

Call for Proposals

## ***Leisurescapes***

### *Architectures and Landscapes of Tourism in the Global Sun Belt, 1945-1980*



Golden Sands Hotel, Varosha, circa 1973 © Press and Information Office (PIO), Republic of Cyprus

In conjunction with an ongoing Cyprus-based research project, we are pleased to invite scholars and researchers in architecture, histories of architecture, urbanism and landscape and social, cultural and environmental studies, to contribute to the collaborative *Leisurescapes Project*. The project took off in 2018 with an international workshop in Nicosia and a second workshop, which intends to bring potential contributors together, is planned for Spring/Summer 2021. The projected final product is an edited scholarly volume that will feature architectural, urban and landscape histories of tourism and leisure analyzed in the broader context of Cold War geopolitics, de-colonization, theories of modernization and development and the reconfiguration of economic geographies in the postwar world.

The project aims to research, document and theorize how leisure tourism became the centerpiece of postwar economies and national development programs of many countries, cutting across the ideological divides of the bi-polar Cold War world and appealing to the newly independent nations of de-colonized regions many of which joined the Non-Aligned Movement. From the proliferation of Hilton Hotels as built symbols of American “soft politics” abroad to the seaside resorts of Soviet-bloc countries conceived as incubators of a new socialist society, or to the making of Southeast Asia into a tourist paradise by economically emergent local elites, the topic evokes a rich array of physical spaces, coastal landscapes and tourism development programs reflecting the complex web of political, social, economic, environmental, cultural and aesthetic agendas that have informed their making.

We are interested in critical studies of how leisure, relaxation and vacationing were conceptualized as sites of modernization and development, how architecture, infrastructure and landscape were deployed as aesthetic expressions of these and how a supra-ideological and a-political discourse of leisure often effectively masked underlying histories of conflict, inequalities and violence. We are particularly interested in contributions that investigate the design and construction of hotels and the transformation of coastal landscapes from a wide range of theoretical positions that are not merely descriptive. We are looking for histories that engage with new theories and critical debates to unpack how specific national development agendas, discourses of design professions and multiple trans-national encounters have shaped the landscapes, physical spaces and spatial politics of tourism, ultimately, shaping multiple understandings and situated experiences of leisure.

While we do not wish to be overly restrictive regarding potential submissions, it is nevertheless important for us to maintain the coherence of the contributions and the integrity of the project, which we tentatively frame as follows:

### **Geographical Scope**

The ongoing research that initiated the project is focused on the divided island of Cyprus. Many of the thematic concerns that shaped the project (see the section on “Potential Areas of Contribution” below) emerged from our better familiarity with the tourist landscapes surrounding the Mediterranean (Balearic, Tyrrhenian, Adriatic, Ionian, Aegean and Black Seas, as well as coastal North Africa, Levant and Egypt), as well as of its islands (Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica, Malta, Sicily, Aegean Islands, Ionian Islands, Crete and Cyprus). The theoretical premise of our project, however, is mapping “leisurescapes” as a global phenomenon, with diverse histories in different countries. We are, therefore, very much interested in relational studies that investigate similar developments in different contexts across the globe, from the Caribbean to Southeast Asia, as well as studies that explore trans-national exchanges, translations and negotiations across different regions/countries.

Informed by the central concern of the project with the concept of leisure, we are particularly interested in coastal landscapes of regions of warm and mild climates that we loosely cover under the evocative term global Sun Belt. What makes this term particularly appropriate for our project is that, beyond its obvious climatic connotations (association of leisure with sunshine), it is informed by economic geography (the tourism potential of warmer climates, attractive landscapes and cheaper labor). While the common usage of the term refers to inter-regional shifts of economic growth from heavy industry to service sectors –from the “rustbelt” to the “sunbelt” in the U.S., *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (2009) acknowledges that in more recent usages, it is not uncommon for the term to be applied to other contexts globally. We therefore welcome contributions that look at the development of tourism industry in connection to inter-regional shifts of economic growth, labor and population movements and opportunities presented by particular coastal sites.

The coastal focus of our project is informed largely by the nature of what we hope to capture with the title *Leisurescapes*. Although many other types of tourism can come to mind (mountain tourism and ski resorts, nature trails, golf courses, cultural tourism to the historic cities of the world, desert and arctic expeditions etc.), our project looks specifically at leisure tourism, which is more readily associated with images of beaches, littoral roads and marinas, coastal hotels, camp sites and vacation villages. This does not mean, however, that we exclude the former entirely. Possible overlaps (such as the proximity of archaeological sites enhancing the appeal of coastal resorts) or possible relational discussions (such as how golf course development advances or competes with beach-oriented tourism in ways that create a different set of pressures on land-uses or infrastructures of a country) are all topics of potential interest for the project.

We also highlight island constellations as a special kind of coastal geography that offers us opportunities for global and trans-regional perspectives. For example, Anthony Reid has compared “Island Southeast Asia” (consisting of today’s Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines) with the Mediterranean in the Braudelian sense that both are located at maritime crossroads where long histories of maritime trading networks have led to extensive coastal development and port cities, offering historical infrastructures and precedents for 20<sup>th</sup> century tourism development. Comparable mercantile and/or colonial histories have shaped Caribbean Islands that were subsequently rebranded as tourist paradises. It is therefore possible to summarize the geographical scope of the project as coastal and island geographies of the global Sun Belt.

## **Temporal Framework**

We are interested in the period from the end of WWII to somewhere around 1980 as the historical interval during which the rise of leisure tourism was enabled on a large scale through state-led development programs and the involvement of many inter-state agencies and international networks. The period also marks the rise of modernization theories and discourses of development in social sciences, along with the globalization of corporate modernism in architecture as the choice style of many coastal tourism development projects.

We are, however, keenly aware of the historical and theoretical ambiguity of the postwar period when the primacy of the nation-state went hand in hand with an expansion of capitalism and private enterprise internationally, in many ways anticipating the neo-liberal economic policies of the post-1980 world. We therefore welcome contributions, which, while focused on the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, address the legacy and relevance of their topics for subsequent developments and current debates in the spatial politics of tourism and leisure.

We are also aware of the fact that in many countries of the world, the development of tourism industry in mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century carried many imperial and colonial legacies of travel that extend back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. There is a vast body of literature on the intimate connections between tourism and earlier exoticizing constructions of the Orient, the Tropics, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean paradise etc. during the colonial and capitalist expansion of the world economy. We therefore welcome contributions, which include these legacies in their analysis of postwar histories, especially ones that interrogate tourism and architecture's role in the ongoing project of decolonization.

We are particularly interested in contributions that trace the history of tourism architectures and landscapes beyond their initial design and construction and look at their subsequent uses, transformations, aging and preservation issues that make up their "afterlife," often in dramatically altered political and cultural circumstances. For example, the fact that the glamorous Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia (1949) is now a bullet-ridden relic used as a military base for UN soldiers patrolling the Green Zone of the divided city, epitomizes for us the unintended afterlives (in this case a traumatic one) that many leiscapes of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century experienced over time. We welcome other case studies with other stories to tell.

## **Methodological Premises**

While the individual work of each potential contributor(s) is of distinct importance and value for the project, we strongly believe in the synergy that can result from bringing scholars together towards a collective product that will be far more multi-faceted, nuanced and thought provoking than the sum of individual contributions. Hence, collaborative workshops, information sharing and feedback mechanisms are very important for the methodological conceptualization of the project.

We also emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Although scholarship at large has come a long way in transcending Euro-centric perspectives towards global histories of modernism, there is still a lot to explore regarding how national and international institutions, laws, interactions between states and state agencies, geopolitics, bureaucracy, technology, expertise and financing, among other themes, inform histories of architecture, urbanism and landscape. We are particularly interested in interdisciplinary explorations of such links between economic, social, political, cultural and environmental practices and the design of tourism spaces.

One publication that initially inspired us as a possible model of a project-focused collaborative work is William Cronon ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, 1995 --the product of a semester-long seminar and a series of conversations among an interdisciplinary group of scholars at the University of California. We are still drawn to it for at least three reasons. First, it was an instructive case of scholars from different places coming together to exchange ideas and engage in collective knowledge production. Second, it offered a compelling example of incorporating multiple media (images, news clips, found objects) into the substance of discussions. Perhaps most importantly, the seminar and the book that came out of it were products of a time when environmental history and theory was taking a critical turn towards questioning what is commonly understood to be “nature”. We expect our project to similarly contribute to recent critical debates in “global histories of the modern” through architectures and landscapes of tourism.

In accordance with this goal of collective knowledge production, we are currently working on the format of the projected 2021 workshop, as well as developing digital means of information sharing, archiving research and compiling a bibliography. At the Mesarch Lab of UCY, we are putting together an “Informal Archive” of images, videos, case studies, news items and relevant published essays that can form a basis for discussion among contributing authors. It is our expectation that this CFP will solicit other potential participants in this project-focused agenda with a given timetable and a specific deliverable in the form of a publication.

## **Potential Areas of Contribution**

After the first workshop in 2018 and subsequent conversations and brainstorming sessions within a core group of scholars that initiated the project, a number of themes began to emerge as possible areas of scholarly contribution. The following is a tentative, open-ended list of these thematic headings and associated topics that is by no means exhaustive. We are also very much aware of the fact that potential submissions will most likely fall under more than one of these thematic headings since, given the larger theoretical and historical framing of the project, these themes inevitably overlap and interpenetrate. Nevertheless, they offer a heuristic structure that lends some thematic integrity and distinctness to each heading while still being capable of giving a connected overall picture –a “thick description” to which each theme contributes with a different set of questions and concerns.

### **1-Frameworks: geopolitics and economic geography**

Inter-national tourism as a strategy of national economic development  
Domestic tourism for nation building: modernization, mobility and citizenship  
Hotel building in capitalist, socialist and non-aligned countries  
Postwar discourses of travel, leisure, relaxation and vacation  
Tourism agencies, advertisements, posters, images of glamour, luxury, “good life”

### **2-Groundworks: building the physical infrastructures**

National and international networks of mobility and connectivity  
Coastal roads and highways, marinas, ports and airports  
Planning of transportation networks; national and international agencies  
Engineering, technology and expertise in infrastructure building

### **3-Gold Coasts: spatial and environmental politics of beaches**

Coastal development: hotels, beaches, beach facilities, pools and camping sites  
Artificial natures: constructing earth forms, water bodies and vegetation  
Legal issues: the status of coastal “commons”; public versus private  
State-led versus private development firms; public-private partnerships

### **4-Leisure Aesthetics: mid-century modern or vernacular?**

Architectural case studies: constructing concepts of leisure through design  
Mid-century modernism as the pervasive aesthetics of leisure and relaxation  
Hilton Hotels and its derivatives: reinforced concrete egg-crate box typology  
Club-Med style vacation villages: low-rise, high-density typologies  
Theme Park resorts: commercialization of regional and vernacular imagery

## **5-Dark Histories: conflicts concealed by a romance of leisure**

Class inequalities, ethnic and environmental conflicts in tourism development  
Who can travel and who cannot? The illusionary democracy of the beachfront  
Tourism as a recovery strategy in contested zones of conflict, war and violence  
Development versus environmental protection of natural habitats and wildlife  
Impact of colonial legacies on tourism policies after de-colonization

## **6-Afterlives: transformation and preservation**

Subsequent uses, adaptive re-use and re-signification of postwar leisuresscapes  
Volatility of markets, wars and conflicts, changes in property ownership  
Neglect and aging of mid-century hotels, issues of preservation, DoCoMoMo  
Current neo-liberal pressures to re-appropriate these sites

### **Project Coordinators/Editors**

Panayiota Pyla, University of Cyprus

Sibel Bozdogan, Boston University

Petros Phokaides, National Technical University of Athens

### **Partial List of Contributing Authors:**

Melita Čavlović, University of Zagreb

Jiat-Hwee Chang, National University of Singapore

Meltem Ö. Gürel, Yaşar University

Juliana Maxim, University of San Diego

Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, Technion

Anoma Pieris, University of Melbourne

Łukasz Stanek, The University of Manchester

### **Timetable**

Announcement of the CFP	20 December 2019
<b>Abstract submissions due</b>	<b>1 March 2020</b>
Announcement of selected proposals	24 April 2020
Skype Workshops	May-June 2020
First Drafts due	October 2020
Skype Workshops	Fall 2020
Second Drafts due (just before workshop)	April 2021
Workshop in Cyprus	May/June 2021
Final Drafts due	August 2021

Title and Abstracts of proposed papers should be up to 500 words and should be emailed to [leisuresscapes@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:leisuresscapes@ucy.ac.cy) and [pyla@ucy.ac.cy](mailto:pyla@ucy.ac.cy). These should be accompanied by a 2-page CV and selected bibliography.

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