience of the beach considerably. In addition, an increasingly large area of the beach is nowadays reserved for parasols and beach-beds that almost occupy half of the beach. As most of the local inhabitants cannot or do not want to spend money for a days on the beach, they are automatically driven towards the far (southern) end of the beach.

There is less 'free' space on the beach; most of the area is reserved for beach beds and parasols.

Tourist guide, employee archaeological museum Nesebar, (age 47)

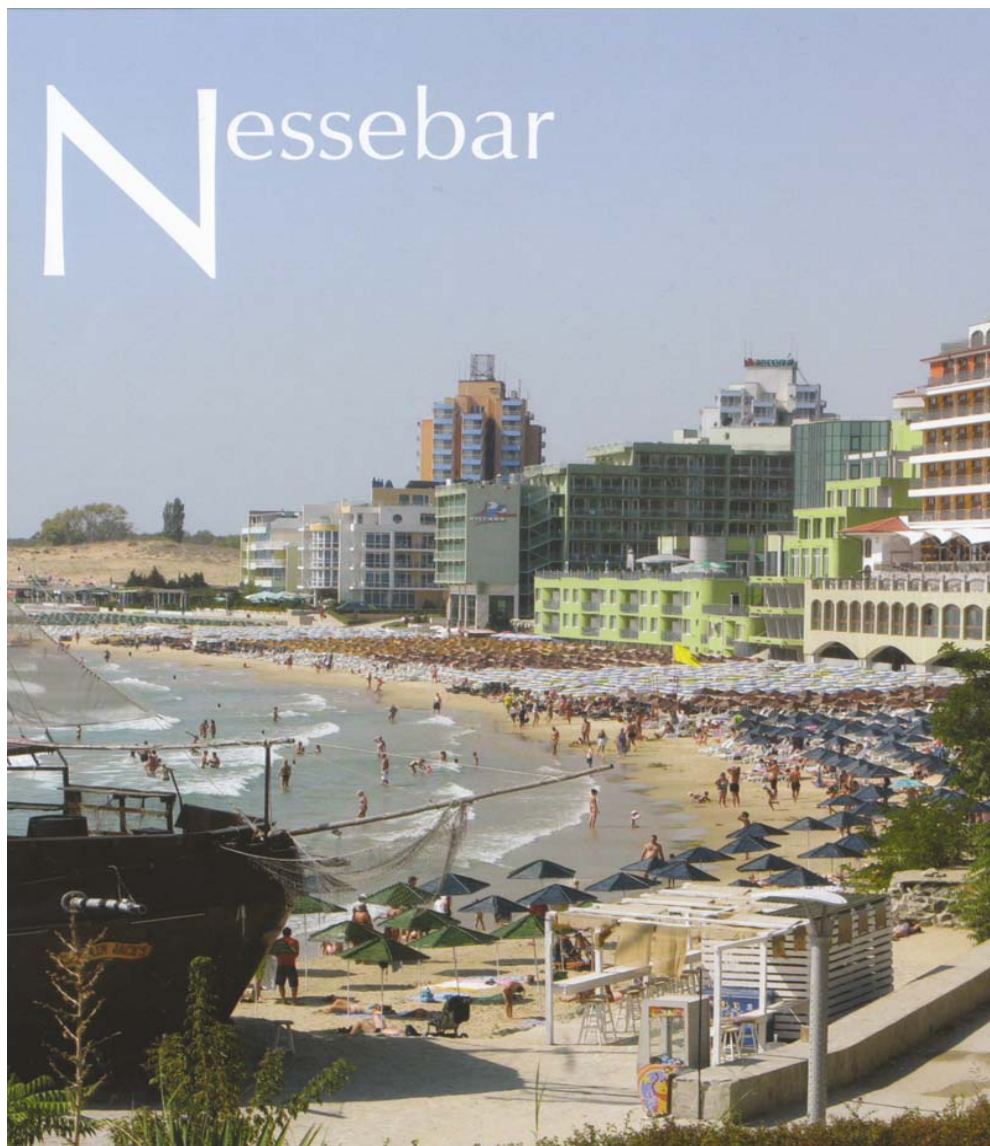


Figure 73: The southern beach during the peak-season in Nesebar

Advertising, consumerism



Figure 74: Information, an important aspect in the tourism landscape



Figure 75: Markers in the tourism landscape

There are too many little souvenir stores in the old town, their goods in front of the stores are damaging the appearance of the old town

Tourism consultant in Nesebar, (34)

The progressive domination of tourist service functions leads to functional conversion, particularly from retail to food service provision, and the expansion of the tourist area into surrounding craft and housing areas. In this way through this process the character of heritage environments is being distorted.

P.T. Newby (1994 p:220)

In recent years, real estate agencies and tourist services have popped up like mushrooms all over town in Nesebar. Visitors are usually not familiar with surroundings which are not their own and signifiers or markers are crucial in order to provide guidance and information: Where to go for eating? What is there to see? Where to book a tour etc.? Tourists are important consumers⁵¹ in the consumer landscape of a tourism destination and advertising signs and information shields have become increasingly important to efficiently 'market' the tourism product. Although advertising signs and markers are not reserved for tourism only, it are evermore present elements in the urban landscape of tourism destinations, and Nesebar clearly is an attestation of this phenomenon.

Figure [75] (next page) indicates the souvenir stores that are situated in the old town currently. Especially in the immediate environment of monuments (objects of the tourist gaze) there is a high concentration of souvenir stores distinguishable. The high quantity of souvenir stores in the old town unquestionably has altered the character of the town centre with cheap displayed goods dominating streetscapes and, often, obtrusive advertising signs sharply contrasting with the original facades of the houses in the old town.

⁵¹ Consumers thus of tangible products such as a museum, souvenirs or monuments for example.

Sometimes just one street within an historic area is converted into a pedestrianised zone with souvenir shops and cafés, conserved and reconstructed facades and no contemporary signs. The street promotes a heritage image, transforming it into an 'island of museality'.

Anja B. Nelle, (2005: p92)



Figure 76: Souvenir stores in the old town

Seasonality



Figure 77: Seasonality in the old town

A common, and often distinguishing, characteristic of mass tourism is the high seasonality of the tourism product which usually is apparent in places highly depending on the 'three S' tourism product (Bramwell 2004). As a large share of Nesebar's tourist arrivals relates to its coastal proximity and favourable weather conditions, the dynamics of the town increasingly are determined by the seasonal fluctuations of tourist movements. Seasonality more and more dictates

social and economic life in Nesebar and as such strongly shapes the dynamic layer of the urban landscape. Whether seasonality needs to be regarded as a negative phenomenon in tourism destinations remains as issue of dispute. Although most of the strategic tourism or development policies set out to limit the effects of seasonality (Conti and Perelli 2005), Bramwell (2004: p10) has rightly argued that “the quiet periods resulting from seasonality may be welcomed by residents and even owners of small tourist businesses as they offer respite from the tourist pressures, and these periods may also help in the recovery of local ecosystems.” Nevertheless, with most shutters shut during the off-season in the old town, the town quickly imbibes a ghost-like ambiance which is difficultly tenable as a welcoming dynamic transformation in the urban landscape.

The tourist image of Nesebar



Figure 78: Postcard image of Nesebar

Nesebar is one of the oldest towns in Europe, well known with its exotic monuments of the Antiquity, its fascinating architecture of the middle Ages and the National Revival period. The town is situated on a small rocky peninsula in the North part of the Burgas bay.

<http://nesebar.com/en/index.php>

In 1956 the town was proclaimed an architectural and archaeological reserve. The remnants of an antique fortified wall with a gate dating from III-IV century, the churches from V-VI century and the ones dating from the medieval period (X-XIV century), which are fine works of the medieval Bulgarian and Byzantine architecture, the 60 houses of the revival period, give the town unique appearance and atmosphere.

http://nesebar.net/nes_old/en/history.htm

Harbouring the best of the coast's nineteenth-century wooden architecture, as well as a unique collection of medieval churches, it's easy to see why Nesebar has become the most publicized [and commercialized] of Bulgaria's Black Sea attractions.

The Rough Guide to Bulgaria, (2008 p405)

On a small, rocky island 37km northeast of Burgas, connected to the mainland by a narrow, artificial isthmus, pretty-as-a-post card Nesebar is the jewel in the Bulgarian Black Sea crown. Famous for its surprisingly numerous, albeit mostly ruined, medieval churches, it has inevitably become heavily commercialized and is virtually under siege from tour groups and souvenir sellers during the high season.

The lonely planet for Bulgaria, (2008, p230)

The historical centre is a prime aspect of Nesebar's tourism image that not only attracts cultural tourists but also is regarded by the inhabitants as the most significant element representing and symbolizing Nesebar, as is attested by the interviews (see next section). More recent history, the collective memories (experiences) of the current inhabitants, arguably has received little attention within urban planning, bluntly testified by the recent demolishment of two, early 20th century, modernistic buildings.⁵²

The process is thus one of obliterating the immediate and modern past by the creation of a townscape that is decked out in the street furniture of an imagined bygone era - cast iron displaces plastic, concrete and galvanised steel; modernist design is consigned to the scrapheap, resulting in the creation of a townscape which idealizes an imaginary past.

Kevin Meethan (1996: p188)

Although this is not a phenomenon which strictly occurs in tourism destinations, as recent (20th century) architecture frequently is neglected in cities or towns, it does reflect however the importance of 'assigned value'.

Questions of cultural selectivity are reflected as distortions of conservation value and compromises in terms of both integrity and honesty. Heritage values and tourist values coalesce' around some periods and styles, and deviate around others. In general, the deviation between the two sets of values increases as we move towards the present.

P.T Newby (1994: p217)

The old centre is regarded as the representative image of Nesebar's history, and therefore is marketed and signified as such. Recent cultural (architectural) achievements are not quickly considered as heritage as it is still relatively 'young' and as such, relatively, of little historic value. Moreover it often not reflects the imaginations of a place carried by the tourist.

...of all the sample brochures carried predominantly heritage based imagery on the cover. This completely overshadows any other reference and reinforces the nostalgic, hackneyed and fictitious way in which places are represented as heritage theme parks.

Chris Murray (2001: p43)

⁵² Only recently an outdoor cinema and the former summer residence of the Ministry of Finance (see figure 40) have been demolished in favour of respectively a hotel and a resort complex.

Most (travel) literature or internet sources regarding Nesebar relish about the countless churches or renaissance houses that can be seen in the old town or myriad civilizations that have occupied the town over the course of its existence. The impressive collections of Thracian and Hellenistic art that Nesebar harbours, as numerous additional artifacts such as a rich collection of Christian Art, are widely mentioned throughout the literature. Another constant returning advertising element is Nesebar's distinctive lay-out (the peninsula) with most photos or images portraying the typical curving shape of the peninsula and the narrow isthmus road.

It can reasonably be said therefore that Nesebar's image foremost is shaped around the cultural heritage of the old town. Despite the new town nowadays constitutes Nesebar's social centre, it is hardly mentioned throughout most literature. Realizing that the new town cannot build upon the divers and rich evolutionary process that has imprinted the old town, it nevertheless is remarkable that an entire area barely has contributed to, or influenced the original image of the town.

If it is desirable that an environment evoke rich, vivid images, it is also desirable that these images be communicable and adaptable to changing practical needs. And that there can develop new groupings, new meaning, new poetry. The objective might be an imaginable environment which is at the same open-ended.

Kevin Lynch (1962:p139)

Although some tourist guides mention the increasing presence of souvenir stores and the large, sometimes rather obtrusive, numbers of tourists that descend upon the town during the summer months, this heretofore has not affected Nesebar's image. The image of Nesebar arguably depends upon the quality and relative 'authenticity' of its cultural and natural resources, e.g. the traditional appearance and atmosphere of the old town centre, however, this image is increasingly devoid of the concrete realities of the current urban landscape.

Summing we can reasonably argue that the dynamic layer of Nesebar has transformed significantly in recent years and which needs to be regarded with a good deal of scepticism as the urban landscape less and less seems to revolve around the 'dynamics' of the inhabitants. But the transformations in the dynamic layer surely will have had its effect upon the third, hyper-dynamic, layer of urban identity, that is, how the people of Nesebar themselves perceive the (transformations) urban landscape of the town?

The hyper- dynamic layer

Considering the fluid (even slippery) nature of collective memory and the highly complex factors that contribute to persistence in the city, it is fairly clear that the issue of urban identity, that is, the numerous elements that tend to give a city its unique character, cannot be separated from the issue of urban perception, the critically important factors of exactly how the residents and visitors of cities actually *view* or *value* the elements of urban identity.

Stephen Philip Diskin (2008: p29)

The urban landscape of Nesebar has transformed significantly and inhabitants (or visitors) each will have their own individual perception with regard to the urban landscape. The tourist will experience Nesebar quite different from the inhabitants, but as well among inhabitants, perceptions can differ considerably (see chapter 2). Before exploring the perceptions of the inhabitants it is important to note that within the municipality of Nesebar, most local inhabitants are, directly or indirectly, active within the inherent tourism industry. Whether selling souvenirs or working at the airport in Burgas, most people in Nesebar are in some way operating (dependent) in the tourism sector. And as the inhabitants of Nesebar certainly are aware of the significant (economic) position of tourism in their community, it evidently influences their perceptions towards the urban development and transformations in the urban landscape.

Even though the interviews have been not an all-inclusive success, it has been possible to deduct certain distinctive tendencies with regard to several questions. The ensuing questions (the full questionnaire is enclosed in the appendix) have produced some interesting insights with regard to the perceptions of the local inhabitants of Nesebar;

- How often, each week or every day for example, and for what reasons are you spending time in the old town of Nesebar?
- What symbolizes the town Nesebar for you (perhaps a sound, a smell, monuments, squares, traditions etc.)?
- In your opinion, what are, in a physical sense, the most important and interesting elements in the *new* part of Nesebar (building or urban spaces)?
- What is your opinion with regard to the new tourism structures (hotels, resorts) that have been built in recent years in Nesebar? (considering their external appearance and their quantity)

One of the most significant transformations within the urban landscape of Nesebar arguably has been the gradual surrendering of the living habitat of the old town to tourism. Hence an important question has been how often, each week or every day, and for what purposes people spend time in the old town of

Nessebar? The responses have made it fairly clear that the old town has lost its former position as town centre which nowadays is embodied by the 'shopping district' in the new town. Many of the interviewees have responded to the question with; "I'll go there just for a walk once every week or every two weeks" or "sometimes to show friends around that are from out of town". The interviews have convincingly showed that the classical role of the old town as the social and economic (functional) centre of Nessebar has disappeared and as such occupies a different position in the everyday life of most inhabitants.

We both go for walks there in the summer with friends for example, but not really for other daily affairs, for this we go to the centre of new Nessebar.

PR Officer Nessebar Municipality (30)

Well for my profession of course I have to be there often as said. Furthermore I like to go the amphitheater or to go there for walks or to have dinner with friends. For other daily affairs you have to go to the new town while in the old town there are mostly souvenir shops.

Tourists guide Archaeological Museum Nessebar (45)

With regard to the question what symbolizes Nessebar most apposite, the historical town has been the unanimous answer. It is interesting however, that although the old town is regarded to symbolize Nessebar most aptly, the majority of the inhabitants only spend relatively little time there nowadays.

This the old part of the town, not only for me I think but for everyone. There are many restaurants here and I like to show friends around or go here for diner.

Tourists guide, employee archaeological Museum Nessebar (45)

For me that is the old part of Nessebar with its special buildings such as the restaurant 'Meeting of the captains' for example or its museums and churches.

Trader in small goods nowadays (59)

Thus the inhabitants still ascribe the old town with much symbolic value despite this, in fact, only marginally relates to the former economic and social functions of the old town.

Whereas the old town symbolizes Nessebar for many, the new town has clearly evoked fewer imaginations amongst the inhabitants who appear to have little affection for the new town. Most interviewees had difficulty contemplating on important and interesting elements in the new town and mostly the responses remained blank altogether. The boulevard north of the town however was mentioned once, as well as some small parks that have been built recently. Nevertheless, the overall appearance or the urban landscape of the new town apparently has not evoked many imaginations or memories among the inhabitants who nevertheless seemed rather indifferent to this comprehension.

No I cannot think of something particularly nice in the new town. I think they have not built very beautifully here...

Real estate agent in Nesebar (52)

With regard to new, recent built tourism structures the responses have been mixed. Especially concerning the aesthetics of many new resorts and hotels the opinions among inhabitants vary considerably. Some regard the contemporary built architecture as a symbol for the 'modernization' of Nesebar whereas others judge the architecture for lacking local style. However a recurrent mentioned aspect in the interviews has been the high quantity and concentration of hotels and resorts in Nesebar nowadays, which most respondents referred to as being superfluous or excessive:

The buildings are too little apart from one another; there is no air between the buildings... I think as well that too many buildings have been built here in recent years.

Tourists guide, employee archaeological Museum Nesebar (45)

I think the new structures built in Nesebar are ugly and there are too many. I think this damages the *image* of Nesebar.

Restaurant employee (27)

There should be more nice buildings as opposed to so many. They are often built to close to the sea and lack style.

Guide/Office worker, waitress (24)

I think there are many great hotels; however we cannot enjoy the luxury that is being offered by these hotels...

Retired (75)

I think it is nice that they build and renovated so many hotels, but I think there are too many in this town.

Receptionist (30)

Despite the fact that the architecture is considered rather differently by the inhabitants of Nesebar, they clearly seem to agree that there is a plethora of tourism structures in the town. But as tourism strongly is contributing to the economic development of the region, the tourist generally is well received by the locals, even in the face of ongoing musealisation or the increasing high concentration of hotels and resorts over town:

I think here in Nesebar there are not many poor people; I think tourism is good for everyone here. You can earn enough with tourism to make a good living, although of course, some people earn a lot of money with tourism...

PR Officer Nesebar Municipality (30)

The tourists are just a part of the environment nowadays...

Health inspector (56)

Well they are an important aspect of my business, so, yes I like tourists. I prefer the Russian, English speaking tourists, as well as the Germans.

Restaurant employee (27)

The interviews certainly have produced some rather interesting insights into the perceptions of the local population. It has become clear that the people in Nesebar generally consider tourism as a favorable and that the positive effects, e.g. jobs, clearly seem to outweigh some of the addressed 'adverse' effects. The dependency on tourism, however, arguably has weighed heavily on the perceptions of the local population and as such allows for the acceptance of some, perhaps, more controversial consequences of tourism development.

CHAPTER V

Synthesis

Introduction

There is a real risk for the town of Nesebar to be excluded from UNESCO World Heritage list as a result of over development.

Bulgarian President Parvanov, quoted in the Sofia News Agency (May 2009)

Tourism concentrations are not static. Their comparative advantages may change over time, perhaps because of shifts in consumption (changes in tourist preferences) or because of the inherent contradictions of the process of accumulation: 'over-development' may make the destination less attractive because of noise, pollution and the sheer pressures of the increasing numbers of tourists.

Gareth Shaw and Allan M. Williams (2004: p190)

The preceding chapter has made it evident that mass tourism development substantially has imprinted the urban landscape of Nesebar, which, as I will argue in this chapter, needs to be regarded with great scepticism in the light of the ever growing influence of globalization and consumption patterns, and our continuous desire for the 'other' (urban spaces as counterstructures). Following I will present the most essential conclusions with regard to the impact of tourism development upon the urban landscape of Nesebar and subsequently reflect upon the general propositions and basic premise of this thesis. In the final section of this chapter I will contemplate on the future of small or medium sized towns as places both for living and recreation, and ideate on specific and concrete recommendations in the context of Nesebar.

We have lost a moral public sphere in this sea of plural voices; the better argument wields no collective weight, actually enabling the public sphere to be dominated by private voices selling fictional styles of life and imaginary behaviours.

Christine Boyer (1996: p4)

The capitalist disposition of tourism development and the implications of marketable images have transformed Nesebar's (cultural) resources into consumer goods, deprived of their 'true meaning' and deeper symbolic value. Tourism has reduced the historical centre of Nesebar to an outdoor museum and furthermore has ceded the beach to obtrusive hotel and resort complexes. Especially the (functional) transformation of the historical centre in Nesebar raises many questions. Aldo Rossi (1982) already addressed the transformation

of cultural heritage (urban artifacts⁵³) when he contemplates on the general process of urban dynamics:

Cities tend to remain on their axes of development, maintaining the position of their original layout and growing according to the direction and meaning of their older artifacts, which often appear remote from present-day ones. Sometimes these artifacts persist virtually unchanged endowed with a continuous vitality; other times they exhaust themselves, and then only the permanence of their form, their physical sign, their *locus* remains.

Aldo Rossi (1982: p59)

He continues this argument regarding the transformation of urban artifacts:

Furthermore, if urban artifacts were constantly able to reform and renew themselves simply by establishing new functions, the values of urban structure, as revealed through its architecture, would be continuous and easily available. The permanence of buildings and forms would have no significance, and the very idea of the transmission of a culture, of which the city is an element, would be questionable.

Aldo Rossi (1982: p47)

In the old town, the urban artifacts (monuments) are the physical elements of permanence in the urban landscape of Nesebar but the transformations that have taken place unquestionably have altered the representational (symbolic) value of many of these monuments.



Figure 79: Souvenir stores around 'the old Metropolis' in the old town of Nesebar

⁵³ Rossi refers to urban artifacts as objects of art and unique quality that go beyond their psychological aspects. Halbwachs (see Rossi 1982) postulates that imagination and collective memory are the typical characteristics of urban artifacts.

By predominantly focusing on, and exploiting the available (cultural) assets of the town, Nesebar slowly is 'consuming' the resources that have induced the development of tourism in the first place. And without prejudice to the value of preservation and conservation of Nesebar's cultural and natural resources, it is questionable when cultural achievements of long foregone eras start to debase current urban development; which as a result greatly lacks a cultural dimension that, arguably, is crucial for the identity of a town or city. To cite Kunzmann (2004: p384); "the cultural dimension of spatial development is a key to urban and regional development in 'Old' Europe." A first conclusion that can be drawn is that Nesebar seems tight up in a historical image of itself that has degraded concernment for contemporary urban planning and development.

The object of the gaze; a stranglehold over Nesebar's urban development



Figure 80: The Marina Palace dominates the centre of the new town



Figure 81: The "Old Metropolis"

Although one can only wonder how Marco Polo would have described the town of Nesebar to Kublai Khan in Calvino's book 'Invisible Cities', in several of his travel stories, Polo speaks of cities that have an obverse, or actually are made up of two half-cities which, in someway, rather felicitously illustrates the current situation in Nesebar:

The city of Sophronia is made up of two-half-cities. In one there is the great roller coaster with its steep humps, the carousel with its chain spokes, the Ferris wheel of spinning cages, the death-ride with crouching motorcyclists, the big top with the clump of trapezes hanging in the middle. The other half-city is of stone and marble and cement, with the bank, the factories, the palaces, the slaughterhouse, the school, and all the rest.

Italo Calvino (1974: p63)

The urban landscape of Nesebar presents itself as a landscape with two 'faces'. Whereas the old town is a place of entertainment, that increasingly evolves as a landscape of pleasures, the new town is foremost characterized by its functional

realm; providing basic needs for the local inhabitants without a profound concern for aesthetics or urban design. The two sharply contrasting town parts almost appear to be in a contextual void as little tension or cohesion is apparent between the two parts, and the isthmus road as such, represents quite aptly the fragile relationship that exists between the new and the old town.

Recent urban development in Nesebar can hardly be accredited for having created a more exiting and dynamic image of Nesebar. The focal point has been to freeze the authentic image of the old town which has come to serve as the representational reality of Nesebar in the global tourism marketplace.

It must never be a question of having a fixed image of the city frozen at a given historical moment...

Christine Boyer (1996: p33)

Without prejudice to the self-evident benefits of the UNESCO world heritage status of the old town, it arguably has polarized Nesebar's urban landscape by ascribing the historic town with such additional (economic) value and status that any efforts towards new creative development have suffocated. The only recent demolition of two modernistic buildings (see fig 39), both valuable 20th century urban artifacts in Nesebar, is a compelling demonstration of the dogma that appears to dominate urban planning in Nesebar and, arguably, in other tourism destinations alike.

Commercial values distort culture through selection, interpretation and bias. What is chosen from the past is what is expected to be profitable. But in choosing from the past commercial values effectively create a new culture which allows us to slip easily between past and present and whose values are based on the ability to be interesting rather than the need to be accurate.

P.T. Newby (1994: p216)

As I already have argued in chapter two, the competition amongst cities and towns in the face of the increasing globalizing tourism space has lead to growing incitement for diversification and identification in places all over the world. Especially in mass tourism destinations, places that rely heavily on strong identifiable images, this increasingly has become an important issue. Although towns and cities strengthen their efforts to successfully position themselves in the tourism marketplace, the evolving urban landscapes in many tourism destinations appear, however, more and more alike. As urban development policies foremost address the preservation of cultural heritage to enhance its exploitation for tourism purposes, innovative strategies that include culture as a catalyst for creative and dynamic urban development, either are lacking or insufficient. Nowadays it is consumerism and capitalism which dominate the

urban development in Nesebar whereby the urban landscape increasingly is considered as a product as opposed to a living habitat for the local population.

The tourism industry in Nesebar strongly dominates the urban development of the town and alternative industries are notably absent.⁵⁴ Newby (1994) already has argued that tourism and heritage can only coexist when the local economy is not dominated by tourism, even when tourist numbers may be large. But as soon as tourism comes to embody a crucial industry in a local economy, the relationship quickly becomes exploitative and cultural heritage (or a natural resource) becomes the basis for generating a cash flow. (Newby 1994) There is little indication hitherto that alternative industries are gaining foothold in Nesebar and tourism likably remains the (single) dominating industry in ensuing years⁵⁵ and thus, continue to exert great influence on the urban development of Nesebar.

Here in Nesebar there is nothing produced. What should we produce here? We only have a few fishermen here. There is no industry here...

Real estate manager in Nesebar

Thus, in the face of lacking economic alternatives and the pressing need for economic development, small or medium sized tourism destinations often consume their existing tourism assets to such an extent that they eventually are hollowed out or transformed so that the original quality of the resource has gone lost. When such a phase is reached, the phase described by Butler (1980) and Creaco and Querini (1999) as apathy or stagnation and decline (see chapter 1), it is very difficult to steer away from this path and revitalize the urban tourist experience of such towns.

Cities are not newly manufactured products; their identity cannot be designed from scratch.

Godela Weiss-Sussex (2008: p238)

This is a vital issue local authorities need to be aware of already during the early stages of tourism development. Many tourism resources are transforming the moment they have been declared as objects of the tourist gaze. And whereas few attractions derive their quality from the presence of many tourists,⁵⁶ an afflux of tourists generally damage the original quality of tourism resources. When I

⁵⁴ Most 'industries' have disappeared in the region over the last few decades as they lost their production value in comparison to tourism, e.g. agriculture and fishing.

⁵⁵ Perhaps, if a similar process is triggered as recorded in Cancun (see Fainstein and Judd 1999), a formerly small resort town that slowly has transformed into a regional production centre, Nesebar might be alleviated from its sole dependence upon tourism.

⁵⁶ Although Urry (1990) has pointed out that in some cases the presence of other tourists can be a crucial factor in the actual tourist experience.

compared the original setting of the central beach in Nesebar with its current situation, it became quite evident how tourism development can transform an entire area in physical and symbolical ways: the beach, once enjoyed for its tranquillity and natural environment, is now characterized by oppressive buildings that align the beachfront and massive crowds congregating at the beach during the summer months.

Regarding the historic city of Venice as another example in this context, it is clearly not the same city anymore since the time it acclaimed its status as cultural tourist destination. Although the physical landscape, i.e. the cultural heritage of the city, carefully has been conserved and preserved over the years, the dynamic landscape of the city, however, has transformed dramatically. Tourists dominate the streetscape today as opposed to the local inhabitants who mostly moved away, making place for hotels and restaurants (gentrification). Although the monuments in the city still provoke imaginations of bygone times in the perception of the visitor, the original qualities of most monuments has long since vanished. Nevertheless, a visit to Venice today, will testify that the bulk of tourists arguably are not too preoccupied with such contemplations and happily consume the historical heritage without much constraints over the actual symbolic meaning of many urban artifacts.

In reality, we frequently continue to appreciate elements whose function has been lost over time; the value of these artifacts often resides solely in their form, which is integral to the general form of the city; it is, so to speak, an invariant of it.

Aldo Rossi (1982: p60)

The massive transformations in the urban landscape of Nesebar eventually can damage the quality of the tourist experience insofar that, sooner or later, the vitality (sustainability) of the town is jeopardized. Tourists searching for authentic experiences or expecting the tranquil surroundings of a beach, increasingly will be disappointed upon visiting Nesebar. And although Nesebar currently is a relatively cheap destination on the European market and as such appealing to many tourists, new and cheaper destinations enter the tourist marketplace every year. Moreover, ongoing economic development in Bulgaria presumptively will cause prices to go up and thus subsequently weaken the competitive advantage of Nesebar.

Urban design as a means of tourism development?



Figure 82: Nesebar Archaeological Museum, built in 1994

When most assets have been exploited and consumed in a tourism destination, new assets have to be created (regeneration) in order to keep tourists interested. As culture, traditions and heritage are strongly connected to a time-space continuum, these peculiarities of a place cannot be created instantly. Theme parks, shopping malls, golf-courts etc. often have been devised and implemented to quickly reanimate tourism destinations which were experiencing stagnating or even declining tourist numbers. These interventions, however, contribute little to the development of the cultural sphere of a town or to the successively strengthening of local urban identities. On the contrary, it contributes to the increasing standardization of the physical urban landscape in many tourism destinations as most of these, arguably, incompatible interventions, substantially lack a creative and cultural dimension.

Applying urban design to cultivate appealing tourism spaces is not without controversies. Consciously moulding an urban landscape that tourists wish to inhabit is touching upon the paradigms of 'McDisneyfication' or 'McDonalidization'. "The McDonalidization of society is a form of 'grand narrative', viewing the world as growing increasingly predictable and dominated by controlling technologies". (Shaw and Williams 2004: p124) Theme parks and

shopping malls are the modern examples of such new forms of tourism consumption which are shaped around entertainment and excitement in a highly standardized and controlled environment. (Shaw and Williams 2004) But the physical landscape of many cities and towns, and especially their historical centres thus, certainly were not conceived and designed as tourist spaces in the first place.

Old European towns, which have grown rather than been planned, are much like natural landscapes. To get lost in them is a delight, quite appropriate to the situation. One can interpret and enjoy the experience as a sequence of unexpected vistas, stimulating in their variety and not predetermined by a recognizable map of overall order. Such an environment is in the nature of a texture rather than a design; it is held together by its homogeneity...

Rudolf Arnheim (1977: p114)

The objects of the gaze involved in urban tourism, e.g. heritage or culture, are usually the product of centuries of urban development that reflect the traditional life-styles, manufacturing industries and various artistic periods that have been the shaping forces of the urban landscape in many towns and cities.

For if urban artifacts presents nothing but a problem of organization and classification, then they have neither continuity nor individuality. Monuments and architecture have no reason to exist; they do not “say” anything to us. Such positions clearly take on an ideological character when they pretend to objectify and quantify urban artifacts; utilitarian in nature, these views are adopted as if they were products for consumption.

Aldo Rossi (1982: p48)

Notwithstanding that nowadays certain tourists purposely pursue highly staged tourism experiences and thereby wilfully accept ‘fake’ landscapes, (Judd and Fainstein *et al.* 1999) contriving an urban landscape purely for tourism purposes contradicts in a sense with one of the fundamental incentives for people to visit other places; namely to experience and observe urban landscapes that to a certain degree are authentic instead of purely ‘staged’ and moulded to respond to the expectations and imaginations of tourists.

A notable exception is the growing appearance of iconic architecture in the urban tourism space (see chapter 2). These usually highly avant-garde designs often trigger a process of urban regeneration in towns as is proven for example in Bilbao with the Guggenheim museum. But granted that these designs (mostly museums) often are spectacular and creative, a certain influence of commercialism can hardly be contested as the implementation of these urban design projects often are aimed to improve the image of a place, i.e. to attract more tourists and businesses. Which begs the question if this development truly enhances local identity and creative cultural development or if it in the end merely functions as an economic catalyst for a dormant (tourism) industry?

A structural shift towards culture and more knowledge based industries (Heßler and Zimmermann 2008) would address the increasing importance of creative milieus that can foster new cultural development and strengthen the identity of places in the increasing competition among towns. Such a process would help to produce a more dynamic urban landscape that is built on local culture and that advocates a healthy process of constant reappraisal of the urban landscape as a reflection of contemporary society.

The research question

Before meditating on the future of Nesebar and other tourism towns alike, let me reiterate the initial hypotheses and research questions and assess whether the basic assertion of this thesis has been legitimate; small or medium sized towns strongly dominated by tourism development primarily are moulded as 'playgrounds' for tourists as opposed to living habitats for the local inhabitants.

I. Homogenization of the physical urban landscape

Neighbouring towns to Nesebar have as well witnessed massive tourism development in recent years. The architecture is hard to distinguish from what is predominantly built in Nesebar; designs are highly standardized and generally massive in scale and scope. Town beaches are claimed by large hotel and resort complexes and brand new holiday villages pop up everywhere alongside the coast. Implementation is often predictable and segmenting and as such producing an urban landscape that is both monotonous and fragmented. With economic motivations strongly dominating urban planning and, at the same time, creative cultural development apparently absent, the urban landscape in mass tourism destinations increasingly appear to homogenize despite efforts made by towns to position themselves in the tourism marketplace (diversification).

II. The needs and desires of tourists outweigh that of local inhabitants

Although it is not straightforward to sum up the desires and needs of tourists, which can vary considerably, Nesebar clearly testifies that tourism can dominate the urban development sphere in local economies completely reliant on tourism. Apart from a few noteworthy parks, urban development in Nesebar has involved for the greater part the extensive construction of tourism resort and hotels, mostly built at prime locations in and around Nesebar. Additionally there has been substantial investment seen in the old town which, however, predominantly concerns the refurbishment of typical Black Sea houses that are converted into

hotels or restaurants. Especially along the edges of the peninsula, hotels and resort complexes are prevalent; demonstrating once more the dominant influence of tourism to claim first-class locations in the urban landscape. Thus, because tourism lays claim to the finest areas in the urban landscape it can reasonably be said the interests of local inhabitants are marginalized.

III. Historical towns as outdoor Museums

Perhaps the most striking and conclusive of the four hypotheses is the musealisation of historic town centres. In Nesebar the historic town embodies an important tourism resource which increasingly has been treated as such; a product that bears substantial economic potential: Souvenir stores align the streets of the old town these days with their cheap displayed good; plethora of hotels and restaurant have settled on the fringes of the peninsula to take advantage of the strong tourist appeal of the old town; a substantial number of people have moved away from the old town to rent out their old houses during the summer months; and lastly, public amenities increasingly have re-located to the new town of Nesebar, which gradually has taken over the role of the old town centre. The economic opportunities offered by tourism strongly can determine urban development in small or medium sized tourism towns which often is marked by the complete surrendering of the historical town centre to tourism.

Although many of the inhabitants in Nesebar have, more or less, accepted this musealisation process as coincidental to tourism development, visitors may, at a certain point in time (stagnation phase), be disenchanted by the staged and lifeless environment of the old town and, as such, will favour new and more 'exotic' locations. With the everyday life of local inhabitants more and more diverted away from the old town, an urban landscape is left behind where merely the facades of history still stand erected that, however, have lost most of their symbolic meaning as they are no longer shaped by human (inter) action and perceptions.

IV. Transformation leads to alienation

As I mentioned before, the local population in Nesebar has quite readily accepted the physical and dynamic transformations that have taken place in the urban landscape. As the current generations are brought up with tourism, it has become such an integral aspect of everyday life in Nesebar that most inhabitants probably could not imagine their world without tourists. It is important to stress in this context the deep entanglement of tourism in the local economy of Nesebar which almost completely depends upon tourism revenues. As the majority of residents in Nesebar are employed by the inherent tourism industry,

it has not been a complete surprise that most people happily welcome tourism in Nesebar; economic alternatives are either lacking or unremunerative. As tourism has contributed substantially to the economic development of Nesebar it is commonly considered that life in Nesebar has vastly meliorated; compared to other towns in Bulgaria, Nesebar has economically thrived after the collapse of the communist regime and the yearning for an often idealised past is not a pending theme. Yet it has been somewhat surprising that the inhabitants still consider the historic centre to most properly symbolize Nesebar although it less and less is a construct of their own human actions and perceptions. Notwithstanding some of the more critical remarks uttered, the inhabitants in Nesebar do not express a feeling of alienation towards their own urban landscape despite the massive transformations that have taken place.

What can be inferred from all this is that when the local economy of small or medium sized towns strongly is dependent on tourism, it quickly can become a determining factor in the urban landscape. The focal point of urban planning in such places is on the exploitation of the available tourism resources aiming to successively attract great numbers of tourists. Although the assertion of towns purely moulded as playground for tourists perhaps has been somewhat hyperbolic, it is difficult to impugn the fact that the need and desires of tourists strongly control the field of urban planning in small or medium sized tourism towns. Place marketing in Nesebar has hitherto revolved foremost around images and conditioned representations of the urban landscape whereby the local community gravely has been underrepresented. Urban identity seems to be adrift in Nesebar as the discrepancies between the projected images of the town and the current realities are vast. As urban identity is foremost about the people that live in places and about their actions, it becomes evident that in landscapes where economic and consumer motivation take the overhand the notion of urban identity becomes fluid. An emerging identity crisis seems to develop as places lose the relation to their local inhabitants and predominantly are becoming the outcome of economic motivations.

The future of small or medium sized tourism towns

To maintain the balance between local identity and international profiling requires considerable creativity and local political self-consciousness. It is clearly a difficult balancing act which requires courage and leadership.

Klaus R. Kunzmann (2004: p388)

The very approach that is making our towns, cities and regions successful – the application of creativity, the development of cultural vitality, the celebration of difference – is severely lacking in the practice and literature being used to promote ‘places’.

Chris Murray (2001: p9)

...we need an environment which is not simply well organized, but poetic and symbolic as well. It should speak of individuals and their complex society, of their aspirations and their historical tradition, of the natural setting, and of the complicated function and movement of the city world. But clarity and structure and vividness of identity are first steps to the development of strong symbols.

Kevin Lynch (1960: p119)

With increasing numbers of small and medium sized towns depending on tourism, images and marketing have become evermore vital aspects in the tourism landscape. Which begs the question what the future will be of tourism spaces that are increasingly characterized by high levels of standardization and consumerist motivations (sellable images) and less shaped around the collective memories (actions) and urban mindscapes⁵⁷ of local inhabitants? The staging and the theatricalisation of many destinations, which according to Chang (quoted in Shaw and Williams 2004: p247), often tends to “accentuate themes peculiar to their culture and location as a way to differentiate themselves from competitors”, in a sense implies an increasing diversity in tourism spaces, however, as culture and local identity often are misrepresented or idealized in a highly selective way, the overall result is not only highly superficial but as well rendering creative cultural development to the background. Mass tourism destinations like Nesebar face an identity crisis that cannot be resolved by the ‘typical’ branding of a historical centre or the application of other, appropriated, marketing techniques. The urban landscape is not a marketable good, it needs to be contemplated in a much broader view that is more all-inclusive, e.g. reflecting individual and collective memories, pluralistic perspectives, politics, society, culture, economy etc.

Imaginary is latent and deeply rooted. Image disseminated from campaign (place marketing) can become part of the imaginary, but must correspond to it, i.e. be culturally homologous.

Rolf Lindner (2008: p36)

⁵⁷ Bianchini (2008: p14) has described urban mindscapes as follows: “An urban mindscape is a structure of thinking about a city. It indicates something which exists between the physical landscape of a city and people’s visual and cultural perceptions of the city.

What are the shaping forces of the urban (tourism) landscape that will strengthen the images of places as well as produce a landscape that is widely inclusive; responsive both to the imaginations and expectation of tourists as of the local inhabitants? Culture certainly is a key aspect in this respect. Culture can create and strengthen local urban identities and as Kunzmann (2004) argues, culture can not only strengthen the identity of a place but also sharpen its image, enhance the value of certain places and contribute to the local economic development of places.

Without culture to make the difference, every place would seem blandly the same [...] Without their different cultural heritages, places around the world would have little to offer that would attract for purposes of tourism.

Boniface, P., quoted in Paskaleva-Shapira, Bessson, Hoffmann and Wintzer (2004: p9)

Culture is an intrinsic aspect of collective memories which arguably, more than history,⁵⁸ (Boyer 1996) should be the driving force behind the urban development of cities and towns. The collective and individual memories of a city or town give resonance to the urban fabric and inform regarding desires for a town's future (Bloomfield 2008), and as Rossi (1982) has argued, collective memory approaches the deepest structure of urban artifacts and hence their form in the architecture of the city:

One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense, great ideas flow through the history of the city and gives shape to it.

Aldo Rossi (1982: p130)

Where the spatial form of the contemporary city or town reveals a patchwork of incongruous leftover pieces alongside a set of artfully designed compositions (Boyer 1996), something that is particularly evident in tourism places (tourist bubbles, heritage sites etc.), the "City of Collective Memory", as proposed by Boyer (1996), attempts to address the quandary in which many places (in particular small and medium sized mass tourism destinations) find themselves:

The public realm of the City of Collective Memory should entail a continuous urban topography, a spatial structure that cover both rich and poor places, honorific and humble monuments, permanent and ephemeral forms, and should include places for public assemblage and public debate, as well as private memory walks and personal retreats.

Christine Boyer (1996: p9)

⁵⁸ As Boyer argues, history is always manipulated and represented in a play of lost significance, while collective memories on the other hand are plural, alive and cannot be appropriated.

In the City of Collective Memory, the architect, city planner, and spectator must begin to move beyond the will to instrumentally formulate historical unities. This gesture requires accepting the inadequacies of both the City as Panorama, with its rational scientific models based on describable pasts and predictable futures, and the City of Spectacle, with its commercially contrived and theatricalised stage sets.

Christine Boyer (1996: p68)

In the City of Collective Memory the narrative form of a place will be pursued again and history and the collective and individual memories again become the shaping aspects in the physical urban landscape which is both the recorder and transmitter of the imaginary and representational forms of the town or city; “Without the monumental illusion before our eyes of the living, history would be a mere ‘abstraction’.” (Auge, quoted in Bloomfield 2008: p54) And as Bloomfield (2008: p54) further comments, “spatial constructions can exert a magical effect by embodying and transcending memories and thoughts that precede and outlive the individual.”

Cities are not empty pages, but narrative spaces in which particular (hi)stories, myths and parables are inscribed. Public and private institutions – from libraries to museums to sports stadiums, - have served as surfaces for inscription, just as have the streets, squares and parks whose names shape the collective memory of the city.

Rolf Lindner (2008: p41)

Urban imaginaries and urban mindscapes are interesting notions in relation to the development of a town as both aspects embody mental imaginative representations of a place that can inform about desires for the town’s future. These concepts need to be understood as more than merely some abstract distillations of a town or city but as factors that actually constitute it. (Bianchini 2008) “The imaginary gives a place meaning, sense, ‘lends it a spirit’ which ‘touches’ us, and as such gives the real greater depth and going beyond it in the sense of adding something extra. (Lindner 2008: p36)

We do not just read the city; we negotiate the reality of cities by imagining “the city.” [...] It is imagination which produces reality as it exists.

Donald 1999, quoted in Bianchini (2008: p16)

Tourism destinations need to move away from a development approach that regards a place as a product in order to move beyond the predictable landscapes of visual consumption and pleasures which are so characteristic in the City of Spectacle (Boyer 1996) and again begin to include the views, experiences and imaginations (mindscapes) of the inhabitants in shaping the urban landscape.

The danger of describing places as urban products lies not in their commodification but also in the disaggregation of the city into a series of attractive attributes [...]. This process tends to avoid and even exclude the many other reading which diverse populations may have of the same environment. It promotes a schizophrenic attitude to place as a collection of discrete and identifiable pieces, each with a formulated image, rather than a layered identity with plural meanings

Erickson and Roberts, quoted in Weiss-Sussex (2008: p238)

The development of a town based upon the perceptions and urban mindscapes of inhabitants will be multifaceted and heterogeneous, and as such reflecting a more realistic image of a town. This would prepare the way for a more sensitive and inclusive approach to place marketing; one that allows for the recognition and promotion of the unique mix that constitutes a particular town's identity. (Weiss-Sussex 2008)

The solution, ultimately, is to place higher value on cultural identity so that it is an end in itself rather than being a means to an end of economic well-being.

P.T Newby (1994: p225-226)

Especially in this era of globalisation, the urban imaginary can become a strategic force to resist monolithic, unequal globalisation imposed by powerful economic and political elites, which have no democratic mandate to determine the city's or town's future. (Bloomfield 2008) In shaping an alternative vision, tourism destinations need to keep up with the aspirations of local inhabitants for whom the urban landscape still bears cultural meaning, and for that matter, urban imaginary and collective memories can help to remake a place in the image of its citizens.

Although the views and experiences of inhabitants arguably are the key to successful urban design, one might, however, ponder on what the quality of these imaginations and experiences are that pervade in the minds of residents. Lynch (1960) has explored this particular issue by assessing the quality of images in the mind of an observer. He argues that "in the development of the image, education in seeing will be as important as the reshaping of what is seen [...] a highly developed art of urban design is linked to the creation of a critical and attentive audience." (1960: p120) If such an audience yet exists certainly is ground for further exploration which however lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless it is important to be mindful of this precondition which arguably is essential for future urban design that pursues landscapes which are foremost based upon the experiences and imaginations of the inhabitants.

Nesebar

The current situation in Nesebar is all but rosy and a dramatic shift in tourism management and urban planning arguably is necessary to beware the town from becoming a literal playground for tourists. With some appropriate interventions, however, certain current on-going processes can be reverted in order to attain an urban environment that first and foremost is a place where people live as opposed to a place where tourists reside.

One of the key problems in Nesebar, and in other towns alike, is the (ongoing) musealisation of the historic centre. As the interviews have attested, the old town in Nesebar is still ascribed with much symbolic value by the local inhabitants. However, as everyday life is more and more diverting away from the old town, new memories and experiences are more likely to evolve around the urban landscape of the new town. And even though the historic old town will always remain a stable base and important reminder of Nesebar's rich history, the symbolic value of the streets and monuments is likely to fade away without the activities and experiences of local people. Notwithstanding many tourists readily consume cultural heritage without many constraints, increasing numbers of tourists demand more authentic 'townscapes' as opposed to the theatricalised sceneries seen today in many historic centres.

The following interventions are envisioned as incentives to restore the balance in Nesebar's urban landscape as well as to provide opportunities to promote creative (urban) development, local identity, sense of place etc.

a. Re-establishing public functions in the old town and restricting the number of hotels, resorts and accommodations in Nesebar

Creating a healthy symbiotic nexus between the old town and the new town can represent a crucial factor in an attempt to revitalize the old town and again include it into everyday life in Nesebar. The exploitation of the town's heritage for tourism purposes attempt to conquer the historic city by the all-natural, to the detriment of urban ordinary life. (Dumont, Ruelle and Teller 2005) Relocating public functions could stimulate social activity in the old town and furthermore strengthen its symbolic value as a dynamic aspect in everyday life in Nesebar. Subsequently it could provide an incentive for shopkeepers- not souvenir stores-, to re-relocate their businesses as locals, presumptively, more frequently spend time in the old town.

An additional important step can be to reduce and restrict the number of tourist accommodations in the old town. The current number of hotels and resorts in the old town is substantial and arguably defies the 'carrying' capacity of the old town. Although realizing that a potential restriction will affect a number of people that hitherto have benefited from rental activities, it arguably is a necessary intervention to prevent the old town from transforming into a 'dormitory'.

b. Improving public space in the new town and strengthening the dynamic (visual) interaction between the new and old town

Quality urban space is noticeably absent in the new town. Urban design has been strongly subjected to the sovereign (world heritage) status of the old town and arguably has not been contemplated as a potential dynamic incentive to creatively develop the urban landscape of the new town. The dominant status of the old town weighs heavily upon the urban planning process in Nesebar: the creative potential of urban planning in Nesebar has hitherto remained untapped. The economic potential of tourism development, i.e. the exploitation of available resources, has been the governing incentive in recent urban development projects which as a result have contributed little to the quality of the urban (living) environment. I would like to highlight two areas that both possess the potential to serve as catalyst for creative urban development in Nesebar and moreover can embody a role of 'connecting urban spaces' in the increasingly incongruous urban landscape of Nesebar.

Public square

With public space is so apparently lacking in the new town, the area marked below arguably provides a palpable opportunity for intervention. The area offers huge potential as binding element in Nesebar's urban landscape as it is interjacently located between the old and new town. It can enhance the visual relationship between the new and old town as its slight inclination allows for a relatively unfettered panoramas of the old town. If combined with public functions, e.g. sports, culture, gastronomy, and permeated with local initiatives, a public space can develop that not only could strengthen the urban identity of Nesebar but as well the nexus between the old and new town.



Figure 83: The area marked in white offers great potential as public space in the new town



Figure 84: Panorama view of the old town; taken from the proposed area indicated in white above

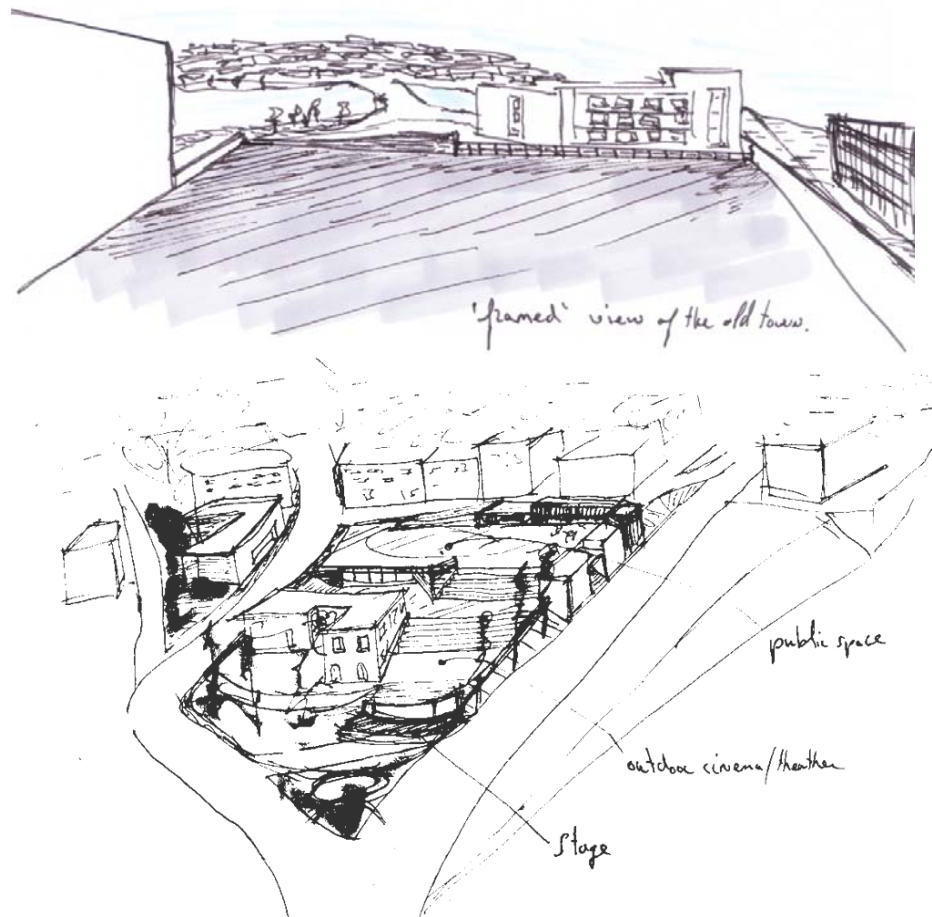


Figure 85: Idea for a public square in the new town

Urban path

A second potential area for development within Nesebar's urban landscape presents itself as a linear element in Nesebar's urban landscape. Running along the northern edges of the new and old town, this 'urban path' offers great potential for (further) development whereby one could think of a park (green belt), cultural events or other leisure activities to revitalize the area. Diskin (2008) already contemplated on the richness of such linear urban paths which have the potential to embody all the three theoretical urban layers of urban identity. When contemplating the path as a linear (green) park for example, it would incorporate the three urban layers as follows: static spaces defined by green elements, dynamism in traversing the path on foot or by bicycle, and the open mind space that a natural environment provides (Diskin 2008). The path sets forth many qualities and can become a vital and vibrant element in Nesebar's urban landscape.



Figure 86: The 'urban path' running along the northern fringes of the old and new town



Figure 87: The potential of the urban path has remained untapped hitherto.

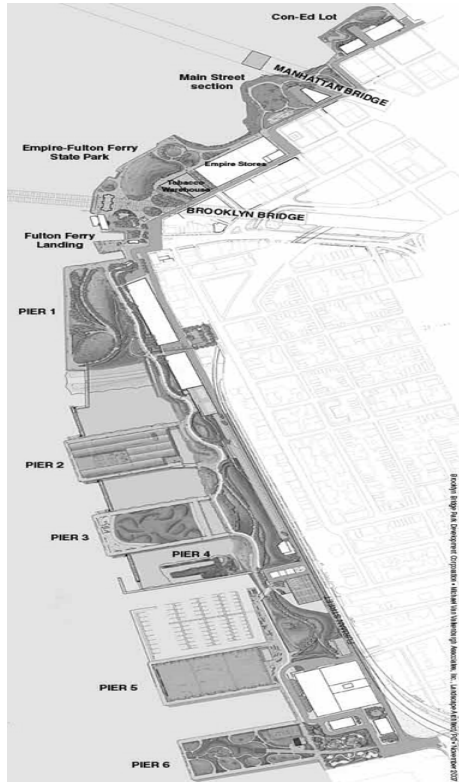


Figure 88: Brooklyn Bridge Park: Myriad functions integrated in a natural landscape



Figure 89: Brooklyn Bridge Park; Exemplary linear park along the shores of Brooklyn, NYC



Figure 90: Idea for the urban path in Nesebar: a green belt traversing both sides of the town

c. A paradigm shift in tourism development

Tourism needs to be reconceptualised as a shaping force of the urban landscape to transcend the highly exclusive nature of tourism development and ultimately strive for a more all-inclusive approach.

- Improved distribution of tourism facilities

Tourism is an integral part of the urban landscape of Nesebar and therefore should be considered as such. The current distribution of tourism structures however tends to be exclusive in the nature of its implementation which needs to be dissolved to attain a stronger integration of tourism structures within the built environment.

- Downscaling of hotels and resort complexes

The relative small-size of Nesebar does not justify or legitimate the scope and scale of some resorts seen today in and around the new town. These rather obtrusive elements in the urban landscape of Nesebar reconcile poorly with the 'original' composition of the town and as such it is important to advocate more small scale tourist complexes which can be more readily incorporated into the town's built environment.

- Reconceptualize tourism facilities

Besides enhancing the distribution of tourism facilities within the urban landscape of Nesebar, reconceptualising tourism complexes as multiplex buildings where both tourists and locals are clients could increase local participation and relatedness towards the built environment.

- Pursuing a 'readable' urban landscape

The history of Nesebar comprises various eras and cultures that all need to be reflected in the urban landscape of Nesebar. Therefore it is important that more recent history is regarded as a valuable and intrinsic part of Nesebar's urban landscape, e.g. the socialist housing blocks, the pioneering hotels and resorts etc., in order to attain in urban landscape that is widely inclusive and sensible to the local conditions.

Conclusive remarks

The future of small or medium sized towns dominated by tourism is bleak. Idealistic representations have become the reality of tourism development and tourism places increasingly develop as spaces of transmitted images. Where local inhabitants should comprise the pulsing heart of a town, in tourism destinations it are the visitors that reanimate everyday life. But without the human actions and collective and individual memories of inhabitants, urban environments are merely a convocation of physical structures that persist only as for their economic purpose.

The failures of contemporary place marketing and place promotion are copiously analysed by Murray (2001) as he contemplates on a more holistic approach to place marketing which clearly puts the local inhabitant at the centre of place development. "The history and identity of a place is shaped entirely by human actions and perception, through time." (Murray 2001: p111) Quality place marketing needs to move away from derivative reproductions to revealing the unique, in the same way:

Working across sectoral boundaries, being experimental and original, adopting a more critical, challenging and inquiring approach, putting people at the centre, and developing a deeper understanding of the past, present and future of the place we are promoting, will radically shift current thinking.

Chris Murray (2001: p14)

Place marketing practice needs to be more reflexive in order to produce more realistic and all-inclusive images of the contemporary urban landscape of places and a radical shift is necessary within the current tourism paradigm in order to move away from the ongoing exploitation of available (existing) cultural resources and advocate the creation of new (cultural) resources. In this context it is essential that local authorities become aware of the dangers resulting from overdevelopment and realize the ephemeral character of most tourism resources. On-going cultural development will be necessary to generate additional (cultural) tourism resources which are not only crucial for the vitality of a tourism town. Subsequently it can serve as an incentive to more actively include the local inhabitants of a place in the development of their urban landscape in order to finally make sense of places again. Local inhabitants are the only true ambassadors of place development and efforts should be made by local authorities to more actively include local inhabitants in the urban development process. Urban planners and architects can be the mediators and translators in this process but their actions are futile if participation of the local population continuous to be rendered superfluous.

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Appendix 1: Interview

Personal facts

1. How old are you?
2. What kinds of schools have you attended?
3. What is your current profession?

Urban Perspective

4. What are significant public spaces for you currently in Nessebar [where do you meet friends, orientation elements, etc.]?
5. What are for you the most important and interesting elements of the *new* part of Nessebar in a physical sense [building or urban spaces]?
6. Would you say that you feel part of a particular community in Nessebar?
7. What symbolizes the town Nessebar for you [perhaps a sound, smells, monuments, squares, traditions etc.]?
8. How often [each week or every day] and for what reasons are you spending time in the Old Town of Nessebar?
9. What is your opinion with regard to the new [tourism] structures [hotels, resorts] that have been built in recent years in Nessebar? [regarding their visual appearance and their quantity]
10. Do you often get in contact with tourists and what is your attitude towards tourists in general?
11. Would you say that the quality of life in Nessebar has improved much over the recent years [money, possibilities etc.]?
12. Are there any pressing social problems in Nessebar that you are aware of?