Tourism as Interaction of Landscapes

Opportunities and obstacles on the way to sustainable tourism development in Lamu Island, Kenya

Siw-Inger Halling

**Abstract**

Lamu Island on the Kenyan coast is the home of a society with a thousand year history of contacts with other cultures through trade and shipping. The loss of its traditional socio-economic base has led to the entry of tourism as the main income generating activity and the major contact with distant peoples.

Tourism in Lamu is based on the old heritage in combination with a rich but sensitive tropical landscape. One concern is how to develop tourism and at the same time preserve a certain set of landscape values. The thesis is based on observations and interviews with the host community in Lamu, focusing on how the local community conceptualize and adjust to the transformations in their envisaged and experienced landscape as a result of their involvement in tourism. Modern tourism ought to be closely linked to development in all respects and could be regarded as an important part of an open society which gives possibilities for interaction between people from different backgrounds. This investigation focus on the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability and deals with the residents’ adaption to the new opportunities. The analysis show that the meeting with tourism gives certain effects in the social landscape such as the accentuation of differences already existing in the society, the evolvement of a new moral landscape and the highlighting of the need of strategies to achieve sustainable development.

*Keywords:* Lamu, sustainable development, tourism, landscape, moral landscapes, tourism and gender relations.

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[urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-158650](http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-158650)

Cover: Lamu Town from the seaside. Photo Siw-Inger Halling
To my favorite travel companions

Magnus, Emelie, Rasmus and Matilda
Acknowledgement

I have had the rare and unique opportunity to spend some time in another culture with the specific purpose to learn from other people and I like to thank all the people in Lamu who have contributed to my work with hospitality, generosity, knowledge, and time and life experience. I hope that some of the joy I felt while doing this work will be shared by those who read it, and that it will be inspiring and fruitful for them who has been involved in different ways.

My fieldwork in Kenya would not have been possible without financial support from The Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography (SSAG) and The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) and I am sincerely grateful for the supporting funds. Professor Kanyinga Karuti at Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Nairobi University was my contact person to get research permit from Ministry of Education in Kenya and I like to thank him and the other staff at the institute who guided and helped me through the process.

My genuinely thanks to my wonderful family; for travel companionship, help with tricky computers, patience during endless dinner discussions about my experience and findings and your constant support and encouragement. I will also give thanks to students and colleagues at Rosendalsgymnasiet in Uppsala for showed interest and all words of encouragement. Hopefully these years of intensive learning for me will contribute to our continuing work and cooperation at our school.

Very warm thanks to my supervisors Professor Erik Westholm and Dr. Peeter Maandi. With your knowledge, patience and guiding this journey has been a giving experience, you have helped me up from the ditches, avoiding dead ends and through winding turns helped me to reach the destination. To Dr. Susanne Stenbacka and Professor emeritus Hans Aldskogius I would like to give thanks for reading my paper and for giving valuable points of view and Hans also for taking time with language checkup.

_Forskarskolan i Geografi_ at the Department of Social and Economic Geography has given me the opportunity to widen my view of the world and of science, I regard it as a great experience to have been a part in it and I learnt a lot. Finally I would give thanks to all who participated and also to all at the department who have made _Forskarskolan_ possible and in different ways
have contributed to my new insights. Most of all I would like to express my
gratitude to Professor Jan Öhman who was the promoter and founder of this
initiative. His sudden and tragically death is a big loss for all of us both per-
sonally and professionally.

Uppsala September 2011
Siw-Inger Halling
## Contents

Acknowledgement ............................................................................................................. 5

Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 9
  Aim and design of the study ......................................................................................... 11
  Why Lamu .................................................................................................................... 12
  The Host Community ................................................................................................. 13
  Structure of the thesis ................................................................................................. 14

Tourism from history to future ...................................................................................... 15
  Tourism and tourists ..................................................................................................... 15
  Early tourism ................................................................................................................. 16
  Tourist places and sustainability .................................................................................. 17
  New tourism and sustainability .................................................................................... 19
  Tourism in Africa ........................................................................................................... 21
  Tourism in Kenya .......................................................................................................... 23
  Tourism in future ............................................................................................................ 24

A geographical perspective on tourism ......................................................................... 27
  Insiders and outsiders in the landscape ...................................................................... 28
  Tourism and landscape ............................................................................................... 29
  Moral Landscapes ........................................................................................................ 31
  Place promotion ............................................................................................................ 32
  Diverse perspectives on landscapes ............................................................................. 34

Investigating and interpreting landscapes ..................................................................... 37
  Cross-cultural meetings ............................................................................................... 38
  Interviewing in idea and practise ................................................................................ 40
  Whom to interview ....................................................................................................... 41
  Analyses and interpretations of the interviews ............................................................ 44
  Other sources of information ....................................................................................... 44

Introducing the study area – a beautiful and vulnerable landscape .............................. 47
  Trade, wind and Islam- a historical and geographical background ............................. 49
  Language, Religion and Literature .............................................................................. 52
  Lamu ............................................................................................................................. 53
Introduction

Figure 1: Lamu town seen from the sea

The taste the humidity the smell all
of this entering the bay of dreams...
Everything is the sea beyond. Landscapes
whose immensity is the brief time that people
spend in them

(Natália Correia, The Nightly Sun and the Daily Moon)

Somebody told me, in the early 1990s, about a distant, legendary, mystic island on the northern Kenyan coast. It was difficult, dangerous and expensive to reach. All women were covered in black, cats and donkeys were living everywhere in the narrow streets and no motor traffic was allowed. It enticed as an exotic and exclusive destination for a journey and the stories
were trigging my fantasy but I didn’t get the opportunity to visit Lamu until 2003. I was immediately, and still am, fascinated by the place. Lamu is the home of a society with a thousand year history of contacts with other cultures through trade and shipping. The loss of its traditional socio-economic base has led to the entry of tourism as the major contact with distant peoples and the main income generating activity today. Lamu has similarities with other tourist destinations around the world but it is also unique in some respects.

Tourism has an inherent tension between the blessings and the blights it could give rise to and is therefore an interesting phenomenon to study. I have seen in Maasai community areas in Kenya (Maasai Mara and Amboseli) that tourism has functioned as an engine of modernization and globalization by giving access to health care, market for handicrafts and thereby incomes, supporting the establishment of schools and water supply and creating a need of mobile phones to keep outside contacts. I have also noticed the mutual exchange, the impressions and knowledge that tourist groups brought back from their visits about alternative medicine, relations with and usage of landscape as well as the role of cultural traditions. Even though I had not formulated a hypothesis to be proven, my expectation was that the interaction between the local society in Lamu and the visitors could inspire and start a demand for new order and change with respect to economic, social and environmental issues.

However, when I got the opportunity to start my research during 2008 the Swedish newspapers, TV-programs and documentary books showed many examples of different harms that tourism could cause (some examples are Dielemans 2008, Svenska Dagbladet 080911, Sveriges Television 081028) but it was little to find about the potential benefits. I participated in a seminar in June 2008 arranged by the University of Stockholm with the title ‘Is it possible to tour sustainably?’ The conclusion from the lectures and organizers was absolutely ‘No, it is not possible!’ All this provoked me to dig deeper in the subject trying to investigate if the message from the different, but nevertheless all pessimistic references about tourism’s possible positive effects, provided a valid picture. Is it true that tourism in most cases works as a destructive power with influences which lead to fading and dying cultures and nature? And is the case that tourism, in its intention to preserve and conserve, lead to petrifaction and transformation of societies and valuable landscapes into living museums? Is it ever possible to turn the perspective around and regard tourism as a vector for sustainable development?

By and by, my interest has moved from the obvious visible changes towards the more underlying perceptions of landscapes. I wanted to understand if the meeting and interaction between the residents and the brief visitors works as transforming practices in the inhabitants’ view of the landscape they live in. The guests may stay for a short time in this particular landscape
but might anyhow leave some tracks that have long-term impact on the local people’s lives.

This work is about sustainable development even if the term is rarely mentioned in the text. The commonly accepted definition of sustainable development comes from the WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) report from 1987: ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, resting on three integrated elements: the ecological, socio-cultural and economic’. In spite of the definition I find sustainable development to be an elusive concept today since it has been loaded with meanings and pre-understandings that sometimes hide the phenomena and messages meant to be in focus. Nevertheless I think that it is necessary to take into account the concept of sustainability in a contemporary study of tourism and its impacts in view of the fact that tourism is a phenomenon that has obvious effects on all the three dimensions. However in this paper I only briefly mention the economic and ecologic sides of sustainability and pay more attention to the socio-cultural part and the impacts given by interaction with tourism.

Aim and design of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate and contribute to the understanding of how a local community conceptualize and adjust to the transformations in their envisaged and experienced landscape caused by the involvement in tourism. The guiding questions are:

- Why has Lamu developed to become a tourist place?
- What kind of contact zones are there and what kind of interaction is taking place between the host community and the visitors?
- Are there examples of tourism as an interaction of landscapes and thereby acting as a socio-cultural transforming force?
- In what ways could tourists-residents interaction contribute to a sustainable tourism development in Lamu?

I have chosen to work with an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is synonymous with fieldwork (Wolcott 1999), to actually go somewhere, being there in person, doing fieldwork and gather your own data. Ethnography could be characterized as a way of seeing, having a ‘multi-instrument’ approach. This includes experiencing, enquiring and examining. Experiencing depends on the human capacity for observation and gaining information that comes through all the senses and is closely connected to the personal, subjective experience. Observation and participant observation are examples of experiencing techniques. Enquiring (or inquiring) is when the researcher takes an active role in investigation and data collection through interviews or
other ways of questioning. When the researcher is investigating what others have produced about the subject it is examining. To ‘triangulate’ or combine these sources of information strengthens the research process and the trustworthiness of the findings. During the whole research period I have examined information from different sources such as academic literature, statistics, official plans and documents, tourist brochures, historical documents, journals about tourism and travel, newspapers, TV-programs and web-sites. This has been important for deepening my understanding and has given me a broader knowledge about Kenya and Lamu as well as about tourism in the past and today, both in preparation for my fieldwork but also to place my own experiences and findings in a theoretical context. The main focus though, has been on observations during my stay in Lamu and interviews with Lamu people. In total I have spent 10 weeks on Lamu Island during 2009-2010.

Why Lamu
When I got the opportunity to study tourism I chose this particular place for different reasons. Firstly, Lamu has good possibilities to attract tourists with its coral reefs, mangrove forests, pleasant beaches and living history in combination with well-expressed culture. Tourism has become the main source of income during the last decade. Secondly, being a teacher in Development Studies and Geography I often deal with the question of how people in developing countries cope with different modes of poverty alleviation. The paradoxes imbedded in becoming dependent on tourism are a challenging topic to study. Thirdly, I have lived in Kenya and visited the country many times so I had some knowledge about different sites and kinds of tourism in the country and I had contact with some people working in the tourist sector, so Kenya seemed to be an obvious choice. Security is a problem in many places in Kenya but Lamu has an isolated geographical position compared to many other tourism destinations and Lamu is regarded as very safe, even for a woman on her own.

In an early stage of the process I was sure that I wanted to do my fieldwork in Lamu but I was not convinced that the local people would welcome me as a researcher. In February 2009 I spent five days on the island making contacts and preparations for the interview study and investigating if it should at all be possible to come as a foreign, white, middle-aged woman, asking questions in this strictly Muslim environment. However I felt very much welcomed. The Lamu people are generally very friendly but at the same time eager to protect their integrity and privacy so it was good to have these contacts made in advance. Some research has been conducted in the area earlier and people had experiences that made them afraid of being exposed, but after explaining my intentions it has not been any problem to be allowed to do interviews or to move freely in the surroundings, participating
in different activities. It was also good for me to see with my own eyes and get an understanding some time in advance how the tourism business is conducted in the area so as to be better prepared for the coming investigation.

The Host Community

One of the cornerstones in sustainable tourism is that the host community should be actively involved in planning, performance and eventually control the tourism activities (Swarbrokke 1999). But the definition of host community may be complex. Massey & Jess (2003) says that a community includes the idea we have of it, the images we use to conceptualize it and the meanings we associate with it and consequently a host community is rarely homogeneous; within the group there are different experiences and interests. The idea of complete consensus within the community is often a myth and in most communities there are histories of conflicts. Swarbrokke means that tourism development may bring to the fore old conflicts about other topics. The motive for community involvement in tourism is to keep the concept of democracy, give voice to those who are mostly affected by its consequences, to make use of local knowledge and to reduce potential conflicts between tourism and host community by increasing community tolerance towards tourism and tourist behaviour (Swarbrokke 1999). The involvement may be on various levels from information and consulting to community strategic policies and citizen control.

Swarbrokke defines certain variables one must consider in the definition of the host community in interest:

- How should the geographical area and its limitations towards the neighbourhood be delineated?
- Do the indigenous people share the same origin and identity?
- Are immigrants included or excluded and are external residents who live elsewhere still a part of the community?
- Do all inhabitants have equal power and influence or are there ruling classes and minority groups within the area?

The geographical area of the study is Lamu Town and Shela Village, both situated on Lamu Island in Lamu District on the East African coast in Kenya. People living in other villages and islands in Lamu district are excluded. I have also excluded migrant workers as well as former residents who are permanently out-migrated. Present residents of various origins and power positions are integrated in the investigation.
Structure of the thesis

The thesis is based on a literature review on tourism, landscape and the studied area in Kenya together with observations and interviews on Lamu Island. All photos that illustrate the text are taken by the author during the stay in the region. The chapters *Tourism from history to future* and *A geographical perspective on landscape* are literature based and introduces theoretical perspectives on Tourism and Landscape respectively. *Investigating and interpreting landscapes* describes the methodological procedure, while *Introducing the study area- a beautiful and vulnerable landscape* is a literature review over the Swahili coast and gives a historical and geographical background.

*Promoting Lamu* provides a brief survey of tourism related literature about Lamu and the following chapters: *Local perspectives on tourism in Lamu* and *Melting pot, meeting point, contacts zone* give an account from the interviews with the local community in Lamu. The last chapter *Tourism as interaction of landscapes* is a discussion about the major findings and conclusions.
Tourism from history to future

Tourism is one of the principal ways through which our ‘world-view’ is shaped; the way we understand the geographical world and the way in which we represent it, to ourselves and to others (Mowforth & Munt 2009). Today’s people in the Western world, and an increasing part of people in other countries, like India and China, live in a consumer society; people have more discretionary income and more leisure time. Almost anyone has access to information from all over the world. All this combined with easily available transportation gives the impression that it is possible to reach any part of the globe whenever we want. Boorstin (1962) expressed the motive for the expanding tourism as ‘making the exotic an everyday experience’ and today many people have experiences of being tourists, in their own country or abroad. Still the experience of going there, the experience of being there and what is brought back from there differs among all these travellers. We must also keep in mind that the major part of the world’s population has never been outside their own country. 80% of all international travellers come from only 20 countries. In the first part of my investigation I have examined literature about various sides of tourism such as its historical development, how the concept is connected with sustainability and how tourism’s future is predicted. All this gives a context for my investigation and help to interpret and understand the role of tourism’s development in Lamu.

Tourism and tourists

Despite the common use of the word ‘tourism’ it does not have any precise definition. Sindiga (1999) says that many definitions have been presented but not anyone has got widespread acceptance. Smith (1989) states that the foundation of tourism rests on three fundaments: Leisure time and discretionary income for the tourists and positive local sanctions at the destination area and she also states that ‘a tourist is a leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change’. This definition could also include both international and domestic ‘day-trippers’ and there is an increasing recognition in tourism research that tourism refers to all visitor activities, including those of both overnight and same-day visitors. Today it is possible, thanks to geographic “space-time compression”, to visit a place for only one day visiting museums, shops and
environment even far away from home. These short time tourists are economi-
cally important for the tourism business. United Nations World Tour-
ism Organization (UNWTO) defines a tourist as someone who travels to
another place or country and stays at least one night but not longer than a
year for leisure, business or other purposes. Przeclawski (1993) gives a wid-
er definition: Tourism is, in its broad sense, the sum of the phenomena pert-
taining to spatial mobility, connected with a voluntary, temporary change of
place, the rhythm of life and its environment and involving personal contact
with the visited natural, cultural as well as social environment. Przeclawski
also says that tourist activity cannot be reduced to the question of spatial
mobility; it is more an instrument of integration and globalization. Different
regions in the world get closely connected just because of tourism and deci-
sions made in one part of the world have their effects in another.

UNWTO estimates that by 2020 there will be 1.6 billion international
tourist arrivals worldwide and tourism is one of the world’s fastest growing
economic sectors, today it represents 30% of the world’s exports of services.
Tourism has tremendous capacity for generating growth in destination areas
but at the same time it harbors an inherent paradox, a tension between the
development opportunities it gives both to the individual and the society on
one side, and the drawbacks it could cause. Tourism is also a relatively un-
stable and vulnerable business. Worldwide there was an unpredicted 4 %
decline in 2009 down to 877 million international arrivals caused by the
international finance crises, natural disasters and political and social unrest.

In 2010, the business has recovered faster than expected, international
tourist arrivals grew by 6.7% to reach 935 million, up 58 million over 2009
and + 2.4 % compared to the pre-crisis peak year 2008 (UNWTO January
2011). The quick recovery of tourism confirms the sector’s resilience, show-
ing that tourism is a key driver of growth in a changing economic setting, but
it may also be an effect of international mega-events during 2010; the Winter
Olympics in Canada, the Shanghai Expo in China, the FIFA world cup in
South Africa and Commonwealth Games in India (ibid.). There is a lack of
reliable instruments for predicting fluctuations within tourism and imple-
mentation of measures to mitigate outside factors impact would reduce the
sector’s exposure to shocks in the short term and to changing conditions
(UNWTO January 2011).

Early tourism

Today’s tourism carries a lot of luggage from earlier periods, often in rather
unreflective ways, and the tensions between past and present play an impor-
tant role in tourism. Löfgren (1999) means that to understand tourism and its
impacts today we need to analyze its history and development. I want to start
with a brief history of the development of tourism as a phenomenon world-
wide before I focus on the expansion of tourism in Kenya and its impact in Lamu.

The word *tourism* first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1811 but the concept of tourism as leisure activity goes back to the ancient Greeks and Romans (Honey 2008). In the pre-industrial era pleasure travel was limited to a small and wealthy group; it could be pilgrimage travel for self-fulfillment (sometimes called self-denial), health trips to spas and seaside resorts, geographic exploration often combined with business interests or education (Murphy 1985). Travel abroad was most often uncomfortable, difficult and expensive but going to far-away places, seeing strange sites and different kinds of behavior have through history worked as renewing of men’s minds and as a universal catalyst (Boorstin 1962). During the seventeenth century The Grand Tour was an important educational trip for potential English diplomats and other rich young men who wanted to explore politics, capitals, culture and society in Western Europe. To travel was to become a man of the world (ibid.). Later, the industrial revolution together with the development of steam power for transportation gave the emerging middle class new possibilities for holiday and recreation. Many people became wage earners and lived in cities so motivation to go on holiday to rural milieux increased.

The working class involvement in tourism was more gradual but changed the scale and types of tourism development (Murphy 1985). The British inventor of guided tours, Thomas Cook, was very important for the development of tourism. He made it possible for people to go on package tours and getting there was just as much a part of the experience as the arrival and stay at the destination (MacCannell 2001). After World War II the possibilities for ordinary people to participate in tourism have changed rapidly. The development of charter and mass-tourism made transportation just to a passage of time on the way to the destination. Boorstin already in 1962 argued that the travel experience had become diluted, contrived and prefabricated; few people are travelers in the old sense he meant. Despite all this travel, so little difference is made in our thinking and feeling and we have not been more cosmopolitan or more understanding of other people (Boorstin 1962).

**Tourist places and sustainability**

The character of the tourist destinations has changed radically during the last decades including the construction of hotels, airports, restaurants. Also local traditions have been modified to make them more attractive for tourists. ‘There is a characteristic transformation of places where the local and the global are linked together through tourism’ (MacCannell 2001:384). A place for work, for instance a beach, where the local fishermen are landing their catch in the morning, is transformed to a scene for touristic consumption.
What MacCannell calls a ‘staged authenticity’ is when the former everyday activities or traditions are realized just to make the tourists content; ‘anything is potentially an attraction’.

Tourist areas are dynamic, they change over time and sustainability must be studied in a time perspective. Butler presented the Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) in The Canadian Geographer in 1980. It illustrates the process of evolution from exploration to stagnation and eventually decline. An increase in either direction on the axes representing visitors or time implies a general reduction in overall quality and attractiveness after capacity levels are reached.

It can also be anticipated that the reactions from the local people to the visitors will undergo change throughout this period, in a complex process related to the characteristics of both visitors and visited and the specific area (Butler 2006). Doxey (1975) illustrates this by his Index of Irritation: “IRRIDEX“, which shows the effect on social relations between hosts and guests as an effect of increased tourism development. He noted a direct link between increased community irritations and fear of losing community iden-
ity. The first phase is characterized by Euphoria with very little planning and where visitors and investors are welcome. During the second phase, Apathy, the visitors are taken for granted and the contacts become more formal (commercial). During the Annoyance-phase the residents have misgivings and concerns over the tourist industry, the cost exceeds perceived benefits and cultural rules are being broken. The last phase is called Antagonism where irritations are openly expressed; visitors are seen as the cause of all social and economic problems.

Doxey’s model suggests a predictable change over time while Butler means that a community’s emerging attitude is more complex and will be affected by the varying degrees of contact and involvement. One of the most useful aspects of TALC is its emphasis on the potential decline if appropriate long-range planning strategies are not pursued for a particular destination. Not all areas experience the stages of TALC as clearly as others but Butlers observations show that if sustainability should be possible also in a long range perspective, an awareness and change of attitude is required among those who are responsible for planning, developing and managing tourist areas (Butler 2006). Innovation is often understood as technical change but innovation also includes ideas and knowledge with respect to ‘ways of doing’. Sustainability is an innovative idea reflecting the notion that it is a process of change and not an ideal end state (Gössling 2009).

**New tourism and sustainability**

As an economic activity, tourism is expected to provide employment opportunities and foreign exchange revenues and to stimulate other sectors of the economy such as agriculture and manufacturing which will lead to a higher standard of living for the inhabitants (Sindiga 1999). Tourism has been cited as one example of a propulsive activity that also stimulates a ‘trickle-down’ effect if it is established in areas with appropriate resources (Weaver 2004), and therefore contacts between developed and developing countries should be encouraged. During the 1960’s the World Bank argued that tourism represented a true motor of development for the developing countries just as industry had been for Europe (Alila & McCormic 1997). The prospects embedded in tourism give hope to many low-income countries to find a way to economic as well as social development, through employment opportunities, and through cultural interaction between tourists and local inhabitants. Even environmental development could be supported through tourism by using the incomes and interest for protection of wildlife and environment.

However, the returns from and impacts of tourism on society and environment are heavily influenced by government policies and the type of tourism. Also the impacts of tourism on space and among social groups are highly varied over time. Research has shown that the foreign exchange receipts
and employment opportunities diminish with large-scale development in the
tourism industry which instead leads to a large volume of imports (Sindiga
1999). Butler also regards conventional mass tourism as unsustainable and
to be growth-oriented, contrived, obtrusive and externally controlled, while
alternative tourism is authentic, community-controlled and equilibrium-orientated (Weaver 2004). Therefore small scale initiatives and alternative
tourism development is required.

Today modern tourism is (at least in theory) closely linked to develop-
ment in all respects and UNWTO is committed to the UN Millennium De-
velopment Goals geared toward reducing poverty and fostering sustainable
development. But the meaning of sustainable development and sustainable
tourism may well differ between different interests. If we do not share the
same notions of such aspects as desires and hindrances in relation to devel-
opment we must ask who should decide what sustainability means and en-
tails, and who is able to dictate how it should be achieved and evaluated
(Mowforth & Munt 2009). Questions on what resources should be sustained
and for whom and what is sustainable for local cultures and economies are
all loaded with power issues and the answers are not derived directly from
the impacts but from the social, economic and political practises and dis-
courses. Saarinen (2006) means that there is a growing need for research in
order to define what the desired goals and conditions are, its resources and
limits and how power issues and decision-making processes are established
in the global-local nexus. Dependency on tourism serves to reinforce the
historically implanted identity, based on the artefacts of colonial occupation,
rather than the contemporary achievements of the people themselves. The
tourism industry is therefore in danger of perpetrating colonialism through
the images in the glossy brochures (Palmer, Destination X).

Swarbrooke (1999:13) defines sustainable tourism as: ‘Tourism which is
economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future
of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fab-
ric of the host community’. It also involves the recognition of negative im-
pacts and the need to manage them through sustainable practices in devel-
opment, planning and policies (ibid.). Early manifestations of alternative
tourism were to a high degree sociocultural and political, but later on also
focused on environmental sustainability. Community-based tourism seeks to
increase people’s involvement and entrepreneurial participation in tourism at
the destination areas, Fair trade and Ethical tourism seek to create social,
cultural and economic benefits for local people and to minimize leakage
from Third World destinations, and Ecotourism is focused on the environ-
ment with largely incidental benefits for local communities. These “new
forms” express an extended connection between tourism and landscape;
emphasizing pleasure sought in the experience and highlighting the human
emotional component in the relationship of the visitor with the tourism land-
scape (Terkenli 2004). They are all in many respects working towards the
same goal, sustainable tourism, and they have much in common but still account for a small share of the total tourism business.

But even small numbers of visitors can be intrusive to sensitive natural or cultural environments. The Swedish filmmaker Hasse Wester gives an example in his documentary *Den Gyllene stranden* (The Golden Beach, 2008) where he has followed a society in India during 20 years and documented the changes caused by backpackers’ presence and demands. The economic development that followed the entrance of visitors in this small and earlier isolated village led to a competition within the community and changed patterns for most of them to earn their living. The demands for food and drinking from the tourists and their unfamiliar behaviour broke down the traditional systems of conduct within the community. When the backpackers by and by ceased to come the traditional way of living had already been destroyed and a new type of poorness emerged. Although it may seem unfair to juxtapose backpackers with Alternative Tourism (the distinctive feature for backpackers is Lonely Planet, not to be called tourists, low budget and mingling with other backpackers) the example nevertheless highlights a problem. Small scale tourism does not automatically benefit the host communities.

Mass tourism and alternative tourism could be regarded as diametrically opposed types of tourism but Weaver (2004:513) means that ‘Alternative and mass tourism represent gradually converging poles of a continuum within a single tourism system’; both systems can be suitable or unsuitable depending on circumstances. He also means that mass tourism is here to stay and the real issue is to ensure that the dominant large-scale mode of tourism operates in an environmentally and sociocultural sustainable way, not to dictate what is most appropriate at any given destination.

**Tourism in Africa**

Tourism in Africa is supposed to have a developing role and together with other activities contribute towards the problem of poverty alleviation and the overall economic progress of the continent. Many developing countries, particularly in Africa, are promoting tourism as a key strategy for economic development (Ondicho 2003) and thereby tourism is given a different role in these countries compared to other parts of the world. Tourism provides opportunities for diversifying their sources of foreign exchange and employment creation, but not only for economic and social reasons but also as a part of their globalization policy (ibid.). Sindiga (1999) means that carefully planned tourism development has the possibility to provide crucial resources for Africa’s economic transformation.

Tourism’s contribution to development is indirect through generating revenues, it involves the creation of an infrastructure of attractions, accommo-
dation facilities, travel and transport and communications and so far it is well
developed in only a few African countries (Sindiga 1999).

Africa, although a large continent, only has less than 4 percent of the
world’s tourists (Sindiga 1999, van Beek 2007). Tourism is unevenly dis-
tributed among the countries: Northern Africa has 33%, Southern Africa
31%, Eastern Africa 25%, Western Africa 10% and all the other countries in
Central Africa share the remaining one percent (van Beek 2007). To some of
the African countries, among them Kenya and South Africa, tourism is very
important and they compete with one another in order to attract tourists.

Tourism in Africa took off after decolonization but there are a lot of simi-
larities between the colonial period and today’s tourism. Post-colonial de-
velopment tends to recreate dependencies with unequal relations between
metropolis and satellite. The rich countries in the north use the poor coun-
tries in the south’s pristine territories for exotic holidays, to find adventure in
the game parks, the wilderness and colorful cultures (van Beek 2007). The
absence of internal tourism is a severe handicap to develop the tourism in-
dustry further and the countries are vulnerable depending on international
tourism which is sensitive to economic or political changes.

Though there is no single tourist type, what is in common for all are their
seeking for something out of the ordinary, exotic but at the same time au-
thentic (Urry 2000) and in that respect many African countries have all of
this ‘otherness’. Tourists are continually constructing Africa and looking for
‘The Real Africa’, the essence of the country or the continent. The Ministry
of Tourism in Zambia used this slogan during the 1980s and 90s, to empha-
size the uniqueness of the country as an advantage in comparison with other
more modernized and developed neighbors. (They then moved on to pro-
mote Zambia as ‘Thriving, Growing and Exciting’ but have now in 2011
announced a competition to find something more quick at repartee.) The
tourists want Africa to remain untamed and wild, with unspoiled nature,
pristine people and authentic culture but at the same time they want a ‘com-
fortable adventure’ (van Beek 2007) and this is often difficult to combine.

‘Tourism is an industry of images and the image of Africa as the lost conti-
nent is not conducive to tourist attention or to tourist investments’ (ibid.).
The view upon tourism’s impact varies among different African authors,
Maina wa Kinyatti from Kenya is among the most critical. In his article
‘Tourism Industry and Development’ from 2006 he accuses the Kenyan rul-
ing class of adopting racist stereotypes of some tribes to show them as ‘true
Africans’, not very different from the wildlife, in order to attract tourists. He
also argues that culturally, tourism has made a great mockery of the Kenyan
people’s life styles and he means that to support tourism in Kenya is to sup-
port the exploitation and oppression of the great majority of the country’s
people. As we shall see in the following chapters not everybody shares his
point of view.
Tourism in Kenya

If you are lucky enough to visit Kenya, you will be visiting the whole world in one country. Along the eastern shores, the warm Indian Ocean rolls onto beaches that are crowded with coconut palms. If you go north, you will find a vast desert with camels and nomadic people who carry their houses on the backs of the camels. Travel to the west and there is the great Lake Victoria, the largest by far in all of Africa. To the south, you will find the grassy plains that stretch as far as an eagle, flying at his highest, can see. In the middle of the country you will see the icy peaks of the great Mount Kenya glistening in the sunlight. Through the heart of Kenya runs a great gash, caused by deep disturbances in the earth’s core. This is the Great Rift Valley, vast and mysterious. (ZAMANI, African Tales From Long Ago 1995)

The Ministry of Tourism in Kenya states that environment and natural heritage are valuable national assets that must be sustainably managed for present and future generations and that tourism should represent the past, present and future aspirations of Kenyans while respecting positive natural and cultural values (National Tourism Policy 2008). In Africa, Kenya is one of the most developed tourist destinations with 1.8 million international arrivals in 2007 (Ministry of Tourism 2008). Tourism is the cornerstone of the economy with more than 10% of GDP. The tourism sector is a major source of employment as well as government revenue and has high multiplier effects as its growth stimulates further socio-economic development in other sectors. Since a heavy dependence on tourism make countries vulnerable, incidents in or outside the country may influence the number of visitors. This became clear in Kenya after the elections in December 2007, when political violence erupted and the subsequent travel bans by major tourism source countries made the number of visitors decline by 34%. As a consequence tourism earnings decreased from KSh 65.2 billion in 2007 to 52.7 billion in 2008 (Economic Survey, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2009). In an effort to attract more visitors and encourage recovery in the tourism sector the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) initiated a number of developments in 2008 such as airstrip upgrading programs aimed at making access to wildlife viewing easier but the international economic crises during 2009 have so far stopped the recovery of the tourism business (The Ministry of Tourism 2010). For the first 11 Months of 2010; Kenya received 986,360 tourists, so there is still a gap compared to 2007. From Europe the biggest contributor was UK with 157,575 followed closely by Italy and Germany. United States contributed a total of 98,713, 43,629 came from India, 26,455 from China, 30,255 from South Africa, 17,237 from Australia and 12,980 from United Arab Emirates (Kenya One Tours 2011-03-24).

Kenya promotes tourism development not only for economic and social reasons but also as a part of their globalization policy (Ondicho 2003) and as a globalizing experience tourism in Kenya is relatively old. The big attrac-
tion for European and American tourists was the great safari with big-game hunting (Mazrui 2000) and already in 1938 East African Publicity Association was formed to coordinate tourism activities in East Africa (Kinyatti 2006). The earliest tourists arrived during the 1930’s but the great expansion of tourism came after Independence 1963. In Kenya tourism is mainly nature-based and tourism has considerable ability to influence environmental quality and as a consequence of that also the living conditions for the inhabitants. The tourism activities are geographically concentrated in certain areas of the country; the main attractions are its pristine wildlife, captivating landscapes, expansive beaches and cultural variety. Although tourism developed on the basis of wildlife, beach tourism at the Indian Ocean has become equally important during later years. Over the years, tourism has become an extremely competitive business and the rapid development of tourism has presented many challenges both at the national, regional and local level. A problem has been the pressure on just a few national parks and preoccupation with some beaches (Ministry of Tourism 2008). This has led to rapid environmental degradation and negative socio-cultural impacts in certain places. These threats indicate the necessity of a paradigm shift in the investment and management of the tourism sector. It is vital to invest in sustainable tourism products and services if the country should be able to deliver an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible tourism. In addition, it is imperative to harness the cultural diversity in the country to promote cultural tourism, which is currently practiced on a limited scale, but has the potential of becoming a major attraction for Kenya as a tourist destination (Ministry of Tourism 2008).

Tourism in future

Although tourism and travel is a long-established tradition and has old roots, it is quite new as an academic subject. There has been a tradition of social science scholarship on tourism in Europe and America since the 1920’s (Hall & Page 2002) but at a larger scale, tourism as a field of research appeared in the 1970’s in the wake of the emerging mass-tourism. Most of the early studies were focused on determination of the ‘supply side’ or the tourism industry approaches with economic analyses, employment benefits and foreign exchange inputs (Hall, Williams & Lew 2004). Sindiga (1999) means that a widely held view has been that there is a positive relationship between tourism and economic development especially for developing countries. Still during 1990’s tourism was mainly regarded as an economic fact and that the relationship created by tourism between the developed and undeveloped world was reciprocal (Pearce & Butler 1993). But Sindiga (1999) shows that the production-oriented approaches in tourism research rarely address the implications on social, environmental and political life. During later years
tourism studies have been institutionalized and there is an on-going discussion about the conceptualization of the subject. Jafari & Richie (1981) say that tourists do not recognize geographical boundaries just like the study on tourism do not recognize disciplinary boundaries and tourism could be analysed both as a multidisciplinary and as an interdisciplinary subject. Löfgren (1999) argues that tourism is a too important topic to define as ”tourism research”, the most interesting work has come from scholars who explore the field in order to understand of the workings of the modern world. The social impacts of tourism are complex and need to be examined from the perspectives of many subject fields and it is not easy to separate extrinsic (macro level) from intrinsic (personal) factors which cause changes in the local community. It is also difficult to apply research findings from one culture to another (Hall & Page 1999). Many researchers therefore agree that tourism should be emphasized as a multidisciplinary research topic today. It should be socially situated and must go beyond the so far dominating narrow economic approach occupied with production and consumption and it is important to include all forms of mobility and transmissions of cultures in the study (Lew, Hall & Williams 2004, Jafari & Richie 1981, Smith 2001, Löfgren 1999, Prezeclawski 1993). Smith (2001) signifies that a direction towards multidisciplinary research on tourism advances the scientification of the subject away from the stereotypes that have earlier dominated. Paralleled with the growth in the tourism industry many universities have gradually expanded their courses and publications on the subject and there are today around 40 English language academic journals about tourism (Jafari 2001).

Murphy (1985) claims that tourism began as an acknowledgment between people, places and their symbols but today’s tourism has not much in common with the earliest forms of tourism. He foretells the future tourism as a necessity and right for most people, often combined with business and learning, with more efficient transports with alternative fuels. What we have seen so far, compared to 1985, is not so much development in transport modes towards a more sustainable way but a big growth in the number of travellers and places to visit. Mass tourism is, since it was introduced during 1960s still dominating. Its focus is ‘flocking on beaches or ticking off checklists’ of ‘must sees’, but there is also a growing interest in alternatives and searching for more fulfilling experiences. This could mean ‘going local’ with a closer relationship with the place visited and the local people (Holland Herald 2011). The analysts at the future network Kairos Future (2009) predict that people in Europe in the coming years will make more and shorter weekend trips, and that they will travel more far away for longer vacations. Food and health will be important for choosing destinations and awareness on environment will be important for travel moods and accommodation (DN 091129). Awareness of our vulnerability to natural forces such as volcanoes and climate change may lead to new forms with return to the earlier modes of individuality, transport by foot, boat or train and in closer contact with the
hosts. Controlling authorities, authoritarian states or well-intentioned environmental activists may ask for a limitation in travelling not only because of concerns about environmental issues but also for ideological and political reasons or elitism while others emphasize the value of mobility and claim that this is an important part of an open society (Rankka, Ydstedt & Johansson 2009).

The aspects of tourism introduced in this chapter will be further discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis, but what I found interesting and confusing during my literature review is that despite UNWTO’s expressed goal of reducing poverty in combination with promotion of sustainable development the emphasis on those perspectives is not dominating in contemporary tourism research publications. In order to delimit my own investigation I have paid most attention to the connection between tourism, the social landscape and how sustainability is understood against the background of tourism in the developing world. Many of the selected citations and examples from literature are however from other parts of the world, but I have chosen them to be understood against this explicit background.
A geographical perspective on tourism

Tourism as a phenomenon has a powerful role in shaping place myths and identities and tourism could be the prime determinant of geographical change in the landscape. The following chapter introduces some aspects of landscape and its connection with tourism.

‘Landscape’ means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (European Landscape Convention 2004)

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is formulated for the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape issues. Even if the convention is formulated from a European perspective its definition and approach is applicable even in a wider international context. ELC demonstrates the role of the landscape for social well-being and it stresses that landscape comprises a variety of cultural, ecological, aesthetic, social and economic values and the importance of public involvement in decision and implementation of landscape policies. It defines landscape as an area as it is perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. But landscape is not just an area or the objective scenic spatial framework of a location; it is rather a place constituted through the tangible and intangible social and cultural practices that shape the land. It is an essential component of people’s surroundings and an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and it is the foundation of their identity (Olwig 2008). WJT Mitchell (2002) says that landscape is not an object to be seen but a process by which social and subjective identities are formed, considering not just what landscape is or means but what it does, how it works as a cultural practice, as a site for the claiming of cultural authority, as a generator of profit and as a space for different kinds of living. He also states among his nine theses on landscape that landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture, it is both represented and presented space and both the frame and what the frame contains.

Today we do not see landscapes as fixed, objective artefacts, but as symbolic, mutable and culturally constructed mixtures of representation and
physical form. They mean different things to different people and different
times and represent, reinforce, idealize, and naturalize sociocultural power
relations (Morgan 2004). Saarinen (2001) says that a landscape can be re-
garded as a geographical and ‘textural’ view - a way of seeing and interpret-
ing the social-spatial reality and meanings. Thus landscape is both a subject
and an object.

Cosgrove (1984) argues that landscape is not merely the world we see; it
is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape could be regarded
as a way of seeing the world. If I understand him correctly, he argues that
seeing is not just watching, gazing at the landscape at a distance; instead it is
perception, interpretation and understanding. Landscape can also be read as
literary texts; the embedded meanings are produced and transformed through
them (Duncan & Duncan 1987). The landscape tells us - when we read it -
what is possible, what we must overcome, what is to be struggled for and
what to be struggled against (Mitchell 2005).

Wylie (2007) points on some tensions in our definition of landscape
which I like to stress: ‘Is landscape a scene we are looking at, or a world we
are living in? Is landscape all around us or just in front of us? Do we ob-
serv e or inhabit landscape?’ The answer to these questions gives guidelines
about how we regard ourselves in relation to the landscape and in relation to
others.

Insiders and outsiders in the landscape

Larsen (2000) uses landscape as the perceptions of the physical world im-
plicated in the interpretations and definitions of cultural values, meanings
and identities and Widgren (2004) claims that the word ‘landscape’ is often
used to mean environmental perception, how people see and relate to their
world. This is an ethnocentric approach; the landscape has a specific cultural
and social representation. The uniqueness, heritage and valuation are
stressed. This could be used to exclude ‘the Other’ who does not share the
same understanding and experience. Duncan & Duncan (2004) argue that
landscape as aesthetic production acts as a subtle but highly effective mech-
anism of exclusion. The number and types of people may be limited in the
area if you are eager to preserve a valuable and unique sense of place. Land-
scapes become incorporated into the formation and performance of individ-
ual, familial and community identities, the identities are defined against and
in contrast to outside world, an imagined uniqueness (Duncan & Duncan
2004). Landscapes could therefore be seen as communicating identity and
community values, symbolizing political and moral values and creating and
conveying social distinction (ibid.).

Olwig (1996) means that landscape does not need to be understood as ei-
ther territory or scenery; it could be conceived as a nexus of community,
justice, nature and environmental equity. It is also closely connected to place identity, culture identity and pride because it is imbued with meanings, etched by customs. But identity is a constantly negotiable process; we only understand who we are by comparing ourselves to something we do not want to (or something we wish to) be and the meaning of oneself is never absolute. The ‘other’ is relative in space and time and therefore our understanding of landscape also should be seen as ‘situated knowledge’ (Setten 2003). If identity is defined through something outside oneself and created through relations with elsewhere and through internal differentiation, then it is also a subject for change (Matless 1998).

The dualism of insiders and outsiders is always present in the study and understanding of the concept of landscape. Cosgrove (2006) writes that landscapes have material presence but come to being when they are observed. The viewer is the outsider who looks upon a landscape in which the locals are the insiders and a part of the on-going processes. The locals share among themselves the nature, the history, living conditions and so on. At the same time the visitor could be regarded as an insider in his own understanding of the landscape, he shapes the view he looks upon just like the Europeans shaped the Orient (Said 1978) and regards himself as having the right to interpretation and power to define who belongs in it (Mitchell 2005). The locals are the outsiders or ‘The Others’ who are not aware of the context. Mitchell (1996) means that representation of the landscape can become pure ideology, disconnected from the realities of the material landscape and from the everyday life in it, able to be reshaped by all manner of powerful interest. It could structure and control both meaning and life of those who live in the landscape making connections between image and reality. To be the subject and never the viewer of a landscape means to be fixed in place circumscribed within a social position and a locality, unable to grasp a larger entity (Mitchell 2002).

Tourism and landscape

Landscape could be used as a tool for analyzing geographical change through tourism but the mechanism of the connection between tourism and the landscape remains largely unexplored (Terkenli 2004). A growing scientific interest however emerges today depending on three broader tendencies in society: firstly the realization of tourism’s big impact on many landscapes around the world and that the carrying capacity has been surpassed, secondly the international and national interest in landscape values and landscape protection and thirdly the awareness of the complex interrelationship between the construction, reconstruction and consumption of landscape (ibid.).

Tourists, like modern pilgrims, seek regeneration in the realm of pleasure, dreams, traditions and arts and they develop a relationship with the visited
location. In order to broaden their experiences there is an ongoing quest for novel tourism landscape destinations (Terkenli 2004). Urry (2002) express that tourists are searching for a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscape, something out of the ordinary, the unspoilt countries or places or landscapes where they can return in fantasy to a simpler way of life, a more authentic way of living. The more people that arrive in these untouched landscapes the more likely it is that the qualities that have attracted them will disappear. Therefore many tourists are against development and an increased number of visitors. They fear that further development will erode the qualities that are characteristic today.

On the contrary the tourism business is searching for more visitors, new kinds of guests and innovation in activities in order to attract a greater number of foreigners for securing and increasing the commerce. But there is also a third actor; the host community at the destination area, who, in higher or lesser degree, invite guests to share their landscape. ‘Tourism is about people travelling in order to expand their experiential, imaginary, and ideological landscapes. Yet it is also about the effects this form of travelling has on the landscapes of the communities receiving the travellers’ (Larsen 2000:199).

The presence of tourism in an area can efficiently change the lived and experienced landscape of the hosts, the way the local people understand and reflect on their own living place as well as the values they give to it (Terkenli 2004). The relationship between people and places is important for geographical understanding, people construct places and places construct people. This is an on-going process and not something that is fixed or unchanging, it is always in a state of becoming (Holloway & Hubbard 2001).

Tourism not only creates welfare or change but it could also construct the physical landscape. Morgan says that ‘Tourism landscapes, like all landscapes, exist at the convergence of history and politics, social relations and cultural perceptions’ (2004:180) and he also argues that tourism is the prime contemporary determinant of space; tourism has a culturally powerful role in shaping place myths and identities.

The concept of landscape is ambiguous. The visible materiality of a place expresses the emotional attachments of its residents and visitors as well as the means by which it is imagined, produced, consumed and contested. Residents, visitors, and the wider tourism industry all participate in continuous social construction of tourism landscapes and places. There is interplay between landscape representations and its physical form and also interplay between tourism, landscape, representation, social structures, experiences and identities. Landscapes - including landscapes of leisure and tourism - are not fixed but are in constant state of transition as a result of continuous, dialectical struggles of power and resistance among the diversity of landscape providers, users and mediators. The meaning and understanding of a particular landscape has evolved over time and is embedded in and permeated by different societies’ social and cultural norms and symbols. Therefore it is not
only to be understood in terms of contemporary societies but also from the
cultural codes of those who constructed it (ibid.).

Crang (2004) encourages us to regard tourism as a dynamic force that
creates places and to acknowledge that both tourist and destination cultures
are transformed and produced through tourism. Both tourists and places are
processual. Culture change, in the form of modernization, is a process which
is both ongoing and accelerating all over the world. Research undertaken
indicates that tourism is not the major element of cultural change in most
societies; it is only one of many forces that promote change and the changes
resulting from tourism are often not direct but indirect and filtered through
many other forces of agency such as global economics, movies and televi-
sion (Smith 1989, Larsen 2000). There is, and will probably always be, an
inherent tension in tourism between economic growth along with new em-
ployment opportunities and a desire to maintain a certain kind of landscape
with significant values (Larsen 2000). Tourism can both stimulate and rein-
force processes of change and identity formation already existent in the local
communities (van Beek 2007).

Moral Landscapes

‘If landscape carries an unseemly spatiality, it also shuttles through temporal
processes of history and memory. Judgements over present value work in
relation to narratives of past landscape’ (Matless 1998:13). There is a tension
between nature and culture but also between social and aesthetic values
which constitute the foundation for considering the ‘character’ of the place,
the social conduct in it and the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ reasons for coming as a
visitor to the landscape (Matless 1998). Ecology of pleasures maps people
and their practices onto environments and landscape is promoted as a public
cultural space through rules of conduct excluding certain members of the
public while including others.

Considerations of these cultural limits or judgements illuminate underly-
ing values. Landscape can be considered as a term which migrates through
regimes of different values; a site of economic, social, political and aesthetic
value, with each aspect being important but sometimes held apart. The local
people on tourist destinations who have developed their own values, opin-
ions and sense of place are most often unaware of how their habitat is pro-
moted and of the tourists’ expectations as it has been formed by the informa-
tion they have collected in advance. What is happening in the meeting be-
tween the different views?

The impacts of tourism sometimes reflect incompatible philosophies be-
tween demands from the tourists and what the hosts can or want to supply
(Smith 2001) and in that perspective the culture brokers are important me-
diators between hosts and guests. Not only the local guides but also travel
agencies, governments, international agencies and even UNWTO could be regarded as cultural brokers and responsible for the ethnic imaginations and cultural trait and selection. They are decision makers, selectively identifying segments of the culture, and function as intermediaries or interpreters.

There is an intertwining of landscape and senses which leads to formulations of environmental conduct and citizenship working through different groups with respect to class, gender and origin.

Moral geographies of landscape emerge whereby particular modes of conduct are considered to be the basis for ‘citizenship’, while others are held to denote an ‘anti-citizenship’, an immoral geography of leisure (Matless 1998). ‘A moral landscape emerges wherein structures are to embody moral principles and offenders are to be cleared out; a lexicon of architectural and human codes of conduct for the landscape’ (Matless 1998:47). ‘If landscape is a site of value, it is also a site of anger’(Matless 1998:10). Not only behaviour but also objects should harmonize with each other historically as well as geographically, stressing fitness and belonging to the landscape. There could be a variety but an ordered variety (ibid.).

Matless (1998) introduces the term ‘culture of landscapes’ which alludes to ways in which particular sets of practices are seen to generate particular ways of being in the landscape. Thereby the behaviour in the landscape becomes a condition for an intellectual, spiritual and physical citizenship. Good manners are not instinctive but can be acquired, people need to be educated in the right use of their leisure and it is even desirable to pass an examination (Matless 1998) on how to see, how to get around, how to use your eyes, how to be and to embrace the proper perspective. The individual and the collective mind could be remade through properly planned environmental practice while disorganized touring might produce hazy confused impressions. Landscaped citizenship is counterpointed by a vision of ‘anti-citizens’. Belonging and identity is regarded as relative concepts always constituted through definitions of Self and Other and always subject to internal differentiations (ibid.). The citations above are from David Matless book Landscape and Englishness from 1998 where he draws out arguments from a local example to illustrate the tensions of landscape and culture. I found it interesting that his illustrations and conclusions from the English countryside are to a great extent applicable at the Kenyan coast today as I will show in later chapters.

Place promotion

The modern view of nature goes back to the discourse about transforming nature into landscape; landscape is seen as a portion of land viewed from a landscape painter’s view. When we are observing the landscape we shape the view and we become a part of a creation process (Setten 2003). The
Dutch landscape paintings during the 17th century have been studied by Mels (2006) and he describes their purpose as ‘a place whose freedom and pleasures afford a welcome but temporary escape from the social constrains and pressure of the city’. Mitchell (2002) tells about the production of landscape views and the picturesque tourism in England during the 1800s with drawings, paintings and guidebooks which purpose was to display the landscape for attracting visitors. These old examples of visual place promotion have in our contemporary world got a lot of successors which occurs through a variety of spheres; advertising, websites, brochures, travel journals, guide books, TV-programs, movies etc. Place promotion is ‘the conscious use of publicity and marketing to communicate selective images of specific geographic localities or areas to target audience’ (Ward and Gold (1994) cited in Morgan, 2004).

The tourism industry actively produces representations in which a destination is depicted through images. Those images, or representations, are based on meanings that are historically and socially produced and have evolved over time. People attach meanings and representations to places, and their ideas and practices are affected by the way the place is promoted. The aim of place promotions is to make a place known and popular but it also stereotypes and modifies the signs and symbols involved and thereby manifest power structures and work as a power structure itself (Saarinen 2004). Place promotion reveals the underlying narratives of place and presents the world as image, inviting the viewer to become an imaginary traveller to an imaginary place. In place promotion we see the mediation of visitor - place relationships and reflections of travellers’ perceptions of the Other across space and time - just as in travel photography, inducing reverie and metaphor. The footprints of the colonisation past continue to be visible through the touristic Othering, both of places and cultures (Morgan 2004).

Weightman (1987) argues that images of place presented in the travel literature often are unrealistic and distorted; it mystifies the ordinary, amplify the exotic, minimize misery, rationalize the worries and romanticize the strange. She also means that tourist literature epitomizes peoples’ attitudes towards distant environments; the traveler is dependent on impressions and appearances and becomes predisposed to idealization, stereotypes and myths. Kapuscinski (2008:15) writes about travelers whose desire is to meet The Other: ‘... it was the typical illusion of space - the belief that whatever is far away is different, and the farther away it is, the more different it is.’ ‘As the tourist takes over mass produced opinions he or she cannot develop an authentic sense of place. This promotes at the same time 'placelessness', i.e. a weakening of its distinctive character to the extent that different places do not only look alike, they also offer the same activities and experiences’ (Mygland &Stokke 1997:4)

Places can be marketed as timeless or modern, natural or technological, sensuous or civilized (Morgan 2004) depending on which promoters tell the
story. There is an interplay between ideas, culture and history, and there are always reasons to ask what the relationship between tourism marketing and ideology is. Place promotion contributes to the cultural production and consumption of landscapes, spaces and places, and works as a complex, multidimensional social construct, reflecting deep-seated cultural influences and shaping both social and place identities. As consumers, producers and reproducers of such images, we use and reuse and recycle the narratives of place promotion with hardly any thought about their origins of meanings. The essence of place promotion is that it immobilizes our dynamic world by changing it to spectacle and straitjacketing it in cliché and stereotype and it plays a key role in the social construction of place myths (Morgan 2004). As a result, the mosaic of tourism place promotion often appears as an orderly, unchanging, unchallenging environment, a celebration of things as they are and always shall be which leads to pacification (ibid.).

'Involved in much tourism is a kind of hermeneutic circle. What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photographic images, as seen in tour company brochures or on TV programs. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travelers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen originally before they set off' (Urry 2000:129).

Place promotional texts can be investigated as cultural artefacts, representations of ethnographic knowledge and sites of cultural production which furnishes the potential traveller with an imaginary place archive but also elevates the primacy of the viewer through its ocular centrism. The way in which people understand and engage with tourism landscapes will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions, such landscapes are never inert or immutable objects (Morgan 2004). But the tourists' destination experience is not only a direct result of a design and communication of place promotion information as they relate to passively. Meaning is created, communicated and interpreted in the meeting between the information and the people involved. On the basis of the available information the tourists get an idea of the location, this image is tested against the 'reality' they encounter on the spot in a dialectically dynamic process. Tourists' consumption of images of locations affect how places are produced symbolically and vice versa (Mygland & Stokke 1997).

Diverse perspectives on landscapes

In human geography landscape is a contested concept, and as stressed by a variety of authors, the meaning differs in different contexts. Holloway & Hubbard (2001) divide the viewpoints in three categories:
The selected perspectives on landscape in previous chapters illustrates the viewpoints above and have given me a broader understanding of what landscape could mean; from landscape as a sum of its physical components towards a more complex view of different perceptions and representations. My own academic education in geography, biology and chemistry was shaped from quantitative methods and I was trained that visible, measurable and statistical proof able objects are phenomenon that are of interest in science. By and by, through widened experience and extended education also in other subjects, I have realized that there are many ways to reach knowledge and the chosen qualitative methods for my investigation are a consequence of this. Still I am fascinated by different perspectives and have not reached a theoretical abode in my understanding of landscapes. However, phenomenology inspires me: to view the landscape as a ‘lifeworld’, not a scene to view or measure but a world to live in with all its meanings and both visible and invisible components. The inhabitants, and even the visitors, are a part of the landscape and the ongoing process of intertwining between the various elements.

In an early stage of my own preparation for research on tourism I read Larsen’s article ‘The Other side of Nature: expanding tourism changing landscapes and problems of privacy in urban Zanzibar’ (2000) and the perspectives she reflected on inspired my own work.

Tourism is about people travelling in order to expand their experiential, imaginary, and ideological landscapes. Yet, it is also about the effects this form of travelling has on the landscapes of the communities receiving the travelers. Given the exchange of perspectives that is involved in these multifaceted encounters, tourism can be analyzed as an interaction of landscapes (Larsen 2000:199).

The theoretical texts about tourism and landscape in previous chapters raise questions about how these issues are expressed in the local context of Lamu: has there been a transformation over time in terms of inhabitants - tourists interaction, how should tourism be formulated to be sustainable in a local perspective, has there developed a visible moral landscape, are there distinctions between insiders and outsiders, in what way does the place promotion from the tourism brokers affect the local people and are there consensus about strategies for tourism development in any certain direction?
Cultures of tourism and travel often present the landscape as a scenery to be viewed but Urry points at the circumstance that for tourists there is no single gaze, the experience differs and the perspective is shaped by opposites, and this is also true for host communities.

There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference. By this I mean not merely that there is no universal experience which is true for all tourists at all times. Rather the gaze in any historical period is constructed in its relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. (Urry, 2002:1).

In the following chapter I will describe how I have worked in order to investigate how the people in Lamu perceive their everyday landscape and in what ways they consider it to be affected by tourism.
Tourism is increasingly becoming a part of both the global culture and the global economy but our understanding of tourism is most often the tourists’ point of view or grounded in the economic benefits for institutions and companies which are working with mass tourism. To achieve sustainable tourism in a certain area I think it is necessary to pay attention to the inhabitants’ feelings and set of values, but so far little has been written from the local peoples’ perspective. In an article about the potentials of tourism Sahlberg (2005) comments upon the fact that in spite of tourism’s economic and social impact, there is still limited knowledge about its effects on social development and economic life, not least on the level of the local community and individual. He therefore asks for research from the host community side. Also Hall & Page (1999) stresses that the residents’ attitudes towards tourism must be regarded in the light of their personal gains from the developing process and their response to the changing environment. The pre-existing values and attitudes and knowledge from their perspective are still lacking. Ondicho (2003:6) writes in an article about Tourism Development in Kenya: ‘Ideally, an effort to find out the present conditions, problems and perspectives in Kenya’s tourism industry requires fieldwork in the country.’

With this background my intention was to explore and understand the indigenous peoples’ point of view with respect to the impacts of tourism, though I am aware of the circumstance that it is difficult to come as an outsider with this ambition and only have the possibility to stay a short time in the area. I had a week of preparation in February 2009 in Lamu and after that I have spent four weeks during October-November 2009 and five weeks in February 2010 (half of the later period with students from Sweden) for my field work. As a part of my investigation I have spent a lot of time just moving around, participating in the daily life and as well as at special occasions; taking photos, going on boat rides, walking on the beach, visiting museums and library, sitting in the shade or in restaurants, being invited to lunches and dinners, participating in various cultural events and one wedding, talking to those who addressed me. Many of these informal contacts led to booked interviews later on but also gave me essential information about daily life, common concerns and current discussions in the society. It has also given me a lot of unspoken information just by observing ongoing activities and meetings.
Wylie points in his book Landscape (2007) at the difficulties that an outsider researcher faces. To access the inhabitants’ point of view the researcher must not only theorize landscape via corporeal dwelling, but also come to know the landscape through participating in it with his or her whole body. Narrowly observational field science misses the everyday textures of living and being in a landscape. There is a tension or gap between observing and inhabiting, between critical interpretation and phenomenological engagement that is difficult to reconcile as an outsider (Wylie 2007). Lowenthal (2008) means that awareness of the landscape involves active participation, how we understand the landscape depends on our physical interaction in it. Landscapes change as we move through them and cultural traditions cause differences in our interpretation. Whenever research is taking place between people with different cultural heritage, backgrounds and practices it is cross cultural research. It can take place anywhere; it is not depending on traveling far or visiting exotic places (Skelton 2001).

Cross-cultural meetings

Wherever you go you get greetings: Karibu (welcome), Jambo (hi) and Habari (how are you). All day long you find men walking in the streets, sitting in the Town Square or along the seafront talking with one another, looking at and commenting all the activities and people that pass by and they are very easy to come in contact with. If you are acquainted you shake hands when you meet and stop for some small talk. This made me as a foreigner quite soon feel familiar in the area. After a while I realized that it was only men and children who addressed me.

The adult Swahili women are, almost all of them, housewives and do not work outside home, which means they do not come in direct contact with tourists. In the afternoon one can see them hurrying along the streets wearing buibui with nicab, totally covered from top to toe in black cloth with only the eyes left bare, and they never stop for small talk with a foreigner. The only women who spontaneously contacted me were women from other tribes who worked in Lamu with businesses. Because of this situation the Lamu women were not in my first priority group for interviews and I did not actively seek contact with them. The traditions in dressing and behavior make the boundaries between Swahili men and women obvious, but also the boundaries between locals of Swahili origin and other residents, and there is a clear distinction between Swahili women and tourists that is difficult to cross. I felt annoyed by the fact that I as a woman only came in contact with men so I changed my own approach and with the help from intermediaries also made some appointments with women to include them in my investigation. I found it important to understand what all these boundaries mean for the interaction with tourists and the development of tourism activities in the area.
Cross-cultural research is full of complexities and contradictions and I am well aware that the selected method and place means that I interact with

Figure 3: Men relaxing in front of Lamu Fort.

Figure 4: Woman dressed in buibui passing Riyadh Mosque.

Cross-cultural research is full of complexities and contradictions and I am well aware that the selected method and place means that I interact with
people with a different language, cultural heritage, background and practices than my own, and I have only spent a short time in the area, so I need to explicitly reflect on how all these circumstances may affect my results. I also need to reflect on how I am perceived by the residents. What identity do I give myself and what identity am I given by them? Am I regarded as a researcher, a stranger, a friend, a benefactor or just an ordinary tourist? As researchers we examine what the locals do, we decide what is important to know, try to understand and interpret the local people’s point of view and we become authorities on their reality (Fuglesang 1994). Is this ever possible? Mitchell (1996) means that Landscape as an object of knowledge is always an ‘outsider’s’ way of knowing. To see and understand a place as a landscape requires distance both from the place and the labour that makes it (ibid.). Therefore I hope that my estrangement could be regarded as an advantage; I can see, interpret and understand the issues from a distance, something the residents are not able to do and thereby get a different perspective. My research may be regarded as situated knowledge (Setten 2003) and is not the basis for generalizations about the impact of tourism worldwide or the only truth about tourism in Lamu. Nevertheless, every example illustrates experiences and consequences of tourism’s impacts for the resident population as well as for individuals which can be relevant also in other locations and at other geographical scales.

Interviewing in idea and practise

*The true wanderer, whose travels are happiness, goes out not to shun, but to seek.*

Freya Stark (1883-1993), The Spectator 1950

*Interview* is an interchange of views between two persons (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). To do research with interviewing is an opportunity to meet the informants face to face and listen to stories from their life worlds, and it might also involve yourself as a person to a higher degree than other research methods do. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) use two contrasting metaphors to describe the interview process: the interviewer as a *miner* or as a *traveller*. The *miner* collects knowledge which is already there, just waiting to be found. The knowledge remains constant and uncontaminated by the researcher and he or she can extract the objective facts or essential meanings from it. This type of interview is data collecting separated from the later data analysis. On the contrary the *traveller* is on a journey to a distant country where he or she wanders through the landscape together with the interviewees. Interviewing and data analysis is intertwined; knowledge is constructed during the process. I see the interviews as a journey and regard myself as a
traveller. In this research project I am a traveller both literally and metaphorically.

Interviews help me to investigate behaviours and motivations in communication with the people involved and through that collect a diversity of opinions and experiences. In the interview situation it is also possible to show respect for, empower and give the informants an opportunity to reflect over their own experiences (Dunn 2005). To collect data from interviews does not mean that I will find out The Truth or understand the public meaning about tourism’s impact in Lamu but it will allow me to discover what is relevant for the informants about the subject.

**Whom to interview**

This study is influenced by phenomenology. Phenomenology is a method that points on an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actors’ own perspectives and to describe the world as experienced by the subjects; the important reality is what people actually perceive it to be (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the human everyday experience and to find invariant essential meanings and descriptions of different phenomena. Objectivity in phenomenal philosophy is an expression of fidelity to the theme investigated (ibid.).

My first idea was to interview only local people; those who were of Swahili origin and born in the area, had lived the main part of their lives here and were working directly with tourists in hotels and restaurants or in other ways were depending on tourist business for their living. To complete the information from the local people I planned to interview just a few other actors such as tourism officials, tourists and travel agencies.

Quite soon I realized that I had to extend the group of informants from ‘purely locals’ to include other residents. My intention was to interview people from various occupational groups, exclusively those who came in direct contact with tourists. I soon found out that most of the people working in hotels and in other business connected with tourism am not born in Lamu. They had come here looking for jobs, only staying short time in the area and consequently could not be regarded as locals, and were, just like me, outsiders. The second thing that forced me to change my first approach was that I understood that almost everybody was depending and involved, directly or indirectly in tourism. Therefore information from people working outside the tourism sector could also be valuable. Even boat builders in distant villages or fishermen out at sea are depending on tourists for their living even if they rarely meet any. A third reason to widen the group of informants was that some of the interviews became ‘mute’; we did not understand one another. It could depend on my way of asking questions but also upon the experiences
of the local people. I tried to ask about what they were most eager to con-
serve and protect, about the core of Lamu’s identity and ‘sense of place, but
the respondents wanted to talk about more current and practical issues. Peo-
ples establish their sense of place in relation to perceptions of other groups
and places, by contrasting with something they feel is different from their
own experience (Massey & Jess 2003). If you have not travelled yourself,
ever have lived anywhere else or you have little education, it is very diffi-
cult to reflect on your own place. Because this is all you know and ‘it is as it
is’. This was interesting in itself but did not give me enough information so I
chose also to include residents with other experiences and origin than the
‘pure Swahili’.

I have made 34 semi-structured interviews (35 persons). I have inter-
viewed 25 men and 10 women, 7 under 30 years old and 10 over 50. All the
informants, except two, are living in the area. 21 are of Swahili origin, 9
from Europe or America and 5 from other parts of Kenya. I have returned to
two persons for a second interview and in three cases I interviewed two per-
sons at the same time. Three interviews were in Swedish, all the others in
English but two with an interpreter. I have used an interview guide with
general issues I wanted to cover but I have also left room for the informants
to speak freely. The interviews have been from half an hour to more than
five hours long (including lunch and walk). In all cases, except three, I made
agreements at least one day in advance for the interview to make it possible
for the informants to mentally prepare themselves and set aside time for the
interview and decide upon a meeting-place. They also had the possibility to
withdraw (one did). I informed everybody that no private details would be
exposed and that their names will not be in the publication. The few who are
mentioned by name or could be identified on photos have given their per-
mission.
During earlier field studies, on my own or together with high school students, in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Turkey and some African countries I have worked with Learning by Walking, or ‘Walking and Talking’ as I call it, to gain information as you move through the landscape together with the informants and make use of unplanned opportunities along the way, remembering the Algerian proverb: ‘It is solved by walking’. Mostly we walked on foot but in the case of Lamu quite often on boat tours along the shores. I have also been inspired by Widgren’s (2006) work in Botswana and Kenya when he conducted research on landscape and property. He sometimes walked in the landscape together with those he interviewed and realized that what they told him could differ depending on the place where the interview was done. All my interviews have been done in places which the informants have suggested and are familiar with; it has been in their place of work such as the museum, offices, hotels, and shops, on boat (once even swimming!), in their homes or on the veranda of the hotel where I stayed. During every interview I have taken notes and after the interview I have locked myself in to type the information and make an Interview Account.

Figure 5: All informants had the possibility to suggest where the interview should take place. The photo is taken during an interview in the stairways to Lamu Fort in November 2009.
Analyses and interpretations of the interviews

The empirical material can produce and inspire the construction of theory but the norm seems to have been that the theory should provide the direction and that the researcher should be in control, producing a linear, coherent study where research questions, framework, fieldwork, empirical results and conclusions follow a rational procedure (Alvesson & Kärreman 2007). In the article ‘Constructing Mystery: Empirical Matters in Theory Development’ Alvesson & Kärreman argue for a reflexive approach where theory is discovered or created by breakdowns and mysteries instead of just being justified by the empirical material. This does not mean that you should avoid theory and come blank, unprepared or ignorant to the research process. Without a theoretical understanding the use of interview material and its interpretation runs the risk of being naive (Alvesson 2003). To work with a reflexive approach means that you as a researcher should be open to the possibility that an unanticipated theme emerges and be keen to follow it up. The research project may turn into something else than what you suspected. The researcher’s pre-understandings and frameworks may be used to open the dialogic qualities in the empirical material and to frame and construct it. The theory should be mobilized as a tool for disclosure and interpretations. This way of working stimulates a dialogue between theory and empirical material which can lead to a gradual development of theoretical understanding. There must be a balance between a degree of direction and openness for being exposed to something unexpected. Breakdowns in the material should not be depending on poor scholarship or lack of preparation – ‘Empty-headedness is not the same as open-mindedness’ (Wolcott 2009) - but could be encountered or constructed to give way to mysteries you want to solve. Working systematically to try to solve the mystery can give room for new understanding and interpretation and lead on to new research tasks which could produce something of broader relevance (Alvesson & Kärreman 2007). This is in line with Kvale & Brinkman’s metaphor for the interviewers’ role; being a traveller you can make plans and prepare you carefully for your trip but you cannot control everything that is happening along the way. But you have to cope with it. The goal is not to find theories that are conformable to law but to show how some phenomena in the world around is understood by people involved (Patel & Davidson 2003).

Other sources of information

To me it has been important to have two separate field work periods. In the time between, on geographical distance to Lamu, I have had time to reflect on my impressions from the field work, on the questions and answers in interviews and to see the ‘breakdowns and mysteries’. My focus has changed
over time both depending on literature studies but also depending on discussions with people involved in different ways and the information given in the interviews.

Beside my interviews and observations in Lamu I have searched for information about tourism in various sources. Academic literature about Lamu is mainly focused on Swahili history and language so to find references about the role of tourism I have searched in statistics, official plans and documents, journals about tourism and travel, newspapers, tourism advertisements and place promotional texts, both in printed books and brochures as well as on websites. I also found one DVD from Magical Kenya and even a Swedish TV-program. I have bought and studied all the books about Lamu (except one about cats) available for sale during my stay in Lamu as well as in the most renowned book store in Nairobi, Bookstop. In total I found 5 books. In Sweden there has been no book about Lamu and tourism to find except various travel guidebooks about Kenya which contain short sections on Lamu. The information given both from printed material and from websites and films has been a valuable complement to my experiences from Lamu and has broadened my view and understanding and also giving me inputs for continuing interviews.

Before I present the results from my field work in Lamu I will give a brief overview of the history and geographical background in the coastal area.
Figure 6: Map of Kenya with Lamu indicated. Source: adapted from UN map: un-kenya.png.
Introducing the study area – a beautiful and vulnerable landscape

The East African coast is such a beautiful landscape and so rich in resources that there will always be some outside power trying to acquire influence over it (Knappert 1988).

The Kenya coast is a vulnerable region with considerable pressure on the physical environment from growing population combined with expanding tourism which leads to water shortages, more intensive cultivation and livestock raising, pollution and threats to marine resources (Tole 2000). Compared to other parts of the country the potential in terms of agriculture, mining and other economic activities as well as infrastructure is poorly endowed and poorly developed (Foeken 2000). The coastal tourism also faces a lot of problems with the physical infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water supplies, lack of sewage systems and solid waste disposal, but nevertheless there are plans and hope for an enlarged tourism sector in the region.

Tourism is an important economic activity on Kenya’s coast but its contribution to development and poverty reduction in the region is surprisingly small. Many of the large tourist enterprises are owned, managed and controlled by foreign or national interest with little participation by the indigenous people. This could be explained by the specific development of tourism in the area. It started with Europeans from Kenya’s interior regions and continued by foreign tourists visiting the beaches on all-inclusive packaged tours from the mid-1960s. Coastal tourism was not planned by the locals or integrated in the local economy. The New Constitution for Kenya accepted in May 2010 and to be implemented in connection with next national elections in August 2012 may give rise to a greater autonomy for the coast area which is eagerly asked for by the Swahili population. Part of the explanation is that the Waswahili population and the Muslim representation in the Kenya government is relatively small which makes it difficult to successfully challenge government on matters of tourism policy. Some avoid working with tourists, especially in hotels, because the Islamic culture tends to associate tourism with immorality and it is estimated that 60% of the hotel workers on the coast come from up-country communities (Sindiga 2000). However, the Waswahili people do control the sea tourism business by offering dhow-trips, deep sea fishing and glass-bottomed boat tours but the level of em-
ployment and the economic benefits from these activities are not well known (Sindiga 1999).

Since Independence 1963 colonization comes from the hinterland, exploitation and economic control by fellow Africans from non-coastal people (Mazrui 2000). When the tourist industry is managed by outsiders’ tourism becomes a form of imperialism and may develop into neo-colonialism (Nash 1989). Some local inhabitants on the Kenya coast consider tourism to be a new form of colonialism in which Europe subjugates Africans. Some objections include the superficial presentation of culture for tourist consumption and the creation of socio-economic change in the Muslim towns (Sindiga 2000). It is also obvious that tourist lifestyles tend to accentuate the dramatic differences between foreign affluence and local poverty and values.

Both Lamu in Kenya and Zanzibar in Tanzania are presented as far-off island paradises with sentiments of the bygone, symbols of exoticism, former grandeur and affluence. Larsen (2000) discusses what role Western tourism in Zanzibar, which is in many respects similar to Lamu, will have for the delineation of local aesthetics and lifestyles and if it may lead to a change in the landscape. Zanzibar has, just like Lamu, for centuries been a cosmopolitan society but today local people are forced to confront, with increasing frequency of the tourist industry. The local people’s perceptions of landscapes, organisation of space and ways of life are affected by the tourism activities. The question arises whether the tourist globalisation will neutralize the previous Islamization and Orientalization and that we will find that tourism will, with its westernized demands, corrode both the African and the Oriental legacies in the area (Mazrui 2000). Or will tourism instead lead to a more conscious effort to preserve old values and what consequences will that have? The Lamu society has historically propagated a mature and non-violent Islamic religious culture, but the geographical location with extremist religious ideologies flourishing in the region could be a disadvantage and the history of cross-culture interaction with tolerance and mutual understanding could be threatened:

Lamu’s spatial location makes it both a potential entry point into the interior and a critical barrier against the radical Islamist forces gaining strength across the border in Somalia (Jamal 2010).

As Smith (1989) points out, tourism is only one of the forces that generate change and it is difficult to separate its consequences from other transforming forces. In the area of East African Coast the number of tourists and connected activities has risen during later years so there are reasons to expect that also the impacts from tourism have become more obvious. In Lamu Island it has been a rapid growth in the economy from tourism paralleled with increased investments in tourist facilities followed by an increase in property values and a growing number of foreign investors. At the same time
there has been a growing awareness of the importance of environmental issues and conservation of culture within the society. Inappropriate tourism development results in increasing stress on the destination which leads to negative changes in the physical, economic and the socio-cultural characteristics (Kabiru 2009). In the official plan, Lamu District Development Plan from 2008, it is said that the district will embark on conservation of biodiversity and promotion of eco-tourism, develop infrastructure in the tourist areas, intensify security to curb banditry activities and poaching and generally promote tourism industry through publicity using the Tourism Board. In Lamu district there is potential for tourism development with natural as well as cultural attractions but those will not be fully exploited if tourism is not promoted. The Development plan expresses expectations of increased employment in a wide range of areas such as hotel and lodges, land and air transport, boating activities, tourist guides and vending of traditional handicrafts if only tourism promotion works well. There is also stated that tourism is a multi-dimensional industry that to a great extent relies on other sectors and its linkages are wide ranging from environmental issues, transport, communication, agriculture, hospitality services, culture and business. If the sector is properly developed and nurtured it should be able to contribute to the growth of all the sectors in the district (Lamu District Development Plan, 2008). Today Lamu is at a crossroads where the direction for the future must be decided. In the following chapter I will briefly review the history of Lamu in order to provide a background and understanding of the opportunities and obstacles in Lamu tourism development.

Trade, wind and Islam- a historical and geographical background

The Swahili language and culture has developed during more than one thousand years along the East African coast. The 20–200 km wide and over

3 000 km long strip of land that extends from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, is therefore called the Swahili Coast. The area has good rainfall, is fringed with sheltering coral reefs and is to a great degree lined with mangrove forests which all are good conditions for trade based on shipping. Before the nineteenth century the coast was a part of the African continent in a locational sense only, the political and economic interests were mainly directed eastwards. From 600 AD the East African Coast area has been a part of the commercial system of the Indian Ocean (Kiriama 2005) but has also been a victim of colonization from the sea by Arabs and Europeans.
The coast has a number of natural ports to which sailing ships with traders and explorers came by following the monsoons. Sailors who did not understand the monsoon winds could be stranded in East Africa for over six months. The travellers, anglers and traders also needed to understand the tides shaped by the lunar months. The water was the basis of the Swahili people’s livelihood; it was their means of communication and trade, it was the storage for food and their source of building material: coral and mangrove. But the Ocean means more than economic wealth to the Swahili peo-
ple, it is the place of immense power and danger and it is the home of many spirits. It can however be tamed and used by those who live on its shores if they listen to the words of God who created it (Kiriama 2005).

Archaeological, historical and linguistic evidence has shown that between the 2nd and 10th century AD the Swahili coast had a lot of economic activity: fishing, farming, livestock keeping and iron working (Kiriama 2005). The increases in foreign and interregional trade led to the establishment of towns. The first recorded history from this area dates back to 914 A.D. (The Arab historian Al-Mas’udi, cited in Obudho 2000). The Swahili towns played an important role in the trade network that linked India, the Persian Gulf and East Africa together. The towns were preceded by farming communities and before the use of slaves was forbidden the rich people had huge plantations on the mainland or on the surrounding islands and the countryside and towns were brought into a natural symbiotic relationship (Ghai-dan 2007). The political and economic power was in the towns and the food supply came from the countryside (ibid.). The establishment of towns in combination with the increasing external influence led to a transformation in culture. The towns became a unique fusion of Arabic, Indian and Swahili architecture but remained essentially African in their roots and inspirations. All these coastal settlements retain evidence of a highly evolved urban culture. They are different in certain aspects, but bound together by a cultural background which shaped their common history (Kiriama 2005).

In architecture the main influences came from India but in other areas such as religion, dress codes and food, the greatest influences came from the Middle East. Arab traders settled in the area from the 9th century and intermarried with the local people. The hinterland was sparsely populated. Along the coast lived Bantu people who originally came from the area along the Zambezi River and by canoe had moved along the river to its mouth and then north, establishing small fishing villages (Knappert 1988). The mix of different civilisations created a new culture and language, Swahili which comes from the Arabic word *sawahil* or *sahil* for coast. Swahili is first mentioned by an Arab from Morocco who had visited the area in 1331 AD. He used it to describe the ‘sawahili’ country which is what we today call the Lamu Archipelago (Kiriama 2005). It can generally be said that the Swahili culture along the coastline was shaped by trade, wind and Islam (ibid).

The custom for a newly arrived Arab was to ask a local Bantu chief for permission to settle on his land and tradition tells that he often married the chief’s daughter. There were few women among the Arab migrants so many men married African wives. You can still notice the characteristic features of the present-day Swahili: ‘soft-brown skin, well-shaped nose, almond-shaped eyes, artistic skill and good craftsmanship in many trades’ (Knappert 1988). But there is no Swahili tribe, the Swahili people are mainly African Bantus who converted to Islam and intertwined it with African religion (Kiriama 2005). To be counted as a Swahili you should be born by Swahili parents or
at least your mother should be of Swahili origin. But if you have adopted the Swahili culture and way of life and have been socially and culturally incorporated, like the Omani Arabs have been, you can be accepted as a Swahili person even if you are born elsewhere (Kiriama 2005). ‘The Swahili today are a living expression of an African-Arab process of intermarriage that began centuries ago, perhaps before the birth of Christ’ (Romero 1997). The Swahili society is therefore very diverse with a myriad of influences both from the hinterland and Asia. The Swahili have never formed a nation with a overarching political structure. Their towns were political units and formed city states through fragile and variable alliances (Knappert 1988) but the establishment of the Zanzibar sultanate in 1840 marks a change with an increasing cooperation among the still existing Swahili towns (Ghaidan 2007).

Language, Religion and Literature

The Swahili language is composed of two major elements, Bantu and Arabic in about equal proportions. It was traditionally written in Arabic script but has preserved the characteristics from Bantu so that new words from other languages, such as Arabic, Portuguese and English were and are adapted to Bantu grammar rules (Knappert 1988). It was originally spoken as far north as Mogadishu and far south as northern Mozambique (from this fact we have the definition of the Swahili coast) and the towns between were called Biladus’s- Sawahili, the towns of the coastal people. Swahili was probably spoken along what is today the Kenyan coast from the tenth century and spread from the coast to the inland as a language of trade by the caravans who sold cotton clothes and bought ivory and other wares (ibid.). Some of the traders also settled in the inland as far west as the Congo forest and so spread both the spoken and written language. Many words which refer to trade in different African languages are of Swahili origin. Swahili was the only written language in East Africa until the arrival of the Europeans (apart from the Arabic which only was used in the Mosques). In tropical Africa the Swahili people are the only ones who have developed an early written literature but unfortunately the tropical climate with rains, ants and cockroaches has destroyed most of what was written before 1800 (Knappert 1988). Islam was mostly peacefully and gradually introduced in the area, first in southern Somalia and Lamu Archipelago, from the seventy-seventh year of the Muslim calendar (700 AD). The Swahili developed their own individual Islamic culture, keeping a lot of their African beliefs and combining them with the new religion. Swahili culture has developed independently; Swahili literature is livelier than Arabic literature, the style of house-building is a local invention, their family life is different, the Swahili women are much freer than the Arabic women and circumcision of girls is not practised. Islamization was not the same as Arabization (Knappert 1988). Even during later years with
intensive contacts by trade and travel as well as invasions by Arabs, Europeans and Africans, the Swahili people have kept their own cultural identity. Although the Swahili culture thrived along all the coast of East Africa and there were similarities in the architecture, dialects and religion there were also isolated cultural particularities in the different coastal towns.

Lamu

The Lamu Archipelago is a cluster of seven main, and a number of small uninhabited islands, situated in The Indian Ocean on the northern Kenyan coast. The biggest are Lamu, Manda and Pate (Faza). The climate is equatorial-coastal characterized by high tropical temperature (usually between 24-30°C), high humidity, pronounced rainy seasons and monsoon winds. From November to March the Kazkazi (north east monsoon) dominates with short rains in November- December. It is replaced by Kuzi, the humid south- east monsoon from April to August which brings heavy rains in April to June combined with lower temperatures. The rainfall varies between 550 and 1100 mm per year.
Figure 8: Map of the Lamu Archipelago, photo taken in Lamu Museum, Nov. 2009. The dark parts show mangrove areas.

Figure 9: Sand dunes form a main part of the landscape in Lamu Island. The photo shows sunrise over Manda Island seen from the highest dune in Shela village.
Figure 10: Lamu Town. The yellow parts shows the oldest stone town remaining from 1700, the green is the Stone Town from 1800 while the reddish are buildings on land reclaimed from the sea during 1800-1930. The brown area is called Mud Town where the architecture differs from the stone areas. Source: Adapted from Encounter Guide Maps, Bundu Maps, Nairobi.
Lamu Island covers an area of 50 km\(^2\). The topography varies from undulating flats composed of lagoonal deposits and fossil coral reefs, to hilly sand dunes up to 65m high. Lamu town has a good natural harbour which is protected from the open ocean by Manda Island. Lamu Island is fringed by mangroves forests along a large section of its coast. Because of the sandy soil very few crops can be cultivated but there are shambas where mangoes, coconuts and cashew nuts are grown (Ghaidan 2007). To be supplied with millet, simsim, rice, maize and other essential ground crops some people today have farms on Manda Island where the soil is good but there is no fresh water which limits the possibilities to practise intense agriculture and most of the food is imported from the mainland. In 2009 it were 5 272 households with in total 22 366 people in Lamu Town and 2 182 people in Shela village (Population census 2009).

Lamu town is situated at latitude 2\(^o\) 15' S- 2\(^o\) 30 S and longitude 40\(^o\) 45'E-40\(^o\) 55'E on the north eastern side of Lamu Island. The land on which the town is built rises from the surrounding sand dunes on the southern and western sides and slopes down to the sea in the east. The main axis of the town stretches to the direction of the Kazkazi which makes the streets act as wind tunnels providing the town with nice breeze during the hot months. The streetscape is characterized by narrow winding alleys which have its origin in the Arab tradition of land distribution and urban development. The narrow streets between high stone houses also provide shade. Open systems of drainage channels runs on the paved streets and follow the town’s natural gradient taking waste and surface water down to the sea.

A great number of ancient settlements can be found along the Kenyan coast but most of them are abandoned since the 17\(^{th}\) century. Most of the still inhabited Swahili towns have undergone modern changes and lost their old character. Lamu’s remote and strategic location on an island plus its narrow streets and alleys has hindered introduction of motor traffic and the surroundings are not suitable for expansion of the building area, which has limited modernization. Lamu town dates back to the 12\(^{th}\) century and is the oldest and best preserved Swahili settlement on the whole East African coast. UNESCO means that it retains more of its original character and has survived physical destruction better than any other of the Swahili settlements and is in fact the only Swahili town that has managed to preserve its authenticity.

Lamu can be classified as an ‘antique living city’; the old town is unique and is a rare historical living heritage with more than 700 years of continuous settlement. Its origin was due to trade and it was developed by indigenous people (UNESCO). The earliest known historical reference to Lamu is an Arabic manuscript from 1441 AD (Ghaidan 2007; Obudho 2000, UNESCO) but according to local folklore and archaeological evidence it is clear that the town had started to develop earlier. In 1441 the Arab traveller Abu-al-Mahani meets a Muslim Judge from Lamu in Mecca and Lamu is
described as a city-state engulfed by sand and getting its wealth from fruit orchards and from the sea. Lamu is mentioned by the Portuguese in 1506 and in 1585 by the Turkish and is by that time a thriving city-state. In 1813 Lamu became a protectorate of Oman, the town was administrated by local liwalis, and in 1895 it was formally declared as a British protectorate. Thanks to the good relationship with the Omani rulers who established the sultanate of Zanzibar in 1840, Lamu grew into a busy trade centre during the 19th century.

Their dhows were trading in ivory, mangroves, oil seeds, grains, tortoise shells, hippopotamus teeth and ivory over the Indian Ocean (Fig.4) but the most important was the slave trade. The establishment of an organized state in Zanzibar was responsible for a great increase in the number of slaves exported to Arabia and the plantation economy in Zanzibar also demanded a lot of slaves as working force. Lamu was excluded from the limitations in export of slaves from 1873 and could continue with slave markets longer than any other place along the coast. Most of the slaves exported from Lamu came by foot from the area of Lake Nyasa (today Lake Malawi), and a few from the neighbouring areas (Ghaidan 2007).
The Swahili architecture has been maintained especially in Lamu and Pate. Lamu is still retaining its unique and original architectural character and has continued to rely on the local and traditional industry to supply with construction materials. All the materials used in Swahili architecture are easily found along the coast such as lime, mangrove and coral. The materials are compatible with the coastal climate conditions and are not affected by salinity caused by the sea. The Swahili houses in Lamu are concentrated to the inner town and are unique in design, endemic to Lamu. Families and kinship groups bought or received plots on which they built a cluster of dwellings divided into a number of small wards, mitaa. There are 36 mitaa in Lamu, varying in size and character but the inhabitants in each had the same social status and were often related. In almost every mitaa there was a mosque (Ghaidan 2007). The northern group of mitaa, Mkomani, had big stone houses where the richest people lived. Stone houses are regarded as the privilege of people of privileged pedigree. The southern part, Langoni, houses poorer people and their houses were built of mud walls and thatch roofs of coconut palm (ibid.). The stone houses are often of rectangular shape, oriented north/south and are one or two stories high with a central courtyard. Most of the permanent buildings have walls constructed of coral rag between 40 and 60 cm thick, the floors are of clay, roof beams of mangrove and the roofs are covered with palm leaves (makuti). The doorways are arched or squared and the side posts are often decorated. The Swahili houses were designed as an inward looking self-contained complex organized around a central courtyard and have few and very small outward facing windows. This gives the persons inside possibility to see out on the street without being seen themselves. The houses appear plain from the outside, the aesthetic richness is inside with elegantly decorated plasterwork and niches.

Figure 12: Above: Traditional Swahili house. The following pictures show an ornamented Swahili door, a view from an inner yard and decorated niches on the inner wall of a house.
The population in the town and its hinterland consisted of a large number of slaves and a smaller number of free men. The free men were divided into three different groups (Ghaidan 2007). The highest social class was the land-owning merchants who lived in stone houses. They wore silk and cotton clothes, the women wore gold and silver jewellery and they used other imported items such as porcelain bowls. The second group of free men was the sharifs, who originated from the Arab immigrants and were the religious oligarchy. They taught in the mosque schools, arranging weddings and divorces and acting as local doctors. The third group of free men were the fishermen and artisans with less wealth and influence. The three groups were kept together by a unifying religion and language. Children got education in Arabic, religious practice, ethics and the Quran in madrassa (mosque schools). The society was strictly segregated by sex, women rarely walked in the streets and if they did they were inside shiras which is a portable tent of kanga and wooden poles carried by slaves. Marriage was usually arranged by parents and it was their duty to give their house or a new built house to their newly wed daughter. Lamu proverb says: “The decent girl drives her parents out of their house; the bad one drives them out of town” (Ghaidan 2007).

At the end of the 19th century the colonial interest from Europe more and more was directed towards the interior of the African continent and the monsoon-based trade was no longer enough to ensure continued growth in welfare of the Swahili towns. The embargo on slave labour on the plantations stopped the slave trade and the output of agricultural products and the whole area entered a phase of decline. The Kenya-Uganda railway, opened in 1901, focused most of the trade to the southern coast with Mombasa as the main port and Lamu was pushed aside.

Today the island has an isolated geographical position which affects the development compared to other tourism sites along the Kenyan coast and the isolation is in fact important as it help to preserve its uniqueness. No manufacturing establishments have been developed in the area, the distance to markets is long and transport opportunities are limited. The traditional livelihood with timberwork and fishing are now afflicted with strong restrictions, agriculture is suffering of water shortage and lack of fertile soil, so tourism, though on a small scale, has become the main source of income.
Promoting Lamu – a brief survey of tourism-related literature

..we should not be deceived into thinking that this heritage is an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile interior from within or from underneath. (Foucault 1984:82)

Mitchell (1996) raises the question if material items in the landscape do reflect the “culture” of a place and people and if it even is so that landscape could determine the culture? In New Axioms for reading the Landscape (2008) he returns to that question and says that landscape is power because it determines what can and what cannot be done, the landscape’s materiality shapes individual and social behaviour, practices and processes. ‘The shape of the land has the power to shape social life’. To relate this to Lamu we can agree on that without the physical conditions in Lamu with the blue waves of the Indian Ocean, the mangrove forests and the tropical climate we would not have had the historical development we have had in the area and without the past conditions the tourism of today would never have developed.

But no landscape is only local (Mitchell 2008) and a landscape cannot be studied only in relation to its nearby surroundings; other forces are working elsewhere but can affect the local landscape. Specific narratives of history are constructed which posit a particular relationship between past, present and future. When a spirit of locality is appealed to it, it could be harmonious or antagonistic to others at local, regional, national, imperial, global or universal scales (Matless 1998).

Tourists tour, consume, and represent landscapes, places and cultures that have been produced, presented, and represented through tourism marketing. The presentation and promotion of Lamu Island in TV-programs, travel magazines, tourist guidebooks or brochures today transform Lamu into an exotic dream for the tourists/visitors/outsiders where the inhabitants are just a part of the view, most often even invisible. In the following part are just a few gleanings from tourist presentations on Lamu to illustrate this:

Lamu is a part of Kenya’s Archipelago and has managed to stay unspoilt and untouched by the mass tourism and development that has hit much of Ken-
ya’s coastline. As Kenya’s oldest living town, Lamu has retained all the charm and character built up over centuries. (www.go2africa.com/kenya/lamu-island, 2010-09-13)

In Lamu, history and modern life are inextricably linked. The community has learned the value of its history, and the importance of traditions and customs. The values, beliefs and way of life throughout the islands are all a part of rich culture that grew and expanded with the sprawling stone town at the heart of the archipelago. (Lamu, Where History Lives. Magical Kenya)

Lamu is a place like no other, a peaceful tropical island where life is lived at its own relaxed rhythm, but a place whose history is as mysterious and fascinating as the winding streets of its medieval stone town.

The island itself is a beautiful place of rolling dunes and endless beaches, where tiny villages nestle among coconut and mango plantations and lunate ssailed dhows ply the waters. (www.magicalkenya.com, 2010-09-14)

The Lamu Archipelago is as mystical, beautiful and serene today as it has been for centuries. The white sandy beaches of Shela, the dense mangrove forests and the splendor of the graceful Dhowos, draw Kenyans and foreigners alike to Lamu year after year. (http://lamuheritage.org, 2010-09-14)

The shimmering light of the Equator. The warm blue of the Indian Ocean. Luxurious hotels. At dusk, a spicy Swahili seafood dinner, sailing the creek underneath the triangular sail of a dhow, the craft that has knit the eastern seaboard of Africa with Arabia and Asia for millennia. Deep sea fishing. The narrow, timeless lanes of Lamu, the once-forbidden Island. A gentle-paced life in a tropical paradise. (Magicalkenya 2009)

Lamu town is a gem of Swahili heritage. Over time, various communities have come in contact through trade, marriage, immigration and cultural exchange, creating centers of power and cultural melting points. (Swahili Heritage, Cultural Festival 2009)

Lamu’s golden era was in the 12th century during a time of rich trade with India, China and Arabia. Large Kotiya dhows sailing with seasonal monsoon winds bring an abundance of goods as well as people. The result was a melting pot of different cultures brought together in the distinctive Swahili way. (Salaam, A.A. (2009), Sultan Style African Décor, Orphans Team)

Today, Lamu remains an image of the town it once was, simple fishing villages and the old stone town remnants of the vast Swahili civilization that governed life here so many centuries ago, a remote gem of Swahili civilization, isolated and pristine in its allegiance to the past. (Jafferji, Javed & Losleben, Elie (2005), Images of Lamu, Gallery Publications, Zanzibar)

A visit to Lamu, off the coast of Kenya in East Africa, is an exotic experience of entering another world. Lamu is a place like no other, with a history as mysterious as the winding streets of its medieval stone town. For those who appreciate the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature in the making of a cultural landscape. Lamu is considered a jewel. Today, as globalization takes root, this fragile heritage is under threat by modern develop-

The Swahili story is a saga of African kings, Chinese emperors, Indonesian cannibals, Omani sultans, Persian navigators, French pirates, Portuguese explorers, Dutch merchants, English missionaries, and American whalers. For thousands of years, traders from Saia and Arabia, borne on the northeast monsoon wind, the Kazkasi, arrived on the coral reef islands and tropical shores of east Africa. These lush equatorial islands, with their perennial sweet water, abundant citrus trees, fragrant spices, and voluptuous women seemed like a paradise to travelers after months at sea. The new arrivals sent intermediaries to bring trading goods from the interior while they lingered in the languid ocean outpost. Romances blossomed as exuberantly as the tropical flowers, soon bearing fruit of a rich Swahili culture. They sailed home on the southerly wind, the Kuzi, leaving behind beloved concubines, multiracial children, and new words from their languages. Each left a legacy, shaping the language, culture, architecture and décor that is Swahili.


Lamu means more an experience than a mere excursion, a journey virtually backwards in time. Turning its back on the modern western world, Lamu has perversely attracted its attention. (*Tomkinsons’ Kenya*, 2001)

For most travelers, this ancient Swahili island state is the highlight of the coast. During the 1970s Lamu picked up a reputation as the Kathmandu of Africa - a place of fantasy and other worldliness, plucked straight from the pages of Arabia Nights. It drew seekers of the miraculous, globetrotters and hippies who wanted to escape the trappings of Western society and get back to basics in a society that had somehow escaped the depredations of the 20th century. Less esoterically, they also found a ready supply of marijuana, which for some, is still a part of Lamu’s appeal. (Lonely Planet Kenya, 2003)

Little has changed here since the 18th century, and Lamu town is packed with aged stone and coral covered buildings and narrow streets. And yet, at the same time, it is one of the most cosmopolitan few squares miles of Kenya. The island takes tourism seriously- it is, after all, the main source of income- but it does it with a style that is often lacking in other parts of the country. With a fast growing population and the expansion in tourism, pressure of numbers in the island is becoming a problem. But Lamu really is a paradise; it is so serene and beautiful that you are likely to want to stay forever. (Footprint Kenya, 2005)

Lamu has been like this for decades, a historic seafaring place where modernity has been gracefully folded into traditional culture without completely spoiling it. The snaky alleyways of the island’s old town, the omnipresent smell of donkey dung and sweetly rotting fruit and the crescent-sailed dhows plying the sea make the island feel like a glass museum case - one with a living culture inside. (Gettleman, The New York Times Jan.12 2010)
These texts can be regarded as important tools for different cultural brokers but there are reasons to seek the underlying message and explore how these texts work as determinants of space; whose views are these? Insiders or outsiders? The picturesque presentation itself privileges the observer over the dweller and the visitor over the occupier (Read 2008). Mitchell (2002) argues that in the world of the picturesque view, labour is fixed, as a subject of representation, while the viewer is mobile and this reinforces the division between insiders and outsiders. If we return to Wylie’s questions in a previous chapter in this paper the differences between tourists and inhabitants are obvious; the outsiders/tourists/researchers are mobile, moving in and out of the landscape as they like while the locals are immovable both in time and space. The tourists are observing the landscape while the residents inhabit it and this gives different basis in the interpretation of the relationship humans – landscape.

Mingay (1989) examines the rural idyll in England and how the key elements in it are selectively represented. The work recounts the changing perceptions of dwellers and observers and a conclusion is that each generation seeks what they want to see in the land. It could be nostalgic traces of the rustic past and romantic beauty or focus on despoiled landscapes with brutal intrusions of modernization. In the place promotional texts from Lamu the idealistic myths as connected with the rural English idyll also here dominate:

- An impression of timelessness
- An emphasis on traditional values
- Harmonious relations between nature and culture
- Absence of social problems

The description of Lamu is only partial; the tourist brokers produce perspectives and images that are supposed to attract potential tourists. A perspective from the resident’s side should probably have resulted in a different story even if they also fear the consequences of modernization.

History does matter (Mitchell 2008), both the everyday history and extraordinary events influence the possibilities in the future. When we study landscape we need to learn to look at it, to ask the correct questions and to read it. When we are able to do this, the landscape becomes a clue to culture. Mitchell means that we need a re-theorization about culture and also to re-think what landscape is. He argues that landscapes need to be read through the theory of labour and capital circulation. Every landscape is an act of purpose and was produced for some functional reasons. Landscape “is a relation of power, an ideological rendering of spatial relations” (Mitchell 1996). Landscape is the spatial form that social justice takes (Mitchell 2008) and social justice is about human rights. Lamu town is built by slaves. The pre-existing economic power and relations that the tradesmen had, the slaves
they had on the plantations as well as in the city, and the influences they got from India, Arabia and other places all together founded today’s landscape.

The ‘grandeur past’ with its unfair conditions hundreds of years ago shaped the World Heritage that tourists can visit and enjoy today. For the tourists, landscape appreciation is often restricted to a visual evaluation of scenery, ignoring the multi-sensory nature of human landscape experience and ignoring the process of change which has created the landscape as a legacy of past ecological conditions and changing human values, and not thinking about that it will continue to change in the future (Read 2008). Lowenthal (2008) says that ‘Landscapes achieve beauty only when enlivened by hoary human history’ and an archaeological and historical landscape, like Lamu, is loaded with reflective nostalgia; it sustains the dream of harmonious, organic connection between a locality and its community (Cosgrove 2006). Social and environmental change, progress and improvement are seen as a threat to inherited tradition and values and leads to raised claims for preservation, protection, conservation and sustainability.

The question is whose interests should be prioritized? Is it conservation and maintenance for tourism or is it functional environment for the locals that should have precedence? Or is this just the same? The coming chapters attempt to let the locals express their meaning about tourism’s impacts and consequences for their everyday lives and to find out whether they regard tourism as a threat or help to achieve a sustainable development.
Local perspectives on tourism in Lamu

For many tourists the main reason to visit Lamu is the Swahili culture, developed during hundreds – maybe thousands - of years, still lively and an important part of everyday life: the tasty kitchen, the specific architecture and furniture, the typical style of boats and its festivals. Lamu has long remained the centre of Islamic scholarship and religion in East Africa and the Maulidi Festival celebrating The Prophet’s birth draws Muslim pilgrims from many countries. The Cultural Festival held every November since 2000, exposing traditions and heritage attracts visitors both from the neighbouring areas and from abroad. Besides this “exotic culture” Lamu offers pleasant beaches and an interesting nature life with turtles, mangroves and sea life.

Visually, the tourism activities are well integrated in the local society. There are no huge tourist establishments with all-inclusive hotels and no mass-tourism charter trips. The tourists move to a great extent in the same

Figure 13: View of houses in Shela with the typical Swahili architecture.
surroundings as the local people do. In spite of a low number of visitors (probably around 20 000 per year, no reliable statistics are available) and a limited season (mainly December to April) almost all households depend directly or indirectly on tourism.

The coming chapters are based on the interviewed people’s stories and views on tourism’s role in their society. The headlines are citations from different testimonies. I have tried to keep my own opinions outside and the statements are taken from the interviewees own words. My selection of themes however illustrates how and where I understand that interaction is taking place and how the residents reflect and conceptualize on it. The chapters give local examples from Lamu to illustrate the theoretical themes in earlier parts of this paper about tourisms development, the physical landscape and its meeting points, how the moral landscape is expressed and the dilemma of insiders-outsiders.

‘To get in touch is a blessing’

Lamu’s history as tourist resort is short compared to the general history of the place. Lamu people tell with pride that for centuries Lamu has been a cultural meeting place for many different civilisations and that inhabitants from this island always have been travelers; they learned new things through their journeys that opened their eyes. Lamu citizens worked as tradesmen and received visitors from all over the Indian Ocean, they intermarried with other people and by and by a multicultural society developed as a mosaic of African and Arabic components. All these contacts have left impressions in language, culture, traditions, medicine and religion. One of my informants said that the new force of change is tourism and the question is what lasting marks tourism will leave. He thought that tourism will disappear, just like all the other visiting or ruling civilizations, maybe leaving some traces, but Lamu will remain. Another man argued that without tourism Lamu should be “nothing” today:

Tourism has brought new life to this place, it was completely dead during 300 years from the 17th century to the 1960s, but tourism brought economic life back again, and there is absolutely development in tourism!

The first tourists in Lamu arrived during the 1960s when the first hotels were established but the number of tourists was very low. They were explorers, adventurers or hippies. Several informants told me that it was really something of an adventure to come here; Lamu was at the end of a very bad, terrible road, no airlines were operating; it was something out of the ordinary and an incredible place. Some visitors were ‘extraordinary and famous people’, but many were young people studying the Swahili language and culture and stayed in private homes. The place was so attractive to some early visitors
that they have returned and settled and become residents. Later on came more of the ‘one-dollar-a-day-travelers’, the hippies, mainly from America. Lamu became a part of the ‘Katmandu-trade’ (escapement from western society with romantic affection to Arabian culture sometimes connected with drugs (Lonely planet: Kenya 2003)). Older Lamu people talk with nostalgia about the visitors during the 60s and 70s and they mean that tourism today is very different compared to 40 years back in time. Tourism was more interactive earlier; many local families could make a part of their living by dividing up their house into a simple guesthouse with low rate. The women made food in their kitchen which their children or husbands sold to foreigners in town. Everything was cheap, tourism was not a market then and the local people regarded it as an honor to have tourists as guests. From Islam you learn that to get in touch is a blessing which benefits all. Lamu was a very small town and the visitors were well observed, all their movements were noticed and they were afraid of doing something wrong. Most of them respected the local culture and way of dressing, behaved in a proper way and attended local activities. ‘It was respect between the two - the locals and the tourists - and the relationship was mostly good.’

‘Tourism is like a knife’

But ‘Lamu wasn’t a playschool where everything was peace and love’; I was told a story by a middle-aged woman who as a child had witnessed when a young man took a picture without permission. The locals felt offended and took the film out of his camera, destroying it immediately without taking notice of his despair. The pictures were from many countries that he visited during his long journey but the locals were resolute; he had crossed a limit and insulted them so they felt no compassion. During quite a long period during the 1970s there was an appeal in Lamu with discourse lectures towards the foreigners and tourism as phenomena. Tourism was connected with immoral behavior such as naked swimming and people were accusing tourists for spreading dirt and waste and destroying in general. In 1976 all foreigners were taken to court accused for something such as espionage or drug handling. Those who could not produce appropriate travel documents were forced to leave the island immediately. Also during the 1980s there was a similar movement but today the local people want those incidents to be forgotten.

Today’s tourists are mainly rich, upper-class visitors, and Chinese and Japanese are the newest groups. Some fly in for just a few days while others return repeatedly for three weeks every year. Some even come to settle, which has increased the prices for land and houses. In Shela around 70% of the private properties are owned by foreigners, mainly Europeans. Some of them are not well seen because they do not take part in the community life, do not take responsibility for common issues and do not contribute with
money or by offering work opportunities. Both community and tourism are threatened by the selfishness of people with money, some of the interviewees argue. Nowadays it is all about tourism and the language of money; even neighbors who earlier were the first persons to one another expect to be paid for favors today. The threat is not tourism in itself; it is money and overdevelopment. The community has come into a dependency relationship with tourists, and the tourists, who obviously are rich if they have money enough to come here, should take their responsibility and donate money:

‘Tourism is like a knife, it has its good and its bad sides; it is a matter of how the whole thing is handled, the economic side shouldn’t be overlooked but when a community is poor it is more difficult to handle it.’

‘A message to visitors’

Figure 14: In the narrow alleys in Lamu town you meet people with different dress codes. It could be provoking from both sides.

‘People from outside are welcome here if they put things right!’ Many of the interviewed people express the same feeling, they are not against tourists –on the contrary foreign tourism has been a blessing in Lamu - but tourists are welcome on certain conditions. One old man explained: -‘People should stay
together; we are all from Adam and Eve and Islam teaches about respect for others. Most of the tourists who come here want to get a feeling of this area, the culture and traditions, they are not of such type who comes for destroying or influence or disrupt, but sometimes they are not knowledgeable’. Another man stressed that the local people do not want to interfere with foreigners who do not accept the common way of behavior and do not pay respect. An important part of Lamu identity is joy in life and pride; a Swahili person is carrier of something special but Lamu people are no good at fighting for their own sake. Locals are tolerant but they do not want to be exposed and so many tourists have ‘low culture’. Many foreign women dress badly, one girl told me that the local women use to laugh at them behind their backs. The residents know that in the countries where the visitors come from it is often cold so they realize that women could not be that undressed at home - so why should they be that when they are visiting Lamu?!

Figure 15: Photo from sign board at Lamu Museum. Information folders with the same content are sent from some of the guest houses to their visitors in order to prepare them in advance and make the meeting between the different cultures smooth.
Some of the interviewed persons told me that they keep away from certain areas because they consider them destroyed by foreign influence. It could be because of the big immigration with working staff from other parts of the country with different traditions and habits; the newly built areas in town where the newcomers are living are not following the traditional way of construction and maintenance. But it could also be places that are connected directly with tourism activities, such as bars, restaurants and the beach. One woman told me that when she has guests from other places she feels sad and ashamed of the change that Lamu town has undergone. She has a hard time to plan where she can take guests so that they do not need to see “the disaster”. Others told me that when they are fed up with all the foreigners they go deep into the winding alleys in the Old town where no tourists can find their way, or they lock themselves in at home. The traditional houses are built to secure privacy which is an important part of Swahili culture.

The Islamic religion is an important part of everyday life for Lamu people. Many men go to the Mosque for prayers five times a day and you can hear the muezzin’s call wherever you are in town or in Shela. But the interviews give a disparate view on the role of religion. Many stressed that it was not any problem with all the different religions represented by the tourists or the Christian churches that have appeared as a result of the immigration of workers employed in the guest houses. In contrast to that one informant meant that threats from tourism are connected with religion; religions can

![Figure 16: The Friday Mosque in Shela.](image)
exist side by side but not mix and the insult the locals feel depends on the visitor’s disrespect for Islam.

Another interviewee meant that today’s threat against the culture does not come from tourism but from the religious people. Reformist Islam does not regard the Swahili culture as pure faithful to Islam, there are too many African elements in it, and the fundamentalists want to purify the cultural expressions to resemble those of Saudi Arabia more closely and their way of interpreting the Quran. The Culture Festival held every November since 2000 is an attempt to show and strengthen the local culture, not for tourists in the first place, but for the local Swahili population to make them aware of its uniqueness.

Figure 17: People gathered to watch the swimming race at the jetty during the Cultural Festival in 2009.
Figure 18: Every festivity has its dhow race: The Malaudi festival in March, New Years Day in January, the Cultural Festival in November and the end of Ramadan; Eid.

Figure 19: Donkey Race along seafront, Cultural Festival in 2009.

Figure 20: Traditional Stick dance during wedding celebrations, February 2009.
‘We have not been given’

Figure 21: Demolishing work in order to build new shops along the seafront in Shela, February 2010.

‘Lamu has a lot of uniqueness but it is not well harnessed or maintained, there are so many topics where the government has to agitate for the better’ one respondent articulated. Quite often during the interviews people expressed the feeling of being misfortune in Kenya: ‘people were better off before independence’, ‘we have not been given’ and ‘this is a forgotten part of the country’. People and businesses pay taxes but rarely see any paybacks from the government, and so many issues are out of control for the residents. A main problem in Kenya is the everywhere present problem of corruption. A conscious strategy from the government is therefore not to post anyone on high administrative position in the area of their origin. As a consequence of this there is very little help and assistance to get from the government since all the decision makers are from elsewhere and upcountry people have taken over the administration. ‘Things have not developed well for the indigenous people and poverty and marginalization is the fact’. It happens that there are information meetings held by different actors such as the Ministry of Tourism or The District Commissioner but they are not a part of the decision making process, just for information and a chance to express your opinions. The common judgment among my informants is that if you have money you do as you like regardless of any regulation, law or public meaning. An example is the transformation of the seafront in Shela where a Frenchman has
inherited a property, taken down the old buildings and instead built up new houses with shops for tourists without any regard for the clearly expressed negative opinions of the local inhabitants.

‘Tourism causes poverty’

Over and over again I have been told that tourism business is very unlike nowadays compared to earlier times; there is an unbalance in the society that is connected with the growth of the tourism industry and the fact that almost all locals try to make their living from tourism – directly or indirectly. One example is the introduction of speedboats in Lamu which has made a big difference. Those who run them are not the ones who used to have dhows. This is a ‘new’ group of boat owners, which have taken over the transport of goods and local people, and because of that there has been an over establishment which has left the dhow owners dependent on tourists. Earlier tourists could have to wait for days to go on a dhow trip, because all boats were occupied, but today the many dhow captains are competing with one another over the very few tourists. This has led to aggressiveness and frustration. One informant meant that the competition and the low education among the boat crew has led to a lot of misunderstandings between staff from different dhows and between tourists and boat staff which has caused negative attitudes between all the involved. To build and maintain a dhow is very expensive and the tourist season is short so the dhow captains are forced to get enough income during a limited period. Earlier the dhows were used for transport and fishing in combination with tourist service but there are very few who find it economically viable to fish for a living today. “During one day’s fishing you get enough for a coke”, one young guy told me. He preferred to wait for tourists along the seafront instead of going out to sea for trying to catch some fish. I suggested that during the low season there could be time for rest and other activities such as handicraft or farming but on the contrary the dhow captains assured me that during that time the rivalry for customers on the seafront is even worse. They barely dare to go home for lunch, if there possibly could show up any tourist you must catch him! If you do not have any employment you are forced to always be ‘stand by’. No customers - no salary!

Lamu is totally dependent on foreign tourists. There is no domestic tourism except during the festivals. The opinion is that Africans in general do not want to visit their own country on holidays which are an unfortunate circumstance because the domestic tourists could fill the low seasons and are not so sensitive to political turbulence. They could bring about a more steady flow of visitors. This is more pronounced in Lamu then in the other cities along the coast which was obvious during the postelection disturbances in 2008. Mombasa, Watamu and Malindi attracted Kenyan visitors while Lamu was empty.
People tell me that there are not many alternatives for making a living. Swahili people normally do not work as staff in hotels, ‘they see themselves as superior, they are above and special’ and do not want to serve or clean for others. Islam prohibits the use of alcohol so Muslim people do not want to be involved in providing spirits in restaurants. This has led to an in-migration of labor from the hinterland looking for work in hotels. The employees have low salaries (around 8000 KES per month), most of them lack professional education, they have no unions and they cannot make their living from tourism alone all year round. A number of them move back and forth depending on season, others stay and compete with the locals for work in the area during the low season. Around 40 Maasai men are coming from Amboseli to Lamu for part of the year to work as guards in guest houses or sell their bead works and ornaments to tourists. It is hard to make a living in the traditional way in Amboseli nowadays because of changing weather with long droughts and increasing living costs, such as school fees. ‘Tourists are making possibilities for a lot of business for everybody, therefore we come here to seek an outcome even if most of us would prefer to stay back home with our families’. The locals in Lamu do not like the Maasai presence and regard them as competitors for customers interested in handicraft.

‘The spoiled boys’

Some informants do not want to associate specific problems with tourism at all while others mean that although tourism brings work opportunities to the community and foreign currency to the country, the disadvantages is greater such as rising prices, bribes, limited accessibility for locals to beaches and other areas and an immoral lifestyle. ‘The little the locals get from tourism is actually a loss if the young boys are getting addicted to drugs and get spoiled.’

Many people in Lamu are worried about the high level of school drop-outs. The decision to leave school could have different backgrounds but are mostly economic, one elderly teacher told me. Primary school is free of charge but for secondary school there are fees. To continue from one class to the next you must pass the tests, otherwise you have to repeat one year. It is still common for girls to marry early and leave school. Even if they would like to get a higher education it is difficult for several reasons to continue. College and high school are very expensive and you must move to Mombasa or even further away because there are no such education facilities in the district. Some of the younger male informants told me that they had envied other young friends’ leisureed life and after secondary school, some even after primary, felt like ‘my head is full’ and they thought they already had got education enough. If they compare themselves with people from other islands in the archipelago people are more educated in Lamu so that could be enough. ‘In our grandfathers’ time’ young men used to learn from the elder
by working together with them, and there is no tradition of higher schooling in Lamu. There are few opportunities to get jobs at an advanced level so if you invest in a university degree it will probably lead to that your permanent move from here.

Some initiatives have been taken to inspire young men to apply for military service where they can get some vocational training and later on come back and use the knowledge in the home area, but most of them are content with staying here with their families and friends and enjoy the leisured coastal life so they are not interested. I have heard many tell with pride that they do not want to be employed. I understand that they even talk condescendingly about the subject; they want to have their freedom. Today you can easily (at least some parts of the year) get money from the tourists; a one hour sunset tour on a dhow can earn you what you earlier had to work hard for a month to get. These young men make money for their families so therefore it is difficult to criticize their attitude. A common opinion is that they are good boys at heart but they get spoiled by their interaction with the tourists. When they start to work with foreigners they often leave religion and the consequence will also be that they are not reached by the education and information that is given in the Mosque about community issues, for instance the cholera epidemic that spread during my stay in November. There are also many young men who come here from other places along the coast seeking for jobs on a freelance basis. So we have got a generation of beach boys who hang around with tourists offering guiding, information about accommodation places, crafts for sale, snorkeling tours, friendship, sex services and drugs. And for all these services they expect payment; those are what people call ‘the spoiled boys’.

The most common drug is mirra (khat) which is frequently chewed by men everywhere and at any time. It is not regarded as a problem, merely as a common habit and is not so often shared by tourists. To smoke ganja (marijuana) is not allowed but many of the officials’ don’t see it as a big problem and let the users continue. Some mean that the use of drugs comes with tourists while other says it is well integrated in the local tradition. Obviously, the use and market have increased because of tourism. There are stories told about locals who have agreements with policemen; the locals share drugs with the tourists, call the police, the police arrest the tourists and they could get off in exchange for some money, which the locals get a share of. Heavier drugs, such as heroin, have also entered Lamu and there are some addicted persons who can support their abuse through contacts with tourists and by begging money from visitors who believe that it will be used for school fees or medical treatments. Local people talk condescendingly about these people and they are regarded as a shame and a big problem for the society.
‘Men should be the guardians of women’

It is obvious that the sexes live totally different lives in Lamu and that women live a different life compared to most of the women in the western world. The few women I have spoken to regard themselves as fortunate and they are content with their lives. There are specific ceremonies to celebrate different stages in their lives which are important for girls and young women in order to develop their identity and find their role in the Swahili culture. The mothers are regarded as the most important persons for the upbringing of children and to restore their role in relation to the spoiled boys is one of the most important tasks for the Muslim community.

Figure 22: Women at Lamu Cultural Festival, November 2009.
One big change related to gender relations has occurred in recent years in education. Only 15 years back it was uncommon for girls to continue to secondary level and those who wanted had to struggle for it. I have heard about a woman, not older than 30 years today, who was not allowed to go to primary school at all. She and her sisters attended Madrassa where they learnt Arabic and the Quran but did not get any other formal education. It was regarded as ‘morally and religiously destroying’ in her family to learn English and other subjects. Many tell that the ‘grandmothers’ are the ones who most eagerly want to preserve the culture and old traditions and they are often against change and modernization because they are worried to lose control and that western influence will take over values and habits. Still some girls are married at a low age and leave school, but generally the girls are now the most organized, active and eager to learn and most of them complete secondary school. Primary school is often mixed but secondary is divided into girls or boy’s school.

Islam teaches that women by nature are the fragile and should be guarded by men. This is demonstrated by brothers taking care of their sisters until they are married and husbands taking care of all the contacts with the community on the family’s behalf. The woman’s place is at home and she should not be seen by other men (if they are not relatives). Earlier it was common that women made handicraft products or cooked at home for sale but they did not sell the goods or dishes themselves, it was made by their husbands or

Figure 23: Young boys singing at a ceremony celebrating the restoration of The Old Mosque in Shela where men are gathered in the town square. The women and girls are watching from a distance along the house walls or on balconies. November 2009.
children out in town. Even today it is rare with women working outside home; if so it would be young women working in shops or offices or older women who have a higher education. It might be accepted even by the elders in the society for economic reasons but it is utterly important that they are covered in buibui and do not interact with men. There are some, but few, ‘beach girls’ (but nobody calls them that) offering henna painting, massage and sex services but most of them are not from Lamu; they are immigrants from the mainland or other islands, some of them perfectly disguised and concealed in buibui and nicab. The problem with drop outs, drug abuse and interference with tourists which is regarded as a main concern in the case of boys, is not a problem amongst Lamu girls, I am told. On the contrary it seems that the presence of tourists has stated a process among the young women to strengthen the moral values. It is more common today to be covered in buibui with nicab, which means that nothing can be seen except hands, feet and eyes. It is not always an expression of religious devotion, merely a fashion and a way to be up to date. The buibui can be covered with plenty of pearls and tinsels, the eyes with a lot of make-up and hands and feet with rings, henna and nail polish. Today it is more common that the girls ask their parents to arrange marriages which have not been a custom in Lamu where most couples ‘marry for love’. The explanation among the young women is that it is a reaction against the immoral lifestyle they can see among the visitors and which has spread to young Swahili men, with girl- and boyfriends showing their affection openly and changing lovers often. The young women ask for something more unfaltering and a higher moral standard.

‘You can never be from here if you not are from here’

The Lamu people has a love and hate relationship with tourists and newcomers. On one hand the visitors and new settlers bring money and development, on the other hand the foreigners could disturb the balance in this small community. The locals fear the outsiders, no matter if they are tourists or have become residents, because if they bring their own culture here it can overtake the local lifestyle. Therefore it is important to make clear distinctions between who belongs to this place and who is not. One respondent, born in another country but since many years back resident in Kenya, expressed her experience:

You can never be from here if you not are from here! It is hard to figure this place out. People think it is very important to actually be from here, this place, the place, the sense of place.

Compared to other places in Kenya the family ties are still more important in Lamu even if upcountry people also regard tribe as something very important. During my interviews I have met some residents who have moved to
Lamu long time ago, some are married to local people, some are of Swahili origin but from other places, they all speak Swahili, take part in community work and so on, but they feel that they are still regarded as outsiders and it will always be that way. One of the Swahili-born people who have lived here all life articulated the issue:

We identify people depending on where they come from. We don’t have problems with for instance luo or giriama people but they don’t belong here. Sometimes it is confusion and we are suspicious and ask: What are you doing here? We respect somebody who takes fully part in community activity and we appreciate all support. If they do not really help or get involved they are not regarded as good members.

Some of my interviewees stressed the fact the Swahili culture is filled with pride: ‘This is what God gave us’ and people regard themselves as ‘above and special’. Lamu has a specific position in religion and the culture and language is pure in its traditional form and they are carriers of the great history of this place. It is the locals’ responsibility to preserve this heritage; they will not adopt or bend. ‘This is both their strength and their weakness’ one immigrant said. Today they feel discriminated by the Kenyan government and the kikuyu population, threatened by internet and mobile phones and misunderstood by newcomers and tourists who do not realize Lamu’s specific value. Therefore boundaries between the pure and original on one side and the new influences on the other side are important. This is expressed in many different ways; dress and adornment is one and defending

Figure 24: Henna painting. Kofia embroidery.

One of the newcomers’ who has settled on the island tells that outsiders are often stereotyped and regarded as all the same by the inhabitants. Some extremely rich and famous people have bought properties on the island and
others spend long periods every year in hotels or guesthouses. Local people suppose that this is a cross-section of the Europeans and therefore the expectations are high in terms of benefits. What the locals can see are people on vacation, relaxing by the sea and spending money, but what they do not see or understand is the differences between the visitors. It is not only the upper-class people who find their way to Lamu, there are also tourists coming on low budget who work hard for the rest of the year during tough conditions to make this trip possible; they have just perhaps managed to get enough money to cover the basic costs and cannot spend as much as the locals expect and want them to do. Another thing that the locals do not realize is that most Europeans cannot afford to come here at all. If you do not know about the differences in the rest of the world by your own experiences from travelling or by education, it is not easy to understand and reflect on these matters which lead to misunderstandings, distrust and disappointments.

The following chapter will explore in what ways and in which places interaction is taking place between local people and tourists within the investigated area of Lamu.
Melting pot, meeting point, contact zone

Lamu town is a gem of Swahili heritage. Over time, various communities have come in contact through trade, marriage, immigration and cultural exchange, creating centers of power and cultural melting points.

(Swahili Heritage, Cultural Festival 2009)

Most of the locals have never had the opportunity to travel but some of them use the contacts with the visitors in a conscious way to broaden their own experience. One of the informants told me that he is very interested in culture customs, politics and likes to watch news and documentaries from all over the world. Whenever he gets a visitor from a particularly region of interest he takes the chance to discuss with them about their opinion on the subject.

Those who work as tour guides often make special tours for the group in question, which means they must listen to the expectations and preunderstandings of the participants to shape the actual tour, which give a good opportunity to exchange information. In Lamu District Development Plan (2008) there is an expressed intention to train community, beach boys, tour guides, hoteliers and boat operators by sensitization campaigns in order to better appreciate the benefits accruing from tourism. The plan states that promotion of tourism would be hampered without this training. To fulfill the goals in the development plan a project has started 2010 to educate the tour guides and connect them closer to Lamu Museum. The tour guides are certified and organized in a kind of union and are therefore easy to reach with this kind of activity but also beach boys, boat operators and hotel keepers are key culture brokers and to train them to consciously promote the Swahili culture is utterly important.

However, communication is not always easy, ‘Africans are welcoming and the Muslim culture also tells you to greet a visitor. This is natural since generations back!’ Some tourists neglect greetings, which the locals think is both impolite and sad. Maybe it is because the visitors have been pushed and badgered earlier and they fear the sort of dialogue the greetings might lead into. Many of the tourists, both short time and leisure house keepers, do not care about the place they are visiting, they just want to use it for their own benefit, coming here for a few days and they are not interested in guided tours in town, snorkeling excursions, sunset trips or handicraft, and they see
every effort from the locals to make contact as ‘a pain in the neck’. One of my informants exclaimed: ‘I don’t understand the meaning of travelling if you don’t want to meet any locals and embrace the local culture!’; while another meant that ‘tourists are like crabs - they have floating minds, they change all the time - it is not easy to understand them’.

It is not uncommon to have relatives and friends who are living abroad and the view of the world is of course affected by such contacts. But many are also unaware of the world beyond Lamu; Lamu is its own world and they are quite content with that. Some informants told me about their own experience or friends’ experience of being abroad and when returning home, full of impressions. No one was interested in listening and they were met with suspiciousness. One of the travelers who later settled here means that exactly that is an important part of the identity of Lamu Island; the people are ‘so down to earth’, they all live in Paradise, it is up to everyone what you make out of it and they do not have references to anything else. Lamu Island has in itself a very strong combination which makes it to ‘the best place in the world to live in’; Lamu town with its long history and particular culture and Shela village with its beautiful nature and focus on wellbeing, still so undestroyed.

All hotel keepers I interviewed and the representatives from the museum had an ambition and a vision that their establishment should function as a contact zone and meeting point between locals and visitors, between different kind of visitors and even between different groups in the resident society. One even mentioned the dream of Lamu being a melting pot where a lot of cultural expressions could be mixed together into a new form of way of life, an innovation. Some residents fear that tourism in Kenya means to copy the western culture. But tourism does not mean that only the locals copy. The tourists also learn and copy customs and behavior from the natives which they bring back home as gifts: ‘interaction, care and love and the richness of the Swahili culture’.

Lamu can sustain its identity through tourism instead of regarding the contacts as threats against the traditional values and habits, one female informant said. To tour means to see but to avoid stopping at the surface, the visitors need translators. If tourism could be a matter of cultural exchange it should be an improvement, she said.

One day tour in Lamu

The study area of this investigation is not larger than that it is possible to reach all parts of it during one day on foot and by boat, so let us do a tour to explore some of the informal and formal meeting points between locals and tourists and search for essential characteristics of the geographical places behind the place promotional texts.
When you arrive to Lamu you must come by boat, whether your previous journey has been by air or by road, so the first place you come to is the jetty. Just opposite the boat landing is the impressive building of Lamu Museum, which is supposed to be the main educational institution for the Swahili history and culture.

‘Where is the Museum in Tourism?’

Beside the administration and management of the Swahili heritage Lamu Museum wants to become a leading actor in tourism development in the area and to function as a meeting point and an important promoter of education and intercultural exchange. As we will see in later chapters there is still a lot to be done to meet tourists’ demands and make them come to, and realize the possibilities imbedded in the activities of the Museum, but there are many plans for reaching these goals. In the future the museum wants to promote cultural tourism based on heritage and a project has started to connect the tour guides closer to Lamu Museum, with a system of rewards for the guides who has brought most visitors to the museum every month. The ambition is that more and more tourists will visit the different museum sites and learn about the unique Swahili culture but also to improve education for the tour guides so that they can be useful culture brokers. There are plans to develop more exclusive tourism for those who want to “build their experience on knowledge and understanding, not to be in the crowd but among the few”,
with home stays and village tourism and to encourage the tourists to stay for longer periods. There are also good conditions for developing and expanding eco-tourism in this rare and rich environment and to encourage that other capacities will develop as alternatives to tourism such as expanding food production, handicraft and production of culture items in the district.

Very close to the museum is Promise/Ahadi’s office and that will be our next stop on our exploring day tour.

‘We offer you the trip of a lifetime’

Figure 26: Dows on Lamu Channel, November. 2010

Promise/Ahadi is quite a new organization whose goal is to enhance work availability with guaranteed income for out of school youth in Lamu. It has its roots in the frustration, competition and cheating among the crews working on the dhows, and the organization endeavors to promote unity among them and to guaranty equitable and quality service for the tourists. Promise/Ahadi provides education ranging from basic literacy skills to language classes, information about drugs and HIV/AIDS, training in 1st Aid and Land & Sea Rescue. The initiative to start the organization was taken by a European volunteer student with support from the Red Cross, Lamu Museum, Kenya Wildlife Service and the Ministry of Tourism but is now run by the local members. The name Promise/Ahadi was coined by the members
themselves to reflect their commitment to this organization and to offer tourists excellent services, as well as their commitment to refrain from unnecessary competition and to promote good behavior among themselves. To be a member you must apply with a letter of introduction and you must sign a code of conduct which includes that you should take the customers to the office for payment, follow the agreed pricelist and give 10% back to the organization, be dressed in the organization’s T-shirt to show you are a member, do not use drugs while with tourists and working for a sustainable environment (no poaching, not destroying reefs and so on).

One problem has been that the dhow owners have seen the tourists as their friends, not as customers and have not behaved professionally. It was quite a slow start to form the organization and has taken some time for the dhow captains to realize the advantages for them to sign as members. There are today around 100 members but only around 1/3 of them take active part in meetings and development programs. A similar initiative has been taken in Shela, but failed and not everybody in Lamu is happy with the initiative. Some mean they are passed over by the organization, others are against all forms of associations or unions and are suspicious about the purpose. But many tourists prefer to visit an office, pay and get a receipt and a planned tour with life west onboard instead of just following someone who persuades them to join “a trip of your lifetime”, so from the tourists’ point of view Promise/Ahadi is a big step forward to secure business trustworthy, sea security and environmentally friendly tourism.

We leave the waterfront and walk into the winding alleys in Lamu town towards the western side of the settlement. When we reach the north western sand dunes we can visit one of the newest meeting places in Lamu.
The owner is a role model himself when it comes to bringing different cultures and experiences together. Born and brought up in Lamu, living, studying and working in Europe and America for many years and returning to his place of origin with a vision of building a meeting point between human and nature, between tourists’ experiences and traditional Swahili culture, between different kinds of art and a place of refuge for those who need it. Situated on a shamba in the sand dunes outside Lamu town four bungalows have been built on stilts. The whole place is ecologically managed with ecofriendly toilets, reuse of shower water and a restaurant serving organic Swahili food. Recently there have been solar panels installed for electricity supply. There are a lot of plans and visions for the place but depending on different circumstances and a tough start everything is not fulfilled yet.

We continue our stroll by following the slope and returning back to the crowded seafront in Lamu town.
If you ever feel bored or lonesome, just go for a stroll along the seafront in Lamu town; you can always meet some acquaintances to share the latest news with, stop for a coffee or juice, witness donkey dramas, watch all the business going on including loading or unloading on boats with people and cargo. If you are a stranger you will be offered handicraft products and boat rides but you can also just contemplate in front of the ever changing tide. The alleys in the town are narrow, so if anyone needs more space it is along the seafront they move and therefore here is always something going on and some people around. Because the alleys inside town are winding, the tourists cannot find their way there, and they better stick to the water. When you are new you will be told if you ever get lost just follow the sloping streets and you will sooner or later come to the seafront. However, many tourists have reacted against all the garbage in the water and on land, donkey dropings everywhere, all rubbish and dust, and complain that they will never return to this dirty place again! Some attempt has been made to clean up the area by putting up dust bins, women from mainland have been engaged to take care of donkey dung, and some parts of the sandy lane have been paved.
But the pavement has caused some of the locals to protest because they think that it destroys the genuine atmosphere of this old milieu.

The Mozambican Dhow

Along the seafront there are a few dhow building yards and we stop to learn about an inspiring example of how meetings and influences can lead to new practices and be integrated in the everyday life.

I was told that five years ago a man came sailing from Mozambique in his dhow. The type of dhow was slightly different from the traditional Lamu style; it was wider and therefore more comfortable for passengers and more stable in rough sea. In comparison the Lamu Dhow is better for fishing but could easily capsize in hard weather (and during Dhow races, but then it is said to be connected with witchcraft). The Mozambican man spent some time in Lamu but when he wanted to return, Kuzi, the south east monsoon, was still blowing so he was not able to sail to windward all the way along the East African coast. Instead he decided to sell his boat to a Lamu man and returned to Mozambique by road. The dhow was very much admired by local captains and soon the boat builders started to make copies and improve the model. The local boatbuilding yard in Shela has the capacity to build three boats per year, the cost per each is about 10 000 Euro and it takes 3-4 months for the four employees to build a dhow. They use mahogany from
the mainland and mangrove from Pate Island and if it is well maintained it could last for a lifetime. Today the Mozambican Dhow is the most demanded style of boat especially for transporting tourists. We will now catch a boat and go for a tour to the nearby Manda Island on the eastern side of Lamu Channel.

‘If you are doing well it will be like a magnet - others will be interested’

The islands close to Lamu are breeding places for several species of turtles and both the adult animals and the eggs have been popular food for locals and carnivores. Today the turtles are threatened by extinction so a movement to protect them has started. The initiative to found Lamu Marin Conservation Trust was taken by the owner of Peponi Hotel but the organization is today run by deeply devoted locals. Here tourists can learn about the specific ecology in the mangrove areas and on the beaches surrounding the islands and join the staff in watching egg laying and hatching. If the local fishermen take the turtles that have been caught in their nets to Peponi Hotel they get paid for them legally instead of selling them on the black market. The turtles are tagged and then brought back to the ocean. Local inhabitants at Manda Island are employed as watchmen for the turtle nests so no thieves can pluck the unhatched eggs. There are also projects on protecting corals and shells, bee projects, plantation projects in the mangrove areas and cleaning activities on the beaches. A lot of school children have been engaged to participate

Figure 29: On 26 February 2010, 90 eggs of Green Turtle were successfully hatched at Manda Beach and all the small turtles found their way out to the Indian Ocean with the help of tourists and locals who kept the Monster crabs in distance.
in the different activities and the tourists contribute by money donations and by taking part in the excursions.

Figure 30: Photo from Manda Beach Nov. 2009. The litter is a threat to the turtles as well as to other living organisms.

Back on Lamu Island in Shela village we will visit a school and get an opportunity to have a traditional Swahili dinner in a family house.

‘You can become a role model’
One teacher I interviewed assured me that there are no dropouts from primary school nowadays, at least not in his school, and most of the youngsters continue to secondary school and many even further. All Muslim children, both boys and girls, are going both to Arabic and English (= Kenyan) school. There might be exceptions depending on failures in tests or idleness but this is rare. He wants the pupils to regard themselves as useful members in the community and to be educated to fulfill that expectation.
During my time in Lamu I have met some adults, both men and women, both young and old, who have taken this task seriously and designed their education just for doing the best for their community on their return and to be able to work for everybody’s good. ‘If you learn, if you meet people, if you work you know what is going on even in other places. Others will go the same way as you do if you go to school, you can become a role model.’ This is also a contact zone between different cultures and values, between old traditions and new ideas, and because of education the whole society is in a transformation process today.

‘Real Swahili dishes to the tourists’

When Ali was just a kid his father passed away and he was sent out in Shela selling samosas to the hippies in order to help the family’s economy. He early realized that he enjoyed mingling with tourists so when he grew up and had his own wife and house he started, inspired by a man in Lamu town who already tried this kind of business, to serve pure Swahili food in his house. Every day he strolls along the waterside and the winding, sandy streets in Shela inviting newcomers to have dinner in his house and for many this has been the first meeting with Swahili
food (so even for me in 2003). During the dinner Ali tells the guests about all the dishes, the ingredients and recipes but it is his wife who is the chef. Ali is keeping a guestbook where all guest are supposed to write a judgment and greeting in their own language, so when people come from different countries in the world they can see if any fellow countrymen previously have shared this experience.

All the meeting points presented in this chapter are examples of phenomenon and places that I frequently came in contact with during my stay on Lamu Island. There are of course many more, and they are all examples of meeting points and contact zones which are important for the interaction between visitors and residents as well as between diverse groups in the local society. Sometimes they although may cause split between the different groups. We will now end our one day stroll by taking a sundowner at the seafront in Shela.

‘All cars filling station’

The biggest - and maybe the most expensive - hotel in Shela; Peponi, established during the1960s, has a wide open veranda facing the sea. Few places in Shela serve alcohol so this is a place where people also from other guest houses in the village go for a sundowner. Tourists from all over the world mix with one another but also mingle with the local men who come here for

Figure 33: Peponi Hotel, Shela, seen from the sea with the old Friday Mosque behind.
a glass of water, a Coke or some even a Tusker. This is ‘all cars filling sta-
tion’ one local man expressed it. This is the place and opportunity for dis-
cussing the politics of the world or the local topic for the day and share ex-
periences and plans for coming excursions while the sun is setting and the
millions of stars light up and are reflected in the calm waves of the Indian
Ocean. But not everybody like the place; some of the tourists choose to stay
at the closed part reserved for hotel residents, some of the local visitors say
that they are treated condescendingly by the staff, while others out in the
community watch from a distance with fear for what the contacts made at the
veranda will lead to: alcohol, contact between sexes and immoral in general.

Alternative images of Lamu

Through interviews, informal talks and my own strolling in the area with my
camera I have come across images that are quite the opposite of the place
promotional texts I referred to in the chapter ‘Promoting Lamu’. Examples
of this are the obvious shortcomings of power and water supply and garbage
handling which is a daily concern for the inhabitants. These are not circum-
stances that attract visitors and they may even be upset when they are con-
fronted with them on the spot. The problems are accentuated because the
presence of tourism even if none of the informants wanted to accuse the
tourists of causing these negative effects. There are also other circumstances
which could act as repellents for the guests and I will give a few examples.

Lamu Museum and Tourist Activity Impact

Angela W Kabiru from the National Museums of Kenya has written an arti-
cle about sustainable cultural tourism in Lamu and she delivers caustic criti-
cism of what has been achieved so far according to Lamu Museum: ‘Be-
cause one of the main attractions on the island is the Lamu Museum, their
shop should display a wide variety of products that can be bought in the
town. Instead, the museum shop is a dark, dusty, almost empty room that
does not have anything interesting to buy. The postcard racks are empty, the
t-shirts dusty and not properly displayed, the sandals obviously very old, and
generally the lack of initiative on the part of the staff manning the shop and
of the management to improve the image of the establishment. ...Generally,
however the exhibits inside the museum are well displayed and in good con-
dition.... Lamu Fort is also one large empty building, dirty and unkempt,
with little to see. There is no literature on the history of either the island or
the fort, and only a few dusty photographs on the upper floor to attract the
visitor.’ (Kabiru 2009). Her article is obviously not a Lamu promotional text
that would attract new visitors and for the Museum there is still a lot to be
done before tourists feel attracted to and realize the possibilities imbedded in its services.

Kabiru is also pointing at other concerns about tourism in Lamu and there are other actors besides the Museum, such as the Ministry of Tourism, who have missions to be fulfilled:

She points to 11 indicators of sustainability listed by UNWTO such as number of visitors, social and economic impacts, number of local residents employed in tourism businesses, tourist and local satisfaction and perceptions of stakeholders. The picture that her survey gives is that there is none or very little monitoring, coordination, plans or known impacts on any of the indicators. Her conclusion is that the key assets and key values as well as the assessment of the current problems must be identified in order to develop sustainable tourism and make Lamu a competitive destination (Kabiru 2009).

‘Tourism is like a glazing’

The common opinion that Lamu is totally dependent on tourism is questioned by a few of the respondents in my study. They argue that tourism does not really intrude in or interfere with people’s lives; the number of tourists is too small. They agree that tourism gives bread and employment and it encourages people to learn about their own culture and helps girls to go to

Figure 34: Ministry of Tourism situated on the seafront in Lamu Town.
school but still they mean that tourism could be regarded as “something on the top”- like a glazing, that does not really affect the everyday lives of ordinary people and they believe that Lamu could survive without tourism. Today there is no control over taxes, number of guest beds, number of visitors or number of employed in the tourism business so much is happening ad hoc and without planning or control. The actual benefits for locals are not easy to see nor the consequences for the community in many respect.

‘The institutions of tourism are weak and tourism in general is bad nowadays, so it would be better if we could change back to the way we lived in our grandfathers’ time’ one young informant said. People did not have much money during those days but there was always food to be found. Men stayed on their farms on Manda Island during the rainy season growing maize and vegetables for the whole year’s consumption. In addition to farming and fishing they worked as coral miners and constructors, jobs that today are done by immigrants. Coco nuts, cashew nuts, bananas and mangos were and are plenty and there is always fish and seafood in the sea, so we can survive without tourism.

**Electricity supply**

Situated on the outskirts of Lamu Town, along the seafront on the way to Shela is Lamu Power Station. From far away you can hear the deafening noise from the old diesel engines. The sand is black from waste oil and all around there are oil barrels. Every day new oil drums are brought in by boat from Malindi to keep the engines going. The inhabitants express their satisfaction with the reliable power supply since the power station was established and mean that the noise and environment degradation is something you must accept. But the power distribution does not always work; several times during my stay in Shela there were power breaks all night and even during day time. People explained the power cuts with the fact that the copper wires were stolen over and over again. Besides that, to me it is incomprehensible why this island with sunshine 12 hours a day 300 days a year does not use solar energy. There are also strong winds for long periods every year that could be used not only for sailing but for wind power plants but I have not seen a single one.
Garbage Handling

Figure 36:
WEKA TAKA NDOGO
NDOGO HAPA
TUWEKE LAMU SAFI
Place small trash here
Small here
Let’s keep Lamu clean
(Empty litter bin on the sea-front. Each time I passed it during November 2009 and February- March 2010 it was still empty but just around the corner you find “Donkey restaurant” shown on next page.)
One informant told me that the desired identity of Shela is that it should be clean and white. There is a community project which is very actively taking care of the environment, mainly the handling of garbage. One man is employed to go from house to house every day together with his donkey, collecting the waste. The deposits are then dumped at a spot outside the village instead of being thrown away close to the houses. The difference between Shela and Lamu Town is clearly visible in this respect. In Lamu there is a tractor that collects garbage but a lot is nevertheless dumped at a ‘Donkey restaurant’ in town or along the streets. When the high water fills the sea-front some of this litter is transported out to sea. Lamu has a system of open drainage for waste water, which is working well if no garbage is hindering the water flow. But most often there is stuff thrown on the streets which stops the drainage and instead unhealthy ponds are formed. I have been told in informal talks with residents that for some of the visitors the nuisances stated above are the main reason why they will not to return to Lamu.

Figure 37: ’Donkey Restaurant’ where garbage from many places in Lamu town are dumped. The donkeys are allowed to feed themselves on what they find. During high tide some of the waste is washed out in the sea.
**Fresh water situation**

*Lamu risks loosing heritage status. Salination of the island’s water resources may soon turn it into another ruin, like Gede and Takwa.* (Daily Nation, Feb.17, 2010)

The exploitation of fresh groundwater at several sites along the East African coast such, as Takwa and Kitau on Manda Island as well as Gede close to Watamu on the mainland, have through history resulted in salt water intrusion which ended the established civilisations. There is a growing concern about the water resources in Lamu Island and therefore an investigation was carried out to present the geological, hydro-geological and geophysical conditions on behalf of the National Museums of Kenya and presented by Zacharia Njuguna Kuria in 2008.

Lamu town was ratified as a World Heritage Site mainly due to its rich Swahili culture, architectural design and historical background but among the factors considered in the process of approval was a reliable and sustainable supply of water. ‘The sustainability of this world heritage site is not only dependent on its unique architecture but also the living culture of the people that depend on the fresh water supply’ (Kuria 2008).

Today there are main concerns affecting abstraction from the fresh water aquifer:

- Depletion of fresh groundwater resources
- The wells are pumped above the safe yield
- Contamination by developers and the local community
- Effects on the natural vegetation and changes in land use
- Salt water intrusion

The source of water for Lamu Island are 30 shallow wells located within a catchment zone of sand dunes in the southern part of the island close to Shela village from which the water is distributed by a pipe line system around the island. This is also the main fresh water source for Manda and Mokowe islands that get their water by boat transport from Shela. The pipe water supply was installed in Lamu 1955 and rehabilitated and extended with additional wells in 1986. During ‘An El Nino Emergency Project’ 1999-2000 the water system was repaired and improved. The water is mainly used for consumption in households and commercial establishments (hotels, offices etc.) since there are no industrial activity on the island, but currently the water supply has become both too insufficient and unreliable to meet the increasing demand. Residents need to rely on open wells, dug next to the Mosques or along the streets for their additional water supply. But most of these wells are polluted by faecal matter or from saline water next to the
ocean (Kuria 2008). When I visited Lamu in November 2009 there was a cholera outbreak which took some lives and made many others sick. During one of my stays in Shela village I also experienced that the tap water was definitely salty.

The establishment and development of beach resorts together with rampant population growth has affected the natural process of dune formation and reduced the catchment area. Clearing of vegetation for construction of beach hotels, growing settlements, farming activities and harvesting of palm trees has led to decreased infiltration of rain water because when the sand is left bare it becomes very hot and most of the rain water is lost by evaporation. The combination of decreased infiltration and reduced catchment area has limited the water resource.

Figure 38: Water Harvesting Plant. Rainwater falls on the tin roof and concrete pond and then runs off into an underground cistern to avoid evaporation. When water is needed it is pumped out from the tank. It is utterly important to keep the catchment area clean from baboon droppings, leaves and other things that could contaminate and withhold the water flow. The picture shows a well-kept plant on Manda Island, March 2010.

On Manda Island there is an intense sale of and construction on properties both for private housing and hotel activities. Since there are no fresh water wells on the entire island everyone depends on water from Lamu which is transported by boats or by a private pipe-line from Shela. There is one desalination plant working on a private basis and some households have invested in rainwater catchment equipment but this is not enough and some of
the facilities for collecting rain water are not properly handled and therefore not functioning well.

In addition to these problems with already limited fresh water resources, Lamu is also destined to host East Africa’s biggest port. So far there are only plans but thanks to big international interest in the project it could be realized maybe in 10 years’ time (www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business 15 June 2009). This is expected to tremendously increase the demand on an already overstretched fresh water resource and will also have consequences for the World Heritage Site, although not everyone is aware of the links:

‘A Lamu member of parliament has rejected calls for a cultural impact assessment study to be done on the proposed port. Lamu West’s Fahim Twaha accused the National Museums of Kenya of being used by “enemies of development” to derail the port project through the cultural assessment study. Mr. Twaha said the port will be built far away from the heritage sites in the archipelago and would not interfere with them. ‘I do not see why people are using flimsy reasons to block the project”, he said.’ (Daily Nation Sep.14, 2010).

Lamu Port Project will also change the conditions for tourism activities as well as for all other activities in the area, but when I chose Lamu as the place for my field work no plans were published and the local people were not informed about or aware of the project and its possible consequences, therefore it is not a part of my investigation.
Tourism as interaction of landscapes—opportunities and obstacles on the way to sustainable tourism development

Tourism has many inherent paradoxes and in Lamu it represents both continuity and change. Tourism is built on the old heritage and a magnificent history in combination with a rich but sensitive tropical landscape; all of this must be protected, preserved and well maintained for various reasons. One concern is to be able to sustain and develop tourism itself and how to combine economic growth with the desire to preserve a certain kind of landscape values.

Besides resting on the continuity of the specific cultural and natural landscape tourism also represents one of many transforming forces. Tourists are not a homogenous group, nor are the residents; different lifestyles, demands and values meet and the locals are affected in different ways, practically and mentally, attracted or repelled. From my investigation there are mainly three noticeable consequences that points on the tensions in the Lamu people’s envisaged and experienced landscape caused by the interaction with tourism:

- The accentuation of the differences already existing in the society.
- The evolvement of a new moral landscape.
- The highlighting of the need of functional institutions and strategies for sustainable development.

The accentuation of the differences already existing in the society

The interaction with tourism underlines the differences which already exist between women and men and between generations and could be an obstacle to a sustainable development for the tourism business but also for the society on the whole. Plans for expanding cultural tourism with home stays, Swahili cooking and teaching the language and about traditions must also involve women. But further tourist development with increased interaction with foreign people could be regarded as a threat to family ties and traditional values and may widen the gap between the groups further. The meeting points and
contact zones between locals and tourists are important for their mutual understanding but only a small share of the population interacts and mingles with the tourists. These circumstances create a gap within the host community, both between the sexes and between generations. There is a long tradition of keeping women out of sight of unfamiliar men and a fear about what will happen to them if they interact with strangers, while men of all ages interact with tourists daily. Even if not all men work in the tourism business they all often meet strangers in the town square, along the seafront or in the streets, they wish them welcome and make contacts.

Young men who drop out from school to earn their living as boat staff, guides or salesmen have tight contacts with the visitors. Some of them are attracted to the westernized way of life that is in so many ways different from the traditional Swahili way of living with its close connection to Islam. They are evident examples of how individuals can choose to vary their identity depending on the situation. Together with their relatives they manifest the Swahili identity as loving husbands, caring fathers and faithful Muslims. Together with tourists they instead emphasize their leisured lifestyle, willingness to interact and make friends with foreigners, a “modern lifestyle” with use of alcohol and drugs and a free sex life. By their families and society they are regarded as “spoiled boys” but the lifestyle is (to some extent) sanctioned because they earn the main part of the family’s income.

There is an increasing acceptance, especially among young people, for women to work outside the home for economic reasons but they are strongly controlled and they need to defend their position towards the elder generation. Among the young women, who get their globalization experience from television and Internet rather than from face to face contacts with tourists, have in contrast to the young men, been a movement towards more active school participation with high ambitions and an evolving more conservative views of marriage and dressing. The use of nicab together with buibui has increased but what for an untrained viewer seems to be very traditional clothes and an expression of deeply religious devotion is actually an advanced awareness of being up to date and latest fashion trends with different cuttings, tinsels, lace and embroideries imported from Saudi Arabia. With this specific and consequently accomplished dressing they draw up the visible, and stress the invisible boundaries towards other groups in the society but also in relation to visitors.

The evolvement of a new moral landscape

As stressed in the European Landscape convention, landscape is crucial for social wellbeing and encompasses a variety of values. Landscape can be seen as an expression of natural and cultural heritage and the foundation for identity. The tourists’ expectations on the landscape they are visiting, as conveyed by advertisements and place promotion information, are affecting
also the residents place perceptions. People have come from all over the world paying a lot of money to spend their leisure time in this particular location. It is taken as a proof that this landscape is desirable even for outsiders and something out of the ordinary. Among the inhabitants it is common to talk about Lamu as ‘Jannat’ (Paradise), a place that has been given to them by God and this is most often reinforced by the reactions of the guests. The locals’ identities are shaped by the landscape they inhabit, with its imbedded values but also in by relationships with the world around them.

Few of my informants among the local population have been international travellers themselves or have internet access; their main outside influences (beside television) are on a personal basis with the visitors who come here. But identities are not made or fixed once and for all; they are in a continuous change. As an individual you can purposely choose to express various parts of your identity depending on the situation, but circumstances can also force you to reconsider your identity. If the reinforcement the residents get from outsiders about the superiority of this unique place and its charming people will diminish, for instance by declining numbers of visitors or the absence of positive response caused by a changed landscape and environmental degradation (problems mentioned in the chapter Alternative Images of Lamu), it will also affect their identity formation. One informant even expressed the fear that with education and an increasing consciousness about the outer world Lamu would not be the same and may therefore lose its attraction. What I have seen is a change influenced by tourism, although not in the expected, visible way, like in the examples from Maasai Mara and Amboseli mentioned in Introduction above. It is a more unconscious and underlying transformation. An example of this is that a new moral landscape emerges where distinctions between insiders and outsiders are articulated. The tourists’ assets, behaviour and culture are not seen as an example of something desired, instead it is often regarded with scepticism and considered to be examples of low culture and a lack of awareness of codes of conduct. The indigenous Swahili people wants to emphasize their inherited customs and values and they generally regard themselves as having higher standards compared to both tourists and the temporary working force from the mainland. They express a desire to educate and train the visitors to observe proper manners and thereby establish good relations and reciprocal benefits. On the other hand, when it comes to the awareness about ecological consequences of defective handling of garbage, oil slick from the power station and other engines, species in danger of extinction and other environmental issues, there is a need to educate the local people.
The highlighting of the need of functional institutions and strategies for sustainable development

The dissatisfaction among Lamu citizens with people in higher and decision-making positions of other origins than Swahili reflects a broader problem. The educational level among the Swahili people is still low, not many have taken university degrees and returned to their place of origin. There is a lack of skilled local labour for this kind of jobs and to avoid corruption the Kenya government is unlikely to post people in their place of origin. The distance to Nairobi is immense, both geographically and emotionally, so the dubiousness towards edicts from the government is pronounced. The local suspiciousness against outsiders also has another reason. Decision-making approaches often ignore the emotional dimension of value system, and instead seek to make decisions by means of rational models. This approach fails to deal adequately with the complex feelings, perceptions, and meanings inherent in people’s relationship to the environment and places in which they live and work (Schroeder 2008), what Massey & Jess (2003) call a tendency to ‘landscape’ cultural identity. In Lamu mythical landscapes, inherited traditions, ceremonies and stories define the cultural heritage and preservation of all this and pride in it is regarded of high importance, higher than reformatory that from an outside perspective may seem objectively and measureable the most appropriate. The outsiders do not seem to understand what is really important and valuable for the insiders, their ‘landscapes of the mind’. One respondent, not of Swahili origin and posted by the government in Lamu expressed it in this way:

To come to Lamu was totally new to me; the way of treating people is totally different compared to other cities along the coast. Here is a lot of hospitality and the local people are kind and not difficult to cope with. But there are certain things I don’t understand and I am sure that many in the public don’t understand what I am trying to improve.

Not only the low number of Swahili persons in higher positions but also the undersized number of locally owned tourist establishments is a problem if the local community wants to have influence and take control over the tourism business and its impacts on the island. Due to escalating land prices more and more residents are selling their properties to foreigners who use them for private leisure houses or small hotel businesses managed by outsiders. If the relationship between Lamu residents and the visitors change, the identity for them will also change; the Lamu people are transferred to tenants and the foreigners are the landlords who decide the conditions. In an ambition to influence this undesirable transformation the National Museums of Kenya have plans to develop a program in connection with UNESCO among young people in Lamu to strengthen their awareness of culture and heritage. The aim is to get more young people engaged and develop their ability to
participate in the tourism industry in leading positions and in a purposeful way. Positive examples have come up during later years, among them Promise/Ahadi, Lamcot and Abduls Econest, where young Lamu people returning after education or work outside Lamu, or trained by and operating in organizations initiated by foreigners in Lamu, are taking leading positions in tourism development and thereby become role models for others to follow. The Ministry of Tourism together with other actors asks for a generally raised minimum educational level that would be required for getting work permissions in tourism establishments to promote improvements and avoid exploitation of the working force. However, representatives from the hotel business oppose and mean that it will lead to a diminishing number of visitors; with higher educational level the salaries will raise and thereby the costs. This conflict must be noticed by watchfulness if a sustainable tourism development shall be possible in the area which also includes social rights and fair economic conditions.

Some new hotels and private properties have broken the traditional norms of style and height of buildings on Lamu Island but until recently there has not been so much observable physical change connected with tourism. Compared to other tourist destinations along the Kenyan coast, and especially compared to nearby Manda Island which has been radically transformed during the last two years by tourist establishments, the Lamu environment has remained basically unchanged. It has also been unaffected by the negative consequences of mass tourism. The Lamu guesthouses are small and mostly accommodated in traditional Swahili houses, small scale cultural and eco-friendly tourism has actively been promoted and the visitors move in the same areas and use the same modes of transportation as the inhabitants.

There are also other reasons to address the tourism development with caution. In spite of all the best intentions there is a contradiction between the supposed benefits from small scale or alternative tourism and its actual effects on the host society. Participants in alternative tourism can inadvertently and unconsciously serve as ‘explorers’ who expose the destination to a more intense tourism development and can generate or make worse intra-community rivalries as discussed in the chapter on New Tourism and Sustainability earlier. Another problem is that the small number of visitors in alternative tourism may generate insufficient revenues to reach the level of desired economic development expected by the local community. According to Weaver (2004), ‘Engagement with alternative tourism is more likely to result in no tourism at all due to difficulties in attaining financial sustainability’.

The commonly accepted definition of sustainable development given by the WCED report from 1987 and the more recent one formulated by Swarbrooke (1999) about sustainable tourism are both wide and can inspire to multiple, selective interpretations. Weaver (2004) calls sustainable development an elusive term and points to the fact that the diversity of destinations
also provides a compelling reason for flexible approach towards sustainable tourism. Questions on what resources should be sustained and for whom and what is sustainable for local cultures and economies are all loaded with power issues and the answers are not derived directly from the impacts but from the social, economic and political practises and discourses in every case. The relationship between tourism and other complex systems that have no immediate or obvious linkage with tourism must be considered. The desired goals and conditions in a particular place must be defined, as well as what sustainability means and entails in the local context and how it should be achieved and evaluated. One weakness in both Doxey’s Irritation Index (IRRIDEX) and Butler’s Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) is that both models suggest a homogenous host community. More often than not there are different reactions within the community which is shown in the case of Lamu. Most of the people I have come in contact with are in phase two according to ‘IRRIDEX’. There is an acceptance and an expectation about future blessings connected with an expanded tourism but I have also met individuals and groups who represent both Euphoria and Annoyance – however, so far, no one in Antagonism. In terms of TALC, Lamu is in the development state where today’s decisions will determine the future development.

The questions asked in the Introduction, if tourism is working as a force of destroying, conservation or development, are all in the case of Lamu answered by a yes. It is not either or, there are representations of destruction, petrification and sustainable development in various ways in the examples given from Lamu, and if the local community want to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits they gain from tourism they need to be active players in the tourism market. A main problem has been the lack of functional institutions and sharp strategies for tourism development and an unawareness of consequences of tourism involvement. None of the consequences described above represents necessarily only obstacles or opportunities, but concern about the effects of tourism is the base for future decisions. To achieve a sustainable tourism improvement a pronounced engagement from the local society is necessary and from the restricted point of view define what is important and desirable in this specific framework. The key competitive factors and needed innovations must be identified and the means by which both the private and public sector can improve capacity building and investments. Effective communication methods and resolute tourism promotion must be developed. To encourage a sustainable development it must be recognized how further expansion of tourism can work in fair and inclusive ways, be environmentally and socially responsible and benefit the local community, both preserving the environment and heritage and contributing to poverty alleviation in the region. Sustainability ought to be regarded as a direction rather than a status and be used as tools in tourism development and an ideal to continually work towards. Tourism could be regarded
as an important part of open societies and an opportunity to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between people from diverse backgrounds. Carefully accomplished tourism may work as an interaction that recognizes the social and imaginary landscape. To paraphrase the statement by Larsen (2000) cited above:

Tourism in Lamu is about meetings between residents and travellers and thereby expanding the experiential, imaginary and ideological landscapes for all parts. Given the exchange of perspectives that is involved in these multi-faceted encounters, tourism is working as an interaction of landscapes.

Suggestions for further studies
The web I have tried to weave in this work has loose ends which could be starting points for further work:

- This study only is based upon a relatively short period of fieldwork in Lamu. Hopefully longer and repeated visits may broaden the experience further.

- To pay more effort to discover ‘The sense of place’ and in what way it may be threatened by tourism, would give a better understanding of the community and how it adapts to new circumstances.

- Interaction of landscapes is supposed to be regarded from various sides but I have selectively focused on the role of the host community. It would give a deeper reflection on the subject to also analyse the tourists’ perceptions.

- The Lamu women have not been given much space in this study. To focus on the female experience, even though they do not work in tourism sector, could make the picture more complete.

- It would be interesting to compare Lamu with other tourist sites in Kenya. In Maasai areas the tourists most often stay for shorter periods and may visit the village for only a few hours while the tourists in Lamu to a greater extent share the everyday environment of the inhabitants. What kind of differences could be connected with these characteristics?

- Lamu is in a rapid process of change and at a crossroad where the future development must be decided. The Lamu Port Project, the
New Constitution, future tourism development, the rapid change on Manda Island and the upcoming water shortage are just a few crucial issues. What kind of institutions will take a leading role for a sustainable development? To follow the community’s adaptation to the new circumstances could help us understand also how other societies might be able to implement changes.
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