From romantic to collective gaze. Changing images of Majorca in post-war German tourist brochures

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This paper analyses models, construction mechanisms and historical changes of the West Germans' tourist gaze, focussing on the image of Majorca in tourist advertising. Theoretically based on the ideas of the German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger and the English sociologist John Urry, it examines the main motifs of tourist perception patterns, as they change over time. Analysing pictures in German tour operator brochures between the 1950s and the 1980s, quantitative and qualitative methods of a Visual History of tourism are being tested. John Urry stresses the importance of visual consumption and sees the gaze as the most important tourist activity, not only in nature or sightseeing, but also in beach tourism. He distinguishes a romantic and a collective gaze. The collective gaze is looking for events, amusement facilities and the presence of many other tourists: "Other people give atmosphere or a sense of carnival to a place" (Urry 1990, 45f.). Ideal places for collective gazers would be British working class seaside resorts like Blackpool, but also lively Mediterranean destinations as Rimini or Ibiza. For Germany, a Majorca beach area has become notorious during the 1990s: In the bars at 'Ballermann' (the Germanised name of the Spanish 'Balneario 6' beach department) groups of Germans are drinking Sangria with straws out of buckets and having similar kind of collective fun (Kallasch 2000).

On the other hand, Urry argues, "there is then a ,romantic' form of the tourist gaze, in which the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze" (Urry 1990, 45, 104ff., cf. Löfgren 1999, 21ff.). Hans Magnus Enzensberger analyses this gaze seeing tourism as an industrially organised escape from the industrial world. Following his 1958 theoretical essay, which is much-quoted in Germany, but little known abroad (Enzensberger 1996, cf. Pagenstecher 1998), tourism is still following the ideals of the romantic period and keeps searching for images of untouched nature and untouched history. Exemplary objects of this gaze would be the untouched scenery of the Alps or an English landscape garden, but also the remoteness of historical buildings or primeval cultures. In Germany the romantic gaze is strongly influenced by the idea of an idyllic Arcadia, which, in the tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Italian Journey, could be found preferably in Italy or some similar Mediterranean country.

So, there are two opposing gazes, two contrasting ways to explain what tourists want to see on holidays. But neither of them must be wrong. As we see from the exemplary destinations, both are linked to different social strata: The collective gaze is essentially a proletarian one, whereas the romantic gaze is followed and sustained by middle class tourists. The relative importance of each model will change in different periods, societies or destinations, depending on the social structure of holiday-makers.

In West Germany, workers started to go on holidays on a larger scale since the 1960s. With their growing participation in tourism, the proletarian collective gaze would probably gain importance and gradually replace or at least weaken the bourgeois romantic gaze. We can indeed observe this change in various types of destinations, for example in German cities and spas (Pagenstecher 2003a). Of particular interest, however, would be the gaze at the South, at the Mediterranean, which was the principal destination of mass tourist expansion since the 1960s. Here, charter jet tourism had a strong influence on tourist perception patterns. The tourist industry's standardisation of images could be equally responsible for the strengthening of the collective gaze as were the social changes.

The Rush to the South

After World War II, German tourism expanded rapidly. The percentage of West Germans going on holidays was steadily growing from a quarter in the 1950s to two thirds in the 1980s. The regular annual surveys conducted by the DIVO-Institute and, since 1970 and in much better quality, by the Study Circle for Tourism Research, show a rising travel intensity from 24 % in 1954 to 45 % in 1965, to 56 % in 1975 and to 65 % in 1987 (III. 1, for details and sources cf. Pagenstecher 2003, 111ff.). Tourism became the fastest growing economic sector and a regular part of life for broad population strata, proving individual and collective success in the post-war 'economic miracle' society. Some phases of even faster growth are evident, namely in the years around 1965, 1971 und 1987. Apart from influences of the general economic development and simplifying things a bit, we can link these three remarkable growth jumps with the large-scale automobilisation – people started driving to Italy – in the 1960s, with the arrival of jet and charter tourism – people began flying to Majorca – in the 1970s, and with the rise of tropical beach destinations – flights to Thailand and the Dominican Republic became cheaper – in the 1980s.

The most striking change was the rush to the South (III. 2). By aggregating figures about individual countries and German regions I calculated the relative share of the Alps (Austria, Switzerland, Bavaria and part of Italy), the Northern beaches (Baltic and North sea within Germany, Denmark, Benelux) and Mediterranean beaches (Part of Italy, Spain incl. Canaries, Greece, Yugoslavia) of all German holiday-makers' destinations. Since the data base for this aggregated figures is weak and changing, this can only be an estimate, but demonstrates a clear tendency: Northern beaches continuously attracted about 12 % of German tourists, whereas the percentage of alpine tourism sank from 40 to 20 %. Tourism to the Mediterranean continuously grew, from 5 to almost 30 %.

A strong growth is noticeable especially in the years around 1970, due to rising charter tourism. Through most of the 'economic miracle', almost 90 % of Germans travelled individually. Changes however occurred since the mid-1960s: The invention of jet-planes boasted air travel and charter tourism, especially to Spanish islands and costas. Big department stores went into tourism business. In a rapid concentration process, various tour operators joined to form the TUI company, one of the biggest tour operators in the world. Thus, it is the beginning of the 1970s, when we see the take-off of a multinational modern tourist industry in Germany, symbolised by the first Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet flying to Majorca in 1971. The percentage of package tours rose from just over 10 % in the 1960s to almost 40 % at the end of the 1980s. This was paralleled – and caused – by increasing air travel since 1970.

In contrast to the established tourism in the Alps or on the Northern beaches, which was mostly individually organised, the beach holidays in Spain were usually organised as charter tourism. Here, tourist expectations and experiences were much more influenced by tour operators and their advertisements. The images in their holiday brochures shaped ideas about the South and about what a beach holiday was all about. So, what kind of tourist gaze did these pictures promote?

Towards a Visual History

Because they would represent the gaze more directly than written descriptions, I concentrated on analysing pictures, although this poses some methodical questions which cannot be discussed here in detail. In spite of some interesting approaches to the interpretation of

images (cf. Albers/James 1988, Uzzell 1994, Mandel 1995) we still have to develop a 'Visual History' taking photographs as a primary source of historical research.¹

In modern mass tourism, tourist perception patterns are widely believed to be constructed and standardized by a powerful tourist industry. The commercial photography in tourism marketing seems to determine the tourists' gaze on landscapes, cities and cultures. We have to be careful, however, not to mix up the images found in tour operator catalogues and sight-seeing brochures with the individual travellers' gaze. But advertising is at least one way to explore tourist perception patterns. To be understood and accepted, it must use existing cultural predispositions and collective symbols. It always tries to "crawl into the brains of the masses", as a German publicity expert put it in 1956 (Gries/Ilgen/Schindelbeck 1995, 3). Thus, the images in travel brochures give historians, too, an opportunity to crawl into the brains of the tourists.

Using quantitative and qualitative methods of pictorial analysis, I analysed catalogues of one of the biggest German tour operators, the Scharnow company, between 1956 and 1987. Scharnow was founded in 1953. In 1968 it joined the TUI group, but continued to sell under its own brand until 1990. Offering quality at reasonable prices, Scharnow addressed the lower and middle middle-classes, solid employees, families and elder people. It was not particularly innovative nor was it directed at a specific proletarian audience. This sold well: With 622 068 passengers in 1975, Scharnow even could surpass the always leading Touropa on the German tour operator market (Bensmann 1976, 36ff.).

I analysed summer flight brochures of 1956, 1957, 1965, 1971, 1979 and 1987. The brochures, that grew from a thin four page leaflet in 1956 to massive 200-pages-catalogues in the 1980s, were found in the Historical Archive on Tourism at the Free University of Berlin (HAT). A quantitative content analysis counted all pictures in the pages about the leading destination Majorca, weighing bigger pages double or triple. A more detailed, qualitative comparison studied the emotional image-building pictures on the title pages of the catalogues and the introducing main pictures of the Majorca chapters within the catalogues.

The Title Images

Analysing the title pages of tour operator brochures over time, the rise of beach tourism becomes obvious. The 1957 Scharnow brochure is called "Fibel", which means a class book for beginner children, as it was addressed at a post-war German public still being tourist beginners (III. 3). It portrays a fully clothed couple in a rather quiet, contemplating conversation, apparently on walking or sightseeing holidays. The bird, used as a Scharnow symbol throughout the 1950s and 1960s, might recall the birds' romantic chirping in the woods or arise the longing to fly to the South with the migratory birds. Between the drawings of various tourist regions, we notice romantic gaze motifs like the Rhine castles, the Alps and – looking South – a gondola and the Palazzo Ducale of Venice, as well as a bottle of Chianti, lemons, grape and other fruit. Instead of Rome, the romantic, untouched past of Venice had become the most famous Italian destination. But more important than culture was nature, the abundant Mediterranean vegetation. Like with Goethe, Italy was the land where the lemons bloom. The beach existed only on the Northern shores on the upper edge of the brochure. 14 years later, in 1971, the title of the Scharnow summer flight brochure showed various aspects (III. 4): On top, we see a Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet. All Scharnow brochures of that period showed airplanes on their titles. Flying was not only transport, but a central holiday attraction in itself. The main focus within this kind of air travel advertising shifted, however, from the

¹ In my recently finished PhD thesis (Pagenstecher 2003), I explored methodical opportunities and limits of such a 'Visual History' mainly based on pictorial evidence. Taking tourist brochures, guide books and private holiday snapshots as prime sources, I tested various quantitative and qualitative methods from the fields of semiotics, iconology, content analysis and oral history.

elegance of a stewardess in 1965 and the security guaranteed by an experienced elder pilot in 1969 to the technological fascination of the Jumbo Jet's phallic front nose in 1971 and a small airplane picture finally vanishing from the titles in the mid-1970s. These rapid changes hint to shifting meanings, fears and desires that accompanied the introduction of a new transportation system into tourist experience.

The most important element of the 1971 title, however, was the beach, covering almost half of the page. Never before or after, it reached that share again. There are no cultural attractions nor Mediterranean flowers or fruits. Instead we see a group of three young, white, healthy and slim tourists enjoying a lazy or sportive, in any case convivial day on the beach. On all pictures in all brochures, we always see young, white, healthy and slim tourists. Apart from some waiters, inhabitants are completely absent. Many pictures show groups of three people, always one man and two women, never the other way around. Usually, the man is in the centre and is active or moving. At the same time, he never looks towards the camera, whereas one of the women always does. This creates a rather open and ambiguous grouping of persons, signalising fun holidays with friends as well as sexual opportunities for a male tourist. This gender-specific structuring can be found on many title pages throughout the years.

Further down the page, we see a portrait of a middle-age bookkeeper, looking solid and very middle-class, with her home address, being quoted saying: "Of course I expect good performance. More important are pleasant co-passengers. With Scharnow, I find both." So, the animating image with sexy and sportive models is contrasted with an authentic testimony of an ordinary tourist underlining the credibility and the familiar middle-class atmosphere of this tour operator.

The Starting Pictures of Majorca Chapters

If we open the brochures, we always find the Majorca chapters at the beginning, usually starting with an introductory page. In the first thin leaflet of 1956, Scharnow described the complicated travel via Barcelona and the different sights included, but said nothing about hotels or beaches. The only picture of Majorca showed a fishing port (III. 5). In the 1950s, fishing boats were abundant in German advertising of Mediterranean destinations. They symbolized the romantic image of a dreamy, arcadic South. One of the most popular German songs in the 1950s was called "Capri-Fischer"; it talked about fishing boats leaving the shore of the Italian island of Capri in the red sunset. This romantic gaze initially was used for Majorca, too. Later on, however, it disappeared: Views of harbours and cultural sights vanished. Apart from some early pictures of Palma cathedral, untouched nature or untouched history were not visible anymore in Scharnow brochures about Majorca.

In 1965, the introducing picture of Majorca shows a beach (III. 6). We see abundant red flowers in the foreground of a total view of a moderately populated beach bay, framed by trees. A female tourist in swimsuit, just going towards the beach, is looking at the bay. Elements of the romantic gaze are central to this image: Apart from the flowers of the Mediterranean vegetation, the closed arch of the bay, half-way open to us, symbolizes remoteness, security and accessibility at the same time. These are typically romantic motifs, as are the muted, almost contemplating hesitation of the woman on the right and her somewhat distanced and panoramatic gaze at the beach. Generally speaking, in 1965 the tourist gaze already aimed at the beach, but still followed romantic models.

In 1971, the introducing picture of Majorca shows a woman wearing a bikini, sitting on the beach, still wet from swimming (III. 7). A full body picture covering the whole page renders a personalised, dynamic and sexualised image: The young woman is looking at us in a direct, laughing and inviting manner. Behind her we see a couple coming out of the water. Every-

thing happens directly on the beach, and very close to the water. The group of three young people, which was also portrayed on the title of the catalogue, is in no way contemplating, but laughing and splashing at each other. This image centres on funny, sportive and erotic bathing holidays amongst young people, just as the text puts the "lively Majorca" on top. Scharnow portrays the beach as a place of young and convivial pleasure, the South as a typical destination of the collective gaze.

In 1979, we see a couple having lunch with friends at a beach restaurant (III. 8). The beach, however, is only backdrop; no swimming people are visible. The collective gaze has established it self, but doesn't need the sea anymore. Gastronomic consumption and conviviality have put aside the beach as tourist attraction. A very similar picture – apparently shot with the same models at the same location – was also shown in the 1987 catalogue. Thus, after the rapid design changes in the 1970s, now Scharnow's Majorca advertising seemed to have reached a stable and successful marketing strategy.

A Quantitative content analysis of the Majorca Chapters

Turning from these emotional image-building pictures on the titles and introducing pages to the individual pages, I counted all pictures inside the Majorca chapters, expecting the beach to be the most widespread motif (III. 9). But, less than a fifth of all Majorca images showed the beach. A slight growth is noticeable, however: Their percentage rose from 14 % in 1965 to a 21 % maximum in 1971 before going down again. Objects of the romantic gaze like untouched nature or historical attractions were completely absent, at least since the 1970s. But the collective gaze, represented by crowds or pictures of laughing, sporting or sunbathing human beings, was visible in less than 10 % of the pictures, too. What we mainly see in these catalogues, are hotel and accommodation photos, their share rising from 61 % in 1965 to 76 % in the 1980s (III. 10).

In this highly developed destination, the modern infrastructure of tourist industry not only dominated the place itself, but also its image in advertising. The brochures gave detailed information about prices, booking conditions and special offers. The rise of the collective gaze was combined with a standardisation of tourist experience: The brochures no longer sold dreams, but delivered technical data of a mass consumer product. Thereby, the immediate hotel environment gained importance over the increasingly interchangeable destinations.

If we try to differentiate these hotel pictures, we can distinguish general views of the building and its situation relatively to the beach, photos of the hotel's consuming areas (lobby, bar, restaurant, swimming-pool) and photos of the individual rooms. Over time a sharp change is noticeable (III. 11). Whereas general views were declining, pool, restaurant and room pictures were rising. The offered consuming facilities became more important than the local situation of the hotel. Tourists seemed to look more for the collective experiences at the bar than for the romantic view of the seaside.

The swimming pool alone covered 13 % of all Majorca pictures – nearly as much as the beach itself. The people in the brochures almost never swam in the sea, but, if at all, in the pool. Since the 1970s, the beach and the sea have just offered the visual scenery for the holidays at the pool, this highly standardised and "much better-managed version of the beach" (Löfgren 1999, 236).

Even stronger, however, was the growth of room images. Their share rose from 0 % in 1965 to 15 % in 1987. Advertising pictures more and more closed in on the tourists' immediate surrounding and left apart the wider aspects of the destination (III. 12). Why are accommodations and hotel rooms that important for advertising? One explanation would be the security of the hotel's environmental bubble: Within the walls of one's hotel room, even an inexperi-

enced package tourist felt safe. But this argument doesn't count with growing travel experience and familiarity with the destination – Majorca is definitely no exotic third world country. Thus, the comfort and luxury of the hotel itself might be a main motif for travelling. Catalogues are trying to sustain the image of high society life in hotels, these prestigious "cathedrals of tourism" (Enzensberger 1996). The Scharnow customers were not booking Spain or the sun, but just two weeks of being served. This explanation is being underlined by an analysis of TUI customers' complaints in 1988 (Schlotmann 1992, 154, 157): 78 % of them concerned accommodation, 42 % especially the room's furnishing.

With the rise of the collective gaze and the industrialisation of tourism, individual destinations lost importance in German tourist advertising. In the rail travel brochures of the same tour operator, a change in the structure of the content is noticeable: From 1973 onwards, the brochures were no longer divided into individual countries, but into travel types. Italian, Yugoslav and Spanish coasts together offered "Sun, Beach and Vino Tinto." Cultural differences vanished, the core elements of a collective beach holiday could be enjoyed on all Mediterranean beaches alike.

Summary

Pictorial evidence can be a very useful source for the Visual History of tourism. The findings of this visual analysis of tour operator brochures suggest a massive change of the tourist gaze: In the 1950s, German advertising promoted the traditional romantic gaze shaped by Goethe's arcadic ideas about the South. Around 1970, this gave way to a collective gaze, promising sport, fun and sex on the beach. Sand and sea gained importance over culture, fisher boats and lush vegetation. Since the late 1970s, however, the beach was reduced to a mere background for collective consumption. The rise of the collective gaze was combined with a standardisation of tourist experience: The brochures no longer sold dreams, but delivered technical data of a mass consumer product. Thereby, the immediate hotel environment gained importance over the increasingly interchangeable destinations. Beach holidays became swimming pool holidays.

But, what are the reasons for this changes of tourist gaze? Was it the change of social structure? In Germany, workers' travel intensity rose, especially in the 1960s, but always remained below the average. The touristic expansion was mainly driven by the continuously growing number of employees, whereas the shrinking working class never made up more than a fifth of German tourists (cf. Pagenstecher 2003, 128ff.). Thus, from a numerical point of view, the possibly proletarian collective gaze could not replace the bourgeois romantic gaze. More important was the general change of values in society, especially in the younger generation, reducing the moral esteem of work and seeing fun not only as legitimate but almost a social duty. The tourist industry played a considerable role in that process: The laughing models in tour operator brochures told inexperienced German tourists how to behave on a beach holiday.

Majorca probably is a very marked example: Different from Italy, which always had been a romantic dream of Germans, in Spain – and even more so in Majorca – no travel tradition and no fixed tourist image existed. Majorca served as prototype for the rationalized development and marketing of a "no man's land" by the tourist industry. In the beginning of the charter era, a new destination type, the beach island in the sun, was coined, a type which later could be transferred easily to the Canaries, Greece, Djerba or the Dominican Republic. This industrial standardisation of the gaze – together with a general change of values – was probably even more important for the growth of the collective gaze than the changing social structure of the tourists.

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Illustrations

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