“Nobody Came to Monte Carlo To Be Bored”: The Scripting of the Monte Carlo Pleasurescape 1880-1940

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Abstract
In 1863, the Monegasque government and the newly founded Société des Bains de Mer decided to transform a small hill known as Spélugues into a casino district. Three years later, in 1866, Monte Carlo was officially founded. Over the next three decades, it became a cosmopolitan pleasurescape designed for a nonlocal, seasonal population of gamblers and consumers, separated from the neighboring urban entities. Although not a port city, Monte Carlo constituted a distinctly global space in which the casino company scripted the movements, emotions, and behaviors of visitors for the purpose of gambling and leisure. Monte Carlo represents both a pleasurescape and company town where entertainment and capitalism were prerequisites for its urbanization.

Keywords
scripted spaces, casino, gambling, pleasurescape, cosmopolitanism, global city

Urban spaces combine a number of functions, entertainment being prominent among them. In the nineteenth century, cities, especially port cities, developed a wide range of spaces dedicated to and dominated by amusement, leisure, and pleasure. In many cases, these pleasurescapes, as an ensemble of material, architectural, and social arrangements, shaped whole cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Monte Carlo was one of these. Today, the casino town appears as a luxurious gathering place of the rich and famous; it is home to Europe’s foremost casino, where aristocrats, sporting legends, and oligarchs rub shoulders. Monte Carlo’s history as a town is deeply interwoven with its history as a pleasurescape. It was planned, built, and even governed as both simultaneously. Moreover, Monte Carlo’s urbanization process reveals much of the project of modernity, which can clearly be observed in this small, cosmopolitan ville de luxe. Monte Carlo’s urban planning aimed to “script” visitors’ practices, movements, and even emotions to the benefit of a specific business, namely casino gambling. As a company town, it was a physical manifestation of a close alliance of corporate actors and state authorities that sociologists and geographers normally regard as a phenomenon of the postindustrial city. The detailed planning of consumption and leisure practices, the marginalization of locals, other industries, and political resistance, challenges the narrative that tends to frame pleasurescapes as power

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vacuums or even spaces of social, cultural, or political dissent. Furthermore, Monte Carlo stands out as an example of a pleasurescape built from scratch. The casino town was associated with a type of cosmopolitanism and globalization facilitated by consumption and leisure. Both consumption and leisure activities depended on intricate exclusion mechanisms.

In this article, I show how, between 1890 and 1940, the Société des Bains (SBM), a French casino company, built Monte Carlo as a casino town and as a pleasurescape. Drawing on historian Tobias Becker’s characterization of pleasurescapes as socially diverse, egalitarian, cosmopolitan, and commercialized, I argue that Monte Carlo’s significance as a pleasurescape derives from the presence of a “spatial script.” This script was produced by a public-private partnership and was the result of an urbanization project initiated and sustained by the gambling business. Monte Carlo’s architecture, infrastructure, and material arrangements all aimed to increase consumption and to “script” people’s movements and behaviors within the pleasurescape. This marked Monte Carlo from the very beginning as a contested space, not despite, but because pleasure was its raison d’être.

After discussing the analytical approach and perspective, I give a short overview of Monte Carlo’s prehistory and urbanization process from 1856 to the 1870s. Subsequently, I discuss how the casino company embedded a “script” into urban space and how that, in turn, created and preserved the pleasurescape of Monte Carlo.

**Approaches and Perspectives**

Monte Carlo was a purpose-built pleasurescape. The casino company SBM embedded a “script” within the space of the city, designed to channel visitors toward the casino, at the same time excluding locals, business, and practices that the company regarded as detrimental to its primary business of gambling. This script aimed to foster consumption and enhance international visitors’ gambling experience. According to the notion of “scripted spaces,” architectural arrangements and objects can guide movement and influence people’s interactions within a defined space. A script is a

[ . . . ] type of space [which] allows the viewer/user to enter and feel as though he has limitless options, even though the reality of the space is one of extreme precision engineered for a specific purpose or “mode of seeing.” This might be equated to something like a “fabricated freedom.”

Research on German spa towns has shown that through urban planning, casinos had already established a mode of using the spa space as early as the nineteenth century.

Urban pleasurescapes as scripted spaces, such as Monte Carlo, are therefore distinctly modern urban formations. They depended on the increased mobility of large parts of society, a growing mass market and people’s ability and willingness to use their money and resources for the purpose of leisure and pleasure. As part of the project of modernity, these pleasurescapes were products of the belief that businesses and political regimes could order and discipline social worlds through urban planning and material arrangements.

The continental spa of the nineteenth century already exhibited a number of these factors. Historian Cornelius Torp recently made the argument for the existence of “casino cities” as distinct forms of urban formations, in which a condensed form of modernity existed. He also identifies private and business interests as driving forces behind the emergence and transnational spread of the “casino city” from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. Monte Carlo was not an outlier; rather, it can serve as an example of how urbanization, the development of pleasurescapes, and the project of modernity are part of the same historical development.

The establishment of a script depended on shifting material arrangements, spatial planning, and the interests of powerful agents. In the case of Monte Carlo, the SBM played the latter role.
The material arrangements included urban infrastructures such as public transportation networks, the water supply, street lighting, and roads. From the nineteenth century onwards and in the wake of the project of modernity, infrastructure increasingly emerged as a tool that could be used for social disciplinary action and political gains. Infrastructure also created the physical and material environment through which the casino company, as a political and urban planning institution, created the script of Monte Carlo. Infrastructure is still little studied as a tool for creating spatial scripts, since Norman Klein, who introduced the notion, primarily analyzed them as a visual phenomenon rather than a “built” one. Infrastructure, however, was key in building a script. Material arrangements, realized by urban planning and via infrastructure, structured people’s usage of and interaction with urban spaces, in addition to their social interactions within them.

To explain how the casino company produced the spatial script and thus the pleasurescape of Monte Carlo, I draw on travel writing, guides, newspaper articles, and advertisements, alongside archival sources like internal casino reports, architectural sketches, letters by executives and tourists, and accounts by casino managers and visitors. I combine a spatial perspective on urban planning with approaches from praxeology to argue that the casino leadership designed spaces to enable or inhibit specific social practices and interactions while encouraging others.

**The Making of Monte Carlo, 1848-1880**

Monte Carlo’s founding fits in with European urban, economic, and political history, despite its unique fame. The idea of using casino gambling as a new source of revenue became part of the political agenda of the ruling Grimaldi family in Monaco after the outbreak of popular unrest during the 1848 crisis. This upheaval resulted in a loss of territory and taxable population, threatening the dynasty’s rule. To compensate for the financial loss, Prince Charles III and his mother, Princess Caroline, endeavored to bring a successful gambling venture to Monaco. In 1863, after some negotiations, François Blanc, manager of the spa and casino in Bad Homburg, agreed to take over Monaco’s gambling operation and responsibility for developing the urban infrastructure that came with it. The newly founded Société des Bains de Mer de Monaco (SBM) was tasked with the construction of a larger casino and the development of a leisure infrastructure. Monaco had no commercial harbor; Condamine, a small district in the bay of Monaco, supported only the local population. Hence, the prince and his government did not look toward port cities for inspiration, but modeled their new seaside district on landlocked casino towns.

A casino alone, however, did not constitute a pleasurescape. From the very beginning, the government and casino executives stressed that a new gambling venture in Monaco would have to include wide-ranging urbanization projects. A core element of this endeavor included the strict separation between Monaco proper as a space for locals and the pleasurescape, designed for consumption and gambling. The latter would also be entrusted to the casino with far-reaching possibilities for designing and financing the spatial arrangement of the town. This private domination of public space was further entrenched by the fact that gambling executives would manage the new town and most of Monaco’s utility services. The immense power of the casino company after 1863 “blurred the lines between entrepreneurial investor and sovereign,” allowing it to build a city around the needs of its casino.

In April of the same year, François Blanc announced in the *Journal de Monaco*: “A whole town remains to be built! To work, then!” Contemporaries like the author Bénédicte Révoil understood early on that the town of Monte Carlo was constructed as “a paradise to soften the edges of the gambling devil.” The urban pleasurescape was built to make gambling part of the many cosmopolitan pleasures that *Belle Époque* cities had to offer, while at the same time marginalizing their supposedly negative aspects.

The results impressed contemporaries, who were nonetheless able to see the intention behind the sprawling new gambling town. In fact, Monte Carlo was “*un casino avec une ville autour,*” a
casino with a city around it.\textsuperscript{24} In 1873, the British journal *The Graphic* described the script that was embedded in the space of Monte Carlo. For the author, the pleasurescape was completely removed from “ordinary life and the countries of reality,” seeming to “obliterate the mind and obscure reason.” According to the article, sooner or later people found themselves at the gaming tables because the city space around them seemed to leave them with almost no choice: “Those who pour molten wax into their ears are tempted through their vision, and those who are purposely blind are overcome by the delicious odors which pervade the place.”\textsuperscript{25}

**Establishing the Script via Infrastructure**

By 1880, Monte Carlo represented an urban pleasurescape firmly grounded in the bourgeois cosmopolitan leisure culture of the Belle Époque. Although located on the coast, most businesses and activities did not involve the harbor, but instead more metropolitan pleasures, such as window-shopping, dining, coffee houses, sports, and of course gambling. The casino took center stage, quite literally, with the gambling house at the center of the town. The layout of the city and its infrastructure represented the basis of the spatial script. Infrastructure enables and disables social interactions within a city and can serve as disciplinary tool, as well as a catalyst for economic activities. In Monte Carlo, the infrastructure funneled people toward the casino from the very moment they arrived. Most visitors did so by train. A French travel guide to the Riviera from 1914 explained that the hotels (mostly run by the SBM) sent a large number of attendants, translators, and buses to the station to make sure that people and their baggage would swiftly move on toward Monte Carlo proper.\textsuperscript{26}

The script also influenced the planning of the transportation network. Monaco had two train stations, one for the old town and one for Monte Carlo, paid for by the SBM. The casino executives thought that their business needed its own transportation hub to shorten the path to the casino for foreigners.\textsuperscript{27} At the station, visitors could therefore choose between a great stairway, lined with tropical plants, statues, and artworks, which led to the great terrace of the casino, a tunnel taking them to Monte Carlo or, after 1900, an electric elevator. For many travelers, this ascent marked a transition between different worlds: Monte Carlo seemed removed from ordinary life, not only physically by its isolation on the rocky shore (see Figure 1) but also by their instinctive reactions. Monte Carlo was a pleasurescape on the edge of both the sea and Monaco, which isolated pleasure seekers in the town and allowed them to embrace consumption and hedonism more than they would have done at home. On arriving on top of the hill, visitors found themselves, not coincidentally, at the Place du Casino, the center of the casino town.\textsuperscript{28}

The spatial script was enforced by infrastructure, or sometimes the lack of it. Monte Carlo’s public transport focused on bringing people to the casino, mostly from the hotels in the town itself. In 1913, Theodore Dreiser recalled that his travel companion in Monte Carlo advocated staying in the town, as it would be easier to get to the casino, and because, as he said: “I prefer to spend some of my time in Monte Carlo, not all of it riding back and forth between the Riva-Bella and the casino.”\textsuperscript{29} There was a real sense that getting to and into the casino was easy, while leaving Monte Carlo was far more complicated. Even the train schedules were planned around gambling, bringing visitors to Monte Carlo at the peak casino times.\textsuperscript{30} With all public transport converging on the Place du Casino and the abundance of hotel facilities, there was little incentive to leave and not many possibilities to do so.

**Establishing the Script via Metropolitanism and Urbanization**

The gambling house at the central Place du Casino dominated the entire urban area, with the city’s boulevards stretching toward and away from it (see Figure 2). Next to the casino stood the prime hotels of the town, the Hôtel de Paris, the Café de Paris, and the sprawling casino gardens.
Monte Carlo’s boulevards fulfilled two functions within the larger script. They guided visitors to the central Place du Casino and provided spectacle and consumption opportunities. Lined with shops, restaurants, and cafés, the boulevards constituted the spatial link between the gambling house and other forms of consumption. The decorative streets allowed people to become flâneurs, a specific bourgeois, urban leisure identity. Being a flâneur required both social status and urban infrastructure. Flâneurs needed leisure time, a respectable appearance, and a city with well-kept, safe streets, window-shopping opportunities, and visual spectacles. Like other pleasurescapes, Monte Carlo was thus a highly commercialized and metropolitan space. Yet, rather than growing out of an existing town, or out of local and global dynamics, as in the case of many port cities, it was planned and built from scratch to emulate these aspects of other European cities.

The boulevard in Monte Carlo perpetuated this mode of seeing and engaging with the city space, giving visitors the possibility to partake in it and unite as cosmopolitan consumers. The city space itself became a sort of commodity, something to be experienced, if one had the necessary economic means. Being in Monte Carlo was a pleasure of its own. Writer Thomas Pickering depicted it as a condensed urban pleasurescape in 1882: “It [Monte Carlo] has been described as a concentration of the noise and movement of the Paris boulevards within the limits of a hundred square yards.”

Entertainment, in the form of opera, represented another link between Paris and the casino. Construction of the opera house began in 1878 under the direction of Charles Garnier, who
had previously designed the main Paris opera. The fact that the SBM was in charge of building the Principality’s opera house underlines the company’s political power. The opera house enjoyed special status as representative state monument in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, it was not the Prince or his government who had supervised or planned its building, but the SBM. That the opera house formed part of the eclectic Monte Carlo Casino reflects the latter’s intended role of integrating gambling into the gamut of metropolitan pleasures.

The legitimacy of casino gambling in Monte Carlo profited from its close alignment with more established forms of cosmopolitan leisure. Gaming took its apparently logical place next to restaurants, the opera, coffee houses, sports facilities, and stores. Other than providing legitimacy, there was a real sense that within the hedonistic pleasurescape, losses at the tables were both expected and accepted, with the lush surroundings softening the blow. In 1899, the Deseret Evening News, an American newspaper, remarked how the beauty of Monte Carlo would distract from gambling losses. In 1901, the Chicago Daily Tribune noted, “Gardens Charm All Visitors,” and explained how these gardens made people more susceptible to gambling in the casino. The article went on to observe that these feelings were unique on the Riviera, an example of how the Monte Carlo experience was regarded as something special and nontransferable. In 1924, the British travel writer C.N. Williamson touched on a similar note. According to him, the atmosphere, architecture, and gardens were part of the reason why Monte Carlo felt unique: “You stroll up the beautiful public gardens from the Casino, for instance, under the long, straight lines

**Figure 2.** The front entrance of the Monte Carlo casino between 1890 and 1900, showing the casino as people would have approached it from the Place du Casino, at the end of Monte Carlo’s main boulevard. Monte Carlo Casino, Monaco (Riviera), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monte_Carlo_Casino.Monaco_(Riviera)-LCCN2002707976.jpg (August 20, 2021).
of shady palms. Every trickling fountain, every well-tended flower-bed on the emerald grass, tells you that you are in Monte Carlo.40

Gambling was never truly absent. As Monte Carlo was at its core a SBM company town, no other leisure business was allowed to rival the casino. In 1908, author Arnold Blankenfeld wrote that even amidst all the shopping possibilities, for nongamblers, Monte Carlo quickly became boring.41 People would eventually at least try to gamble, since “[n]obody came to Monte Carlo to be bored.”42 With its lavish gardens, restaurants, shops, and cafés, Monte Carlo was a scripted space seemingly full of possibilities. In reality, the space had the carefully planned purpose of boosting the gambling business. Many saw through this script. Daisy Cornwallis-West, the Princess of Pless, for example, commented of Monte Carlo in her memoirs: “Personally, I think it is a boring place as there is nothing to do but gamble, gossip and eat.”43

**Exclusive Nonlocal Cosmopolitanism and the Globalization of the Pleasurescape’s Urbanization**

The urbanization of Monte Carlo reflected the centrality of the casino and its visitor-centered business. It favored nonlocal, tourist housing, predominantly outside the price range of the working class and Monegasque inhabitants. A 1913 city marketing publication described Monte Carlo as a “city of flowers and superb mansions.” This was more than an advertising slogan.44 Mansions and villas flanked with grand hotels dominated large parts of Monte Carlo even in the twentieth century, while Monaco-Ville, the town of the Monegasque nationals, was almost devoid of them.45 The villas were not only expensive; since they were disconnected from their environment, they isolated the inhabitants from each other and did not foster a neighborly atmosphere. Instead, people met in spaces of consumption, at the casino and in the cafés and clubs. Only a few people truly lived in the mansions, among them the foreign SBM executives.46

François Blanc was determined to build as many hotels and mansions as possible. Thus, by 1870, Monte Carlo already counted over nineteen hotels (the largest being the SBM owned flagship, the Hôtel de Paris with its 3,000 rooms) and over 116 mansions, as well as eighty luxury apartments rented out only to visitors.47 Between 1864 and 1928, French newspapers such as *Le Figaro* announced how easy it was to find a mansion in Monte Carlo because of their sheer numbers.48 This building boom contributed to the exclusivity of the pleasurescape. Although people could buy a property without financial support from the SBM, it was difficult to do so because of the rise in land prices: in 1874, one square meter of living space close to the casino had already reached a value of 150 francs.49

Housing was not the only aspect in which the interests of the SBM did not necessarily align with the needs of the local populace. One important twentieth-century issue in this regard was labor. The lack of a local Monegasque presence in the pleasurescape resulted to some degree from the fact that the populace had limited access to jobs in the SBM and the casino. Especially in times of economic crisis, this gave rise to popular protests and tensions between the government and the casino. In 1934, for example, Monegasque chauffeurs organized a demonstration as they felt the casino and the hotels favored foreign drivers. A group of local people forced entry to the casino, demanding work from the administration, while others took to the streets in front of the palace demanding that the government give them work in hotels or the casino.50 The SBM however, which had relied on foreign labor since the 1860s, continued to employ mainly personnel from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France. The most lucrative jobs within the SBM, those of managers and croupiers, were largely unattainable to Monegasque inhabitants.51 In contrast to other metropolitan pleasurescapes, like London’s West End or Montmartre in Paris, Monte Carlo had not changed into a pleasure district, thereby blending the local population with cosmopolitan pleasure seekers. Rather, Monte Carlo was planned and built from scratch as a space for foreign travelers and largely dominated by a non-Monegasque company, the SBM.52 The company
favored the development of Monte Carlo over Monaco as a whole, and the casino owners showed little interest in investing in anything other than Monte Carlo itself. The Blanc, and later in the 1920s casino manager Réné Léon, remained gambling entrepreneurs building a city, rather than urban planners running a casino.53

The SBM had planned Monte Carlo as a pleasurescape focused on gambling and bourgeois consumption. By design, it was an enclave with its own international populace, culture, and urban fabric, dominated by the casino.54 The Prince and his inner circle made the separation of pleasure seekers from the Monegasque population part of the planning process from the very beginning.55 While pleasurescapes in general and in port cities in particular featured zones of contact between locals and visitors, or were spaces in which foreign laborers such as sailors could become part of the social fabric, Monte Carlo was a temporary global metropolis. The influx of foreigners was limited to the traveling seasons, while foreign workers generally did not live in Monte Carlo itself. Another important distinction from port cities was the social class of the nonlocal population: they came as consumers, most often gamblers, and thus had bourgeois or even aristocratic backgrounds. They did not come to work or interact with the local population, but stayed among their peers and sought pleasure. The SBM had planned Monte Carlo as appealing to a cosmopolitan clientele by building a space that was devoid of workers and local people. Although not a port city, then, Monte Carlo saw a constant international presence and flow of visitors that shaped the urban space. Statistics reflect its nature as a cosmopolitan company town. In 1911, around 1,034 families spent the winter in Monte Carlo, 97 percent of them in hotels. The most represented nationalities were British, making up 31 percent, and French, with 15 percent.56 In 1913, over nine thousand of the twenty-three thousand inhabitants of Monaco lived in Monte Carlo, most likely as winter residential tourists. The principality became a densely populated area, with 10,300 inhabitants per square kilometer.57 According to the Monegasque census published in 1929, the residents of Monte Carlo numbered around 25,000, with around 9,600 Italians, 9,100 French, over 2,200 English, 384 Swiss, 323 Americans, 193 Germans, 177 Dutch, 171 Russians, eighty-six Czechoslovaks, fifty-five Hungarians, fifty-three Turks, fifty Danes, twenty-three Greeks, twenty-three Yugoslavs, and 790 people of various other nationalities. There were Monegasque nationals resident in Monte Carlo as well, but only around 1,500, a minority in the pleasurescape.58

Monte Carlo remained a city inhabited by seasonal vacationers brought together by consumption.59 The SBM and the Monegasque government treated it accordingly, as a space for nonlocal consumers rather than simply visitors.60 In a report to the Monegasque government in 1922, the casino listed 101,437 visitors to the gambling rooms alone for the 1921-1922 season. In the previous season (1920-1921), 132,456 people had been admitted to the gambling rooms. The top three nationalities were French (50,612), British (19,308), and Italian (8,113). The growing American market segment was also represented by 7,753 gamblers. The impact of the Great War is also apparent in these statistics, with only fifty-nine Germans and 129 Austrians listed. The gambling revenues of the Monte Carlo casino remained high, financing the whole town and by extension the principality. For the 1921-1922 season, for example, they were listed as slightly over 58,000,000 Francs.61 Even in the 1930s, archives show that the populace of Monte Carlo was almost completely foreign, with only a handful of Monegasque people registered.62 Travel writer Pickard combined romanticization of the labor needed to keep Monte Carlo going with exclusion of the local populace and racial segregation when he remarked: “Dark-faced peasants with Ligurian eyes sing Saracenic songs while they work for the little town of pleasure they have never seen.”63

The supposedly racial ambiguity of the Monegasques played a significant role in their perception by visitors, especially those from Britain and France. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Monegasques were often characterized as not fully European and described in almost colonial terms.64 The casino’s architecture itself featured orientalist designs, since one of its main architects, Charles Garnier, and the SBM, imagined that this theme would stimulate
consumption. This pairing of design choices with racially charged views of the local inhabitants is not exclusive to Monte Carlo. The port city of Marseille showed similar characteristics, with its oriental architecture and a discourse that associated the city’s native inhabitants to a supposed “Orient.” Monte Carlo was a cosmopolitan space, but it was built for a traveling, consuming European bourgeoisie, lacking the diversity of Mediterranean port cities.

The exclusion of locals and the control exercised by the SBM over the populace were not simply side effects of building the pleasurescape, but constitutive elements of it. The SBM’s casino manager Pierre Polovtsoff wrote in 1937 the following:

Monte Carlo is an entirely artificial town, designed expressly for those who wish to lead an easy life and can afford to do so. Nothing sordid is allowed to interfere with the visitor’s enjoyment; for instance, there is no beggar to be seen in the place [. . .]. It has no factories or industries, and there is not the slightest risk of anything of the kind being established.

All other economic ventures depended on the SBM’s success and their usefulness to the casino. There existed for example a pottery factory and a waste incineration plant, but they were located at the edges of the principality or in the working-class settlement of Monte Carlo supérieur.

Monte Carlo as Safe Pleasurescape and Urban Laboratory

The SBM regarded the exclusion of the locals and the making of Monte Carlo into a scripted pleasurescape as connected issues. While port cities’ red-light districts became laboratories for urban regimes and later renewal due to their deviant and sometimes criminal features, Monte Carlo was planned to minimize these factors from the very beginning. In the first half of the twentieth century, gambling was still regarded as controversial. This meant that Monte Carlo as a casino city had to be especially safe, clean, and civilized. Policing was a serious issue and the SBM maintained a sizeable security force of its own, targeting people and practices that the company deemed harmful to their casino and pleasurescape.

SBM documents from 1879 show that in that year, the company paid 57,987 francs simply on financing law enforcement. François Blanc and his successors could count on the Monegasque and French police to cooperate with the extremely well-trained and influential casino security force. The police of the principality paid special attention to people who might undermine Monte Carlo’s atmosphere. From 1866 to 1900, it kept Monte Carlo free of homeless people and workers, who had to live either in Beausoleil or the worker settlements of Monaco-Ville. The political authorities stated that such people had a negative impact on tourism, claiming that encountering them would mar visitors’ experience of consumption. In 1870, after many visitors had complained about incidents at the station of Monaco, casino director Henry Wagatha argued that a police station should be built there, not because it was really needed, but simply because he thought it would give people a stronger sense of order. These measures were a logical extension of the sophisticated surveillance and security apparatus of the casino itself. The service intérieur of the SBM, its security force, featured guards, plain-clothes detectives, and the gardes de jardins, the security personnel of the gardens. As with urbanization, policing and security seemed to be regarded as an essential task for the casino administration. Again, private economic motives blended seamlessly with political ones.

The pleasurescape of Monte Carlo had its own, even more specific needs when it came to security. The most notorious was the practice of removing ruined gamblers, the so-called viatium or viatique, in operation from 1864 to 1924. The viatique was a small loan given to visitors who could prove that they had the intention to leave but did not have enough money to pay for a ticket. The SBM would lend them money to travel home, no matter where that might be. The
beneficiary promised to return only to repay the casino company or to stay away forever, and if he or she did in fact never return, the SBM would not try to get their money back. The so-called décavés, the ruined gamblers, who had lost all or at least most of their fortunes, could after all turn into beggars or thieves. At the very least, their misfortune would be witnessed by others and disrupt the gambling atmosphere and the secure space.

The process of getting the viatique was as intrusive as it was thorough. The gamblers had to approach a casino official and tell them that they had no money left and wanted to leave. The official, an usher, or most likely a casino detective, would lead the person through one of the “looking glass” doors, a hidden entrance located in the gambling room within the casino. What followed was a detailed interview about the gambler’s stay and the events leading up to his unfortunate situation. Once all the information had been checked, the gambler was given the money.

Conclusion

Recent historiography stresses the importance of entertainment districts and pleasurescapes in the urbanization of cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Monte Carlo is an often-ignored, prime example of this development. The SBM casino company and the Monegasque government planned, built, and governed the town as an urban pleasurescape for the explicit purpose of hosting an international clientele of gamblers and consumers. Monte Carlo thus both affirms and challenges assumptions about urban pleasurescapes. While it was commercialized, metropolitan, cosmopolitan, egalitarian, and global, all these characteristics served to boost gambling as particular consumer practice and became part of an infrastructural endeavor by the casino company to assert control over the behaviors of visitors and inhabitants via a spatial script. Although not a port city, Monte Carlo was a global town that marginalized the native population for the benefit of pleasure seekers. The casino town was a product of the modern ambition to shape behavior and interaction with spaces through material arrangements and the firm belief that social order could be established by rigorous urban planning procedures. The script restricted the movement of gamblers not with laws, but by means of architecture and aesthetics that created allure.

Monte Carlo’s history also demonstrates that not every pleasurescape was shaped by or connected to an unruly, creative local population. Unlike sailors and social groups associated with the harbor, Monte Carlo’s pleasurescape was defined by a lack of locals, who were marginalized and pushed to its edges. The political authorities and the SBM emphasized control and security to preserve Monte Carlo as a space for safe, cosmopolitan pleasure and consumption. The casino town continued in the line of continental spa development, yet on an entirely different level. Entertainment, leisure, and consumption were the preconditions for its conception and urbanization until the twentieth century.

Another precondition of Monte Carlo was the growing interconnectedness of the modern world. François Blanc had run his first casino ventures in Germany and expanded to Monaco after its ruling family had decided to copy the approach of other Central European microstates. The SBM staff was largely made up of Germans, French, Swiss, and Italians, while a large portion of its customers were British and increasingly, after 1918, American. As a town and business venture, Monte Carlo was the result of complex processes of international transfers and depended on the increasing mobility of capital, consumers, and entrepreneurs. This was despite the fact that it did not feature a port as the classic hub of globalization processes. In Monte Carlo’s case, it was the casino, which facilitated these connections instead.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.
Funding
The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The author received financial support for the publication of this article from HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) as part of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program “Public Spaces”

Notes
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