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Spatial productions of a legendary holiday village: Club Med Foça

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Abstract
At the time of its appearance on the outskirts of the infrastructurally underdeveloped and culturally conservative village of Foça in 1966, Club Med was already a widely known international holiday village chain, promoted as an antidote to civilization. The term legend was commonly attached to it at an international scale to refer both to its stunning localities, and the atmosphere of abundance offered within its guarded boundaries. Arguably, a sense of Oriental exoticism was also a source of attraction to the Western patrons of Club Med Foça. This article is based on the hypothesis that Club Med had a significant impact on the cultural environment of Foça, which exemplified the porousness of spatial boundaries. Hence our aim is to surface the spatio-cultural role of the Club for both Foça residents, and the Turkish population at large. Our findings reveal that for Foça residents, the Club was both an economic resource and an agent of significant socio-cultural transformation. For the Turkish population, it was publicized as a microcosm of Europe, and offered a glimpse of a highly desirable, modern culture. Generating a small town bourgeoisie of sorts in Foça, Club Med introduced unprecedented forms of spaces, pleasures and desires. Engaging with archival research, on-site spatial analysis, and oral histories, we explore the mutual production of spatial and cultural boundaries in the historical context of 1960s and 70s Foça vis-à-vis Club Med.

Keywords
Club Med, Foça, Holiday village, Spatial production, Legend.

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1. Introduction

Critical studies in tourism often highlight its partly colonial origins in the context of the relationship of Western tourists and their relationship to a non-Western site (Desmond, 1999; Edensor, 2001). These studies emphasize the idealization and objectification of local sites and populations for and by tourists via such means as 'native' dance and music performances, the commodification of folkloric customs, and picturesque postcard images. Yet, as recent theorists of tourism who are informed by poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist positions recognize, the production and consumption of tourism involves a complex network of relationships between multiple agents and cannot be explained by homogenized references to tourists on one side and natives on the other (Aitchison, 2001).

Along similar lines, we contend that besides a multiplicity of agencies, tourism also involves a broad array of spatial productions, which are not independent of and yet not reducible to the materiality of its architecture. Spatial production is a concept that we borrow from Henri Lefebvre, whereby he distinguishes between "the formal abstraction of logico-mathematical space" and "the practico-sensory realm of social space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 15). According to Lefebvre, rather than being an a-priori condition, and an empty container of subjects and objects, space is produced by power relations, social divisions of labor, technologies, and social superstructures. As such, space emerges as the outcome of ongoing production processes involving the interrelationship between subjects, objects, discourses, and social practices. We contend that Club Med Foça, operated between 1966 and 2005 and located off the scenic Northbound coastal road from the historic Turkish town of Foça, offers fertile ground for the exploration of such interrelationships due to the fluid spatio-cultural context that it produced.

There are detailed academic studies on Club Med holiday villages, which focus mostly on the emergence of mass tourism in Europe (Tchoukarine, 2016; Furlough, 1993; Furlough, 1998). These are informative studies and provide critical perspectives on such issues as the Club's exclusive nature in terms of ethnicity and class; its exploitation of workers who are obliged to work for long hours; and its relation to consumer culture. Studies on Club Med Foça are scarce and mostly focus on the administrative history of the Club's foundation, with a few highlighting its architectural characteristics. These are largely limited to the analysis of the Club as an autonomous entity, detached from its physical and cultural context. Such work is informative and plausible indeed, considering the latter's seemingly intact spatial and cultural boundaries.

At first sight, Club Med Foça's boundaries seemed insurmountable indeed. Located on the fringes of the village, it was physically isolated from Foça. There were incommensurable cultural differences between the economically and educationally disprivileged residents of Foça and the Club Med vacationers, who were mostly professionals coming from European capitals. Hence, the Club's spatial and cultural boundaries were seemingly intact. The Club was closed to Turkish tourists until the 1980s, and even after the ban on the natives was lifted, the Club remained beyond the reach of many local tourists due to the hefty costs involved. The stories about the Club's admirable atmosphere from the few who had been there contributed to the multiplicity of the spatio-cultural layers that formed its legendary status in the cultural context of the late 1960s and 70s Turkey. The term legendary appeared repeatedly in Club Med's publicity material, and national and international media to describe the exclusive and unique holiday experiences offered in their premises (Skift and Club Med, 2015; Tourism Today, 2021). To examine this legendary status in the context of Turkey, we carry out a sociocultural reading of the complex network of relationships between multiple agents who contributed to the Club's spatial production.

Putting the lens on the impact of the facility on the lives and worldviews of its employees on one hand, and on the

local tourists and Foça residents on the other, this study is supported by archival research, spatial analysis, and oral histories. Besides critical studies on tourism and prior work done on Club Med in general and Club Med Foça in particular, our research is also supported by articles in period newspapers, magazines, and architectural journals; visual material from the private archives of the residents; and 5 site visits to Foça and Club Med premises. The interviews consist of lengthy conversations with 17 first-hand witnesses of Club Med in different capacities, which include 7 previous staff members, 6 Turkish visitors and vacationers, 3 local small business owners, and the former mayor of Foça.

Our research was guided by the following questions: How was the cultural environment of the Club received by the local population? How did the local employees experience the spatio-cultural gap between Club Med and their everyday environment? To what extent and how was this gap breached by their daily crossings? What were the ingredients that earned legendary status to Club Med Foça both for the insiders and for those who had no access? By way of addressing these questions, we aim to expose the multi-layered history of Club Med Foça, whereby its legendary status is irreducible to a singular explanation.

2. Envisioning a touristic legend

At the time of its appearance in Foça in 1966, Club Med was already a widely known international holiday village chain, promoted as an antidote to civilization. It made a name for offering a highly protected environment, where vacationers would be engulfed in personalized and "intimate relations, intensity of life, liberty of choice," and reside in "a utopian society of abundance and ease." (Furlough, 1993, p. 68). As our interviewees explained, opposition to urbanism, materialism, and social stratification was reinforced by such strategies as the absence of TV and newspapers and the use of colored beads instead of cash for purchases within the village boundaries. Every village offered a wide range of sports, nightly animation shows guided by specially trained employees, disco dancing until late hours, and "an erotically charged climate," which encouraged brief encounters (Furlough, 1993, p. 73). The employees, who could be distinguished from the vacationers only by means of a badge, were supposed to mix with the latter in all club activities to make them feel at home and taken care of throughout their stay.

Founded in 1950 by the Belgian entrepreneur Gerard Blitz (1912-1990) in collaboration with French businessman Gilbert Trigano (1920-2001), Club Med's first location was on a small deserted beach in the Balearic Islands in Alcudia. Blitz is known to be the founder of the concept of the "all-inclusive" holiday, his motto being, "The aim of life is to be happy. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now" (Club Med, 2019). Following Blitz's own passions, Club Med resorts boasted of offering relaxation, sunshine, seaside locations, group activities, and sports. They were directed by "attractive young organizers," and in a relaxed social environment "that was conducive to sexual freedom" (E. Britannica, 2019). Club Med employees were called *gentils organisateurs* (GOs), and vacationers *gentils membres* (GMs).

The first village in Alcudia was a modest environment consisting of U.S. army surplus tents. The atmosphere was free from "social hierarchies, interpersonal and personal constraints, and stuffy bourgeois attitudes" (Furlough, 1998, p. 227). The early villages had minimal facilities as the emphasis was on outdoor living and sports. By the late 1950s, Club Med began to employ increasingly expansionist strategies and modern management techniques, which led to agreements with such enterprises as the bank of Edmond de Rothschild (1961) and American Express (1968) (Furlough, 1998, 278). New villages were founded in diverse locations including Djerba (1954), Tahiti (1955), Morocco (1961), Guadeloupe Island (1968), Martinique (1969), Malaysia (1979), Brazil (1979), Maldives (1985), Thailand (1985), and Bahamas (1992) (*Zippia*, 2021). In the 2000s, Club Med targeted the tourism

markets of newly developing economies with more upscale vacation villages. The Chinese company Fosun bid to take over the company in 2015 (*The Local*, 2015). By 2019, Club Med operated 71 resorts, a sailing ship, and luxury tours. It also sold luxury villas and chalets alongside some of its resorts (*Club Med Sunway*, 2019).

The early 1960s saw the beginning of the establishment of planned policies for the tourism industry in Turkey. The Tourism Industry Encouragement Law of 1953 was a significant step in establishing policy and regulations in accordance with international standards. In 1955, the Tourism Bank was founded to develop the industry by opening new facilities and by providing credits for the private sector. As the five-year development plan of 1963 emphasized the importance of tourism, the establishment of the Tourism and Promotion Ministry in the same year mobilized related investments. Facilities on the shorelines, which would appeal to high-income European and American tourists were given priority. In line with these policies, the development of road networks and motor transportation made seashores accessible since the 1950s via the US financial and technical aid extended to Turkey as part of post-WWII geopolitics. Henceforth, the Bank of Tourism and the Pension Fund, which was established in 1949 under the Ministry of Finance, became the major agents in administering the financial and managerial aspects of the tourism industry. While the former acted as the investor by renting its properties, the latter took the role of both investor and manager.

Foça Club Med was one of the earliest examples of collaboration between a local investor and foreign management. It was also the first seaside holiday village of its kind in the country. Negotiations began when Mukadder Sezgin, who worked at the Tourism and Promotion Ministry at that time, contacted a friend of his in Athens, who in turn introduced him to the director of Club Med in Athens (Saf, 2019, pp. 67-68). Soon after this initial contact, Gerard Blitz, whom Sezgin describes as "someone with a philosophical mind who knew the meaning and importance of what he did for the economic, social and cultural aspects of world tourism," visited the Ministry with the Athenian director (Sezgin, 2018, p. 322). Agreeing to work with the Pension Fund, Blitz then met with the Minister of Finance, to explain Club Med's mission. Emphasizing the importance of sports, entertainment, and natural surroundings as an escape from contemporary urban life, Blitz also explained how their investment would contribute to intercultural relationships (Sezgin, 2018, p. 322). According to Sezgin, the Minister was delighted at the "dream-like" opportunity, and the project took off. The negotiations between Club Med and the Turkish government took place at a potent time, which met the current needs and policies of both parties as Club Med was searching for new sites around the world to expand the business, and the Turkish government sought to open up the country to international tourism.

While Blitz, Trigano and the General Director of the Pension Fund, were looking for an appropriate site on the Aegean coasts, Selçuk Dirim, the enthusiastic entrepreneurial Mayor of Foça managed to invite Trigano for a reconnaissance flight over the coastline (Kozak & Coşar, 2017). Trigano preferred Foça both due to its proximity to the airport, and its historical connection with Marseille, which he thought would be attractive for French tourists, as Marseille was founded as a Greek colony (circa 600 BC) and populated by settlers from Phokaia (today's Foça) who did not want to live under the Persian Empire. Upon his first visit, Trigano chose the present site, which had multiple ownership (Kozak & Coşar, 2017, pp. 45-47) (Figure 1). The Pension Fund expropriated the part owned by the Treasury without any charges; the Municipality donated its parcels; the area owned by the Forestry Directorate was rented and the private parcels were bought by the Pension Fund. All parties seem to have enthusiastically participated in this initiative. The facilities would be owned by the Pension Fund, and the management rights would go to Club Med for a 10-year period. The contract was continuously renewed until Club Med left the

facilities in 2005 as the Pension Fund did not want to provide the expenses for maintenance. Both the land and the facilities were transferred to the Treasury Department in 2007.

3. Constructing a legendary setting

Foça was an inconspicuous small town in the 1960s, with a population of around 3000 and an underdeveloped infrastructure (Yıldırım, 2011). It was a historical town with attractive 19th-century stone houses. Only the roads around the two market areas were paved. Street lighting was provided by the municipality by means of gas lamps located at the intersections. Many buildings were in deteriorating condition. Electric supply was available during limited hours and drinking water could be obtained from only five fountains in town. The wells on the streets or in private gardens were the only other water sources (Karaca, 2017). Until the foundation of Club Med, Foça had one 5-room hotel and a 12-room guest house (Kozak & Coşar, 2017, p. 46). During summertime, its breezy beaches were lined up with modest campers' tents, and a few coffee-shops and eateries.

The construction of the Club began at the end of 1964. The design of the project was prepared by the company's French architects headed by Daniel Paterne, while Turkish architects and engineers produced the construction drawings; Turkish construction companies of Emek İnşaat and Yütaş undertook revision and renovation projects in 1972 and 1982 respectively (Foça Tatil Köyü, 1967, p. 152; Saf, 2019, p. 68-69). As the Pension Fund was a shareholder of Emek İnşaat, it is most likely that the initial construction drawings were also prepared by the latter. A year after construction began, the leading architectural magazine in Turkey, *Mimarlık* published two articles by architect Tali Köprülü on holiday villages. While the first one provided advice for future enterprises giving detailed descriptions regarding the architectural program and construction costs (Köprülü, 1965a); the second one reported on a seminar on holiday architecture in Corfu, which was organized by Club Med (Köprülü, 1965b). Köprülü, who was part of the architectural team of Emek construction company, took the architecture of Club Med Foça as the model for his advice and ventured to set the tone for future developments.

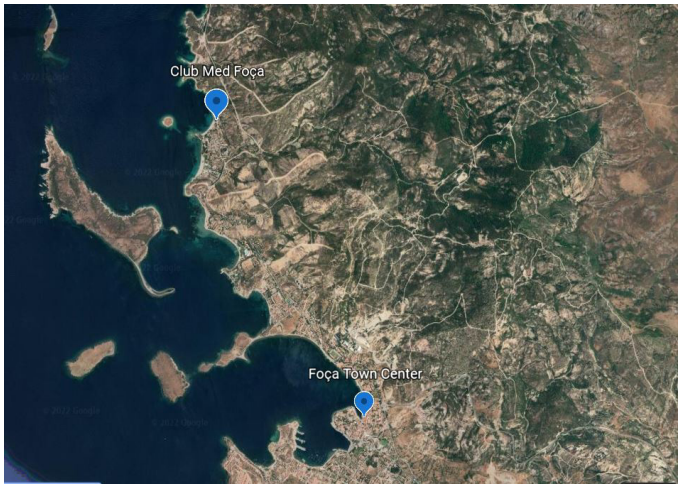

Figure 1. *Aerial view, Club Med, Foça and Foça town center (Google Earth image marked by authors, 2022).*

In Foça, the Municipality arranged for the infrastructural facilities as the Directorate of Highways asphalted the roads, and İzmir deputies supported the expenses for power supply. Two wells were opened for drinking water on a private parcel with the permission of the owner (Kozak & Coşar, 2017, p. 47). Labor for the construction work was obtained from the Foça Agricultural Open Prison. With special permissions issued, prisoners worked both during construction and later in the Club's gardening and cleaning departments (Yiğit, 2012). Club Med, with its refined architecture and well-groomed landscape, seems to have landed like an alien spaceship to Foça's provincial townscape.

At a distance of 5 kilometers from the town center, the holiday village was carefully fitted into the topography and sensitively landscaped to blend in with the natural environment (Figure 2). This scenario fitted well with "Club Med's ethos as an isolated and recuperative Eden" (Furlough, 1993, p. 73). As demonstrated in a 1967 advertising film in German, prospective vacationers were invited to the "magical club" in Foça "which is picturesquely situated by the sea," and nestled in a "charming landscape" like in "a picture book" (Club Méditerranée, 1967). The

Figure 2. *Club Med, Foça. A view of Group B units from the sea (courtesy of Sevki Avci).*

picture book image was supported by the architecture of the 332 accommodation units, which consisted of small and simple prismatic cells with flat roofs, arranged together to compose outdoor areas, courtyards, passages, patios, and terraces (Figure 3). Their white-washed cubic masses adorned with a palette of local materials, such as stone bases, terracotta ventilating pipes, wooden windows, doors, and shutters, manifested a modern architectural language that was responsive to the region.

When first built in 1966, the village included two groups of lodging, accommodating 664 people in 332 units. As published in *Arkitekt*, the leading architectural journal at the time, group A with 208 units was built with an open courtyard system in an olive orchard, whereas group B with 124 units was laid out with a closed courtyard system on a hilly area (Foça Tatil Köyü, 1967, pp. 152-53) (Figure 4). Each unit was designed as a three-meter-high single-story volume and had a little over 20 square meter of floor area. Each included a small bathroom with a simple sink, a water closet, and a basic shower. Hot water was provided by heating coils.

Figure 3. *White washed cubic masses of living units were arranged to compose outdoor areas, courtyards, passages, patios, and terraces (photograph by the authors, 2019).*

The material quality of the units also reflected the minimalist approach. The interior walls were also white and had the same rough texture as the exterior walls. The floors were made of *Palladiana terrazzo*, a characteristic of local building culture. The bathrooms were very small with tiled walls separating the fixtures. Since there was no air conditioning, ventilation was provided by terracotta pipes integrated into the wall along the periphery of the room at the ceiling height together with small-sized windows (Figure 5). All openings were kept small and shutters were used for protection from the sun. The minimalist design of the rooms was to encourage the vacationers to spend more time outdoors and enjoy the social and sportive activities that the village offered (Sezgin, 2016, p. 274). As one vacationer ÖA confirmed, "No one goes to the room. They won't let you sleep even at midday. You cannot find time to sleep from activities ranging from chess to backgammon, billiards, table tennis, seaside activities, and especially sailing" (Figure 6).

The modest accommodation units were supported by distinctive social and sports facilities; an open-air theater; a hammam; a semi-open restaurant with a very long service counter and a bar. Support structures included administrative buildings, manager's and workers' lodgings, an infirmary, and service facilities. This spatial program reflects an age before the arrival of spectacular multi-story, all-inclusive, five-star resorts, which line up the coasts of contemporary Turkey.

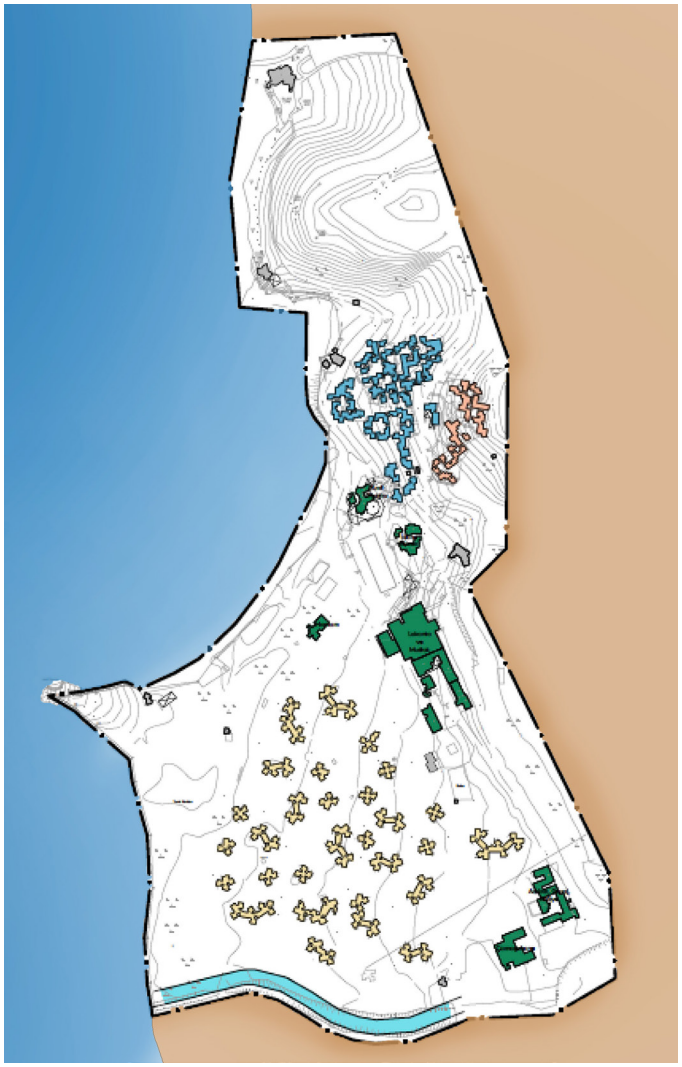

Figure 4. *Site Plan of Foça Club Med. Edited by the authors to indicate the seashore (courtesy of Haluk Erdik). Group A units in the flat area are shown in yellow, group B units on the hilly area are in blue, service and social buildings are in green, technical structures are in gray. Bungalows shown in orange were added later in 1982-83.*

Figure 5. *Ventilation of rooms was provided by terracotta pipes and small openings (photograph by the authors, 2019).*

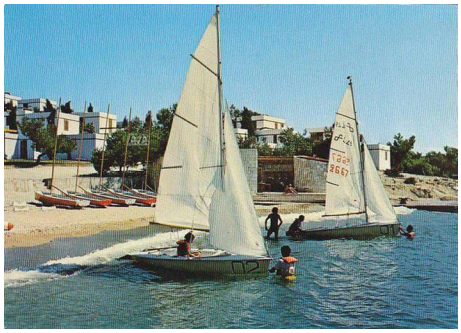

Figure 6. *Sailing at Foça Club Med (courtesy of Haluk Erdik).*

In this much-admired atmosphere, the vacationers were held in public spaces by a chain of organized events. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner times were programmed; open-air shows were organized following dinner hours; the bar and the disco kept the Club grounds active until the wee hours of the morning. At the heart of these activities and the village's physical space was the restaurant designed to seat 400 people. It included room for a legendary open buffet presenting 70-80 kinds of dishes and hors d'oeuvres (Foça Tatil Köyü, 1967, p. 153) (Figure 7). The significance of this space and the food therein were mentioned by all of our interviewees who recalled eating together as a ceremonial activity with the GOs joining the guests for dinner at their tables. Besides the restaurant, the bar, and the disco, social facilities included an outdoor theater where nightly shows were organized to entertain the vacationers. Sports activities were a significant concept of the village. Facilities included volleyball and tennis courts, a sailing club, horseback riding, an Olympic size outdoor pool, and beach amenities.

The simple cubic forms of the accommodation units contrasted the architectural language and material palette of the leisure facilities, each of which was populated at different times throughout the day and night. The use of yellowish-colored local stone and sloped wooden roofs with terracotta tiles set these structures apart from the modern design language of the units (Figure 8). To be sure, Club Med Foça had its share of orientalist gestures through several architectural and organizational moves. Some structures were designed with undertones of Ottoman architecture, evidently to gratify the cultural expectations of the tourists. The hammam with its domes, the restaurant with its arches, and the outdoor theater facility with its vaults and arches all appeared to enrich a touristic experience of the Orient (Figure 9).

This experience was supported by the organization of lectures on Turkish crafts (Kozak & Coşar, 2017, p. 50); folk dancing shows, Turkish nights, and guided trips to souvenir shops in Foça and other historical sites in the vicinity like Ephesus and Pergamon (Karaca, 2017). As a folk-dancer from the 1970s ZU mentioned, a group of them from the İzmir Folklore Association were shuttled for a show from İzmir as part of the celebrations of the French

Figure 7. *Club's restaurant with the legendary open buffet counter in the background (photograph by the authors, 2019).*

Figure 8. *Social facilities designed with yellowish colored local stone and sloped wooden roofs with terracotta tiles differed from the modern design language of the units (photograph by the authors, 2019).*

Figure 9. *Domes of the hamam appeared to enrich a touristic experience of the Orient (photographs by the authors, 2019).*

Figure 10. *The cover of Hayat (1967) magazine, portraying an image of a young woman. The headline reads, "From Paris to Foça: The Hayat team is in the holiday village in İzmir, which is built for European tourists".*

National Anniversary Day on July 4th, 1975. These activities illustrate how the locality was packaged for consumption as part of the Club's administrative strategies. Blitz announced this strategy as a selling point during his first meeting with the Minister of Finance, stating that they would familiarize the vacationers with traditional cultural products like local folklore, music, food, and handicrafts through exhibits and shows, and organize site visits outside the Club. At that level, Club Med can clearly be considered as "a reconfigured colonialist adventure" for the Western tourists where the vacationers "could partake of colonialist exoticism" (Furlough, 1993, pp. 77-78).

Although a sense of Oriental exoticism may partially explain the attraction of Club Med Foça for Western tourists, the source of appeal was very different for the Turkish subjects. For them, the Club offered a glimpse of a highly desirable, modern culture. It was perceived and publicized as a microcosm of Europe in Turkey. A year after Club Med's opening, a popular Turkish magazine *Hayat* featured the village by means of a lengthy article supported with photographs. The cover page had the image of a young woman in a pink plaid bikini holding a giant beach ball, accompanied by the headlines "From Paris to Foça: The *Hayat* team is in the holiday village in İzmir, which is built for European tourists" (Hayat, 1967, pp. 4-5) (Figure 10). The lead article elaborated on how "Westerners who crave the sea, sand, and sun" could purchase a "life in paradise." Readers' appetites were whetted by elaborate descriptions of buffet lunches, sports and entertainment activities, the bar, and the nightclub. A photo caption read, "during the day everybody parades half-naked in the village," while another one stated that "their [the vacationers'] entertainment continues until wee hours of the morning." As Özgün and Şavk (2020) also emphasize, the Club's hedonistic atmosphere with highly sexualized overtones provided the opportunity for sensational press coverage in the popular media of the 1960s. The Hayat article ended in a bewailing tone: "now pity your fate that you are not among the tourists having fun in Foça clad in their bikinis and shorts." As the aforementioned member of the 1975 folk dancing show put it, "popular media created the mythical impression that one would almost turn into a European if one had the privilege of being admitted there."

The analysis of the sources of this generalized understanding of Europe and the European subject remains beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that since the mid-18th century cultural policies of the Ottoman Empire, the term Europe had been equivalent to the equally generalized notions of civility, the West, and modernization (Keyder, 1993). Although the United States replaced Europe as the epitome of modernity in the post-WWII years, there was not a clear distinction between the US and Europe regarding the person on the street; being Western meant being civilized and hence modern. While such moves as Turkey's membership to NATO (1952) and application for EEC membership (1959) manifested political interests in forming Western alliances, "modernization was transmitted to the masses not as a creed that legitimated the modernizing state, but at the level of daily practice - of markets, of consumption, of communication." (Keyder, 1993, p. 25) For the Turkish urban elite with modernizing ambitions, Club Med offered precisely the idealized lifestyle and consumption patterns that were associated with Europe, aka the West, and promoted in the popular media.

4. The spectacle of modernity

Before the 1990s only a handful of Turkish citizens could enter the Club as vacationers through favors extended by acquaintances between Club administrators and high-ranked Turkish bureaucrats. The centralized reservation system did not allow Turkish tourists to stay as guests at this and the ensuing Club Med villages, such as the nearby one in Kuşadası. Only in the 1980s a very small fraction of the reservations was allowed for Turkish people through an office in Istanbul. As more luxurious all-inclusive resorts became widespread in Turkey and competition intensified, more Turks were admitted to the villages. Özgün and Şavk (2020) convincingly argue that the limitation of the number of the Turkish clientele needs to be interpreted in the light of the tension between the Club's hedonistic environment and the nationalist political discourses which were critical of Western cultural practices, viewing the latter as a form cultural imperialism. Nevertheless, for those early Turkish visitors, the attraction of Club Med lay less in the breathtaking seascape and the architectural surroundings, let alone organized site visits, than their own image both as spectators and participants in an otherwise largely unattainable *mise-an-scene*. The Club's isolation helped to reinforce the feeling of superior social status and exclusiveness for the native tourists, and of yearning and curiosity for those who did not have access.

One of the Turkish clients, HK who was granted a week-long stay in 1975 through her acquaintances at the Ministry of Tourism, said that she did not even bother to visit the town center during her vacation. "Who wants to go to Foça" she said, "what to do there? A week flies by until you look around and discover all that is at Club Med." The few Turkish vacationers whom she saw during her stay included three famous pop stars and a few married businessmen who sought anonymity to spend time with their girlfriends. She was apparently struck by the relative absence of children, the elderly, and married couples:

> "All singles; single women and single men. They flirted with everyone. If it worked it worked. Otherwise, it was all about shopping around. If they got a response they stayed, if not they went to someone else without wasting time."

Fascinated by the casualty and transience of intimate relationships, which would be considered unacceptable in the predominantly conservative cultural atmosphere of Turkey, HK added that it was a fun-packed holiday for her where it was impossible to feel down among such a bunch of joyful people. She stated, "You could live the kind of holiday where everything was permissible, which was impossible to experience in Turkey at that time." Another interviewee, HD said that "it was an epic thing to be a guest there. You experienced Europe without being in Europe."

Paradoxically, as Club Med Foça promised a magical atmosphere at least partially due to its native environmental and cultural setting for the foreign vacationers, it owed its legendary sta-

tus to being a microcosm of Europe for Turkish vacationers. The latter seem to have participated both as spectators and as performers on a mythical European stage. HK expressed her spectator status vividly as she described the beach:

> "Some had a book in their hands; others furthered the intimacies established during the previous night. Music blasted everywhere. We were foolishly watching - us being there as two girlfriends. As for the nudist beach, we once looked from afar pretending that we were just passing by. You need to be, well, naked like them in order to participate. That does not seem appropriate, I mean, among all those people. And you cannot fix your gaze at anyone of course, but just throw a side glance."

If HK experienced the club more as a spectator, HD a dentist from İzmir who was invited as a special guest by the Club Director, seemed to have been both a participant and a spectator as he described being served escargot and frog legs, which are categorically excluded from Turkish cuisine:

> "They clean the snails and add sauce and garlic and the like. They bring it as if it is a big favor. My wife said she could not eat anything like that. I said do not ever do such a thing. We are guests here. We can eat even raw fish in order not to humiliate them. Then came frog legs, *cuisses de grenouille.* There, we really learned not to be prejudiced. We had not eaten anything that delicious in our lives."

Both HK's and HD's recollections of Club Med resonated with a sense of discovery of the so-called modern West. The awkwardness that they felt at such unaccustomed sights as the nude beach and frog legs were overcome by the conviction that their cultural status was elevated by the sheer fact of their admission to the Club. In HD's words, Club Med Foça served as a learning space as much as an entertaining environment. His experience resonates with that of a different group that inhabited Club Med, who literally regarded it as an *Ecole*, i.e., staff members from Foça.

5. *Mission civilisatrice* from within

As the first touristic enterprise of its kind in Turkey, Club Med was not only a means of boosting the economy but also a model for the development of the newly born tourism industry. The agreement between the Club Med administration and Foça Municipality on hiring staff members from Foça reveals the latter's interest in boosting the local economy on one hand, and providing literacy in the tourism sector on the other (Kozak & Coşar, 2017, p. 49). Indeed, Club Med boosted the economy and created new job opportunities for the locals. If the service personnel had houses in Foça, they came to the village on a daily basis. Otherwise, the Club provided housing for them either at the entrance area of the village or at a close-by area within walking distance. According to HKA, who worked at different levels at the Club, the personnel lodgings were kept very clean and neat. The workers were served decent food in a separate cafeteria. This care, in return, helped the personnel to identify with the institution.

Considering the absence of educational institutions on tourism at that time, on-site practice seemed to be the only possible way of training the locals. Such training extended beyond the technical competencies required by the service sector. When the villagers who used to earn their living by olive and tobacco cultivation and fishing were recruited by the Club for employment, they faced an entirely different cultural environment. As YG, a restaurant owner in Foça since the 1960s expressed in a nutshell, "the French Holiday Village was Foça's window to the world." Indeed, prior to the Club's opening, in the absence of TV broadcasting and having limited access to printed media, Foça residents used to lead a sheltered life largely confined within the boundaries of their small town. The appearance of a European urban population with different clothing, eating and behavioral habits in such close proximity resulted in feelings ranging from fascination and desire to resistance and disdain. The newcomers were not only wealthier but also more liberal in their everyday conduct including clothing, liquor consumption, and display of intimacies.

As residents explained, disdain for cultural difference initially overshad-

owed the economic benefits that Club Med promised to offer. It was apparently difficult to find local staff members during the first year. Our interviews with the workers indicated that despite the sense ownership attained, they experienced difficulties regarding not only the cultural but also the physical environment. For example, some female laundry workers complained about the heat in the earlier laundry rooms, which were located under the restaurant. A noteworthy example of cultural difference was the resentment to the unisex restrooms. Initially, the idea of women and men sharing a restroom did not sit well with the cultural practices of Turkish workers.

In a former employee, HKA's words "some wanted to work there, some simply had to. Yet, there were others who resisted, and questioned whether it was appropriate to work under foreigners." For the more conservative ones, the term European resonated with all the negative associations of being *gavur*, a derogatory term to designate non-muslims. A hotel owner, SK vividly explained the locals' early encounters with the tourists:

> "In the beginning, people were hiding as if they saw demons. At the end of the first tourist season, they began to say, 'they are *gavur* but they are like us; their hands, their feet, their faces are exactly like ours. There is no difference. They only dress and behave more liberally; Their men and women can sit together to eat and liquor up. It takes one to know one. In time, our people began to fall into step."

Some were not comfortable with liberal perspectives on gender. Stating that in the first year only one woman could be recruited, SK continued to explain;

> "As other women saw that nothing bad happened to her, they began to plead for employment. When money comes to the household things change: Curtains, lighting, colors, and clothing. Then other women are incentivized."

One of the former employees, AY told us how she "wanted to stand on her feet," and get retirement benefits. Yet her husband, who worked at the Club, tore her job application into pieces, saying that she better stayed home and looked after the children. It took her five years trying to negotiate with her husband before she finally joined the Club without his consent.

Working conditions in the Club were not always comfortable for the women employees. Having joined the cleaning staff, SV recalled how she refused to clean the unisex toilets in the public spaces, as she found it unsuitable for a woman to step into a restroom used by men. However, it seems that shortly after the initial moments of resistance, employees began to not only enjoy the benefits of having a regular income beyond their previous means but also learn the etiquette of the European bourgeoisie. From that perspective, all former employees that we interviewed expressed their admiration for the educational role of Club Med. The term *Ecole* is featured repeatedly in their narrations. IC, a woman who worked both in the laundry and the reception, revealed the rift between the tourists and the staff as she described the expected behavior patterns from the latter:

> "You had to behave elegantly; The way you talked and you walked needed to be adjusted. You learned by observing. You had to. Otherwise, you could not work there. You could not talk loudly for example."

Such changes in behavior did not remain within the boundaries of Club Med. As observed by EÇ, a shop owner in Foça, those who worked there carried themselves differently than the locals. "Even the way they talked had changed," he said. A former Mayor, ND confirmed by stating, "There were so many things that affected us; be it clothing, be it lifestyle." The cultural impact of Club Med on Foça was further reinforced by staff members who were sent to work in Switzerland during off-season months. Household commodities such as colored TV sets, which were scarcely available in Turkey before the late 1970s, became commonplace in the houses of those who returned from their tenure in Switzerland.

In time, etiquette turned into a privilege. A former employee at the Club's laundry, DP boasted of how civilized Foça became, and how many locals learned to speak French through their contacts with the vacationers. According to hotel owner SK, those who were employed by Club Med "acquired

manners and regarded themselves as culturally superior to others. As they learned a foreign language and became more self-confident and as their lives changed through the revenues that they brought from abroad, a different situation emerged." More significantly however, a new cultural rift began to emerge between Club Med employees and others. SK exemplified the situation by saying,

> "They [the employees] learned a lot by observing their [the tourists'] attitude towards children and towards animals; their shopping without bargaining; their carefree attitude at the swimming pool; and their comfort within their world. As you know, we tend to lay eyes on others and they [the tourists] don't. Those who worked there gradually became like them."

Unforeseen as it was, Club Med seems to have generated a small-town bourgeoisie of sorts in Foça, whose lifestyles and consumption patterns differed radically from the rest. Club Med introduced yet another element to Foça's public life, which was arguably an extension of the former, i.e., new kinds of pleasures and desires, which relate to the sexualization of public spaces. Former employee HKA used the term cultural crash to describe the difference between those who had no contact with the Club and those who benefited from it either by working there or via commercial transactions with the foreign tourists who visited the town.

The Club was an erotically charged space similar to its international counterparts. The liberal display of tanned sporty bodies, the encouragement of brief encounters, the nude beach, generous consumption of alcohol, and entertainment at the nightclub and disco clearly contributed to such charge. This atmosphere inevitably crossed the Club boundaries as vacationers visited Foça and as the local employees went back and forth between the Club and their homes in Foça. Apparently, a new cultural space flowed into town, which signaled sensual pleasures. "Those high heels, those perfume scents that swept Foça! It was beautiful," said HKA, a long-term former employee who worked at different departments of the Club. Other interviewees too recalled the scent of perfume that the vacationers brought to town. Ex-Mayor ND fondly remembered how he and his friends, as small-town boys in their early teens, collected used plastic sunscreen bottles from the garbage bins outside the village to squirt water at each other. He also mentioned smell as a newly found source of pleasure. When SK argued that Foça residents became more cultivated after the establishment of Club Med, he did not only refer to economic betterment and acquiring foreign language skills but added that the locals "learned to mix cocktails. They learned to prepare alcoholic drinks; they learned to booze; they learned to converse while boozing." Exposed tanned bodies, the scent of perfume and suntan oil, cocktails, and dinner tables shared by both sexes signaled new sources of pleasure hitherto unknown to the economically deprived and conservative atmosphere of Foça.

Club Med's enormous impact on the cultural environment of Foça is an excellent instance that exemplifies the porousness of spatial boundaries. Despite its physical distance from Foça and its self-sufficient and strictly bounded environment, the Club caused radical economic, social, and cultural changes, and divisions in the small town of Foça, which benefited some, and caused bitterness in others. The beneficiaries were clearly the agents of a *mission civilisatrice* in Foça, which was hardly on Club Med's founding agenda, but the effects of which had a lasting imprint.

6. Conclusion

The term legendary, as used in the publicity material of Club Med, resonates with notions of fame, admiration, and desire. Considering the larger context of the holiday village in Foça, it turns out to be a slippery term with different implications depending on one's position vis-a-vis the Club. For the Western urban tourists, who are targeted by the publicity material, it certainly referred to the ideal of living in a paradise of perpetual fun, away from their daily chores and obligations. That paradise was contained in a bounded space, within a carefully crafted architectural

setting that permitted the practice of individual liberties.

Yet the story takes a different turn when the focus shifts to the local scene. In the newly emerging consumer culture in Turkey, the legendary status of Club Med lay in its relative unattainability on one hand, and its association with an equally glorified Western culture on the other. That association was problematic not only because of the impossibility of homogenizing Western culture as such but also because the Club offered an exceptional environment even for Western tourists, outside the normalized routines of their everyday lives. Nevertheless, for the native population who could not enjoy a vacation there, their distance from the Club marked a space of desire; a space that was physically too close to be excluded and culturally too distant to be included. Their desire was further fueled by the way Club Med was featured in the popular press, which helped to raise its hedonistic atmosphere to legendary status, leaving much room for imagination.

As an escapade for Western vacationers and a space of desire for the upper segments of the Turkish population, Club Med was a bounded space of inclusions and/or exclusions. For the residents of Foça on the other hand, the material boundary of the Club was overwritten by its sociocultural fluidity. The employees apparently began to bridge the spatio-cultural gap between the Club and their everyday environment by adopting new habits and affording consumer goods that changed their domestic settings. The locals then saw a new social hierarchy, which separated the employees and shop owners who received socio-economic benefits from the existence of the Club from the rest of the population. New channels of desire opened up, which could partially be pursued by some, and resented by the culturally more conservative and economically less privileged others.

To conclude, despite its guarded physical boundaries, the carefully constructed culture of Club Med Foça did not remain within its spatial demarcation. While the legend oozed out of its container, it caused significant economic and socio-cultural effects not only in its immediate vicinity but also at the national scale. The space of Club Med Foça is produced both within and outside its boundaries by means of complicated interactions between material, economic, social, political, and cultural factors and a broad array of individuals who re-produced the legend in unpredictable ways. As such, it is an exemplary case to surface the complicated entanglements of different agents in the production of space.

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