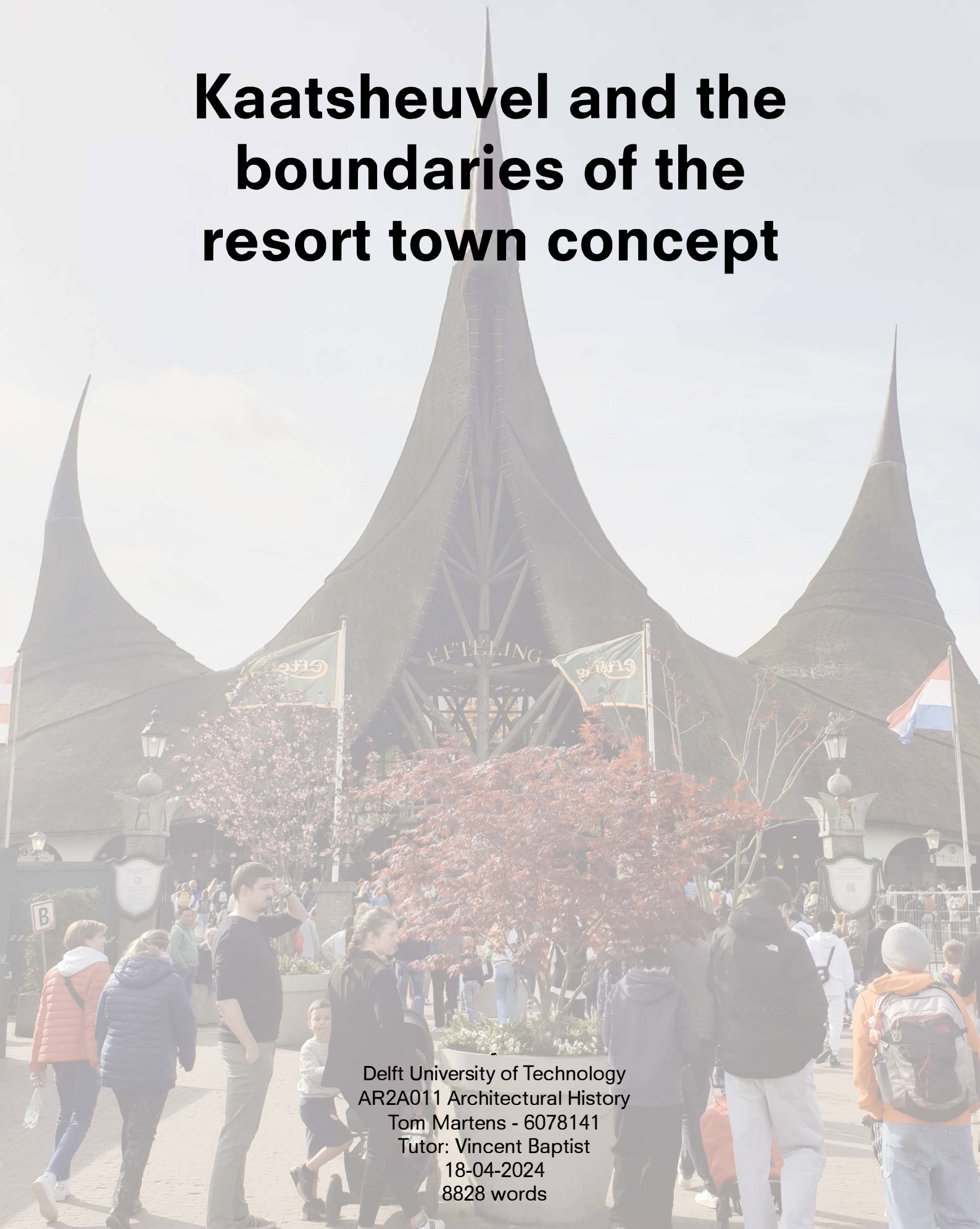


Kaatsheuvel and the boundaries of the resort town concept



Delft University of Technology
AR2A011 Architectural History
Tom Martens - 6078141
Tutor: Vincent Baptist
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Chapter 0 - Abstract

Most academic papers never give a concrete definition of what a resort town is, which makes discussion of the topic difficult. To create more clarity on the subject this paper investigates the Dutch town of Kaatsheuvel, and if the theme park within its borders, the Efteling, makes the town an example of a resort town. To achieve this the history and development of the town were traced back to the inception of the Efteling in 1933, and this development was then compared to academic sources on resort towns, with the six stages of resort town development by Butler (1980) playing a key role. In the end, Kaatsheuvel has a lot of similarities to other resort towns, but especially the early stages of the resort town are not present in the history of Kaatsheuvel. This means that Kaatsheuvel can be considered as a resort town, but the path it took to get to that status differs from other more conventional cases. This conclusion has both specified and expanded the concept of the resort town, making future discussions on the topic more precise.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The concept of the resort town is a concept that is not very concrete. While quite a lot of literature has been written on the topic, a concise definition of what could be considered a resort town is absent. This is not only important for academic discussions on the development of the resort town, but it can also be vital for the lawmakers to help them make choices for the development of a town. Butler (1980) gives an overview of the different stages resort towns might experience, and the last stage could be worrying. Butler states that resort towns will experience decline unless the town finds something new for the visitors. When the liveliness of a town hinges on the success of a resort, the decline can be disastrous for this area. Understanding if a town is a resort town can help the local government to actively avoid the decline stage.

While a clear definition of a resort town is challenging, the definition of a resort is more tangible. Within the definition given by Cambridge dictionary (n.d.), Merriam-webster (n.d.), and Britannica Dictionary (n.d.) a resort is a place for touristic visits, usually with the goal of relaxation. Some examples mentioned are ski resorts and beach resorts. Something most definitions mention is the fact that resorts are aimed at vacationers, which usually entails a multiple day stay.

The vagueness of the term resort town can make discussion of the topic difficult. If there is not a common understanding of the term, it becomes very difficult to create models that encapsulate all resort towns. Even if these models are created, it is unclear to which towns they apply. The edge case of the term discussed in this paper is the “theme park town”. While theme parks have a lot in common with resorts, such as the large amount of tourism, there are also clear differences. The most obvious one is the time tourists spend at their destination, which is often only a day at theme parks. Many larger theme parks do offer overnight stay options, which makes the distinction between resort and theme park less clear.

To be able to investigate the “theme park town” a case study was selected. This case study is Kaatsheuvel, a Dutch town of nearly 17.000 people, with its theme park the Efteling. It is a part of the municipality Loon op Zand, which has around 24.000 residents across three towns. Kaatsheuvel is the largest of these towns, housing more than 70% of the municipality, as reported by the municipality of Loon op Zand (n.d.). The municipality is partially built on a rare geographic phenomenon where a large amount of sand was deposited during the last ice age. This area later developed into a sand drift, likely due to a combination of grazing animals and the removal of the top layer of heathland. This area is now known as national park Loonse en Drunense Duinen, named after the towns of Loon op Zand and Drunen (Gemeente Loon op zand, 2023). Figure 1 shows a map of the municipality.

Loon op Zand is the second largest town in the municipality, with over 6.000 residents. This town is also the oldest of the three, as it originated along an important trade route. In the fifteenth century Kaatsheuvel was founded to facilitate the extraction of peat, which was a common fuel back then. A farming culture then developed, with the main development occurring in ribbons. These ribbons grew into the town of Kaatsheuvel. The town is also a part of the Langstraat region, which produced a lot of leather products. Due to the presence of fresh water and oak trees in the dunes, and the presence of cows and strong grass in the swamplands, leather was an abundant resource (Gemeente Loon op Zand, 2023).

The Efteling attracted 5,56 million visitors in 2023, with substantial amounts of visitors coming from neighbouring countries, especially Belgium, according to the website of the Efteling (2024). Besides the rollercoasters the park also has a fairytale forest, where small scenes from various fairytales are recreated. The park also has more family oriented dark rides, where carts slowly travel through a variety of scenes. The theme park was originally built as a sports facility for the town in 1933, with relatively little influence on the town of Kaatsheuvel (Steenbergen, 2012).



Figure 1: Map of the Municipality Loon op Zand

This influence has grown tremendously in the past 91 years, which is immediately evident by the large difference in scale. The number of yearly visitors is more than 300 times the number of residents, and a large part of the local economy is tied to the Efteling, which is evident from their reported income of 265,9 million euros in 2022, as indicated on the website of the Efteling (2023, a). The Efteling also has a very large footprint when compared to Kaatsheuvel, roughly a third of the size of the entire town, as is visible in figure 1.

The main reason Kaatsheuvel and the Efteling were selected for this paper is because the Efteling is experiencing a transformation. In the last fifteen years two large overnight stay locations were built, with another hotel being built right now. This means the town is slowly lining up with a more traditional understanding of a resort, where the park offers multiple-day stays. Kaatsheuvel is also a very well documented case, especially the history of the town, thanks to the work of Eduard Steenbergen. This collector of old pictures has published two books filled with pictures, all of which are annotated with relevant information.

This paper aims to make the concept of resort towns a more precise one by investigating if the edge case of “theme park towns” should be included in the concept. To achieve this goal the development of Kaatsheuvel will be compared to the development of other resort towns and theoretical resort town models. Therefore, the research question is:

How can the development of Kaatsheuvel as influenced by the Efteling since its inception help in defining the concept of resort towns?

If the development of Kaatsheuvel is similar to that of resort towns in general, this paper will narrow down the concept of resort towns. If it turns out there are substantial differences the paper also narrows down the concept by excluding the “theme park town”. This paper can also help local governments to avoid a declination stage, which would have great effects on the town.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Resort towns are a rather specific case of towns with a large monofunctional facility disrupting a small community. Other examples of town models are the industrial town and the monotown, which both also have large monofunctional facilities. The industrial town is a town that has most of its economy tied to one specific industry, according to Barbieri et al (2019). The monotown is similar, in that it also often has a large industrial facility. Trifonov et al (2016) describe the monotowns in the region of Kemerovo, which has various single-industry towns, often with poor economic and social stability. Their paper focusses especially on the town of Yurga, which is the first in the region to receive governmental support.

In these papers the monofunctional facilities are often seen as a problem to be solved. Trifonov et al (2016) write about solving the “issue” of the monotown. The literature on industrial towns seems a bit more positive, as the paper by Barbieri et al (2019) also highlights the economic advantages of the industry. But in general, the industrial facility is not painted in a positive light, even being called idiosyncratic to the local context. Here we see a clear difference with resort towns, where authors generally take a more neutral position. While Crewe (2011) discusses the impact the San Marco resort has on the town of Chandler, the resort is not painted in an overly negative way. Some more negative aspects of the resort are discussed, but the resort itself is not painted as a problem waiting to be solved. It should be noted that most literature on resort towns still has a greater emphasis on the local community and their story than the story of the large resort facilities.

Within the subject of resort towns specifically there is a dominant theory on development, most comprehensively presented by Butler (1980) in six stages. The development of the resort towns is measured in the number of tourists, who have various attributes depending on the stage. Butler does also admit not every case follows these steps exactly, some stages may be missing.

Butler (1980) explains that as the number of visitors increases, the link to the local community slowly starts to erode. Where at first tourists use local facilities and residents cater to tourists, this changes during the development stage. In this stage larger organisations start to get involved, which cascades into an even bigger rift in later stages, as the tourism industry and the residents are less and less aligned. The paper by Butler does not specify what exactly would be considered as a resort town, so this begs the question if Kaatsheuvel could be one. If so, the stage of Kaatsheuvel is also unclear, although it seems to be consolidation stage, as the area is strongly tied to tourism, but the number of visitors is not stagnating.

While Butler (1980) admits some flaws in his stages, specifically in the fact that the stages are not guaranteed to happen in every case, other authors are more critical of these life-cycle analyses. Muller (2008) notes that these analyses are often founded mostly on empirical evidence instead of concrete data. Muller also states that the role of competition is often not considered and that there may be multiple alternative development paths. To be able to combat these issues Muller created an agent-based model to predict the attractiveness of different sites to a group of stakeholders based on a variety of amenities. The model was applied to Steamboat Springs in 1970 and was able to predict the development of the case study accurately. While it would be interesting to create a model similar to this for Kaatsheuvel, given the scope of the paper this seems implausible. Despite this, the paper by Muller provides useful criticism that must be taken in mind in this paper as well.

Another model that aims to capture the development of resort towns is the growth machine model, presented by Canan and Hennessy (1989). The growth machine is a “machine” comprising of two groups, advocates and statesmen. The advocates have something to gain directly from development, and this group contains landowners and investors. The second group, the statesmen, are further removed from the development and more concerned with the economic aspects of the development, which means this group includes bankers, realtors, the government, and others. The first group of actors aims to create a coalition with the second to promote growth in a specific area. This growth machine often generates opposition from residents, which manifests in antigrowth advocates. This model is interesting as it shows that there are not only the people that are locally involved, the advocates, but also a group of people who only benefit in very distant ways from development of land. These statesmen can be very influential in some cases, like when the government is involved. Most discussion revolve around the use of land in this model, as it is one of the most valuable resources to the growth machine.

This theory of the growth machine is challenged by Gill (2000), in their paper on growth management. The growth management model aims to incorporate the positive aspects associated with growth, while also creating a guidance system to minimize the consequences it carries. Gill has adapted this model to fit in with the development of resort towns, which they base upon the stages of Butler. Gill mainly criticizes the idea that growth creates an increase in tax, which would in turn create an increase in quality of life. According to Gill, the impact of the growth itself should also be considered, as not all growth is positive for everyone. Gill paints a very clear picture on a disjoint between the desires of the tourism industry and the community, which is in contrast with other papers. The paper by Butler (1980), as an example, notes a lot of interaction between the tourism industry and the local community, especially in the first stages of the resort.

Something that is eerily absent in all papers is a simple definition of a resort town. Some examples of resort towns are provided, but the characteristics that make them a resort town are glossed over. This paper aims to clarify the definition of a resort town by confirming if Kaatsheuvel can be considered to be a resort town. By comparing the development of Kaatsheuvel to the development of resort towns, a conclusion can be reached.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This paper effectively consists of two major parts, with different types of sources tied to them. The first part concerns the town of Kaatsheuvel, and the second part links the development of the town to the literature discussed in the previous chapter. This first part on Kaatsheuvel has been divided into two parts as well, one discussing the historic situation of the town and one discussing the changes that occurred since that historic starting point.

The description of Kaatsheuvel and its history uses more informal sources, as no papers were found discussing the town specifically. The books by Steenbergen (2012,2014) are especially important for the description of the town. These books are not academic books, but rather a glimpse into the collection of Steenbergen, which has many postcards and pictures, most of which are annotated. Due to Steenbergen having lived in Kaatsheuvel himself, many of the annotations are very specific, detailing which people are in the picture and what is happening. In the section on the Efteling, Steenbergen mentions that some of the pictures are from the archive of the church, newspapers, magazines, and another picture album.

Another source on the history of Kaatsheuvel comes in the form of archival material from the municipality. A lot of the paperwork from the municipality is preserved in the regional archive of Tilburg. This archive includes messages to the mayor and other important local government workers, notes on meetings, comments from residents, old municipal visions, and more. From this archive three folders were investigated, with three distinct topics. Folder 351 focusses on the plan Kaatsheuvel-Zuid 1980, which shows plans to redesign the south of the town. This plan was eventually abandoned for various reasons, with quite a lot of complaints from many parties. Folder 381 deals with the reaction of various parties on an environmental report the Efteling wrote in 1990, which would serve as the basis for their vision. Folder 1812 shows the municipal vision Kom Kaatsheuvel, which focusses on the centre of Kaatsheuvel. These three documents show the previous attitude of the municipality, and also some of the reactions of the residents on these plans.

Other relevant sources for the information on Kaatsheuvel include the current municipal vision, which has a rather detailed section on the development of the town. The website of the Efteling is also used in various places, as this site is filled with both practical information and blogposts detailing the activities of the theme park. Another useful source is an informal conversation held with an elderly resident about his experiences growing up in the town of Kaatsheuvel. This resident has lived in Kaatsheuvel since his birth in 1937, which means he has experienced the town and the Efteling for his entire life. Later in life, this resident owned a petrol station, which is especially relevant since some of the literature discusses the relation between local business owners and tourists. Where possible, the stories told by this resident are supplemented with other sources, to confirm their validity. While in a lot of parts it might seem that the books by Steenbergen are the only source, in reality the stories Steenbergen wrote down line up with the stories told during the conversation. This variety of sources, although largely not academic, should be sufficient to describe the development of Kaatsheuvel.

The second part concerns the existing literature on resort towns, and this section mostly uses academic papers as sourcing. These papers were already discussed in the literature review, but a short description of each source will be given here for clarity. The paper by Butler (1980) presents a life-cycle model for resort towns. The stages paint a complete and concise story on the development of resort towns and is therefore one of the most useful references for this paper. The text by Butler was also very influential for the other papers used in this section. The papers by Crewe (2011), Canan and Hennessy (1989), and Gill (2000) are all used as case studies to compare Kaatsheuvel to. These papers were selected because they focus on different aspects of the resort town that might be relevant. Crewe has a large focus on the communities of people and how they are affected by the resort. Canan and Hennessy introduce the ideas of a growth machine to the resort town, which introduces a system of statesmen and advocates. Gill expands on this paper by looking at a case where a growth machine turned towards a growth management system. In this case the growth is not limitless but gets concrete and regulated bounds.

The development described in these academic sources will be compared to the development of Kaatsheuvel. This comparison will make it possible to find an answer to the research question, since it will reveal if Kaatsheuvel follows the typical development of resort towns and as such, if it could be considered one itself.

Chapter 4 - Historic Situation of Kaatsheuvel

4.1 - Influence of the church

The church was a very important organisation in the 1930s, and a large part of life revolved around it. Back then, a lot of people were religious, and the Sunday service was a weekly event. Pictures by Steenbergen (2012, p.56) show the large mass of people traveling to the church on special occasions, such as the opening.

The church was not only an important organisation, but also an influential one, and this is especially relevant for the inception of the Efteling. The sports park first took shape thanks to the investment of the leaders of the local church, who wanted to build the park to make sure the youth of Kaatsheuvel did not seek entertainment outside of the municipality, as Steenbergen (2012) writes. This is in line with the Interbellum period, where especially in the 1930s there was a fear for the new culture the youth had created during the roaring twenties, and especially a traditional organisation like the church would want to set children on the 'right' path (Bruijn, 2019).

4.2 - State of technology

The camera is perhaps the most relevant piece of technology in this section, as it has an impact on the other sections of this paper. Cameras were invented somewhere in the 19th century, depending on which early prototype is considered the first (Dam, 2023), but in the 1930s they were still extremely rare. A lot of the pictures from that time were taken very deliberately, as it was expensive to waste a picture. The books by Steenbergen (2012,2014) show this very clearly, as most pictures were taken very deliberately, and there are very few pictures that were taken spontaneously.

The car is another important invention that was not widespread in the 1930s. While Ford was already mass-producing cars at the start of the 20th century according to Britannica (n.d.), in the 1930s the car was expensive and still far removed from the widespread use it sees today. The pictures by Steenbergen (2012, p.89) of the streets of Kaatsheuvel show this absence of cars quite well. While there are some cars around in 1926, there are only a few. This means the mobility of people was not very good and travelling more than a few towns over was a difficult process.

While the car was not widespread, there was another way of transportation. Kaatsheuvel had a tramline for a long time, which closed in 1937. Although not a lot of information is available on this tramline, Steenbergen (2012, p.332) did write down the song that was allegedly sung when the tram was closed. The lyrics mention that the tram had not been around for long, and that it was replaced by "modern traffic". These observations should be taken with a grain of salt, as the lyrics might not be accurate to reality. Still, it is certain that there was once a tram in Kaatsheuvel.

4.3 - Labour

Labour was also very different in the 1930s, especially for a region like Kaatsheuvel. As mentioned in the introduction, leather products, especially shoes, were important for Kaatsheuvel. The process of shoemaking required a lot of manual labour, and this commonly happened in stores connected to homes. According to Steenbergen (2014, p.121), in 1914 there were 85 people making shoes by hand, 12 shoe factories running on manual labour, and 33 shoe factories running on motors.

Chapter 5 - Development of Kaatsheuvel

5.1 - Inception of the Efteling - 1933

Since the 1930s a lot has changed. One of the more important changes was the second world war. Kaatsheuvel also had a role to play in this war, although it was not a major role. The Loonse en Drunense duinen were used as an ammunition storage by the German forces, who occupied the area. The storage included some buildings and parking spaces dug into the ground. At the location where the main building of this depot once stood is a monument to the war in the shape of a grenade, to remember the victims of the war (Snels, 2019).

The end of the war brought a lot of change with it, one of the more important being the import of cars, which greatly increased the mobility of the people (Couwenbergh, n.d.). This marks a big change in the way people travelled to the Efteling, which was visited not only by the residents of Kaatsheuvel, but also some residents of neighbouring towns. These people used to travel via carts pulled with horses, since cars were seen as a luxury product.

As previously introduced, the Efteling first took shape as a sports park. Steenbergen (2012, p.301) writes that on October 16th, 1933, chaplain de Klijn, on behalf of pastor Völker, of the St. Jan-parish requests the bishop to allow them to purchase a piece of land of five hectares to aid the Roman Catholic sports association. One and a half year later the next pastor, van den Brekel, requested another two hectares for the sport and walking park to create a playground. The park officially opened on May 20th, 1935, and included soccer fields, tennis fields, a playground, and more. A small café was also built, although this building was destroyed in the war when the Germans used the building as another munition depot. This start in development lines up quite well with the theory by Butler (1980), with a relatively unknown attraction that will not attract many tourists.

5.2 - Exposition "de Schoen '49" (the shoe '49) - 1949

One of the major changes in the Efteling occurred in 1949, with exposition "de Schoen '49". As previously introduced, Kaatsheuvel was part of the Langstraat region, a region known for its leather products. The town was a logical location for the exposition because of this. The exposition was held in the Efteling, which prompted a large development in the park, according to Steenbergen (2012, p.311). This large development is also present in the development stage proposed by Butler. The exposition was a success and attracted visitors from all over the country. After the exposition there was not an immediate explosion in popularity for the Efteling, although the exposition did put the town on the map.

It should be noted that the Efteling does not consider this exposition to be the start of the park. As they celebrated their 70-year anniversary in 2022, according to their website (2021), the start of the Efteling would be in 1952. This is the year in which the fairytale forest had the first ten fairytales installed. The history section of the website (n.d., a) notes that the Efteling nature park foundation was founded in 1950, which is the organisation that became the Efteling. The start of the Efteling is thus purely in the creation of the fairytale forest, and not some organisational change.

In the conversation with a resident, it became clear that, according to him, the Efteling at some point had shops in the park that were run by residents of Kaatsheuvel. This claim is very difficult to verify, but Steenbergen (2012, p.304) does mention that the small café which was later destroyed in the war did belong to a resident of Kaatsheuvel not directly associated with the founders of the park. This is the only verified case of this happening, but there could very well have been more shops by residents in the park at some point. This is important as Butler discusses the role of local businesses interacting with the tourists a few times in the first two stages.

5.3 - The Efteling Hotel - 1992

Since the opening of the fairytale forest the Efteling has been growing steadily, according to the website of the Efteling (n.d., a). At first this expansion mainly focusses on the fairytale forest, adding more fairytales to the park. In 1978 a haunted house was created, and the first rollercoaster follows in 1981. All of this expansion leads to the construction of the Efteling hotel in 1992, the year of the 40th anniversary by the count of the Efteling themselves. The park seems to still be in the development stage proposed by Butler (1980), as more and more tourist infrastructure is built.

From this period on it becomes more difficult to track down the history of Kaatsheuvel. The books by Steenbergen both only discuss the history until around 1950. External sources of information are mostly interested in the Efteling, which has a very well documented history. This is one of the first points in history where the Efteling begins to overshadow the town of Kaatsheuvel. Here, the old municipal documents are interesting, as they reveal more about the town of Kaatsheuvel.

The first document that will be discussed is the plan Kaatsheuvel Zuid 1980. This redevelopment plan for the south of Kaatsheuvel received a lot of criticism, mostly from residents (executive Board Loon op Zand, ca. 1982). Despite this, the plans were partially accepted, but ultimately not really followed up on. The second set of plans was better preserved, even including a copy of the document BRO produced for the municipality (BRO, 1990). This plan was drafted in 1990, and redeveloped the centre of Kaatsheuvel, including the access. A hotel was also planned for the new entrance to the town, but from some responses it becomes clear this hotel would be competing with another planned hotel in Sprang-Capelle, a town directly north of Kaatsheuvel (local council, ca. 1990). It is not clear if this hotel planned for Kaatsheuvel later became the Efteling hotel, but it does show that the municipality was considering a hotel near the Efteling.

The old archival documents also included a lot of discussions within the municipality, and two of them are especially interesting for this paper. The first comes from a reaction by the Efteling on the municipal vision that concerns the recreational areas of the municipality (executive Board Loon op Zand, ca. 1982). This plan had some guidelines for the Efteling, stating they should maintain the green character of the park. The Efteling responded quite harshly to this, stating that they did not want the municipality to interfere in the design of their park, as the plans would mean the Efteling needed a permit to remove plants and trees.

Another interesting conflict is the reaction to the environment effect report produced by the Efteling in 1990 (Efteling B.V., 1990). The Efteling produced this document to support their development plans, which included more focus on overnight stays for guests. This report was criticized heavily by both residents and more prominent organisations, like political parties and natuurmonumenten, on the fact that important parts of the report were missing (executive Board Loon op Zand, 1990). Reactions mention there was a lack of vision on the trash produced by the Efteling, no time indication, and a lack of attention for the agricultural lands. The plans by the Efteling encroached on various farmlands they did not own, which is why a lot of the residents of these areas made comments on the plans. Notes from a meeting that was held regarding the plans reveal that the municipality defended these plans quite strongly, showing that the two parties were working together.

Current day

The Efteling hotel was only the start of the facilitation of multiple-day visits by the Efteling. Efteling Bosrijk opened in 2009, a vacation park with both a hotel and standalone bungalows. In 2017 Efteling Loonse Land follows Bosrijk, with another hotel and even more bungalows (Efteling, n.d.). At the moment the Efteling is building yet another hotel, which is planned to be completed in 2025 (Efteling, 2023, b). With all these overnight stay options it is clear that the Efteling is developing itself into more of a resort than ever.

But not only the Efteling is investing in overnight stay options. Over the years a lot of other companies have built hotels near the park. Some examples are the guesthouse hotel, built in 2018, and the Landal Kaatsheuvel park, opened in 2020 (Schelfhorst, 2017) (Jacobs, 2019). While the guesthouse hotel was built in collaboration with the owner of a local supermarket, the Landal Kaatsheuvel park is part of a larger chain of recreational parks.

The town has had to find a new economic driver after the shoe industry was moved to other countries. The previous chapter mentioned that a large amount of people worked in the shoemaking industry. Currently there is only one shoemaker in the entire Langstraat region, and the old owner of the shop had a very hard time trying to find his replacement (Oetelaar, 2023). The Efteling reports to have 3.000 employees on their website (n.d., b), which is a lot compared to the 17.000 residents of Kaatsheuvel. The Efteling never discloses where their employees live, and Efteling employees are frequently seen taking the bus to and from work. Concrete data on what percentage of employees live outside of Kaatsheuvel has never been made public.

The town of Kaatsheuvel is expanding in recent times, with a few development projects creating more housing in the town. The growth in population can also be observed in data. Although the CBS does not have data on each town, it does have data on the municipality. Figure 2 shows that the growth of the municipality is on the rise since 2016 (CBS, 2024).

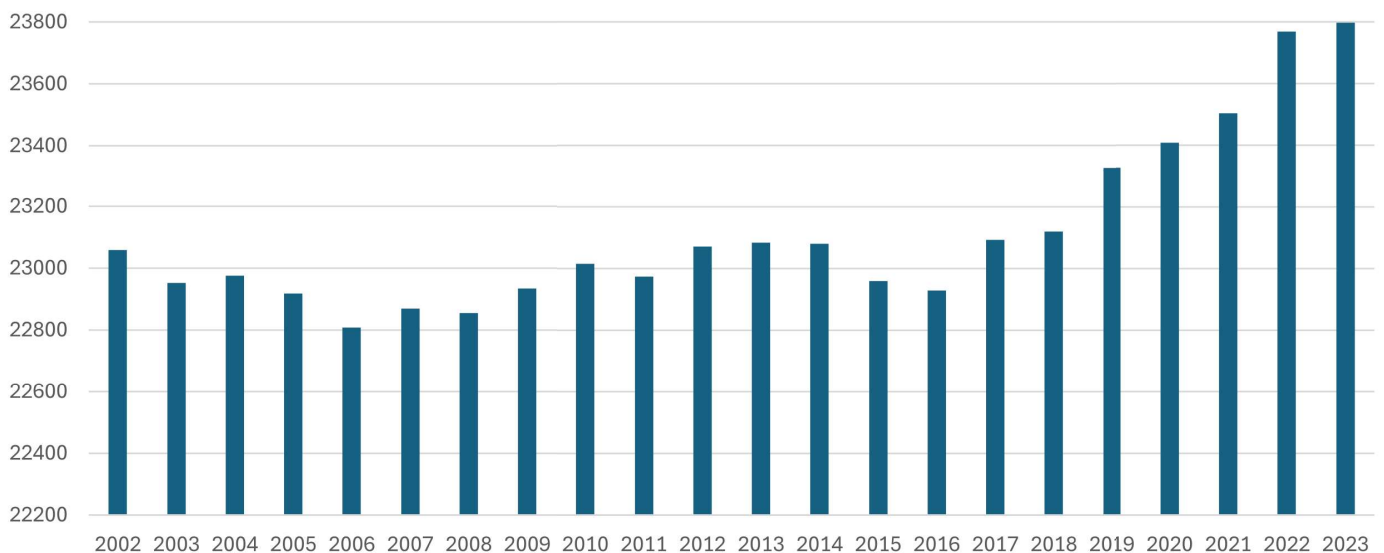


Figure 2: Number of Residents per Year

5.4 - Visions of the future

While the future is still uncertain, there is the possibility to have some insight into it via the visions. Both the municipality and the Efteling have presented visions of the future, in which they outline their plans and what is important to them.

The municipality has a lot of goals in relation to tourism, which are especially relevant to mention given the topic of this paper. Most importantly, the municipality wants to diversify the tourism industry for the town. Within their vision they mainly focus on the national areas close to Kaatsheuvel and barely on the Efteling. This is also because the municipality wants to avoid mentioning specific spaces, as the vision is just a first exploration, not a concrete plan (Gemeente Loon op Zand, 2023).

The Efteling has also created a vision, the world of Efteling 2030, which is posted on their website (n.d., b). This vision outlines the plans the Efteling has for expanding and had to be approved by the municipality. It is here that we can observe the influence of the Efteling in a more negative light. The proposal was approved with relative ease, despite concerns from neighbours. Some changes were made, such as height limitations near the residential zones of Kaatsheuvel.

The Efteling already owns large portions of land surrounding the park, where the future expansions will take place. However, they do not own all of the land, and in their proposal, this is quite clearly visible. An article by NOS shares the story of the owners of a plot of land, completely engulfed by land of the Efteling. They have a camping on this land, which is partially popular because of its natural character. The plans by the Efteling would turn the surrounding into parking space, which would disturb the atmosphere of the camping. The owners also state in the article that their camping is fully booked every summer, so for them the expansion would likely not create any extra revenue. In the map made by the NOS, visible in figure 3, two other plots can be seen that are mostly surrounded by the Efteling in their future plans (Kompeer, 2018).

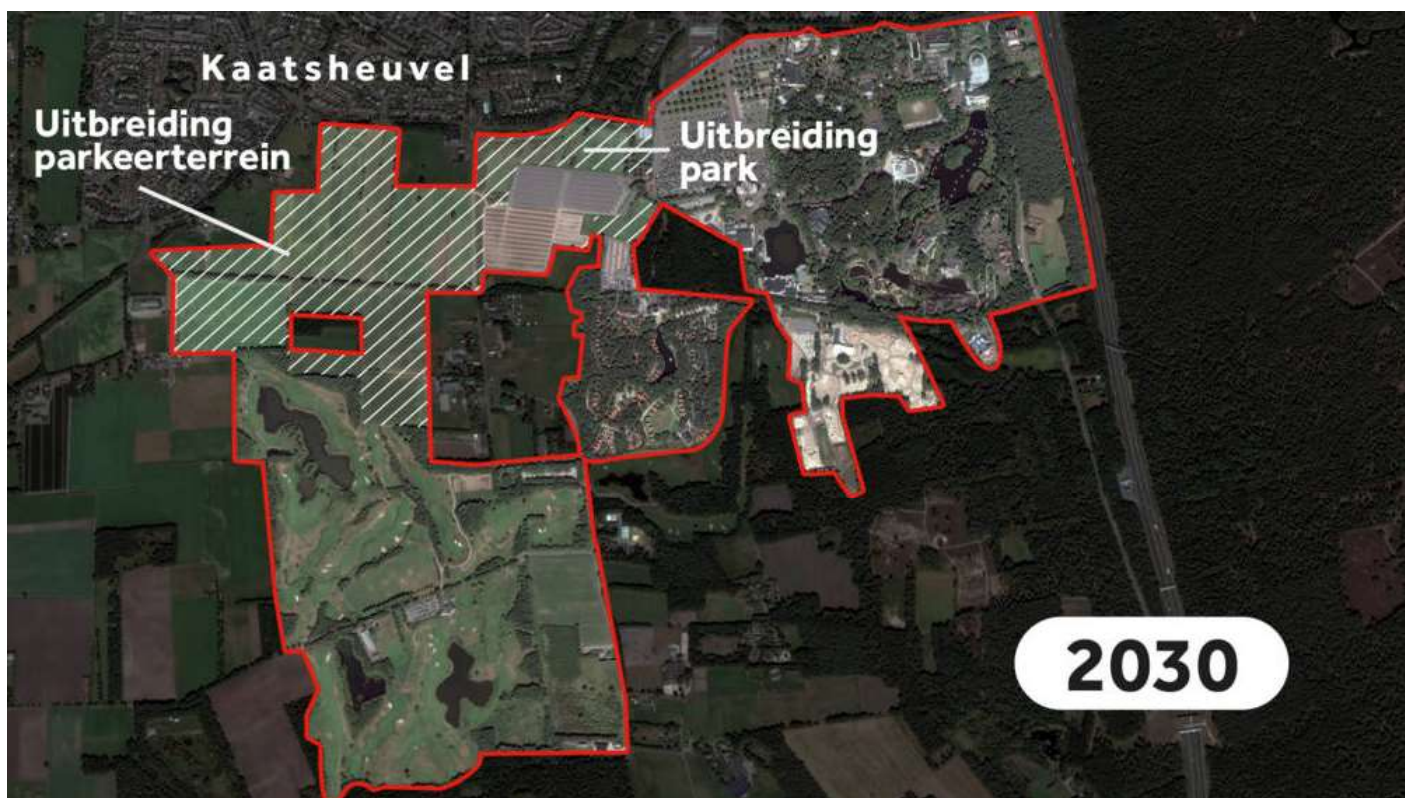


Figure 3: Development plans of the Efteling. Source: Kompeer, 2018

The development of Kaatsheuvel and the Efteling has been summarized in the timeline seen in figure 4. This timeline also includes the stages proposed by Butler (1980), which will be expanded upon in the next section.



1933:
Sports park opens



1949:
Exposition "de Schoen '49"



1992:
Efteling hotel is built



2021:
the Eftelings vision for expansion is approved

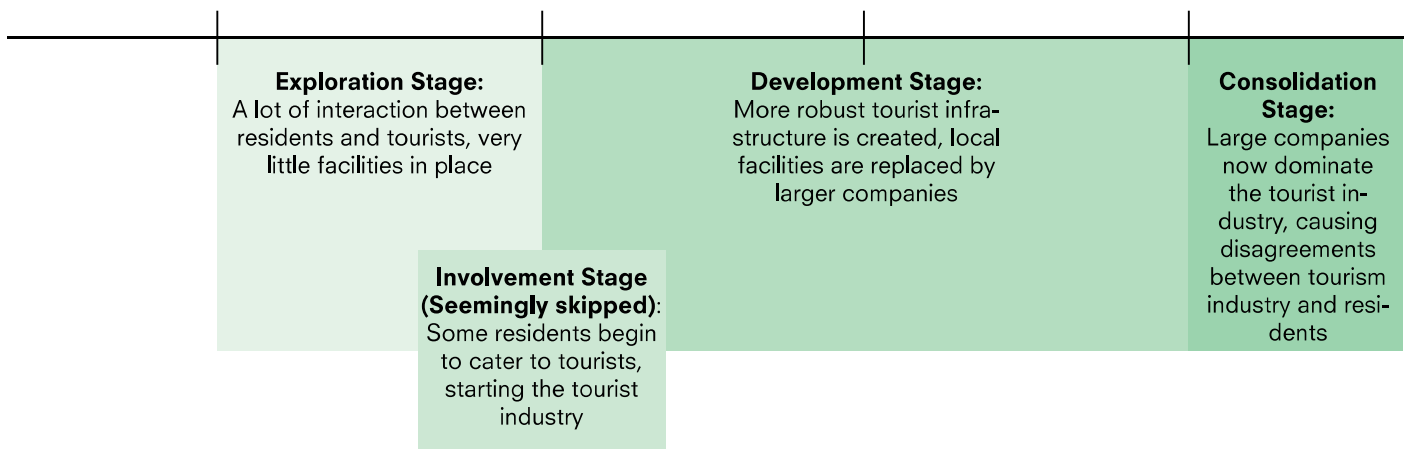


Figure 3: Timeline of Kaatsheuvel and the Efteling

Chapter 6 - Comparison to the Literature

6.1 - The life-cycle model (Butler, 1980)

Exploration stage

The first stage Butler (1980) identified is the exploration stage, where only a few exploring travellers will visit the town. There is very little tourist infrastructure in place, which means the travellers will interact with the local population of the town they are visiting.

There are both commonalities and differences to identify in this stage. A major difference seems to be the source of the first few travellers. The text by Butler (1980) seems to imply most resort towns are created to exploit some natural phenomena, and not a man-made structure like the Efteling. The small amount of touristic infrastructure does not match very well with the Efteling, as there always was infrastructure in the Efteling. The books by Steenbergen (2012, p.304) show the small café where parents could sit while their children were playing in the playground.

There is also the difficulty of local ownership. The Efteling started off as something completely owned by the residents of Kaatsheuvel. However, the Efteling later fell into ownership of people outside of Kaatsheuvel. This means the local ownership has changed over the years, but the facilities are still the same.

Something else worth mentioning is the fact that the Efteling was mainly visited by the residents of Kaatsheuvel. When it was a playground, the Efteling was also attractive to the residents themselves, and not just tourists. The origin of the Efteling makes it seem as if the park was never supposed to grow into the theme park it is today. When it was built, it was made to boost the health of the residents, not as a grand tourist attraction. The literature never makes specific mention of the residents of a town visiting the touristic attraction.

Involvement stage

In the involvement stage some residents will start to cater to the tourists, according to Butler (1980). These residents will have a closer connection to the tourists, but the connection between tourists and locals will remain strong. The involvement stage also marks the start of the involvement of the municipality, where they start to improve infrastructure. Some marketing will also be implemented to draw tourists to the area.

This stage is not very clearly present in the development of Kaatsheuvel and seems to be missing from the development. There already was a strong connection between the Efteling and its visitors in the exploration stage, but this was due to the fact that the people running the Efteling and the visitors were all mostly residents of Kaatsheuvel. The small café meant for visitors of the playground was already in place and destroyed in the earliest stages of the park, so this is also not a case of residents interacting with "tourists".

The exposition de Schoen '49 could be seen as advertisement, although we once again see differences. The exposition did not have promoting the Efteling as its primary goal, but rather promoting the shoemaking industry of Kaatsheuvel. The Efteling was chosen as a location and as a result received a lot of attention, but this was not the primary goal of the organisers. The shoe '49 also seems more applicable for the development stage, due to the large amount of development the park received because of it.

Development stage

The development stage marks itself by the development of a more robust tourist industry (Butler, 1980). The control of local government and residents will decline throughout the stage. Local facilities will be pushed out in favour of larger accommodations by external companies. The natural and cultural attractions will be supplemented by man-made attractions.

Here we can observe a lot of similarities with Kaatsheuvel in the large-scale development, which is very clearly present with the exposition de Schoen '49. This exposition caused a lot of development for the park, especially in infrastructure. The fairytale forest was completed not long after in 1952, which is another large development, and marked the true start of the Efteling, according to the organisation itself.

There is some difficulty in the mention of man-made attractions supplementing the natural and cultural facilities. The main attraction of the Efteling always was the man-made structures, as this is the basis for the park. It can be stated that the man-made structures that were present were expanded during this stage, as the fairytale forest has had many new "residents" in the years after it was built.

The rift between the residents and the tourist industry can first be observed around 1990. This is when the Efteling starts to put more focus on expanding into an overnight stay location, as is evident from the Efteling hotel and the plans they presented. It is interesting to see that despite many complaints from various parties, the municipality was still positive about the plans of the Efteling to expand.

Consolidation stage

During the consolidation stage the number of visitors starts to show a decline in growth (Butler, 1980). While more visitors are coming every year, the growth is not as big as it used to be in the development stage. The number of visitors will exceed the number of permanent residents. The tourist industry will be dominated by large, nation-wide tourist companies, and there will be widespread advertisement for the area. The conflict between residents and the tourist industry will grow, especially for the residents who are closely connected to tourism.

Because the access to concrete yearly numbers of visitors is limited, it is impossible to say if the growth of the Efteling is starting to slow down. If Kaatsheuvel follows the steps proposed by Butler to the letter, the town has just entered the consolidation stage. Landal Green-Parks is a clear example of an international tourist company, which only settled in Kaatsheuvel in 2020.

The widespread advertisement has already existed for a few years, with the Efteling partnering with large companies in the Netherlands, such as the Dutch railway company NS and supermarket chain Albert Heijn. Both of these companies have offered special deals for cheaper entry to the Efteling.

The conflict between the residents and the tourist industry is also starting to show itself more, especially with the presentation of the vision for the future of the Efteling. This plan has received some backlash, especially from the residents living near the Efteling.

Stagnation stage

In the stagnation stage the peak number of visitors has already been reached, according to Butler (1980). The park is widely known and visited, but not as in fashion as it used to be. The capacity for factors will have been reached, which causes issues for the environment. On the other hand, there will be too many beds for the number of visitors, leaving excess beds available.

This stage has quite clearly not been reached by the Efteling yet. The park has reached a new record in visitors last year. This raises the question if the capacity has been reached for the park, but this is difficult to say. While there are now maximum numbers of visitors in the park, the Efteling has many plans for expansion. The expansions would increase the maximum capacity.

Butler (1980) speaks of beds specifically, but in the case of the Efteling this might not be the best metric to use. For the Efteling it seems better to substitute beds for visitors directly, as not everyone will have an overnight stay when visiting the Efteling. With a maximum number of visitors there is a possibility for the presence of excess visitation spaces, as there would be beds. This seems to not be the case, as the busiest days of summer will mostly be fully booked. In terms of actual beds there does not seem to be an excess, as the Efteling is actively building more.

Decline/rejuvenation stage

During the decline stage the tourist area becomes less attractive for visitors, as other areas become more interesting (Butler, 1980). This will lead to a decline in tourist facilities, which will then decrease the attractiveness of the area even more. With the departure of the tourist industry, old facilities can be renovated to serve the local community.

Another possibility for the final stage is the rejuvenation stage. Butler gives two options to reach this stage. The first one is to supplement the area with another man-made attraction. The second is to utilize previously untapped natural attractions.

The municipality seems quite aware of the risk of decline, and in their vision they steer strongly to a rejuvenation stage. The vision is filled with mentions of the Loonse and Drunense duinen as a tourist facility, which can become a very attractive area. This willingness to diversify the tourist attractions is important to avoid the decline of the area.

The Efteling itself does not aim for a diversification in tourist attractions in their vision, although this is quite logical. It would be strange for the Efteling to actively promote their competitors and drive people away from the park. The addition of more man-made structures is also a goal for the park, as their development plans aim to create more attractions.

The Efteling is very clearly focussing on overnight stays in the park. They currently own three resorts, with a fourth hotel being built right now. They clearly see a large market in multiple day vacations for the area. This brings the theme park closer to a traditional understanding of a resort, where tourists would spend multiple days visiting the area.

6.2 - Other case studies

Chandler, Arizona

When Kaatsheuvel is compared to other case studies on resort towns, more similarities emerge. In the case of the paper by Crewe (2011), she describes the relation two distinct communities in the town of Chandler, Arizona, had with the San Marco resort. The two communities were divided by race, with a group of white farmers and a group of Mexican workers both living in the town.

We see a very big difference in the emergence of the town itself. Chandler was founded mostly in one go, with a large number of plots being sold in 1912. During this sale the hotel was already planned, and presented as a factor that would make the plots more valuable. This is in stark contrast with the founding of Kaatsheuvel, which happened in the late Middle Ages when the extraction of peat started. The Efteling only came into the picture in 1933, at which point it was not presented as some grand attraction but as a local sports facility. At this point, it is safe to identify a pattern in the discussion of Kaatsheuvel, where especially the start of the resort town does not line up very well with other sources.

A big cultural difference between Chandler and Kaatsheuvel can also be observed. Crewe (2011) devotes a lot of time to racial inequality, which stems from the combination of white farmers and Mexican workers in the town. In Kaatsheuvel this racial tension is not mentioned or felt anywhere, mostly because there was no large number of migrant workers in the town of Kaatsheuvel. Because of this, there are no clear groups of residents interacting differently with the Efteling, as there are with the San Marco resort in Chandler. The experiences of the white farmers in Chandler do seem to line up quite nicely with the experience of the residents of Kaatsheuvel. The theme park has created both positives and negatives, with the effects of tourism running deep in society.

Moloka'i, Hawaii

Canan and Hennessy (1989) describe the activities of the growth machine on the Hawaiian island of Moloka'i. This growth machine is comprised of the government as the statesmen and the local resort owners as the advocates. Both of these parties are interested in the development of the island into a tourist location, which has faced opposition from the residents. They feel the emergence of the tourist industry poses a threat to their culture and will mostly obstruct them.

In the case of Kaatsheuvel a similar growth machine can be observed, with similar actors. The municipality and the Efteling itself have both been vocal about their positive attitude towards the expansion of the theme park, since at least 1990. These two organisations also work together closely, which can be seen in the ease with which the plans of the Efteling were approved by the municipality. Similar to the case of Moloka'i, in Kaatsheuvel there is also an opposition forming, which is against the expansion of Kaatsheuvel. Overall, there are a lot of similarities between the case presented by Canan and Hennessy and Kaatsheuvel.

Whistler, British Columbia

A similar story to the previous one is presented in the paper by Gill (2000) on the town of Whistler, although framed in a very different way. Gill starts of the description of the town in line with the growth machine theory, where a coalition was formed between the national government and local investors. The residents of the town are generally happy with the resort, as it improves infrastructure and creates jobs for the people. However, when antigrowth advocates start to emerge as the town experiences nuisances from the tourism industry, the town planning lines up more with growth management theories. The town started to implement limitations on the size of the resort facilities, with a maximum number of beds for example.

This story also lines up quite well with Kaatsheuvel, where the opposition to the park only started when the park had grown for quite some time. It was only when the Efteling presented their plans for expansion that some residents and organisations started to act as antigrowth advocates, who want to implement growth management ideas. For now, the Efteling does not seem to be managed in size by the municipality, as the plans for expansion they recently presented faced little opposition from the municipality.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of Kaatsheuvel shows many similarities to the development of theoretical resort towns. While the exploration and involvement stage do not line up very well with the theory, the development stage and consolidation stage do match up particularly well. The stagnation stage and the decline stage appear not to have been reached yet, but since there is no data available on the number of visitors per year, this is hard to confirm nor deny.

The reason the first two stages do not line up very well is because of the origin of the Efteling. While the theoretical resort town seems to draw in visitors by an interesting natural or cultural attraction, the Efteling started as a local facility aimed at the residents of Kaatsheuvel. This created some changes compared to the literature, specifically with the local companies and ownership aspects of the theory. There is a lot of discussion of the conflict between local companies and the large external companies, but in the case of the Efteling the local company gradually grew into a larger one.

The other case studies discussed share some overlap with Kaatsheuvel, although once again we see a disjoint in the earliest stages of development. The paper by Crewe presents a resort that has been created before the town surrounding it was founded, which created a very different dynamic between the town and the resort. The paper by Canan and Hennessy and the paper by Gill show more similarities in the relation the Efteling has with the local government. They have formed a growth machine that is working very effectively, facing some opposition from antigrowth advocates in the process. The growth management described by Gill does not seem to be present, as the

It can be concluded that Kaatsheuvel now behaves like a resort town, but it did not start as one. Kaatsheuvel shares many similarities with other resort towns and some later stages of the life cycle model presented by Butler, but in its inception there are major differences. These differences should not just be ignored when discussing Kaatsheuvel as a resort town, as they have caused differences between Kaatsheuvel and other cases, even in the present day. Still, this paper has shown that even towns that might not be considered "traditional" resort towns can carry the characteristics of one, and these types of towns should be included in discussions surrounding resort towns.

Chapter 8 - Discussion

The risk of bias in this paper is relatively high, as a lot of the historical sources used are a bit more subjective than would be ideal. Despite this, efforts have been made to remove bias as much as possible. When the conversation with the elderly resident of Kaatsheuvel is used, additional sources were included where possible. Where these sources did not exist, it was explicitly mentioned that this was the case.

There are other areas where this paper could have been expanded to be more complete in its analysis. A major factor that was not discussed a lot is the drivers of change in Kaatsheuvel. Gill (2000) discusses exactly who was the mayor of Whistler at what point in time, and what their attitude towards growth were. This would have been interesting to research for Kaatsheuvel as well, but due to time limitations this was not possible.

More research is needed to determine if the differences caused by the unorthodox inception of Kaatsheuvel as a resort town have resulted in substantial differences in its characteristics, or if these differences are likely to show up in the future of the town. This could lead to an even sharper definition of the resort town concept, or it might create a new subset of resort towns in the theme park town.

The definition of the resort town could be specified even more if another typology of town is examined. Some other edge cases that come to mind would be other locations that are more focussed on single day trips, like zoos. Another interesting case would be towns where a specific event is held, which would mean the "resort" would not be around for the entire year, but only for a week. This paper also opens the door to questioning the preciseness of other "town" definitions. In the papers on industrial towns and monotowns the definition was also not given which begs the question if these terms can be clarified more as well.

Chapter 9 - References

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