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**UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED ARTS, VIENNA  
ARTISTIC RESEARCH PHD PROGRAMME/  
PROJECT PROPOSAL**



## 1) Overview

As the initial point of my research I take publication “Budva, Sv. Stefan, Petrovac“ from 1966, which illustrates tourist zone of Budva - a Montenegrin town on the Adriatic Sea, at the time of the beginning of mass tourism in Yugoslavia. Being personally overwhelmed by the natural beauties of Montenegro but at the same time horrified by witnessing the gradual destruction of its landscape and continuous ruining of functionality of its urban localities by constructing wild - often never finished - buildings, in last thirty years, I found this book particularly interesting as a material proof that change has happened and as a call to investigate the circumstances that mark this change.

I visited all 30 locations pictured in this book, and photographed them again, 50 years later, in October 2015. The collected material I used to create a sketch-publication that refers to history of urban planning in the chosen tourist zone reflecting local curiosities significant for the radical changes that occur during the process of city transformations and historical, economical and political aspects of this planning.

Adriatic coast of investor-friendly Montenegro and its tourist architecture reflecting turbulent political and grey economical background serve as a brutal example of what I want to continue investigating in other touristic localities on the coast of Europe. Aiming to understand the dynamics of this change, I will list and compare the similarities and differences that appear in various areas depending on their historical and economical development, and try to understand its meaning in wider social sense referring to the topics of public and private domains in contemporary cities, land ownership, as well as personal histories.

In these terms, Nordic coast, UK, Normandy, Belgium or areas of Marseilles and Costa del Sol, Italy, Croatia and Albania would be some of the cases of my study chosen thoughtfully in order to stand as representative examples of this transformation which historically varied in all these areas. In all the cases I will repeat the action of photographing the actual state of the same sights that were given in the local prospects dating from the past, taking the beginning of (mass) tourism as initial point of investigating each of the cases. What stays invisible and what becomes obvious will be the subjects of my investigation.

As an artist who uses photography and words as tools of research within the print media, I am simultaneously interested in the meaning of photography in this context and the way it is used. As a counterpoint to the archival material whose purpose was originally promotional, illustrative, or documentary, in any case - representative, I want my material to question the possibilities of photography in the context of interpretation and posing questions. I would rather treat the image as a tool that helps deconstructing and analysing the social structures that have contributed both to the global economy and to aesthetic principles of photography. I will, in that terms, not only investigate the history of mass tourism and its impacts in the chosen areas, but use the example of such a history and its traces captured in photographs to question the potency of photographic archives as opposed to photographic essays. The intent of mine is to emphasise possibilities of active and discursive narrative structures that the photographic essay allows.

Having in mind the results of the comparison I have already made in Montenegro, I want this project proposal to help me map the fields of interest and define the wider context of my investigation, as well as to help me narrow the list of relevant topics to be covered within next four years while working on my doctoral thesis.

## 2) Mass tourism

The change I want to explore is directly related to mass tourism, the beginnings of which I consider relevant to my study. This relation reflects and reproduces political and economical circumstances and my intention is to explore its conditions and variations taking the chosen examples in Europe as cases of this study.

As historical beginning of mass tourism usually dates from several decades ago, and if compared to the ways, reasons and circumstances that made people travel before that, one could also see it as a travel without real purpose. Mass tourism developed with improvements in technology, which allowed the transport of large numbers of people in a short period of time to places of leisure interest, so that greater numbers of people could begin to enjoy the benefits of leisure time. It seems that travel for fun has its origin in 19th century Britain. "English seaside resorts were the first places where the rapidly growing industrial working class in Europe would go away for leisure and pleasure, generally with others from

the same class neighbourhood. They left behind, if only for a day or a week, industrial towns and cities, places of backbreaking labour, water and airborne pollution, rampant ill-health and a lack of visual stimulation. The resorts offered some remarkable contrasts as the collective tourist gaze took improbable root in these places by the sea..."<sup>1</sup> Yet, it was only after the right to a minimum wage, a shorter working week and a paid annual holiday had been enshrined in law that the working masses could afford to give even a passing thought to the traveling to an unknown destination simply for revelry or repose<sup>2</sup>, what happened much later, namely in the second half of the 20th century.

### 3) (The tourist vs unknown / Unknown vs Untouched)

It is interesting to imagine what is the unknown of an unknown destination in the context of mass tourism? If a tourist is a worker who was given limited time a year to spend on holiday and leisure time - is an exploration of the unknown really what comes as an option given to her? Isn't set of unknown destinations always more or less predictable list of attractions proposed in tourist guides to be visited and explored over and over again, to add to reproduction of the meaning predefined and advertised in the prospects that made these people want to travel in the first place? Is the way these localities are constructed actually the field which is supposed to stay unknown as long as it doesn't turn into a new potential attraction discovered by investors and promoted by travel agencies? What is then, if anything, left to the tourists to be discovered? The encounter that occurs between a worker from a foreign country coming to an unknown destination in order to spend his holiday and a local situation being reflected in the way touristic complexes are constructed is where the position of a tourist is to be understood as well as his or her ideas and expectations of the unknown.

What here becomes the unknown of my interest is the way these discoveries take place - both the ones performed by the local authorities when defining new attractions and those promised to the tourists. Instead of 'unknown' that could still serve as a label to mark more or less cultivated destinations that one still didn't visit, the term 'untouched' is what I would introduce here.

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1 The Tourist Gaze 3.0, John Urry and Jonas Larsen, Sage Publication, 2011

2 Holidays after the Fall, Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia, E. Beyer, A. Hagemann and M. Zinagel, Jovis Verlag, 2013

#### 4) (outside - inside / season – not season / rights and laws / questions)

Who has a right to ‘touch’ and change the untouched? Who is in power of turning the untouched into “unknown” to be discovered through the performance of mass tourism? Here, destinations to be visited from the outside have to be seen as localities that someone chooses, constructs and maintains from the inside. Depending on how this inside-outside relation is implemented the development or popularity of a certain tourist area could be measured. These localities were chosen, constructed and are maintained in different areas based on different policies and they reflect different stages of development and care towards the questions relevant in political, social and economical context.

Apart from the functioning of already established tourist zones, I am curious about the untouched areas around these developed centres on the coast of Europe, the change of the landscape, and the way the dynamics of such change is predictable or not. At the same time, all the started but unfinished buildings become objects of my interest as examples which show how this process is dependent on political and economical circumstances, as well as possible evidences of fragility of the systems they were about to reproduce.

If the tourist centres are built with an aim to satisfy the needs of tourists when enjoying the benefits of leisure time, how does this kind of building influence the area at the non-season times when massive numbers of tourists are not around? Also, how does the area and its social, political and economical conditions where the tourist centres are built affect the way the centres are built? Is their purpose to satisfy the tourists needs or are the needs of tourists created so that goals of authorities could be met? Is a tourist a construct, as the tourist zones are? Aren't the complexes of resorts created only with the reason of economic prosperity of the area?

How does the way these centres are built reflect the official attitude of the authorities towards position of all the actors involved with tourist seasons (and non seasons), having in mind that tourism is an important, even vital, source of income for many countries? Upon which attitudes the authorities of different zones in Europe within or without EU context make their decisions and how the change of the landscape illustrates the values they stand for? How do they deal with these subjects depending on political and economical changes in specific

areas and how are their approaches and decisions obvious in the ways these areas are constructed and maintained? Is it possible to map the values behind their moves just by watching the landscape and its change in relation to both the visitors and the locals as both consumers and creators of these landscapes? What are the needs of the visitors, namely the tourists, and what are the needs of the locals and how do they participate in changing the landscapes? What is the landscape and to what degree the change of the landscape is controllable, or who is able to control this change? How is this control inscribed in what seems to be given and taken for granted by inhabitants, visitors, consumers and observers of this spaces? What are the responsibilities and duties of both authorities and the citizens involved in this change.

In order to question all of that, I want to start a journey that will take me to thoughtfully chosen places on the coast of Europe. I am curious about the examples of coastal tourism in well organized societies as well as in those in underdeveloped countries or states in the middle of transitional processes. I believe that the wild examples of the latter could also help me locate and emphasise the issues in the zones where the change of landscape is performed in more subtle manner. By comparing the archival photo material from the past to what I will try to capture from the same places nowadays I want to understand the changes and the ways these changes have occurred in different places at different times. What stays invisible and what becomes obvious in these comparisons will serve as a basis for each individual case I will examine through my study. I imagine it to grow in different directions depending on the insights I collect. I see it as a study of mass tourism in different coastal zones in Europe, with the emphasis on: the position of a tourist and his or her encounter with the localities they visit as a crucial point of understanding the cultural context in which tourism exists the way we know it, the way the localities are constructed and developed as a crucial point of understanding the political and economical context, and the way this interaction functions or doesn't through successful and unsuccessful implementations of mass tourist attractions in all its versions. After all, in more abstract sense, what I want to convey is a study of a view, study of a gaze, where the landscape and its changes and all the interactions that occur with it from different perspectives will bring me closer to the answers and hopefully open new questions.

## 5) (before the thesis)

The first steps of this research I already took in Montenegro, last autumn. I found a handbook on tourism with reproductions from sixties and I got disturbed by the fact that most of the places shown in the pictures I can not recognize, even though I am very familiar with the landscape of Montenegro. At the same time, I was pretty much witnessing the process of its changing in last twenty years, and unfortunately in the worst possible way – it became disastrously disfigured by over-development and architectural monstrosities. I asked my uncle, a local poet, to take me to the same places from which the photos in the book were taken in order to try to capture the same view, expecting that the change will be obvious.

During this test trip to Montenegro, while searching for the places from which the photographs from the book I used were taken and later while sorting the material to finally compare it, I have made certain conclusions that will serve rather as assumptions to be reassessed more profoundly during my future investigation, as significant in both the given area of Montenegro and other localities that I decide to use as cases of my study. Here, I list some of the notions:

- *The obstacle to what used to be the view becomes the view itself (fig.1)*

Namely, what used to serve as a representative image of a tourist locality several decades ago has certainly changed since the time this image was created or taken. This change has occurred in certain circumstances that are more or less visible once when the same image is attempted to be captured. There is no same image seen from the same place, and what appears as an obstacle to the previous perspective turns into the representative image of the tourist locality from another side today. This notion opens up some interesting questions. Depending on the obstacle that appeared it is possible to consider its meaning in the wider picture that is created simultaneously with (or has actually enabled) the erecting of these obstacles. These obstacles to the previous view are namely the buildings that got a chance to be built closer to the coast. They 'pop up' between the previous point of view and the sea to become representative examples of the current point of view. I see this change of points of view and the switch in perspectives as an interesting symbol which helps to explore social and political context and the historical frame within which this change has

occurred in different terms in different areas. The amount and density of these 'obstacles', the way they appear and function are matter of concern in the field of urban planning and various aspects of private and public domains. Questions like 'who has a right to the better view?' and similar, I want to explore, taking the comparison I mentioned as a first step.

*- If the sight appears as attractive from distance, by getting closer to the elements of the wholeness, the image that the sight initially has formed gets contaminated and ruined. (Fig.2)*

What became obvious after I photographed all the places shown in the original book is that one could easily take these shots as new postcards or simply panoramas of the touristic zone. Cities grow, there is even beauty in it, the progress is visible... The buildings that one could easily consider aggressive, wild or ugly while standing in front of them and participating in this new situation (where terms aggressive, wild and ugly are to be translated and understood in the context of politics, economy and culture), merge almost subtly with the rest of the surrounding once they are observed from the above and from distance. They are added and they do add to what has already been there, making it clear that the original photos from the book I use are not to be approached from a nostalgic point of view but are rather to be questioned with the same criticism and curiosity as the elements captured in the current state. Getting closer to the object of investigation is here very literal attempt I take in direction of understanding the conditions that made changes of any landscape possible. The sight that appears attractive from distance consists of elements that should be examined more closely. I am interested in taking a close-up of this change and in possible readings and meanings of the image that the wide angle panoramas stand for.

*- There is something beautiful about abandoned construction sites (?) (fig.3)*

While searching for the places from which the photographs in the book I used were taken not only that I was fascinated with the results that were obviously showing the change I wanted to re-question but I got distracted by the amount of buildings that didn't fit the frame. Also, on my way which was very often wild and 'untouched' there were many examples of abandoned construction sites, hotels and resorts under permanent construction. They are scattered on the edges of

the tourist zones, labelling the zone between known and unknown, being the obvious opposite to the earlier mentioned 'obstacles'. They stand as monuments of unsuccessful business – the monuments which didn't become site-seeing spots nor tourist attractions but the reminders of the investors miscalculations when trying to turn untouched zones of landscape into unknown destinations for the tourists. Here, I become curious about liminal spaces, hinterlands and city-hinterland relationships as the backstage from which urban sustainability should be addressed.

#### 6) (tools and methods / active image)

I want to approach all the questions and topics of concern in the field of mass tourism and its political and economical aspects that I have listed here, not only from a theoretical point of view but as an artist-researcher who uses photography and written words as tools of research. I am interested in the potency of an image and the way its narrative qualities could be employed in order to question existing social structures. In these terms, I am curious about critical realism and social documentary but from a point of view that has been refracted through some of the lessons of conceptual art, semiotics and cultural theory of the last half century or so. As an opposite to institutionalised and common way of approaching photography as a document that is archival I am interested in more discursive articulation of possibilities of meaning that are not reducible to this archival paradigm. Here, I would separate the problem of the archive as a problem of art history or history of photography from the work that one does as an artist. Knowing that the initial step of my research is entirely based on the archival material I will certainly deal with the questions of history and politics of representation. On the other hand, as an artist, instead of adding to existing bureaucratic model of handling images that leans on inventory and leads to repetition of a rather banal models of a list, I am interested in possibilities of a photographic essay taking it as discursively more complex podium, something as the economy of the image that involves elimination, editing, cutting...

I will use image as a tool which helps me deconstruct and analyse social structures that have contributed both to the global economy and aesthetic principles of photography.

The final result of my research I imagine as a publication in print, combined with a written thesis that will support the artistic research practice by critically

reflecting both on its methodology and its relation to its context, accompanied with adequate online presentation of the process and/or the exhibition. At the same time, as I am curious in expanding the silent mode of both the photography and photo books that I've been using so far to convey my researches and present the results of my artistic investigations, I am open to come up with new approaches to the topics of my concern and make excursions to other media if they turn to give more profound insights.

## 7) Time schedule

### 1. "Mapping" – defining the context / goals / theoretical framework (1st and 2nd semester)

In this phase, I will be defining more precisely the exact matters of concern in all the spheres that my main theme covers or is referring to. All separate fields that are seemingly not related are to be understood through the impacts they have on each other, in order to analyse the situation which they form. I am interested in coastal mass tourism as continually expanding industry and societal phenomenon, its history, development and future, especially concerned with its negative side effects which allow a split to grow between tourists and the residents of destination countries. In that sense, it is needed to address and understand all the actors and activities around it, not only separately but necessarily through their interactions. I will use the first phase of my research to locate these fields of relevance and to map their elements, defining the context of my thesis and the thesis itself.

I see the first phase of research as dedicated to reading and writing, in order to learn and understand: history of mass tourism on the coast of Europe, position of a tourist both as a traveller and as a worker, traveling, its motives and sorts, labour and leisure, relation between the tourist and the local terrains, relation between the locals and the surrounding adapted for tourists needs and expectations, landscape, hinterlands, architecture, relations of those when understanding the change of the landscape, tourist seasons and non-seasons, tourist zones, legal terms, geographical, political, cultural and economical conditions as determinant factors to influence similarities and differences in implementation of concrete examples of tourism in specific coastal tourist zones.

In addition, I will deal with topics of: an image, representation, archive, advertisement, visibilities and invisibilities that photograph offers or serves(?), the narrative potential of a photographic sequence, the possibilities of photography as a tool of research, as well as understanding the situation of photography as an encounter that occurs between the photographer, the photographed and the spectator, that would all serve me to start, convey and accomplish my artistic research in the most adequate way.

During the first phase, the second one, more demanding in financial and infrastructural terms, is to be planned.

## 2. "The Journey" – artistic research through practice (3rd and 4th semester)

With all the knowledge, questions, doubts and assumptions that the first phase brought, I will decide on specific areas and tourist zones on the coast of Europe and will visit them during the second phase. I will chose them as representative examples to further examine certain aspects that will turn as significant for my investigation. Those zones will serve as cases for several distinctive studies, based on curiosities that I will discover during the first phase and directions of relevance that I will decide to follow.

If the first phase is labelled by rather theoretical approach, the second one, starting from that stable ground, would take me to more experimental, intuitive and spontaneous approach. Having in mind all the conclusions and hypothesis from the first phase, the second one should bring answers, surprises and new questions to be considered as relevant to the results of the first phase.

What was addressed during the first phase, in theoretical terms, through readings and reflecting, in this phase is to be reassessed in more personal manner. Here, whatever was learnt during the first phase, is to be processed in practical terms.

The situation of traveling will give me an opportunity to understand what I already learnt about it, while literally interfering with the aspects defined during the first phase of research. Through performance of moving, visiting and leaving the localities that I chose for my investigation, I will collect material that will become a mixture that either complement the results of the first phase, or give entirely new insight from a rather subjective point of view. I will be both the

actor of the activities that I am examining and the one who is analysing the roles of all actors involved. I will document this process of balancing between subjective and objective during the second phase, curious to see what it will bring. I expect to derive the most inspiring and influential insights for my artistic research exactly from this phase of study.

### 3. "Conclusions / editing / " (5th semester)

I am interested in potency of an image, how its narrative qualities could be employed to question social structures. I use photography and words to research social phenomenon, (sub)culture(s), impacts of tradition and history, construction of social roles and underlying psychological mechanisms. Questioning positions and diversity of possible truths I find most challenging in my work. The results of first and second phase are to be revisited within this statement, during the third phase.

I want the questions discovered and asked during the first phase, to find its shape and representation during the second. The answers are not to be given literally but rather as a call to further examine what I tried to brought from/ through invisible to visible and where I believe the third phase will be the most significant in this terms. During the third phase, the material I collected during the second phase, having in mind all the conclusions and doubts from the first phase is finally being edited. The final comparison of both what I expected to find out to what I actually experienced in each of the cases and what was found among the cases itself is taking its time and place, during the third phase.

Also, deciding on final shape and sketching the possible ways of presenting my results are part of this phase.

### 4. "The Outcome" (6th semester)

Not only that I want my research to bring me closer to understanding the mass tourism, its development and implementation in the coastal areas of Europe through well chosen examples and comparison of 'what was' to 'what is', using the photograph as a tool to requestion visibilities and invisibilities of conflicts (between landscape/locals, architecture/visitors and authorities/legal terms) that these areas uncover and reproduce, but I want the research itself to help

me contextualize my artistic approach and overall artistic practice, so that I can address possible scenarios and meditate on ‘what could be’ or ‘what will be’ within the perceived context.

I imagine undertaking this kind of examination in the conditions given at the University of Applied Arts Vienna as an interaction with professionals and researchers from other fields that could give me new and fruitful perspective to my work. I am equally curious about searching for answers as for asking new questions, and I want my investigation to follow this approach.

What is from this point of view seen as an open end to my study I want to become the consistent reflection of the process I will go through and the knowledge generated during the previous phases of research. Having it finally shaped in a publication in print, web project, containing elements of text, sound and images, an exhibition and/or lecture about the process and conclusions of my investigation, to name few possible outcomes, I see it as a natural step to consequently follow and communicate the process and conclusions it will bring.

#### 8) Appendix (fig. 1,2,3)



fig 1. The obstacle to what used to be the view becomes the view itself. (example: The Island of St. Nikola, Budva, 1966 and 2015, illegal Case “Cape Zavala”)





fig 2. If the sight appears as attractive from distance, by getting closer to the elements of the wholeness, the image that the sight initially has formed gets contaminated and ruined. (example: Bečići, panorama, 2015, the building on the main beach of Bečići)



fig 3. There is something beautiful about abandoned construction sites (?) (example: Hotel AS, Petrovac, Perazića Do, in reconstruction since 2002, case “Mirište”, in construction since 2007)



## 9) Bibliography, resources and references:

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