

# NICE (NEW! COASTAL ECOLOGIES): TOWARD AN ALTERNATE MODEL FOR THE FUTURE ARCHITECTURE AND MASS TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE ALONG THE EUROPEAN MEDITERRANEAN COAST. CROATIAN COAST AS A CASE STUDY.

## Abstract

New! Coastal Ecologies (NICE) Research is positioned within the cross-section of spatial and social studies, focused on leisure, culture, and architecture. It addresses the concerns of two main stakeholder groups in coastal landscape development. One group is focused on maximizing growth and revenue within the tourism industry, while the other challenges the profit-centric approach, recognizes the carrying capacity of tourist destinations, and is aware of the decline in authenticity, identity, culture, and livelihoods. This division mirrors the paradoxical character of the tourism industry: its inverse relationship between success and the depletion of its resources, the cultural, and natural habitats.

In an era dominated by the grim realities of climate change and the global impact of mass tourism stemming from consumption patterns that emerged after WWII, there is a growing need for a shift in perspective. This research advances the notion that tourism need not be viewed as an inherently destructive force. On the contrary, there are alternative tourist developments and architectural typologies for tourism that take into account the benefit of ecological values and are beneficial for the local and global communities.

An illustrative instance is the Josic-Candilis-Woods seaside holiday resort in Port Leucate-Le Barcarès, constructed in 1965, being part of the broader framework of French governmental planning to enhance tourism infrastructure along the French coastline. Similarly, the (former) Yugoslavian government played a proactive role in fostering the creation of holiday resorts along the Croatian coast, foreseeing the emergence of inventive public and private leisure spaces designed to complement the natural surroundings. Delving into examining these constructive paradigms, which progressively waned with the rise of neoliberal capitalism, can serve as a valuable reference for crafting alternative coastal scenarios.

From the Brazilian "Costa de Sol" to the French "Côte d'Azur," coastal landscapes globally share differences and similarities, facing the common threat of destruction from mass tourism infrastructure. The Croatian coast, one of the coasts surrounding the "Mare Nostrum," as the ancient Romans referred to the Mediterranean Sea, is positioned as the focus of research exploring prospective landscapes and tourism dynamics of coastal destinations worldwide.

## Introduction

This academic paper critically examines the potential positive impact of tourism, challenging the notion that it is inherently destructive to the social, cultural, and natural values of destinations it touches. The exploration is organized into three main sections. The initial segment delves into broader issues surrounding tourism and leisure, drawing on various sociological and architectural discourses investigating the concept of leisure and its contemporary significance. From the transformative forces of 19th-century industrialization and urbanization to the mass consumption patterns of post-industrial societies, this section traces the gradual evolution of free time utilization and its impact on coastal regions and leisure infrastructure. By highlighting the changing dynamics of leisure and tourism, it showcases the influence of societal shifts on the perception and utilization of coastal areas, providing a historical perspective on the development of seaside resorts and emphasizing the positive aspects of vacation resorts for mass tourism planned by socialist governments.

The second part serves as a case study, focusing on the Croatian coast, which encapsulates key moments characteristic of the development of coastal tourist destinations. The initial coastal resort in Croatia exhibits similar developmental patterns to the first health and spa resorts in northern Europe. Addressing the post-war period and mass tourism boom, social and governmental policies akin to other Mediterranean coastal countries are explored. However, decades of centrally planned economy and the war of the 1990s temporarily mitigated the overconsumption of coastal territories, causing a "fertile delay," providing an opportunity to avoid the mistakes of more economically developed countries and making Croatia a laboratory for exploring alternative coastal development strategies.

Finally, the paper concludes by presenting a set of guidelines for approaching planning and design in future coastal developments, particularly in the face of the environmental crisis confronting the world. The increasing complexity of human interaction with the environment, entangled in intricate networks that blur the distinctions between nature and culture, underscores the necessity for changes in design practices. This includes planning and constructing future coastal landscapes with innovative approaches capable of conceptualizing sites, territories, ecosystems, networks, and infrastructures within new tourist destinations along the coastlines.

## Planning and Design for Leisure

"When we accept that the leisure of the greatest number is on the way to becoming a crucial phenomenon of contemporary civilization, we have to examine and review the evident and the hidden relationship that exists between leisure and the different activities of daily life, clarify its significance and the increasing role which it is called upon to play in our society."

— Candilis, *Planning a Design for Leisure*

The evolution of leisure and its impact on coastal landscapes is a tale that spans from Brighton in the mid-nineteenth century to the destructive mass tourism practices witnessed in places like Benidorm, Spain. The English fishing village of Brighton transformed from a medical spa into a recreational zone, setting the pattern for resorts where the beach became a site for pleasure, social interaction, and status reversals. The idea of well-being and the advantages of a mild climate and therapeutic sea align with a developing modern society's social and cultural awakening. It coincides with Freudian Vienna's pursuit of a departure from traditional modes of living. Early seaside health towns internalized the central duality of the attributes that would later become the main concept behind modern seaside resorts: creating a healthy environment for recreation and relaxation in the healthy sea air and becoming a profitable business — with the first tourist services.

For the working class of the industrialized world, the time between the two World Wars was a period of unrest and economic uncertainty. During that period, the potential of the sea resorts to contribute to the wellness of the people was recognized by fascist state-operated leisure organizations in Germany and Italy. In the 1930s, under the fascist regime, in support of building a strong nation of happy and healthy citizens, KdF (Strength Through Joy) initiated the building of the gigantic seaside resort near Prora in Germany. The resto served as an example for new models of coastal recreation that were realized with varying levels of success in post-war Europe; an unbroken wall of apartment blocks designed to host 20,000 holidaymakers extended for some kilometers along the coast. In Italy, thousands of summer colonies were created (1922–1943), most as temporary structures to assist children during the daytime (MULAZZANI, 2019).

In 1936, France witnessed negotiations resulting in trade union rights, a 40-hour workweek, and the establishment of the first paid workers' holidays known as the Matignon Agreements (Jackson, 1988). A year later, in the summer of 1937, The 5th Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) (Mumford, 2002), as an architectural forum for sharing ideas and formulating design guidelines for modern, 20th-century society, put leisure on its agenda. The Theme of the CIAM 5 was Housing and Leisure (Image 1). For the first time, modernist architects gathered around the CIAM forum and introduced the discussion on the space of the extra-urban countryside. As part of the CIAM 5 conference, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret designed the *Pavillon des Tempes Nouveaux (Pavilion of New Time)*. This tent-like structure tells the story of future cities, introducing the concept of the city and countryside (surrounding landscapes) as independent loci (space) for the modern mass leisure practice.

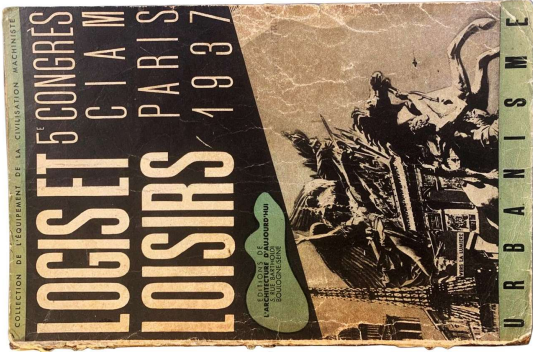


Image 11: Front cover image for the book Logis et loisirs: 5e congrès CIAM, Paris, 1937. (Source: Published by Éditions du Centre de Recherches et de Publications de l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1938.)

Post-World War II, leisure time and paid vacation rights became key elements in the democratization of society. Responding to new social constructs, a group of architects known as Team 10 emerged as a response to the CIAM's functionalist approach. Formed in the early 1960s, Team 10's criticism was centered around the perceived shortcomings of the functionalist and rationalist principles, as being too rigid and dogmatic, not adaptive to the changing cultural and social realities of advanced industrial society. While Team 10's primary focus was not specifically leisure and tourism, the approach in shaping a more responsive, adaptable, user-centric approach to architecture and urban planning influenced the development of leisure spaces and tourist destinations. The ideas about the importance of human scale, adaptability, and community participation were central to the design for vacation resorts by a French group of architects Candillis-Josic-Woods, who were part of the Team 10 group, alongside Alison and Peter Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, Jacob Bakema, Giancarlo Carlo, among others. During the fifteen years of partnership, the Candillis-Josic-Woods office elaborated more than ninety leisure-related projects, many of which were commissioned by the governmental plan to develop 180 km of the French coastal region Languedoc-Roussillon close to the Spanish border (Avermaete, 2005). In these projects, Candillis-Josic-Woods demonstrated new approaches in designing for leisure within the context of late industrial societies: anticipating democratic intention to give everybody access to natural resources (sea, mountain) on one hand — and the need to prevent the disappearance of those natural resources on the other; attempts to reconnect with more "dense" patterns of urbanization; integration of various programs as opposed to mono-functional zoning, with architecture

inspired by vernacular housing and adopted to the climates. An excellent example of the main principles described in Candillis' "Planning a design for leisure" (Candillis, 1972) is demonstrated in their project for a holiday resort Port Leucate-Le Barcatés, a seaside holiday resort built in 1965 as a mix of housing and recreational facilities in the coastal community. According to Candillis, the newly planned resorts should not be isolated monofunctional zones but should be developed as a space integrating various programs. Inspired by Mediterranean vernacular housing, the architecture recommended by Candillis is modular and adapted to the climate. The repetitive assemblages of adjoining bungalows and villas with roof terraces and patios form white and geometric networks along the sea.

The emergence, development, and, finally, the "costs" of mass coastal tourism in the Mediterranean is best illustrated through the example of the Spanish coast, which expanded in the late '50s and consolidated in the 1970s and 1980s. One place that epitomizes destructive mass tourism practices is Benidorm in Spain, a major tourist town in Costa Blanca that can cope adequately with over 500,000 tourists over the peak-season period. The practice of mass tourism in Spain culminated in 1980, facilitated by fiscal incentives for investment in the tourism industry, resulting in extensive urbanization of the coast. Not only the seasonal tourists but also retirees from the colder, wealthier industrialized countries of northern Europe would choose to have their second homes or move for the warm climate of the Spanish coast. Speculators and private initiatives had free rein. The natural resources that have guaranteed the success of the leisure landscape in the past are now undergoing privatization to intensively used "entertainment zones." Driven by short-term profit goals, the market is urbanizing coastal landscapes by means of gated fragments inhabited for limited periods of the year.

#### Croatian "Fertile Delay"

The similarities in coastal landscape developments among the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea began to diverge in the 1970s and 1980s. Western capitalist and Eastern socialist economies exhibited contrasting patterns; while under the attack of mass tourism, the coastal landscape of France, Spain, and Italy are urbanizing rapidly, the Croatian coastal landscape remains less developed, avoiding the extensive transformation of its coasts. This development pattern, a "fertile delay" in which Croatia avoids some of the overconsumption patterns in other Mediterranean coasts, makes the Croatian coastal landscape an ideal research laboratory for experiments on prospective coastal development.

From the secession villas and promenades in the "city-health-resort" (Image 2) built by the Austro-Hungarian empire to the "socialist utopias" (Image 3) of the 1960s vacation resorts emerged into pristine landscapes, there are lessons to be learned from the historical spatial and social projects for leisure spaces being built alongside the Croatian part of the Mediterranean, the Adriatic Coast, and compared to the trajectory of the past and existing coastal development trends. Addressing the contemporary challenges confronting tourist coastlines necessitates applying a set of principles derived from a comparative analysis encompassing global coastlines vis-à-vis the specific case of Croatia.



Image 2: Abbazia, general view, Istria, Austro-Hungary. (Source: © Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.)

Currently, Croatia is particularly reliant on tourism, which is evident in its average net international tourism revenues from 2015 to 2019, which exceeded 15 percent of GDP. This is notably higher than other tourist-dependent countries, such as the Dominican Republic and Thailand, where the figures were around 8 percent, Greece at 7 percent, and Portugal at 5 percent during the same period (Herre et al., 2023). Croatian tourism officials, including governmental agencies, consultancies, and hoteliers, constitute a stakeholder group that prioritizes market performance grounded in the pursuit of sustained economic growth built on revenue from tourism. What lessons can be learned from the past when planning for the future coasts?



Image 3: Hotel Liberaas in Dubrovnik, A. Cicilić - Štin @ Roney, gradnja 2016.

When recounting the narrative of Croatian tourism, there are three distinct phases: the first period, between the 1960s and 1980s, coincided with the emergence of mass tourism

linked to consumption patterns of developing late-industrial welfare societies. The second phase is characterized by unplanned and expansive construction amid the chaos caused by the war in Yugoslavia and the transition to a market economy. A substantial increase in local and global tourism investment in Croatia defines the present decades of the 21st century. This transformation aligns with the country's accession to the European Union, becoming its 28th and most recent member.

The actual development of mass tourism appeared from the 1960s to 1970s, a period marked by the construction of sizable structuralist hotel complexes. Centrally planned economy regulated the coastal landscape, designating the coastal strips into industrial and recreational zones, and forming large tourist and architectural ensembles near big cities. The concepts of these buildings principally remain on the level of fragmentation and recomposition of large construction masses, but the stringing together of residential micro cells created complexes whose configuration follows the topography, adapting to the ground and turning it into unique terrace-like-mega forms (Image 4). Brutalist architectural expression and the scale of these hotel buildings created an authentic iconography of the collectivistic tourism arcadia intended for Western Europe's working class and lower middle class. In the most fruitful era of Yugoslavian coastal tourism, in the '70s and '80s, hotel complexes accommodated numerous mostly German tourists who flocked to the beaches for their single holidays of the year. Workers and their families from all Yugoslavian republics had an opportunity to have a holiday by the sea using state-controlled and financed recreation resorts. At

the same time, the local population from coastal cities and villages would profit from hosting the guests on a "room and board" scheme.



Image 4: Haludovo Palace Hotel. ruin as seen from the pool area, 2011. (Source: Thorsten Schrotterster @Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0, Wikimedia.)

Such a development of tourism infrastructure and construction resulted in controlled density and location at the coast, supervising and preventing metastasis-like expansion, almost accidentally preserving the coastal territory as a valuable natural resource for the decades to come when the resources once known as standard would become unreachable and serve to singular private-profit.

The relatively non-exciting exploitation of the Croatian coast during the socialist era resulted in preserving the landscape: for the time being, around 80% of the coast remains non-built. However, as Zimmermann outlines in the Venice Biennale Croatian Catalogue, figures from 2006 reveal new trends in the occupation of the coastal territory: until the 1960s, about 120 to 150 km of 6,000 km long coast was urbanized; as a consequence of more intensive building, the year 2,000 marks 837 km of occupied territory and the forecasts, according to existing development plans envisage the further expansion of cities and villages to additional 716 km, in total leaving 30% of the un-built territory (Zimmermann, 2006).

The "Original" coastal landscape became a primary "trade value" when the country entered the turbulent decade of the '90s. The government and the new forces entered the Croatian economic and social realm when the country transitioned from the socialist, one-party, state-controlled market system into a capitalist, parliamentary democracy, free-market system, recognizing the coastal strip's economic potential. However, the Adriatic and the coastal policy moves into the center of the Croatian government's policies as "the starting point in consideration of development, the economy, culture, tourism, and other areas," as stated in "The Program of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

for the 2003-2007 Mandate," there is an absolute lack of long-term development strategies that would gear the counter in the time of the unstable conditions of the new market economy. Coastal space, which came under the marked strain of building, shows the most apparent manifestation of all space management problems.

Even though tourism records an exponential sharp increase in the number of visitors, Croatia, in terms of its tourist accommodation capacity (infrastructure), ranks at the bottom among European countries, as reported by Sinisa Filipovic from Horwath Ltd consulting, at his lecture at the Croatian Academy of Arts and Science, Zagreb, 2019. One of the primary challenges facing Croatia's tourism industry is the short visiting season. Croatian tourism grapples with the brevity of its visiting season, attracting guests primarily during the three summer months. The remaining part of the year, the same tourist destinations that attracted hordes of tourists over the summer months are empty, gloomy places, with local populations idle and without work — their source of income compromised, with communities reduced to a few hundred elderly residents who reminisce about the days when their coastal towns and villages were vibrant and filled with pride.

### Future Coasts

"Landscape is a medium ... capable of responding to temporal change, transformation, adaptation, and succession."

— Charles Waldheim

With the aim of introducing innovative ideas and concepts for advancing coastal tourism landscapes, it is advantageous to reassess the tourism paradigm and architectural strategies by appreciating past initiatives and recognizing their limitations. For example, looking at the projects and practices of Josic-Candilis-Woods (Avermaete, 2002). On the one hand, those projects built alongside the French coastline conceptually overlap with some of the core concepts of sustainable tourism, anticipating the design that integrates the surrounding environment and develops a new kind of public space. On the other hand, one of the central premises these resorts are developing is maximum intra and interconnectivity — with road systems connecting the new tourist centers with the cities, as well as the internal systems of pedestrian and local traffic — all counting on the newly discovered advantage of the mobility by car and plane. At the time when those resorts were built, in the 1960s, there was no awareness of the trend in which fossil fuel energy-dependent economy and consumerist society were heading; the issue of the limiting capacity of the planet to absorb the pollution and increased emissions of greenhouse gasses was not on the agenda. However, at the present moment, the world will pump out around 50 billion metric tonnes of planet-heating gasses in 2022, according to the latest data released at COP28 (Paddison & Choi, 2023), gathered in Dubai for the annual UN climate summit in December 2023. When data shows that since 1976, every year, the average global temperature has been warmer than the long-term average, the question of how architects are responding to programs to be built is of crucial concern. How do architecture and landscape architecture contribute to developing concepts for the design of leisure spaces of the 21st century?

Similarly to governmentally planned tourism infrastructure along the French coastline, Yugoslavian planners are developing regional plans alongside the Adriatic coast, building numerous vacation resorts with architecture susceptible to the site, the climate, the territory, and the natural landscape. In the 1970s, the government created plans to develop tourist infrastructure on the Adriatic coast, supported by United Nations experts (MATTIONI, 1967). These examples of social hotel infrastructure, apart from being part of a socialist social project, ensuring working people's recreation and healthy lifestyle, demonstrate a sensibility for the local environment regarding its social, natural, and cultural heritage. Even though the tourism lobby might perceive the "socialist utopias" of the 1960s as highly unsuccessful and unprofitable because socialist monopolistic hotel groups controlled all the investment in tourist infrastructure, creating uniform vacation resorts for so-called "beach and sun" tourism, not everything conceived in the concepts of socialist (often brutalist) architecture can be deemed harmful. On the contrary, the interconnectivity to the surrounding landscape and the appraisal of social forms undoubtedly contributed to the development we would describe today as 'sustainable development'.

Although advanced for their time, the concepts such as those developed in a partnership of George Candilis, Alexis Josic, and Shadrach Woods and Yugoslavian "socialist utopias" might be taken as the starting point for general research into urbanization patterns of coastal landscapes, the current challenges posed by the climate crisis demand an enhanced level of architectural consideration specifically geared towards addressing the environmental aspects of the crisis. Exploring environmental ethics and responsibility is crucial when contemplating establishing a different relationship between humanity, technology, and nature, extending its influence to diverse fields, including architecture. While late-modernist projects coastal resorts were exploring the new private domain and individualized spaces, the concept for future coasts should be built on a concept of new ethical imperative needed in the contemporary world, as Jonas suggests (Jonas, 1985) a contemplation on the trade-off between increasing social manageability and individual autonomy. The interaction between humans and the world is becoming increasingly complex, shaped by networks involving human and non-human elements. The conventional distinction between "nature" and "society," a foundational concept in Western thought since the Enlightenment, is deemed flawed and unsustainable, as Latour (Latour, 2012) depicts in his argument questioning the concept of modernity. Rather than being distinctly modern, he argues that we've always been entangled in complex networks that defy the clear-cut distinctions between nature and culture. Recognizing these complex networks underscores the necessity for changes in design practices, including planning and building for future coastal landscapes, with new approaches able to conceptualize sites, territories, ecosystems, networks, and infrastructures within new tourist destinations along the coastlines. In the face of uncertainties and the absence of clear rules associated with the flexible dynamics of global capital production and consumption, the concept of so-called Landscape Urbanism (Waldheim, 2006), a term coined by C. Waldheim, effectively captures possible approaches, witnessing the recent renewal of interest in landscape within the historical disciplinary formations of architecture,

urbanism, and planning. In the same way, Olmsted's Central Park in New York (an example that J. Corner (Corner, 2006) used to explain the dialectical synthesis of the term landscape urbanism) can be considered a driver of city formation and not considered to be a separate recreational zone of the city, the new coastal landscape should be developed by tourism programs as coastal development driver - not isolated resort zone.

In conclusion, future coasts, whether regions, places, cities, or territories, should be developed as complex environments integrating ecological and spatial systems, technology, and design. This development should be able to negotiate and establish inclusive conditions where tourists and inhabitants can coexist. It should create new social realities for a more productive relationship between locals and visitors, introducing innovative typologies for the daily life of both citizens and tourists, such as resorts/university campuses, civic/tourist centers, and museums/hospitality. This vision aims to develop a new kind of landscape that spatially and conceptually aligns with the vision of new (urban life) in the Mediterranean.

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