

A century of tourism in Europe. New challenges to the discipline of Urbanism

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the most important modern phenomena of the last hundred years. Not only for its economic significance, but also by the changes it has produced in the city and the territory. Unfortunately, in many cases its economic success has exceeded the growth forecast, destroying what had been its raison d'être: the city.

Urban planning and architecture have participated in this process by showing their contempt with the physical consequences of this slackness. The discipline seems not to have understood that we are in front of a major phenomenon that needs its own tools to face these transformations.

Nowadays, in the early twenty-first century, there are two different challenges: how to turn the tourist conglomeration in Southern European coast into a city, and how to include the matter of leisure in the post-industrial city debate.

Keywords: tourism, urbanism, Europe, territory, coast.

Introduction

Tourism has been one of the most significant economic, urban, territorial and architectonic phenomena in Europe during the twentieth century. Diverse disciplines have analysed it, such as geography, sociology or economy. However, architecture and urbanism have not paid the same attention to tourism, despite its impact on the territory. These disciplines have historically considered tourism to be a very lucrative activity, but not an object of study.

We owe the Grand Tour the interest in architectural heritage and the evolution of urban mapping. Those trips young British aristocrats made through continental Europe to complete their education in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be considered the origin of tourism. Urban mapping was a tourist guide to visitors, before being used as a technical tool for modern developments. Bufalini's 1551 and Nolli's 1748 maps of Rome are two examples of the value of maps as a guide to visitors, in which the relationship between new and old is highlighted; the relation between the real city and archaeological remains or the space left by the monumental buildings.

Spas, promenades and baths

Modern tourism started with the discovery of nature and body care. The industrial city had moved man away from the countryside as well as pollution and «bad humours» of the city had put their health at risk. In front of these dangers, a new health culture and the return to natural premises experience again the historical ways of «taking the waters». Old spas become the leisure and entertainment meeting place for wealthy classes. Many destinies cover the map of Europe, where they relax and socially interact: Bath, in England; Spa, in Belgium; Baden-Baden, in Germany; Vichy, in France; Davos, in Switzerland, Montecatini, in Italy, or Yalta, in Russia, are good examples of this. The spa is an urban building located in the countryside, which is gradually complemented with services and attractions, such as the theatre, the casino and the clinics, leading to the spa town.

Bath is a school of good manners for the English aristocratic society, in which Richard Nash becomes the master. The spa is placed in the interior of the country, in the mountains, and its expansion depends on those who can afford it, as it is very exclusive. The first main change comes from the Medicine, which determined that cool water seas were a very healthy shock therapy. Afterwards, the spa goes down from the mountains to the coast: the cold coast of the North Sea, the Baltic and the English Channel. The aristocracy moves from Bath to Brighton, led by the Prince of Wales, as Scheveningen (Holland) competes with Spa (Belgium). In the Baltic, Heiligendamm (Germany), Jūrmala (Latvia) or Sopot (Poland) turn up.

The hot water spa, the Mediterranean Sea, is not revealed until the early twentieth century, when the monarchs or dethroned ones looked for a milder climate. Tobias Smollett, Scottish doctor and writer, true inventor of Nice (*Travels through France and Italy*, 1766) will claim this land as a country where winter is like the English summer. The new spas in the coast will be promoted by the aristocracy: Biarritz by Napoleon III, driven by his wife Eugenia, Brighton by the Duke of Wales, Corfu Island, Madeira or Cape Saint Martin by Empress Sisi, Empress Victoria will be interested in the Isle of Wright.

Aristocratic tourism will mark the territory of tourism in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, although the architectural and urban contributions of this period are scarce. The only significant contribution in this period will probably be the waterfront, the design of an urban balcony facing the sea. In the historic cities where tourism starts, the promenade often replaces the old city wall, demolished in the early nineteenth century, when due to new military technology it becomes useless and it is confirmed that the greatest risk is the tumult of the crowd inside rather than attacks from the outside. In the open coast to the beach, as in the district of Croix de la Marbre of Nice, the growth of the city next to the historic city —on the flat area in front of the sea— revolves around the promenade, which becomes both the mechanism to privatize dunes and salt marshes and the central element of the city.

From aristocratic tourism to mass tourism

Whilst the spa town expands, some services for leisure are built up in the industrial city. The bourgeoisie develop their own spaces, some of them taken from the aristocracy, such as opera, lounges and cafes. The new working classes require more intense attractions, in order to have fun after a stressful workday. In Europe, the most popular amusements are the Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Tivoli in Copenhagen or the Wiener Prater. The transition from aristocratic tourism to mass tourism does not occur until the interwar period, when workers from the most industrially advanced countries gain the right to paid holidays. The conquest of this right is the result of a very slow process that began in the late nineteenth century, although it did not become widespread until after World War I, in response to the demands of the working classes as part of a strategy to contain the spread of communism.

All sorts of movements led the first social tourism focused on lower classes. In 1893, Paul Lafargue, Carl Marx's son-in-law, published a pamphlet entitled *Le droit à la paresse*. Pastor Wilhem Blon organized the first educational summer camps for children in Zurich. Baden-Powell published *Scouting for boys* in 1908. Politicians decided to intervene and totalitarian governments promote specific policies to regulate the use of leisure time, especially for youth. In 1933 the Nazi regime launches the Kraft durch Freude (KdF) and Mussolini the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (OND).

In Spain, those who followed Modern Architecture, gathered around the GATEPAC —among which we find young Josep Lluís Sert—, wanted to include some reflections about working classes' leisure and holidays within the work for CIAM IV. Consequently, they designed a major project of recovery and development of the beaches in the Llobregat Delta, in an agricultural plain near Barcelona. Those beaches had been presented by the Barcelona City Council as the «spa-beaches» for the 1929 Universal Exposition. In the specifications and panels of the so-called «Ciutat de repòs i de vacances» project, there is an explicit accusation against the risk of transforming these beaches into an exclusive area for upper-classes; an imitation of the models that were taking place in the French Riviera —Juan-Les-Pins and Cannes—, and the need to avoid the creation of a waterfront or land division. In front of this pattern, they proposed bands parallel to the sea, traffic segregation; turn the waterfront into a pedestrian area, and the creation of a great green belt. Free ground floors and blocks supported on pilotis to eliminate any obstacle to an open green area directly connected to the sea.

The construction of collective accommodation, hotels, hostels or colonies is a copy of the building in the compact city or the modern linear block facing the sea. The appearance of the panoramic hotel with terrace and sea views will not occur until mid-twentieth century. Medical architecture changes the model in the mountain spas. Those sanatoria where aristocratic tourism attended moved looking for healing waters and clean air. As the sun becomes a medicine, doctors suggest facing the rooms south and adding them a large terrace. Paimio tuberculosis sanatorium (1928-1933), by Alvar Aalto, is one of the first modern examples of the translation of new medical types into spa towns, as in Davos.

The means of transport as the driving force of mass tourism

The tourism boom was not only caused by the spread of the benefits of the new economic situation and holiday pay, but also by a revolution in the modes of transport and accessibility. Initially, tourism travels by stagecoach and boat. Boats basically carried goods, and in transatlantic travel, immigrants. As techniques improved and boats went from sail to steam, from wooden hull to iron, efficiency and security of trips increased, boats became mixed transport, cargo and immigrants or travellers. During the nineteenth century, the American upper classes made their Grand Tour through Europe, before visiting the beaches of California and the Caribbean. Boat building exclusively dedicated to leisure passengers was the outcome of a contradictory process.

From the point of view of tourism, cruises —real-floating palaces— were the necessary means of transport to come into fashion some coastal destinations, especially cities related to the domains of the British Empire. The golden period of the great cruises began in 1880 and ended with World War I, with boats such as *Mauritania*, the *Titanic*, the *Normandie* or the *Queen Mary*, which in some cases became icons for young architects of Modern Architecture. Marine transport did not have a major impact on the territory, but it marked the future of tourism in some ports.

The railway will lay the territorial foundations of mass tourism. The construction of the European railway network is developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, in a short period of time and following criteria of profitability in the short term. In the beginning, states agreed the construction of the first lines with private companies which seek higher returns by connecting cities and areas in which there is high demand. States will not intervene until the last quarter of the century to complete the network, recover

companies in bankruptcy and turn the railway into a public service. No country designed a global strategy to ensure a tourist exploitation of certain territories.

Thanks to Thomas Cook—who founded the first travel agency—the railway became the method of transport used by tourism for long destinations, such as the Trans-Siberian (1904), with companies such as the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits. However, the railway is the essential means for the development of mass tourism. On the one hand, it becomes the promoter of those destinations that are being communicated with the great industrial regions. On the other hand, it provides access to certain territories, those which the train passes through, which had been left out of industrial development.

The car helped to increase mobility and helped new territories to develop tourist areas. This means of transport became the mechanism that changed the shape and use of the city and territories. Nevertheless, more than the car, highways are the key element that will redraw the map of tourism at regional level. The railway had drawn the coastal area since the stations and their status as a physical barrier. The car recovered the road network and blurred the hierarchy that was imposed by the railway. Highways, with their exits and entrances, re-established differences in accessibility and design the territory as a set of nodes. The aircraft will strengthen this system thanks to airports, farther away from each other.

The aircraft is the most significant means of transport within this evolution. After World War II, aeronautics industries had increased their production capacity and expertise. After military confrontation, these companies appear and develop throughout the world the flag carriers. States consider aviation a strategic means of transport. The big revolution occurs fifteen years later, when aviation changes aviation propeller for propulsion turbines, and state companies sell their old stuff to charter airlines.

For the first time, tourism has its own means of transport and, by reducing travel costs; tourism becomes the first global market. The control of tourist market depends on the control of the means of transport. Travel agencies turn into tour operators, which gain customers in their countries of origin, organise their trip and activates competence among supplies. Thus, customers choose according to final prices rather than the differences and particularities of each place. The island of Majorca is the main laboratory where to experiment how to control the market and manage the benefits of a general supply of Fordism nature.

The last two key transformations will be the recuperation of the railway to function both as a metropolitan and a high-speed transport, and the creation of the low cost companies. These companies will promote second-rate airports, which will help certain long distance pendulum like motion that will end up in the so-called residential tourism. It will also give a chance to backpackers.

The spread of mass tourism

After World War II, the «Marshall Plan» helped mass tourism to consolidate in the two blocs in which the continent is divided into, but following different patterns. In the Eastern Bloc, the social formulas that started in the interwar period are still working: colonies, social spas or camps. Obviously, almost no countries in this bloc had warm seas, and due to the type of economy they did not have the need or the opportunity to carry out a development such as the one that will occur in the western Mediterranean area. Thus, social tourism in these countries is a continuation of the paternalistic policies of totalitarian governments, using the same urban forms, and let medium classes to get into the aristocratic spas of the beginning of the early twentieth century.

In the Western Bloc the process will be divided in two phases. The first phase, the starting point, will take place until mid-seventies. The second one, the explosion and abuse of the coastal area, will ultimately risk the tourist vocation of some locations and their ability to regenerate. France and Spain are the two countries that more clearly illustrate this process, in which town planning and governments play different

roles. In 1947, French geographer J. F. Gravier published *Paris et le désert français*, where he denounced the huge imbalance that occurred in France between the capital and the periphery.

French government focused on rebuilding the historical cores and developing the grands ensembles, according to Modern Architecture, embodied by the Team X (1960-1981). Georges Candilis is the most distinctive architect of the French group. When the government carries out the «Racine Operation» — named after the government employee who led the process of construction of 16 tourist resorts in the Mediterranean coast— Candilis becomes the director of the project and who decided the role of architecture and urban planning in this territory. Candilis theorizes about this in several articles on leisure architecture, which should be the genuine expression of humankind option to choose in terms of time, activity and state. Joffre Dumazedier had defined these three states in his text *Vers une cristallisation des loisirs* (1962): «relax, fun and development». The projects that will be developed in Languedoc-Roussillon for 2.000.000 tourists will be a good example of how Team X faces the city of tourism: traffic separation, the nautical centre becomes the heart of the city, and an unchanging zoning, because there is no land left for an industrial usage, according to densities and typologies. Other characteristics are the negation of the seafront promenade, constructing triangular shape buildings in order to make the sea views possible, pedestrian promenades, sculptures in public space and leisure activities around the port. It will never be done again such a huge development in this area.

In Spain, since the early twentieth century until the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) the Spanish government had attempted to attract international tourism by promoting luxury hotels —called Paradores Nacionales— located in palaces, castles and monasteries rehabilitated with this aim. Spanish economy retreated due to Civil War, so it was necessary to reinforce tourism, even though they had to sell it to foreign investment. The «Plan for Economic Stability» opened Spain to European capital: investment in land took priority over the first attempts to manage urban and regional planning. The Franco dictatorship had bet on the losing side, and people were afraid of the international political vacuum. In 1976 the United States ratified a treaty with Spain entitled «Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation», which meant a breath of fresh air, and in 1979 it is approved the «National Stabilization Plan» to help Spain to prosper not being one of the poorest countries in Europe anymore.

Other European Mediterranean countries, like Italy, Yugoslavia or Greece, strategies are different. In Italy, the spa-type tourism of the past left many traces that were going to be helpful for later development. There no virgin beaches as in Algarve (Portugal), in the Costa del Sol (Spain) or in Languedoc-Roussillon (France). Housing divisions determine the rules of the game in Rimini (Adriatic coast) and in the lidos of the Po Delta. In the Adriatic coast, Tito's government wanted a tourist development closer to the Modern Architecture ideal, thought twenty-five years ago. In Greece, the tourist supply is totally connected to the archaeological heritage and, since Santorini was struck by a devastating earthquake in 1956 and Fira was rebuilt, the values of popular architecture as an alternative to cultural tourism.

Current situation of tourism and challenges for the future

The 1973 oil crisis tested the tourist sector. When it seemed it was going to fail —as an unnecessary activity— it resisted, while certain sectors collapsed, such metallurgy or shipbuilding; industries that had helped to build the industrial society. The crisis adjusted some settings and changed expectations. The lack of political stability in those countries that could compete with European holiday tourism, the fragmentation of holidays and the failure of commercial flights over the speed of sound make tourist attractions in Southern Europe to remain the preferred for the Northern countries. However, the single currency raises costs and, subsequently, the competitiveness of underdeveloped countries.

European tourism is thrown into confusion since the eighties. That competitiveness must be added to those mature tourist destinies that fell into obsolescence, the search for alternative ways of tourism, such

as rural tourism and, basically, the incorporation of a new urban tourism and those industrial cities under renovation. Tourism is no more an exclusive opportunity historical cities or wonderful landscapes — mainly beaches—have to incorporate everything concerning enjoying free time. Our cities are now the first tourist destiny for their own inhabitants, as well as any activity —economic, social, cultural, religious, etc.— is able to become a tourist attraction. Since the eighties, the role of town planning within tourist sector takes place in two different ways: creating new attractions —for a not very creative type of leisure—, and renovating those pieces inherited from mass tourism.

Nowadays, we live a period in which industrial city is being reconditioned, historical districts are recovered, old industries are reorganized, urban life is revitalized thanks to regaining the public space, obsolete industrial buildings turn into cultural facilities, or the organization of great events to put the city on the world map. On the one hand, tourism follows different patterns, and on the other hand, town planning deals with a topic that is not restricted to certain areas, after a period in which did not showed any interest on tourism. In the urban society of the twentieth century dichotomy city vs. countryside has disappeared, as well as industrial city vs. tourist territory.

One hundred years ago, when town planning emerged in Central Europe, the project in terms of discipline deals with the creation of the modern city following the rehabilitation standards inherited from industrial revolution; nowadays something similar occurs with the tourist project. Probably, in the beginning of the century nobody could imagine how significant and spread tourism was going to be. In the sixties it was still possible to claim that leisure city was a new project. Nowadays, in the early twentieth century, there are two different challenges: how to turn the tourist conglomeration in Southern European coast into a city, and how to include the mater of leisure in the post-industrial city debate.