

# From Culture Areas to Ethnoscapes: An Application to Tourism Development

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**Abstract.** Most studies of the regional impact of tourism take both the “product” and the “region” as predefined, thereby omitting or downplaying key attributes of the tourism enterprise from analysis. This paper provides a context for tourism impact studies by explaining through theory and example how both region and products might be delineated, thus providing a more credible basis for analysis of tourism policy, especially that designed to promote aspects of authenticity and heritage. Discussion begins by reviewing the social science concepts of culture area/region, kulturkreise (culture circles), cultural landscapes, ethnoscapes and other spatial configurations, and considers how these can provide useful tools for tourism planning. Then using a case study from the Caribbean, it shows how these concepts were adapted to develop new regions for the diversification and expansion of tourism based on culture history, traditions, and way of life.

## 1. Introduction

Much contemporary tourist development, especially that proposed for destinations such as rural communities, remote islands and regions, is focused on the idea of “heritage” and “authenticity” (Smith and Eadington 1992). This has been the interest of ecotourism<sup>1</sup> and alternative tourism, but is increasingly seen as the principle resource that any locality - urban or rural - must deploy. Given the intense competition across the tourism and recreation industry as a whole, it is clearly an advantage for any locality to have “unique” attributes such as interesting ethnic customs, a widely-celebrated historical event, exceptional monuments or architecture, or, as discussed in this article, a distinctive “cultural heritage.” The paper describes the context within which regional science methods applied to tourism should be framed in order to contextualize properly such applications.

The principal concept explored in this paper is that of a “culture area” or culture region. A cultural area, to be explained more fully below, is a geographical region with one relatively homogeneous complex of activities, beliefs, values, and customs

(traits). These traits may be employed to delimit and map a series of divisions of territory in which the occupants of each division are characterized by distinctive cultural features that differentiate them from those in other areas.

As an illustration of this approach, I will explain enhancements of tourism for the Dutch Caribbean Island of Aruba, proposed by this author within a Framework for Sustainable Tourism (NTC 2003). The goal of this project was to broaden the appeal of the Island to as yet untapped markets by increasing the range of cultural attractions and style of accommodation, developing new tourist spending opportunities, by stimulating local entrepreneurial activity and increase local employment opportunities, and to make explicit the traditional culture of Aruba in an increasingly multi-cultural territory. The last goal was especially important, but recognized that one key purpose of heritage tourism, in general, is to strengthen the cultural self-confidence of a community, rather than simply to preserve a unchanging way-of-life, as is usually the case with nature tourism (Bulbeck 2005).

## 2. A Culture Area Concept

As peoples domesticated plants and animals, they established permanent settlements. In time, with population growth, occupational specialization and social stratification, distinct civilizations emerged. Some settlements grew into large 'cultural centers' of production, creativity and innovation. Also known as 'culture hearths' they were identified as a places of origin for major civilizations: Mesopotamia, the Nile, Indus, Wei-Huang and Ganges Valleys, Mesoamerica, the Andes, and West Africa. In turn these places evolved particular patterns of culture or 'trait complexes' based on a unique configuration of functionally related traits that differentiated one cultural group from another, that is, individuals in one community shared more traits than they did with neighboring groups.

The notion that traits diffused outwards from a few centers was established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by anthropologists and geographers. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German anthropologists Leo Frobenius and Fritz Graebner worked with the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel to map the diffusion of cultural traits from a few dominant cultural centers to other regions.<sup>1</sup> In the years since, the notion of a culture center or region has been used and developed in different ways. Frobenius used a culture historical approach to organize the archaeological record into a basic sequence of events in time and space. This approach assumes that artifacts can be used to build a generalized picture of human culture, and that descriptive models could be interpreted. For more than one hundred years these ideas have been modified, nuanced, and criticized, yet remain useful concepts for tourism research and policy today.

The *kulturkreis* or 'culture circle' was first conceived by Fritz Graebner and later refined by Wilhelm Schmidt. It was a central concept in early 20<sup>th</sup> century German anthropology that influenced both ethnology and archaeology. The Kulturkreis School, in particular, relied on diffusionist principles, believing that similarities among cultures could be shown to be the result of cultural influences from elsewhere, rather than the result of a universal human nature. They asserted that a limited number of culture circles had developed at different times and places, and that later cultures developed from the dispersal of cultural traits from these centers. With this theory, it was thought

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<sup>1</sup> As traders moved between cultural centers, an exchange or 'diffusion' of traits took place. Knowledge, products, and practices spread across wider regions, reaching an unprecedented pace during the age of exploration. It is also true that social and technological innovations were generated independently in different areas of the world.

that the history of any culture could be reconstructed through the analysis of its culture complexes, tracing them back to one or more of the few original culture circles (Zimmerman 2001).

In the United States, anthropologists Alfred L. Kroeber and Clark Wissler proposed an expansion of the diffusionism idea in their studies of American Indian ethnology, and from this, Wissler developed the idea of the "culture area." The notion of a culture area is generally regarded as Wissler's most important contribution to anthropology. A cardinal feature of the culture area is that it established a basis for cross-cultural comparison and the building of theory. Kroeber realized the significance of Wissler's development of the culture area concept but noted that the idea had existed long before Wissler (Freed and Freed 1983). In fact, Wissler had developed the concept based on an 1895 article by Otis T. Mason (1895) in which he had identified eighteen American Indian 'culture areas' (Harris 1968). However, it was Wissler who advanced the concept to the point where it could be used analytically (1917). Kroeber himself later also conducted an elaborate investigation and delimitation of culture areas in North America (Kroeber 1939). What the concept did was to shift analytical focus from the culture and history of a specific social unit to a concern with the trait complex viewed in cross-cultural perspective (Freed and Freed 1983). Thus, the culture area is more than just a geographical grouping of social units with similar cultures; in Wissler's hands, it became a significant theory of culture change.<sup>2</sup>

According to Melville Herskovits, the culture area concept as advanced by American anthropologists was "essentially an empirical thing" that proved useful for museum and library classification schemes and for instructive purposes. He argued that although distinctive culture traits or groups of traits can be plotted on a map, there is usually a historical connection between places, including many resemblances between the material culture, folklore, religion, and social organization of the people studied and of those adjacent to them. This resemblance tends to fade with geographic distance, until finally one comes to a region where the

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<sup>2</sup> In order to integrate what was known about Native American communities, Wissler gathered ethnographic data from a variety of sources that he used to group Native American tribes based on similarities and differences (Brown 2001). First, he identified areas based on single traits, such as food or ceramics; then he took all the traits into simultaneous consideration, and in the context of social or tribal units, he was able to form discrete groups. This created "culture areas" from which cultural influences radiate. Because of this effort, he discerned a distinct geographic pattern, with groups living in proximity, or in similar natural environments, sharing many cultural traits. He eventually defined nine distinct Native American culture areas, grouping tribes that shared significant traits.

culture is almost entirely different from the culture originally studied. Herskovits defined a “culture area” as a region in which the culture is more or less of a unit, i.e. comparable, and peoples with the most exuberant expression of the culture as people with “typical cultures” (Herskovits 1924). He later used a similar method to delimit major culture areas in Africa (Herskovits 1930).

American Anthropologist, George P. Murdock, undertook worldwide cross-cultural analyses of the regularities and differences among diverse peoples. Beginning in the 1930s, Murdock began to develop a standardized set of ethnographic trait data from original ethnographies and case study reports and conducted large-scale cross-cultural sampling of the data to demonstrate how it could be analyzed by statistical techniques to yield functionally integrated complexes of traits and theories applying to the evolution of these traits.<sup>3</sup>

Early geographers, too, evolved a parallel understanding of culture regions. In the early 19th century, French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache used a different name for essentially the same culture area concept, “genre de vie.” De la Blache developed an approach to geography that focused on a regional method rather than a systematic one. He stressed the importance of viewing humans not only in relation to their physical environment “pays”, but also within their cultural milieu, “genre de vie” (a way of living or local culture). This includes the traditions, institutions, language, habits, food, etc., of a people, so that regional identity relates to its human characteristics, as well as its physical ones (Hilkovitch and Fulkerson 1997). In the mid-20th century, geographer Carl Sauer reinvigorated the culture area concept within the field of geography by synthesizing the ideas of the German *Kulturkreise* School with the anthropological approaches (Sauer 1925). Sauer, interested in the interface between nature and culture, believed that a “cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, nature is the

medium, and the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases. With the introduction of a different, alien culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape occurs, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of the old one.” His work inspired further research on the origin and spread of cultures within human geography (Brown 2001), and laid the foundations for the field of cultural geography.

The culture area constructs just described are summarized in Table 1. Their widespread use by anthropologists and cultural geographers is because they make possible comparisons between regions, assist in the historical reconstruction of cultural development, and lend themselves to questions about the impact of the natural and human-made environment on the formation of culture (Brown 2001).

## 2. Globalization and Ethnoscapes

“Cultural tourism” has a variety of definitions that echo the understanding of culture embodied in the above descriptions. For instance, the 1976 Charter on Cultural Tourism, defined Cultural Tourism as a form of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, especially its arts. This form of tourism includes historic sites, cultural facilities (museums, theaters), architecture – including houses of writers and artists, outdoor festivals, rural landscapes and monuments (ICOMOS 1999). For the UNWTO, it is the movement of persons for essentially cultural motivations, which they suggest includes study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travel to festivals, visits to historic sites and monuments and folklore and pilgrimages (WTO 1985). This approach to heritage is typically enshrined in the activities of most international, national, and local tourism agencies involved in tourism development, and their policies and practices.

Thus, even with the most sensitive approach, the challenge for communities involved in cultural or cultural heritage tourism, in general, is to preserve the character of the community and its cultural resources, to offer an authentic experience, and to respect the social and cultural way of life of the host community. Individual communities will identify the cultural resources that they feel make their locale special and unique (Jamieson 1994). Nonetheless, this does not completely resolve the dilemma in that tourists are encouraged to focus on past practices, all modern societies are under tremendous pressures to change from the growing integration of the international economy, communications, and cultures, including especially tourism.

<sup>3</sup> Murdock's traits included such items as customs, food cultivation and family structure (Smith and Crano 1977). To each of these diverse traits, Murdock assigned an unordered nominal code with a geographic co-ordinate. For each society, the set of cultural traits is compared with other societies. Those that hold similar trait complexes are grouped together; from this Murdock defined six ‘culture regions’ - Africa, Circum-Mediterranean, East Eurasia, Insular Pacific, North America, and South America (Coult 1968). His work was published in the Ethnographic Atlas (1967), and the Atlas of World Cultures (1980). The Ethnographic Atlas is a database on 1167 societies coded by Murdock in which he gives ethnographic codes and geographical coordinates but no actual maps. A summary volume of the Atlas was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1967 and contained the data on 862 of the better-described societies in each of 412 cultural clusters of the world.

**Table 1.** Contributions to the Culture Area Concept

| Author (see text)               | Culture Area Concept   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Frobenius, Graebner, and Ratzel | Maps the diffusion of cultural traits from a few dominant cultural centers to other regions  |
| Graebner and Schmidt            | <i>Kulturkreis</i> or 'culture circle' - similarities among cultures could be shown to be the result of cultural influences from elsewhere, rather than the result of a universal human nature   |
| Kroeber, and Wissler            | Cross-cultural comparison and the building of theory - shifted analytical focus from the culture and history of a specific social unit to a concern with the trait complex viewed in cross-cultural perspective  |
| Herskovits                      | Historical connection between places, including many resemblances between the material culture, folklore, and religion, social organization  |
| Murdock,<br>de la Blache        | Standardized set of ethnographic trait data from ethnographic studies and large-scale cross-cultural sampling of the data<br>'Genre de vie' - a 'way of living' or local culture - relation of cultural milieu to physical environment 'pays'                              |
| Sauer                           | Cultural landscape - fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group - a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of the old by new incoming groups  |
| Appadurai                       | 'Ethnoscape' - characterizes the landscape of persons who make up the shifting world - as culture areas become no longer tightly territorialized spatially bounded and culturally homogenous spaces - becomes harder to identify distinct cultures. 'Home is re-imagined.' |

While preservation of the natural environment, artifacts, and customs of the past is a worthy endeavor in itself, the official definitions do not sufficiently incorporate the more dynamic character of culture, including vast migrations of people, knowledge, and material culture. Contemporary anthropologists, and increasingly in other studies of development, are defining new perspectives, perhaps best articulated by anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai. Appadurai notes that different communities appropriate traits from elsewhere and domesticate them into local practices, and that, given the extent of this practice, culture areas are no longer tightly territorialized spatially bounded and culturally homogenous spaces.<sup>4</sup> Appadurai uses

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that there are no longer in some places relatively stable communities with networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure, with a common history, symbols of shared identity, traditions and values. However, it is almost impossible for groups to remain as self-contained entities.

the term "ethnoscape" to characterize the landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals (Appadurai 1991, p191).<sup>5</sup>

Appadurai sees this transnational movement of people and entities that transcend specific territorial boundaries as a process of 'deterritorialization'. Deterritorialization of peoples creates new markets for film companies and travel agencies that respond to the needs of relocated populations and Diasporas for periodic contact with their homelands. However, as time

<sup>5</sup> Appadurai proposes other 'scapes' which include 'technoscapes' - the global configuration of technologies moving at high speeds across previously impermeable borders; 'mediascapes' - which comprise the capability, production and dissemination of information, images and narratives across borders; and 'ideoscapes' - the ideologies of states and counter-ideologies of movements, around which nation-states have organized their political cultures (Al-Zubaidi 2006).

passes, the homeland has become partly reinvented, existing largely in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups (p192-3). These “partly imagined lives” are “tied up with images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere ... cultures, therefore, are more dynamic; they borrow and reconstruct themselves overtime.” This poses problems for representing identities (p198) and for developing bounded culture areas in tourism destinations. Moreover, this poses a challenge to the accepted constructs for “heritage tourism”, “culture tourism”, and related terms.

Although this is not the place for a deep discussion of “globalization,” it is arguable that this more recent understanding has arisen as much through awareness of the process of development, and new emerging global structures, as a change in the process itself. Static theories of culture were based significantly on prejudice from dominant cultures with respect to themselves and others. Changing structures have undermined the 20<sup>th</sup> century global hierarchies that identified nations as developed and underdeveloped or cultures as civilized, traditional, or “primitive.” In terms of the process, however, for modern destinations, such as the Caribbean, the post-Columbian exchanges during the so-called “golden age of exploration” were far more traumatic than the current era of McDonalds and Disney World.

This comment aside, it is evident that the concept of culture and heritage embodied in most heritage tourism is essentially static, and the need to escape this conception is especially acute for any territory, that has already attained what might aptly be called an “Appadurain ethnoscapes.” The example used in this paper, Aruba, a small island in the Caribbean, illustrates the application of this concept, and others described above. Aruba is indeed a shifting landscape of tourists, diverse immigrants, and guest workers and provides an excellent case study of how the culture area theory can be applied to tourism planning. (Reasons of space prohibit providing a detailed ethno-history of Aruba but the following will suffice for purposes of this paper.)

### 3. Cultural Tourism Challenges in Aruba

The Island of Aruba, 20 miles by six miles, is located off the northern shore of Venezuela and has been home to groups of Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawaks for more than 2,000 years. Around 1499, the Spanish used the territory as one of its strategic bases for their New World conquests. They were eventually ousted by the Dutch who colonized the Island in 1636; they were followed by a diversity of immigrants including Sephardic Jews from Curacao, Venezuelans,

Colombians, Portuguese, and other Europeans. Later settlers brought African slaves to work mainly as house servants.<sup>6</sup> Over time, these settlers intermarried with the Indians<sup>7</sup> creating a hybrid population with many biological, cultural, and linguistic influences; the latter provided the basis for the growth of the native language, Papiamentu.<sup>8</sup> Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relatively small population<sup>9</sup> of Arubans endured considerable hardships. The arid island produced little food, and had small subsistence industries making it largely dependent on the outside world; some phosphate and gold mining supported a few families. Occasional famines and endemic poverty forced men into wage labor on the plantations of Venezuela, Colombia, and Cuba (Hartog 1961).

However, the Island’s fortunes began to change when, in 1928, the American Lago Oil and Transport Company (Lago)<sup>10</sup> established an oil refinery on the southern tip of the Island near the small village of San Nicolas. This brought the Islanders increasing economic prosperity, population growth and American material and cultural influences. Since the native Arubans spoke only Papiamentu and Dutch,<sup>11</sup> Lago recruited an English-speaking workforce primarily from the British Caribbean.<sup>12</sup> Chinese, Levantines, East Indians, Surinamese, and Ashkenazim Jews from Eastern Europe followed in their wake,<sup>13</sup> and in less

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the neighboring island of Curacao, Aruba was extremely arid and unsuitable for plantations, thus it was used for raising animals for food and hide, and as a ranch for horses.

<sup>7</sup> The earliest population figures for the Island (1806) record 1,546 inhabitants (whites, Indians, Africans, and mixed). The immigrant farmers, laborers and merchants intermarried with the Indian population. By 1863, the last of the ‘pure blooded’ Arawaks had been absorbed into the population; and in the ensuing decades, so too were many of the 758 newly manumitted African slaves (although many Arubans still deny this last fact).

<sup>8</sup> Papiamentu is a melodic potpourri of Spanish, Portuguese, African, Indian and Dutch.

<sup>9</sup> In 1900, the population stood at 9,702 (Hartog 1961).

<sup>10</sup> Later affiliated with the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, which subsequently became the Exxon Corporation. Currently (2007) the refinery is managed by Valero.

<sup>11</sup> Dutch was only spoken by the few educated Arubans, and then only in conversation with the Dutch.

<sup>12</sup> Workers arrived in large numbers from Trinidad, Jamaica, and from British Guyana, with smaller numbers from Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts, St Vincent, and Grenada. Many individuals had acquired industrial work skills through British or American corporations, on the Panama canal, or in the modernizing sugar refining industry.

<sup>13</sup> Between 1900 and 1951, Aruba’s population had grown from 9,702 to 53,000, incorporating 48 different nationalities (Hartog 1961). Today, the Islanders fall roughly into four main groups: native Arubans, emigre Arubans, Afro-Arubans, and migrants (Razak 1998). The Emigres are juridically Aruban, and comprise primarily the Dutch (*macambas*), Surinamers, East Indians, Lebanese, Ashkenazim Jews, and Chinese. Apart from the Dutch colonizers, the latter groups came to Aruba in the wake of the oil refinery.

than 30 years, the Island population grew from 9,000 to 55,000 comprising more than 50 nationalities (Hartog 1961, p369). After the end of WWII, the oil refinery systematically automated production. This caused a steady decline in its labor force, which fell from 15,000 to 1,200 by 1985, the year the refinery closed.

Well prior to this, in the late 1950s, to offset growing unemployment from the layoffs, the Island Government initiated tourism development with a “sun, sand, and sea” theme, plus casino gambling. The style of tourism adopted was American – extending the language and culture of North America via the oil refinery to the fledgling tourism sector. Aruban tourism struggled during its early years, but was well established by 1980. Unfortunately, this was the decade in which a recession hit the United States (the major tourism market), there was also a political struggle for independence from Holland (which resulted in a Status Aparte), and the refinery closed its doors. These events occurred in quick succession causing an Island-wide economic collapse. The response from government and business was decisive. They elected for a three-fold expansion of tourism (from 2,500 to 7,000 rooms).<sup>14</sup> The endeavor required workers in numbers that far exceeded the Island’s existing unemployed labor force. This created a new wave of immigration, mainly from the Spanish Caribbean basin. When work on the Framework began in 2003, the Island’s population had surpassed 93,000 (not including a speculated 7,000 “illegals” with over 100 nationalities.)

Some idea of the dramatic growth of tourism in Aruba is indicated by Figure 1, which compares the number of arrivals with that in the rest of the world and the Caribbean region as a whole. Remembering that tourism is, at least according to the UNWTO, already the fastest growing industry in the world, makes the case of Aruba quite remarkable. Moreover, that the Island has survived the cultural and demographic challenges thus far is even more so! In this light, it is easy to understand why the dramatic change has caused cleavages to emerge among the established population with calls for greater emphasis to be placed on Aruban language, culture and traditions, including in the area of tourism development.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the expansion was due in part to incompetent multiplier calculations by the Aruba authorities under advice from the World Bank, IMF.

<sup>15</sup> In order to identify who's native, and who's not, native Arubans tend to sort individuals into groups within the societal structure according to their time of arrival in Aruba and on their degree of Arubanness (based on character, language-use, and somatic characteristics.) (Razak 1998). Briefly, the native Arubans are those who are descended from the original founding families of the Dutch and Iberian settlers, Sephardic Jews from Curacao, and other West-

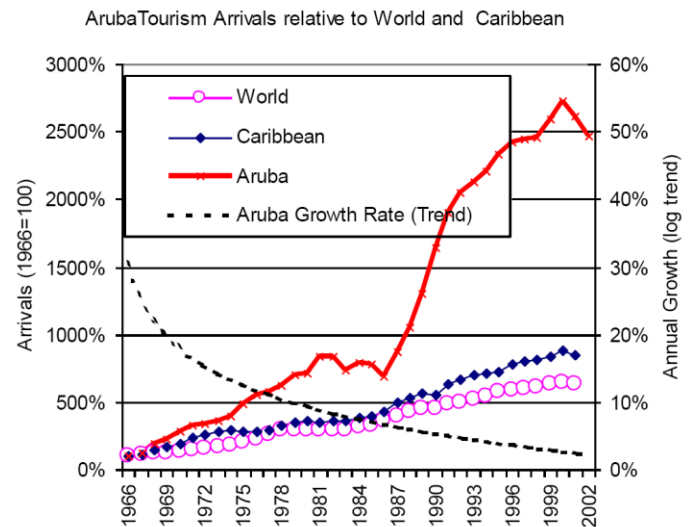


Figure 1. Arrivals to Aruba Compared to the Caribbean and the World (Source: Cole and Razak (2004). Data are indexed to 100% in 1996)

Equally, important in promoting calls for a re-thinking of tourism development was the associated concern that the Island was reaching its carrying capacity. The accelerated growth of population and within-island migration led to urban sprawl and increased attrition of the Island’s natural landscape adjacent to the Island’s Tourism Corridor and the capital, Oranjestad, both home to the wealthier Aruban population. Development encroached also onto the neighboring undeveloped and fragile North-shore of the Island. In contrast, the southern end or ‘Sunrise Side’, the location of the oil refinery<sup>16</sup> and the residence for most new immigrants, has seen almost no tourism development. This area, nonetheless has attractive beaches previously reserved mainly for the American staff of the oil refinery, and has less-developed areas of the Island’s North shore that could potentially support a variety of recreational activities.

#### 4. Sustainable Tourism in Aruba

The first Aruba National Tourism Conference held in July 2002 brought the public and the private sectors together. The purpose was to address the complex of issues and concerns about the prevailing pattern of

European migrants who arrived in Aruba between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 1970s, with increasing nationalism and a call for separation from Curacao and increased autonomy from Holland, there was a concomitant hostility by the native Arubans toward those groups that settled in Aruba after the 1930s.

<sup>16</sup> The refinery reopened after 1990 under Wickland, Coastal, El Paso, and currently Valero.

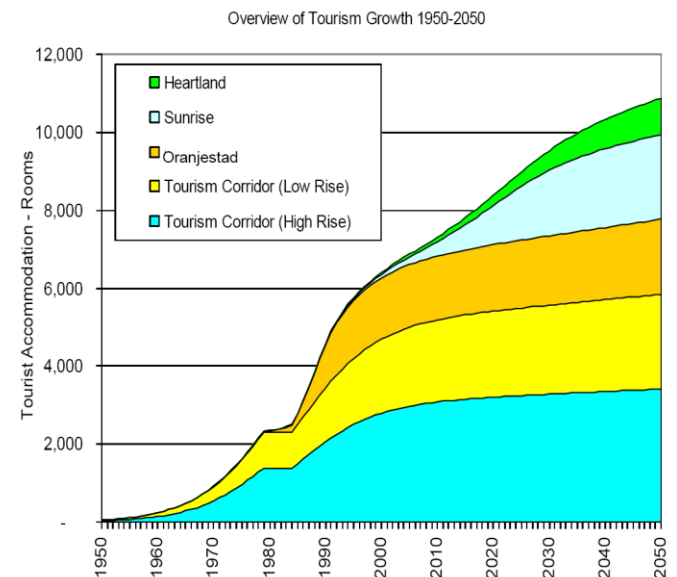
tourism development on Aruba, to “maintain the Island’s future as a prime Caribbean destination in a more sustainable manner,” and to initiate work on the Framework. This project was completed in 2003-4. The Framework proposed that sustainability would only come about through the initiation, growth, and maturation of tourism products in a planned sequence across identified culture regions of the Island. For each culture area, proposals were made to increase the sense of a distinct cultural identity, and to develop a range of cultural attractions, styles of accommodation, tourist spending opportunities, and local entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. This would help control the direct and indirect burden of tourism activities on already intensively developed areas, and from over-encroachment on the Island’s natural environment.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the development of other tourism sites would shift the burden of tourism away from the overcrowded tourism corridor

As noted above, it is somewhat challenging for Aruba with its highly evolved Appadurain ethnoscapes to develop wholly ‘authentic’ cultural regions out of centuries of immigration of diverse ethnic groups. Only the development of the explicitly cultural components of the Framework, is considered here. It should be said, however, that both the macro- and micro-components of the work – i.e. respectively dealing with the broad economic and demographic aspects of the Framework, and the prescriptions for new and reformed products. Both attempted to incorporate a more culture-sensitive and dynamic concept of tourism, host-guest relationships, and tourism products.

At the macro-economic level, this involved determining that the scale of tourist operations is matched to local employment, skills, resources, and so on. For example, it was recommended that the typical increment of construction of new accommodation should be reduced and paced to the needs of the Island (represented by demographic growth and material aspirations, and regionalizing economic development, maintaining the environmental burden well below the estimated carrying capacity of the Island). The phasing

<sup>17</sup> To be successful, the Framework (leading to a Tourism Plan) had to meet with broad agreement from government departments, organizations, and the people of Aruba. A series of focus groups were carried in selected communities to present the main points of the Framework. Participants were invited to not only critically respond to the major issues brought forth in the Framework’s recommendations, but also to offer their individual opinions and creative ideas for achieving the major goals of the Framework. Second, for each Island region, focus groups were asked to evaluate specific tourism products proposed for their communities. Since the continuing success of Aruban tourism is directly connected to the overall welfare of the Arubans, their contributions to the decision process involved in creating a second Tourism Plan was crucial.

of the new development over an extended time-span (roughly two generations) was critical to fostering new tourism development at a far more restrained pace in currently less-visited parts of the Island. These technical aspects of the Framework were based on familiar regional science principles, and incorporated flawlessly into the rhetoric of government.<sup>18</sup> The proposed phasing of projects (building onto existing tourism regions) in the central “Heartland,” and the southern “Sunrise Side” districts considered below are included in Figure 2. Other technical aspects are discussed elsewhere (Cole in this issue, and Cole and Razak, 2007).



**Figure 2.** Proposed Phasing of Tourism Development by Region (Source: Cole and Razak, 2004)

At the micro-level, the work involved investigating the potential for developing culture areas in the terms already discussed. Since Aruban culture has never been effectively utilized in tourism, one goal of the project was to consciously “Arubanize” tourism to balance the existing American style of tourism product, and to counter the increasing Hispanification of

<sup>18</sup> At the twenty-seventh annual Caribbean Tourism Conference, the Prime Minister of Aruba, Nelson Oduber, welcomed the delegates and, citing the Framework. He announced that “by supporting a smaller scale of tourism and making better use of Aruba’s varied tourism potential through new tourism products and projects; improving and consolidating existing tourism products within defined geographical areas; limiting urban sprawl and unnecessary travel, whilst maintaining agglomeration and scale economies; controlling direct and indirect burden of tourism activities on the island’s natural environment, and putting into practice an agreed upon timetable master plan for the next 10 years, we will be able to secure a sustainable development for the future.”

the Island which has bothered tourists and natives in different ways. For the tourists, Aruban culture differentiates the Island from Latin American and Spanish Caribbean destinations and is one reason they choose the more expensive Island of Aruba. For native Arubans, since the Spanish-speaking immigrants look like themselves while possessing a different language and cultural ethos, they feel that the Island is losing its distinctive Aruban identity. A related goal was to use the cultural diversity of the population as a source for the development of new tourism products, while another aim was to promote tourism in regions of the Island that were not yet benefiting from tourism in any significant way. This involved not only the creation of culture-specific products, but also the formation of culture regions that would impart a different cultural ambience. With the differentiation of island regions by culture or history, tourists would have a reason to visit other parts of the Island. Again, this is a challenging task for Aruba given its history, a heterogeneous population, and a hybrid "native" culture.

Taking a broad overview of the population today - in addition to the majority native Aruban population, there are three other culturally distinct groups which are sufficiently strong to impart some culturally authentic ambience to the Island: the culture and language of the English Afro-Arubans, the Dutch, and the Hispanic Arubans. Although the aim is to enhance and develop a native Aruban tourism to counter the increasing Americanization and Hispanification of the Island, the extant cultural diversity of the population does, in fact, provide a rich referential source for the development of culturally diverse entertainments, crafts and festivals. It also allows us to differentiate and develop at least four distinct Island regions -- each imparting a distinct ambience and authentic cultural flavor. These contrasting goals are balanced to develop a productive complementarity for tourism, with a predominant "Aruban" ambience built upon cultural heritage, the Island's history, and features of the natural environment.

For the analysis, the Island is re-divided into functional spaces identifying products, projects, facilities and events around the notion of culture. The purpose is to spread tourism activities around the Island and away from the established center of tourism on the north-west coast (the Tourist Strip or Corridor). In addition to suggesting a range of new tourism products drawn from across all regions of the Island, additional regions (Oranjestad and environs, Savaneta, Santa Cruz, and San Nicolas) were delineated by culture or cultural heritage (culture areas) and considered as potential new tourism regions. Two of these culture regions, Santa Cruz and San Nicolas, are now discussed

briefly to illustrate the process adopted (based on the culture area concept as developed and applied by Frobenius, Graebner, Ratzel, Kroeber, Wissler, and Murdock). The rationale for these new regions and tourism products is also addressed.

## 5. The Culture Area Concept Applied

As explained above, one goal of the framework was to make the traditional culture of the native-Arubans more explicit. This made the identification of Native Aruban material culture, traditions, other symbols of identity, and history a first priority. The basis of these came from the identification of traits and trait complexes or clusters. Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork, a number of symbols were identified with striking regularity as being commonly associated with being native-Aruban. These are, for example, the Papiamentu language, the concept of the Cunucu (from the Indian word *conoco*), and the old cunucu houses (*cas di yerba*), local dances like the Aruban waltz and the *tumba*, accompanied by small bands of musicians called "*conjuntos*", folkloric festivals such as *Tambu*, *dera gai*, and the New Years tradition of the *dande*. Others symbols include herbal medicines and magic waters, local foods such as *Pan bati*, *funchi*, and *bonchi* (sorghum bread, corn pudding, beans), places inhabited by the Indians with their cave paintings (e.g. Ayo Rocks, Huliba, Guadirikiri, and Casibari).

Attachment to the land denotes an ancestral continuum which equates with being a real or native Aruban. The traditional native-Aruban view reads the landscape in the romantic terms of the past; as the landscape is re-shaped away from a idealized image of the past towards the desired image of a modern future, anxiety manifests over the loss of the past in both symbolic and tangible terms. Some native Islanders advance that developing and deploying ideas and overt symbols of native culture will offer some protection and resilience against change. It is the Aruban's historical relationship to the land, however difficult though this relationship has been, that still serves, in part, to symbolize their identity today. Traditional Arubians have always been district-oriented and until quite recently, the Island was divided into *barios* with little social contact between them. There is still a good deal of sociability and a sense of close community and small town friendliness in the different *barios*. The majority of native Arubans are Catholic and quite religious.

Finally, the native ethos has always been the attraction of Aruba for tourists; elements include friendliness, strong family orientation, and shyness, a gentle demeanor, hospitable, and musical and romantic. To-

gether these elements make up the look and feel of Aruba which constitutes the 'unique' appeal of the Island for tourists. Where possible, these symbols of native Arubans were utilized in proposed products, projects and facilities, and for one culture area in the center of the Island, Santa Cruz.

## 6. Santa Cruz: The Native Heartland

In developing the culture area for Santa Cruz the site of native authenticity, the ideas of Vidal de la Blache and Carl Sauer were referenced. De la Blache stressed the importance of viewing humans not only in relation to their physical environment 'pays', but also within their cultural milieu, 'genre de vie' (a particular way of life). He refers to the cultural milieu as including, for example, a peoples' customs, traditions, institutions, language, and habits, so that a region's identity relates to its human characteristics, as well as its physical ones.

Carl Sauer also was interested in the interface between nature and culture, believing that a cultural landscape is shaped from the natural landscape by its inhabitants. Thus, under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through different phases of development over time. As noted above, for the native Arubans, thinking about and using the land in the mode of the past achieves a kind of *communitas* for Arubans (Turner 1969). The landscape around Santa Cruz is dotted with *cunucus* and the remnants of old stonewalled Aloe fields. Natives love to fish, especially line fishing for crabs, and some build *ranchos* (overnight camps made from rocks or driftwood) in the *bocas* (lagoons). Most make frequent pilgrimages to large rock formations where the Indians (perhaps) once held religious ceremonies and have left their presence etched in the white, black and ochre paintings in the caves beneath. These activities are not ritually or economically necessary, but they are significant practices that concretize the idea of a native continuum. Folktales about the history and meaning of some parts of the Island are also more myth than fact. I stress here, however, that many of these professed significances are more at the level of feeling than of serious praxis. All Arubans consider themselves modern and aspire to benefit from the wealth the changing landscape portends. Returning to a former way of life is not desired in reality; ideal and real co-exist at different places in the mind.

Santa Cruz as a locale has not participated greatly in tourism; the area is becoming part of the Oranjestad commuter belt, and is a weak focus for regional economic activity. It is expected that the present town

center in Santa Cruz will become more fully developed through increasing business from local households. Nevertheless, beyond this, the area has cultural and physical attractions that could be developed or restored. The area could gain economic and other benefits through greater participation in tourism, reducing also the burden on the northern half of the Island.

Santa Cruz is considered locally as the 'traditional' or 'folkloric' center of Aruba. This region constitutes the oldest inhabited Indian site on the Island. Legend holds that an Indian Cacique from the Paraguayan peninsular (under the Spanish) came to Aruba, and converted several Aruban Indians to Catholicism at Santa Cruz. He also erected the first Christian cross on the Island in Santa Cruz. In view of its Indian-associated history, and the continuing traditional character of the Santa Cruz community, it would be more than appropriate to promote this area as the folkloric, most native, heart of Aruba. Even today, the festivals of *dera gai*, and *dande*, are celebrated here with a particular respect for their traditional forms.

About 50 projects were suggested in all. The two products and projects - the Old Aruba Village Museum and the Pueblo Living Village - shown in Table 2 illustrate products that are compatible with the overall goals of the tourism strategy. That is, that each product or project will require some environmental, social, and economic evaluation to determine its suitable location, sufficiency of public support, and financial feasibility. In each case, the team has had discussions with members of the NTC, local cultural groups, prospective investors, tourists, and has visited potential project sites. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Aruban village museum, and a living village respectively capture times past, and the past in a changing present.

## 7. San Nicolas and Afro-Caribbean Culture

A second culture area, the town of San Nicolas, is located at the southern end of the Island (the Sunrise Side), and has the majority of the English-speaking Afro-Aruban population residing there. This population is furthest away in terms of social distance from the native Arubans. The town is variously referred to as "Music City," or less benignly, as "Chocolate City." (Hostility has marked the relationship between San Nicolas and Oranjestad for reasons too complex to discuss here.) As an oil town, shaped over the decades by an English Caribbean influence, it is possible to develop products from the existing cultural ethos, architecture, and material culture. The concept of the *Kulturkreis* or 'culture circle' was referenced for San Nicolas. Relying on diffusionist principles, Graebner and Schmidt believed that a small

**Table 2.** Tourism Products in the Santa Cruz Culture Area

| <b>i. 'Old Aruba Village Museum': A 19<sup>th</sup> Century-Style Village</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>As the old 'folkloric heart' of Aruba, a major project proposed for the outskirts of Santa Cruz is the construction of a year-round show village, the 'Old Aruba Village Museum'. This attraction would depict 19<sup>th</sup> century country life, with mud and wattle houses, kitchen gardens, tankis (water catchments), cactus fences and stonewalls, small aloe field and aloe processing technologies, penned animals, and goats, pigs, sheep, and chickens running around. Visitors can step inside the houses to see how families used to live.</p> | <p>One exhibit would be a partly finished 'show' house (cas di yerba) built in the traditional manner with cactus stick, and mud walls, thatched grass roof, with a pounded earth floor and lime washed walls. Some parts of the construction process should be revealed through protective glass viewing windows. Rooms of all the buildings should be furnished according to the style of the time, and the kitchens and other workplaces fully equipped with period-appropriate tools and utensils. The village will have costumed informational tour guides. Local historians should be involved in the proper re-creation of this historic village.</p> |
| <b>ii. The 'Pueblo Living Village'</b>  |  |
| <p>One aspect of tourism diversification is the development of products based on Native Aruban culture, material culture, and traditions. In developing a 'unique Aruban experience', it is necessary to look to the Island's own history, people, and culture. The Pueblo Living Village is an ambitious year-round project designed to use aspects of native-Aruban culture.</p>  | <p>The Living Village is a year round product. Through multiple facilities and entertainments, the village incorporates and displays native culture, and its traditions, material culture, manufactured products, and the visual and performing arts. It involves local residents for employment and business participation, and arts and crafts technical training.</p>   |
| <p>The most important aspect of native culture has contributed to the success of Aruban tourism for many decades – this is the friendly and hospitable nature of the Arubans. Other symbols considered 'native' are the Papiamentu language, the concept of the Cunucu, local dances, and folkloric celebrations, herbal medicines and magic waters, local foods, cactus fences, Indian drawings, and so on. Where possible, these will be utilized in the village construction, decorations, and in tourism products produced in the village.</p>              | <p>Some village features include: the 'Wayaca Print Shop' prints and sews fabric products (e.g. pareros, tee shirts with Island motifs); 'Arashi Crafts' and 'San Pueblo Pottery' produce a variety of well-designed local crafts. The 'Aloe Café' serves local dishes. The 'Arawak Botica' is an aromatherapy shop selling candles, aloe balm, scents with an Arawak Indian ambience. The 'Cadushi Garden' displays a variety of exotic cacti and plants with local medicinal purposes. The Calabas Mini Rancho is a small petting farm for the youngest visitors, and so on.</p>   |
| <p>In addition to the employment and economic issues benefits, this project would serve local interests, and create a new facility for Santa Cruzans, local artists' low rent studio space, workshops (fabric printing, crafts, and pottery), vocational education for talented artists and the development of 'native' designs.</p>  | <p>The Pueblo Living Village sub-projects include a central market place (a colorful open-air place to buy locally made crafts and food); a public plaza for meeting friends, for a one night a week performance of folkloric music and dance. On the periphery of the village is the 'Theater Arubano', which will perform 'Island of Gold' - a costumed account of the seizing of Aruba by the Spanish and Dutch.</p>  |

number of culture circles had developed at different times and places, and that later cultures developed from the dispersal of cultural traits from these centers. With this theory, it was thought that the history of any culture could be reconstructed through the analysis of its culture complexes, tracing them back to one or more of the few original culture circles. This idea was used to locate culture traits originating from the wider circum-Caribbean region that had been imported into San Nicolas through immigration.

The Afro-Arubans comprise three groups: the English-speaking peoples from the British Windward Islands, Guyana, and the Dutch Islands of Saba and St Eustatius; the "Antilleans" who are Dutch speaking

Afro-Antillians from St Maarten, Bonaire, and Curacao, and from Suriname; and, peoples from the French and Spanish-speaking territories including St. Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.<sup>19</sup> While native Arubans are Catholic, religious faiths practiced in San Nicolas are diverse and include Protestants, Methodists, and

<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that, although the original 'village' of San Nicolas stills retains a large Afro Caribbean population and a distinct Afro-Caribbean flavor in lifestyle and architecture, the surrounding areas have grown rapidly in recent years. This larger suburb is home to more recent settlers, mainly from Latin American and the Spanish Caribbean; many native Aruban families are also beginning to move into the area.

Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelists, and Jehovahs Witnesses.

Traits and symbols of cultural identity identified through this method are too numerous to mention, but include call and response singing, carnival and cropover, saltfish, traditional Afro-Caribbean foods, rum, rara rara bands, winin', reggae, rastafari, calypso, obeah, and many other customs and symbols from the many Islands represented by San Nicolas. The original town known as "Esso Village," or simply "the Village", is the emotional/conceptual heart of San Nicolas. It is relatively well delineated by major streets, and is replete with symbols identified for this Afro-Caribbean culture area. The municipality of San Nicolas (including Lago Heights) and its village center constitute not only a refinery town, but also as a "1950s Afro-Caribbean town." It is also widely recognized as the "musical heart" of the Island. The center of the town and Esso Village, with its many original small wooden West Indian houses (not found else-

where on the Island), have remained relatively intact since the 1950s and 1960s when it was home to thousands of refinery workers from the English Caribbean. As such, San Nicolas exhibits a different ambience than that of Oranjestad and the other larger towns -- San Nicolas is a cosmopolitan town with a lingering "English" flavor. Together with the cultural composition of the population, this provides the rationale and physical foundation for developing a different and alternate style of tourism here.

Given its history and current diversity, San Nicolas is cosmopolitan; but for the purpose of promoting San Nicolas as a tourism destination, the original center may be advertised as an "Afro-Caribbean town." (see Table 3 for specific tourism products). The Village has retained its original English Caribbean flavor. Products here include the renovation and painting of all old buildings in bright Caribbean colors (owners permitting), establishment of a "Music Quarter" which

**Table 3.** Tourism Products in the San Nicolas Culture Area.

| <b>i. The San Nicolas 'Music Quarter'</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>San Nicolas represents itself as the 'musical heart of Aruba'. A Bourbon Street-style development (a popular tourist area in New Orleans) integrates adjoining streets and several blocks to form a distinct 'Music Quarter'. This project will utilize San Nicolas's diverse musical talent and create nighttime entertainments. In addition to diversifying the Islands' tourism offerings, the 'quarter' is built around existing bar activity and employs Island musicians.</p> | <p>Different bar/cafes should be associated with different types of music, e.g. The 'Black Cat' and the 'Blue Note' are strictly jazz bars. 'Rasta Talk' and the 'Dreads Bar' present reggae music; the 'Soul Juice' offers rhythm and blues, 'Latin Rhythms' for Latin music, etc. Tourists will come for the music, and eat, drink, and dance. To enhance a sense of security among visitors, friendly police should patrol the well-lit streets in plain sight, as is the case now with the Tourist Strip beaches.</p> |
| <b>ii. The Summer 'All Caribbean Carnival'</b>   |   |
| <p>While Aruba holds a pre-Lenten carnival, other Caribbean Islands hold a summer 'Cropover' celebration. This festival originated with the field slaves during the harvest season. Considerable tourism revenue comes from this event at a time of year that is considered the low season for the Caribbean. Since many Islands are represented in San Nicolas, each could bring their festival traditions into one big summer festival parade.</p>                                   | <p>This 'All Caribbean Carnival' would include the carnival traditions from the other Caribbean Islanders that settled on Aruba. Among others, these are from British Guyana, Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts, St Vincent, Grenada, and the Netherlands Antilles. This represents central San Nicolas as a distinct but diverse Caribbean community.</p>   |
| <b>iii. Three Caribbean Music festivals</b>  |   |
| <p>San Nicolas may host at least three music festivals during the year to reinforce the notion that the town is the musical heartland of Aruba. These must be of high professional standards in terms of music, and organization, and presented in a manner that would ensure tourist attendance.</p>  | <p>'The Battle of the Bands' will be a competition between the major musical bands on the Island. The Soca Festival would be held in July to attract summer tourists to the town. The All Caribbean Music Festival is designed to attract a wider community of Aruba's musicians, and to represent the music from around the Caribbean, e.g. reggae, zouk, bachata, chutney, salsa, calypso, etc.</p>   |
| <b>iv. The Central Market (Food, Arts, Crafts, etc)</b>  |   |
| <p>A busy 'covered market' always attracts tourists. This central market may stimulate boutique and café development close by. The facility should serve as a central market for local residents, a public meeting place, and should expand to include other appropriate vendors.</p>  | <p>Located in San Nicolas town center, the rationale here is to increase tourist spending, and provide business opportunities for local San Nicolas vendors, and artisans, and to diversify product choice overall.</p>   |

comprises four village blocks of bars with live Caribbean music; a summer "All Caribbean Carnival"; three Caribbean music festivals, and a colorful central open market (food, arts, crafts, etc). With the new hotels, landscaping and infrastructure, and increasing tourism-related entrepreneurial activity, San Nicolas will develop an enhanced cultural flavor, unique on the Island.

Overall, the proposals for this region would use new tourism and related development to stimulate the San Nicolas area economy and boost employment; with increased economic activity and consequential population growth, this would stimulate suburbanization on previously developed terrain -- again reducing environmental pressure at the north end of the Island. The developments also would make better use of the presently under-performing infrastructure. Like Santa Cruz, the town has not benefited from tourism in any significant way; moreover, San Nicolas was economi-

cally devastated by the shutdown of the refinery with consequences for local businesses and the physical fabric of the town. Seroe Colorado, the contiguous housing area built for the American executives at Lago, fell into almost complete disrepair. When the refinery later reopened, some physical and stylistic improvements were made to the streets and densely populated neighborhoods. Although the town center and village has slowly been restored, it retains a distinctive Caribbean 1950s small town flavor. The San Nicolas area is unlikely to develop further without the engine of new tourist-related activity. In addition, many San Nicolas residents work in tourism and would welcome the opportunity to work closer to home.

The products and projects shown in Figure 3 are intended to be illustrative of the products that are compatible with the overall goals of the tourism strategy. Each product or project required environmental,

**Tourist Strip**

- Natural Pools
- Las Canchas Condos
- Ultra Hotel
- Walking/Exercise Path
- Irausquin Blvd Improvement
- H2O Activity Centers
- Mediterranean Hotel and Spa
- Security Patrols
- Bubali Wildlife Park
- Eagle Beach Campground
- Delft Town Plaza
- Madiki Commercial Strip
- Royal Dutch Town Hotel
- Wharfside Market
- Oranjestad Re-facade
- Historic Oranjestad Tours
- Carnival Museum and Theater
- Airport Route Beautification

- Caiquetios Antiguos
- Wild Coast Rides

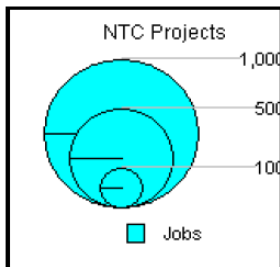
**Santa Cruz**

- Pueblo Living Village
- Olde Aruba Museum Village
- Tumba Festival
- Arts and Crafts Market
- Folkloric Dance Night

- Dune Protection and Patrolling
- Arikok Visitor Center
- Environment Patrols
- Cave Protection/Landscaping

**San Nicolas**

- Fisherman's Warf Hotel
- Seasonal Music Festivals (3)
- Central Market
- All Caribbean Carnival
- Bus/Taxi/Tourist Shuttle
- Shopping Mall
- Water Tower Museum
- Music Quarter
- The Promenade
- Rogers Beach Marina
- Refurbish Colony Housing
- San Nicolas Golf Club
- Blue Surf Resort
- Waves Beach Resort
- Colorado Retirement Condos
- Colorado Hills Hotel
- Colorado Mini Mall
- Golden Dunes Resort
- Blue Lagoon Resort
- Marina Restaurant/Sports Bar



**Figure 3.** Proposed New Tourism Development over the Next Decade (Source: Cole and Razak 2004. Product names are working titles chosen for their descriptive function and ambience.

social, and economic evaluation to determine its suitable location, sufficiency of public support, and financial feasibility. Focus groups were conducted across the Island in which participants were invited to reject or refine projects, or suggest creative and meaningful alternatives. The products were presented at other venues, including three National Tourism Conferences.<sup>20</sup>

## 8. The Bridge to Regional Science

This paper has explained a number of historical and recent concepts from anthropology and geography, notably the "culture area" and the "ethnoscape," that have proved valuable in preparing a new framework for tourism in one particular tourism destination. These concepts, and the approach presented in this paper offer a "bridge" between an ethnographic approach to issues of authenticity, identity, and heritage in the modern, rapidly evolving era of globalization, and the more conventional approaches of regional science, together offering a more sensitive analysis for tourism policy. While the case study considered was a small Caribbean destination, given the similarities to other destinations, especially, rural communities, inner-city neighborhoods, or remote tribal areas, all of which have been, or aspire to be, the targets of locality-based tourism, the approach should be applicable to other destinations.

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<sup>20</sup> This included discussions with members of the NTC, local cultural groups, prospective investors, tourists, and visits to potential project sites. The products (partially) described are culture sensitive and presented as suggestions to be discussed refined or replaced.

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