# Colonial historic–geographic heritage in Puducherry in tourist information

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# Preface

With the completion of this thesis I have finished my Masters degree in Geo-communication at the University of Utrecht. Along with an internship, this thesis is the last test before I receive my Master of Science title. I have decided to do both my internship and my thesis in Puducherry, India. This unique possibility could not have happened were it not for a number of people I want to thank. First I want to thank my supervisor Bouke van Gorp for her feedback and the supervisor of my internship, Tine Beneker, for allowing me to do this research. Secondly I would like to thank Mr. Arasu and all the people at Prime Trust for allowing me to perform research along with working with them. I would also like to thank my parents for their support during my time in India and in the stressful time after I came back, without their trust in me I would have never been able to finish this.

# Contents

# Introduction

*I arrived in Pondicherry [...]. In population and size it is an inconsequent part of India – by comparison, Prince Edward Island is a giant within Canada – but history has set it apart. For Pondicherry was once the capital of that most modest of colonial empires,* French *India.*

Yann Martel: Life of Pi

Puducherry, or Pondicherry as it was called until 2005, is an old colony of the French Empire located in the southern tip of India. Although the French have left over half a century ago, they have left behind a city centre that shares more features with a French town than with an Indian town. This makes Puducherry unique in India and has made the city centre a tourist attraction.

The history and geography of Puducherry tell an exciting story about the spatial development of the area to those interested in this subject. People can learn about the history of French colonialism and colonialism in general, the historic relationship between East and West and about the architecture and design principles of late 18th to 19th century France.

Many travel guides and other sources of tourist information point out the history and geography to their readers. However, is this information going to *teach* tourists about the history and geography of Puducherry? Following Van Gorp (2003) this research will focus on historic-geographic heritage, which is described as built heritage through which the historical and geographical dimensions of a (part of the) landscape can be observed. In an effort to specifically show what kind of information is provided to tourists it is worthwhile to describe the area or subject the tourist information focuses on in detail. By doing this, researchers can explain in far more detail what choices have been made by the producers of tourist information  (see: Jacobs, 2001; Van Gorp, 2003). A comparison will be drawn between the way Puducherry is depicted in tourist information and the history and geography of the city centre. The focus is on tourism because this has been identified as a force that might help conserve heritage by showing and teaching people about the history and geography of the area they are visiting and as one that could threaten conservation by reducing it to empty commodities (see: Li, 2003).

The focus will be on French heritage found in the city centre. The research area is limited in this way for practical reasons: this centre is relatively compact, so it can be discovered by foot. This part of Puducherry is described in most detail in sources about the history of  the area and it is the part of town that every source of tourist information pays attention to, making it possible for the researcher to draw a meaningful comparison.

*Research questions*
This first part of this research consists of a description of the history and geography of Puducherry. This will be done by describing a number of general features of colonial cities and describing how Puducherry fits in this general model. This way it will be clear in what context Puducherry is placed and what aspects of the town can be considered typical for colonialism in general and for Puducherry in particular. Most attention will be given to the colonial history, but all other periods of history will be described as well to provide a context to place Puducherry in. Then the current state of the city centre will be described by describing the visibility of colonial built heritage. This closes the first part of this research and it will answer the question: *What is the historic-geographic story of Puducherry and to what extent is the story still visible in the city centre?*
The second part of this research focuses on the way Puducherry is depicted in tourist information. It starts with an explanation of how influential tourist information is on tourists, followed by a discussion of the current state of tourist information and description of the methods used and

specific questions that will be answered. Together these will answer the subquestion: *What parts of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry does tourist information pay attention to and to what extent do general criticisms on tourist information regarding style and content hold true for these sources?*

Lastly a comparison is drawn between the historic-geographic story of the town as described in the first part and the images created by tourist information as described in the second part. This will answer the main research question: *To what extent does tourist information pay attention to the colonial historic-geographic heritage of Puducherry and to what extent does it pay attention to these historical and geographical dimensions?*

*Relevance*

Information offered to tourists has been a source of concern among geographers, anthropologists and historians for some time. It is considered as a mediator between tourist and destination, the information provides the framework that will supposedly guide the tourist's experience in the place they visit (Lew, 1991; Bhattacharyya, 1997). In this role tourist information is thought to be very influential and the information will provide tourists with a vision of what they perceive as reality. Researchers describe this role in detail and show what kind of image tourists will gather from it. Travel guides in particular have been subject to the scrutinising eyes of many scholars. Practically every aspect of the guides has been dissected and criticised (see for example: Jacobs, 2001; Van der Vaart, 1998; Bhattacharyya, 1997; Van Gorp, 2003). Not only scholars, but also people outside academia believe that the influence of tourist information can play a role in how visitors look at them. To give just two examples: Melbourne citizens protested against being called racist in the Lonely Planet guide and a Moscow television station aired an editorial against the same guide for their description of Moscow as corrupt (The Australian, 2006; Mueller, 2007).

Research on tourist information is highly relevant, especially for growing tourist destinations. More research leads to a better understanding on the kind of information tourists pick up, it will provide local organisations and governments a clear image of where tourists will go to, what they will expect and what places they will avoid or know nothing about. This information can be used to manage the stream of tourists and provide them with information about places they would otherwise know nothing about. An understanding of what tourists expect can give local actors the chance to give tourists a more satisfying experience .There is also a purely theoretical relevance to the analysis of tourist information: many of the theories relevant to this area of study have hardly been researched in the past. Although existing research does underscore these general theories, more research is needed to further specify them. A limitation in existing research is that most of it focuses only on tourist guides (a few notable exceptions being Van Gorp (2003), Beneker (2003) and Nelson (2005)) while research by Van Gorp (2003) shows that many tourists pick up most of their information during their visit. Hardly any research pays attention to information available on the internet , while this has turned out to be a great source of information for many tourists.

# Chapter 1: History and Geography of Puducherry

In this first chapter the history and geography of Puducherry will be described. The colonial period will be described in detail, while other periods will be described in passing as well to provide context and a complete picture of Puducherry. The following question will be answered: *What is the historic-geographic story of Puducherry and to what extent is still story visible in the city centre?* To give the reader a general idea of the kind of town Puducherry is, this chapter starts with a short description of the location, size and governmental set-up of the town. After this a description of colonies in general and French colonies in particular will be made. This description serves as the framework of this chapter, it places the history and geography of Puducherry in a broader context and provides explanations for a number of historic events and spatial processes. After an explanation of the methods used for this part of the research, the history and geography of Puducherry, from ancient times to the present. Lastly the second part of the research question is answered, by way of an inventory of Puducherry's built colonial heritage.

## 1.1 Introduction to the city of Puducherry

As mentioned in the introduction, Puducherry is a seaside town on the east coast of South-India. It is located south of Madras in the province of Tamil Nadu. The city of Puducherry forms a Union Territory with the other old French colonies Mahé, Karaikal and Yanam. Puducherry has this special status because it joined the Indian state a few years after it was formed, the people of Puducherry were given the choice to either join the province of Tamil Nadu or form a special territory and they chose for the latter (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). The other colonies are many times smaller than Puducherry and are spread all over south India (see map 1.1.1).

A Union Territory is an administrative region administrated directly by the president. The president appoints a Lieutenant Governor who oversees the territory on the president's behalf. Puducherry also has a legislative assembly and a council of ministers. Together these form the political power of the territory and they can make their own laws for the area they govern. Most laws can be executed immediately, but some have to be ratified by the central government in Delhi (Government of India, 2010). In practicality this



*Map 1.1.1: Location of the Puducherry Union Territory (Source: Wikimedia, 2010)*

means that Puducherry has different laws from Tamil Nadu, and can govern the territory much more directly than other regional governments in India.

Puducherry is the biggest area of the Puducherry Union Territory and has the largest population of the four different parts. In the 2001 census 735,004 people were counted, on a total of 973,829 in the whole union territory. The population of the area has grown 20.82% between 1991 and 2001, although this is a gigantic growth compared to western countries, the population growth has declined since 1981 with 16.06% (Government of Puducherry, 2010). The most recent census dates back to 2001 and a new one can only be expected in 2011. Data has been collected on the whole area of Puducherry, including multiple towns and a large urban sprawl that receives no attention in the remainder of this research. The numbers should only be taken as an indication.

The population density (inhabitants per square kilometre) of Puducherry is 2,534 in 2001, which –

compared to the density of 9,294 persons per square kilometre in the Delhi metropolitan area – makes Puducherry a mildly densely populated city.

## 1.2 Colonial Historic-Geographic built heritage

In Puducherry a number of features can be observed that are representative of colonialism, French colonialism in particular and post-colonialism. These are described below.

*Colony*
Between roughly 1500 and 1950 European powers held political control over almost the complete world. One major exception has been China, but even here Europe had its influence. The relation between Europe and the rest of the world can be described as one between core and periphery, with Western Europe as the core and the rest as the periphery. The elite of the core ruled over both the core and the periphery, often by collaborating with the elites in the periphery. This is the basic model of formal imperialism: Europe had created colonies all over the world and ruled over them (Flint & Taylor, 2007, 81, 86).
The reason why European powers created colonies is twofold, according to sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (Flint & Taylor, 2007, 87), the capitalist powers sought out the products of the periphery and looked for a low-cost workforce. The colonies were created in the periphery to produce goods for the core. The European powers were far more technologically advanced and powerful than the people in the periphery, as a result they had complete control over the periphery (Flint & Taylor, 2007).
Because of these factors, colonial cities have developed in completely different ways compared to Northwest-European cities (King, 1976). The extensive body of Northwest-European literature on the development of cities is irrelevant and instead the theoretical work of A. D. King in his book *Colonial Urban Development* (1976) will be used. In his book he makes a model of colonial cities based on Delhi.
King starts with the development of a conceptual model of a colonial city. The colonial city is different in many ways from industrial cities in Europe. Their most defining feature is the fact that they are dual cities(King, 1976. p. 6). They consist of a centre made by and for the industrial coloniser and a centre for the pre-industrial local population. These two centres have hardly any contact with each other. Usually the only locals who could be found in the colonist centre were servants. King recognises a few processes that explain the differences between the areas: first and foremost the coloniser was the dominant party in the city. They were controlling the local population and did not want to interact with them much (*ibid*, p. 39). British people were shipped to India to manage a steady supply of resources to the homeland, not to waste time with the 'savages'. By building a special town for the English they ensured that they felt safe and 'among friends' and that they only had to take care of that part of town. The second explanation is that the coloniser came from a different society where certain technological developments had been implemented. They demanded broader roads, bigger houses and modern facilities to live the life they were used to back in the homeland. A third explanation for the stark differences between the two centres is that the western society had evolved from one where all activities were focused around the house to one where working and living were separated. Along with this process recreation was also moved further away from home. This resulted in broad roads leading from the residential areas to the working areas and the construction of recreation facilities such as racing tracks, stadiums and picnic grounds. King also explains why the colonial centre does not look like an English city: there was no western working class in India, only upper class and a few middle class Westerners were sent to the colonies. As a result there were no large working class neighbourhoods that were so typical of the industrial cities in Great Britain (*ibid,* pp. 36-37).
Besides their general lay-out, colonial cities are built in the fashionable style of the age they were built in. In the case of cities that were (re)built in the late 1700s and onwards this style was neoclassicism. This was the fashionable style in Europe and was imported to the colonies to please the colonists. Before this style came into fashion the fashionable styles in Europe were Baroque and

Rococo. Both these styles are characterised by a lot of detail and ornamentation (Rococo more than Baroque). Neoclassicism is a reaction to these styles and goes back to the classical era. Inspiration came from archaeological discoveries in Italy (Stillman, 1973; Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010). Scholars from all over Europe visited the ruins of places like Pompeii and took note of the geometrical forms employed in the buildings (Stillman, 1973). In a time in which rationalism was the popular philosophical outlook on life the clear lines and simple forms resonated strongly among the architects, they believed they had discovered an eternally valid 'true style' (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010).

*French colony*
French colonies are typical colonies in many ways and France has created an empire for exactly the same reason as other European powers, but there are some specific features that differentiate French colonies from other colonies.

First and foremost, France has been reshaped by the French Revolution in the late 1700s and this has had some effects on the colonies. Most notably was the division of church and state, religion played a relatively insignificant role both in France and in its colonies. A second effect of the revolution is the introduction of token representation of the local population in French politics. A third effect is the fact that people got the opportunity to study in France, where they learned about the principles of *liberté, égalité & fraternité* (liberty, equality and brotherhood) and came home with ideas about fairer societies (Quinn, 2000; Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

Secondly: the way France is being ruled from Paris. Nearly all decisions were made in the capital, even colonies on the fringes of the empire could not make any large decisions without written consent from Paris (Quinn, 2000). This had a gigantic effect on the efficiency of colonies and the profits that were being made. Other colonial empires managed their colonies far more decentralized, which made the colonies more capable to react immediately to changing circumstances and new opportunities. The French empire was bureaucratic and slow by comparison (Quinn, 2000).

Thirdly: the long conflict with the English empire. France and England have been each other's nemesis for many years and have fought many wars both on European soil and in their – often adjacent – colonies (Quinn, 2000). A large part of France's foreign policy was aimed towards weakening the English empire, often with no regard to the consequences. The ultimate example of this is France's support for America in the American Revolution. This support weakened the French state and Quinn (2000) claims that it directly led to the French Revolution a few years later.

*After the colony*
After the colonizer has left the region and independence has been declared, the question arises what has to be done with all that the colonizer has left behind. Western (1985) describes that three courses of action can be taken: either the heritage is left to rot, it is destroyed on purpose or it is protected. What course of action is taken largely depends on two considerations. First the question arises whether it is perceived that the colonial status is continuing, if this is the case the decision is often made to destroy everything of the colonizer, as has been the case in – for example – Indonesia. Western (1985) identifies this as a political reaction by the new leaders of the ex-colony. On the other hand, if no one believes that their country is still seen as a colony, then it is more likely that the colonial history is protected or developed. The latter has been the case in the USA, where old English buildings still stand proudly in Williamsburg, VA (Western, 1985). Western believes that it is easier for a post-colonial society to treat colonial heritage as part of their heritage if the period of colonisation is seen as a thing of the past.

The second consideration is an economic one: barring a few notable exceptions, such as Canada and New Zealand, ex-colonies can be described as developing countries (for an indication, see Watkins, 2008). Western (1985) and Graham *et al* (2000, 239) point out that the local population and government can be preoccupied with this and that there is simply not enough interest to invest in either the protection and development of heritage or the destruction of existing colonial heritage.

How colonial heritage is treated is not a black and white issue, King (1976) writes that in Delhi a lot of heritage was still visible, but he also notes that some street names have been altered. Queen

Mary's Avenue – for example – has been changed to Pandit Pant Marg and Upper Bela Road is now called Mahatma Gandhi Marg. He notes that in 1972 70 of the 151 English named roads had been renamed. King does not explain why these street names in particular have been changed. It does go to show that a post-colonial city can erase *some* colonial heritage while leaving some of it untouched.

*Conclusion*
A typical French colony can be summarized as following: it has been found to provide France with goods and cheap labour, the only French people living in it are upper or middle class and they were technologically more advanced than the local population. The policies of the colony were determined in Paris, aimed towards increasing profits and often aimed against the English empire. After the French Revolution, the church plays a relatively small role in the colony.
A colonial city is formed by segregation: the French and the local population live in different parts of town and there is little to no interaction between them. The French part of the city has been built in the popular building style of the time and was tailor-made to accommodate to the wishes of the French population.
The independence movement was led by French-educated colonials who had learned about the ideals of the French Revolution. After independence the reaction of the new rulers towards French heritage depends on the way in which independence has been reached, if they have the feeling that they are still being treated as a colony it is likely that an effort will be made to destroy French heritage, otherwise it becomes more likely that colonial heritage will be protected. The thoroughness of either protection or destruction depends on economic situation of the ex-colony, often ex-colonies are mired in larger problems and the management of heritage is only of secondary concern.

## 1.3 Methodology

*This chapter consists of both a description of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry and an inventory of colonial historic-geographic heritage in Puducherry. Based on the theoretical French colonial city a methodology has been created to describe this story and to create this inventory.*

*Historic-geographic story*
A summary of the history and geography of Puducherry has been written based on secondary sources. Most of it is based on Frederick Quinn's The French Overseas Empire (2000) and P. Raja & Rita Nath Keshari's Glimpses of Pondicherry (2005). Additional details are gathered from INTACH's website and books (2004; 2008). The reason for this limited amount of sources lies in the fact that Puducherry's history is not as well documented as that of many other places, and these sources are the most concise and reliable ones on the subject. Although there is more information available, these sources are not reliable enough to take at face value. They either contain many spelling errors, do not list citations or there is no information available about the authors.
The historic-geographic story is written down as one continuing story in chronological order, it is followed by a discussion in which this story is compared to the typical French colony described above. To aid in this, King's model of a dual city is adapted to Puducherry and has been incorporated with the Layer Model of Hoekveld as discussed by Van Gorp (2003). Van Gorp uses Hoekveld's Layer Model (*Dutch: lagenmodel)* to describe how a city changes throughout the ages. Hoekveld shows that in every age elements are added and taken away from a city. After a city is founded it never starts from scratch again and every new period in history will build on the previous period. This results in the typical historical city where newer buildings stand next to older buildings and even the latest post-modern wonder of modern architecture follows the building lines from centuries ago. The history of such a city can be summarised in a map showing layers for every different period of history and the places they overlap or lie next to each other (Van Gorp, 2003).
.

*Inventory*

Van Gorp has created her inventory making use of secondary historic sources, but it turned out that these sources did not pay enough attention to the geographic dimension, did not provide enough information and often skipped over parts of her research area, so she made her own inventory. She walked through the streets of the centres of the three towns she focused on and took note of the features of all buildings that she found.

The same holds even more true for Puducherry. There are only two relevant books that describe the city in considerable detail, but both have a strong focus on history and architecture. Information about specific objects and the context these stand in is very scarce. Raja & Nath Keshari's (2005) contains the most information in the form of short articles describing many random elements. This book proved to be a goldmine for all sorts of factoids and pays attention to parts of history that are not described elsewhere. Unfortunately the book has a strong historic point of view, making it hard to gather information about the geographic context. INTACH's (2004) book mostly provides information about the building styles of heritage, this means there is a rather strong focus on details and the bigger picture is only a secondary concern.

As a result, the most defining element of Puducherry does not receive as much attention as it ought to have in a historic-geographic story: the street pattern. Raja & Nath Keshari (2005) mention the street pattern in passing and note that over the years more streets have been added. They do not specify what streets these are and what was there before. The street pattern is still very visible on maps and on the streets, but it is unclear if these are roads from the early stages of the rebuilding of Pondicherry, or of a later period. In this research a similar approach to making an inventory has been made, just like Van Gorp, the researcher has walked through the streets of the research area to personally take stock.

Although an inventory of heritage had already been made, this was not done in a format that can be applied to this research. *INTACH Pondicherry* has taken stock of *all* heritage – including Tamil – in Puducherry and has listed the importance of individual buildings on either a national, historical, regional or local level. This listing has been made to create awareness about the rapid deterioration of built heritage in Puducherry.

INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) is a trust with chapters all over India, protecting heritage and art in any way they can. In Puducherry the organisation performs awareness programs for the population and visitors, advises the government and private property owners about renovation, submits plans for renovations to the municipality and performs research on heritage in the union territory of Puducherry.

Although employees of INTACH have filled in listing cards for all old buildings in Puducherry, these cards have not been released to the public. Employees noted what Tamil and French features can be observed from the exterior of the building and kept track of the current owner and use of the building. The final map (see map 1.3.1) only shows what buildings are considered 'heritage' by the organisation. INTACH recognises three grades of heritage:

- *Grade I:* Buildings of national and historic importance, INTACH describes these as the prime landmarks of Puducherry.
- *Grade II:* Buildings of regional or local importance, these buildings are less important than Grade I buildings, but they do possess traits that make them contribute to the image and identity of the town. This category contains a lot of buildings that are prime examples of a specific architectural style.
- *Grade III:* these buildings are important to the overall image of the townscape. Individually these buildings often hold little relevance, but they set the scene of the town (INTACH, 2004).

The exact criteria behind the division of buildings in these categories is unclear and is not elaborated upon by INTACH.
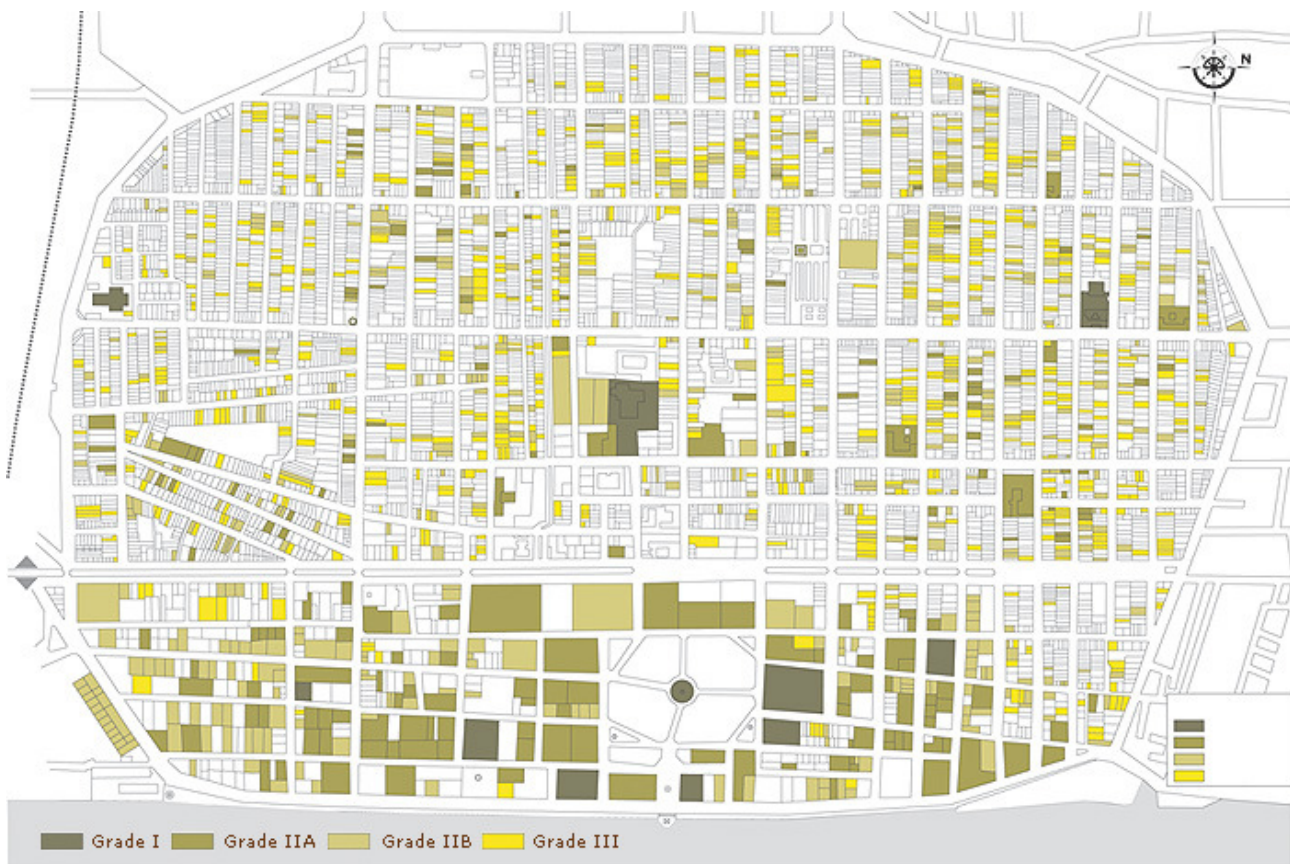
*Map 1.3.1: Listed heritage buildings in 2001(facing west) (INTACH, 2010)*

This listing can only serve as a broad indication on historic-geographic colonial heritage. This has a number of reasons: first and foremost is the fact that this listing has not been updated since 2003 and many buildings may have been destroyed in the meantime. In 1995 the first listing was published, INTACH counted a total of 1,807 heritage buildings in that year, 1,507 in the Ville Noire (Tamil part of town) and 300 in the Ville Blanche (colonial part of town). In 2003 there were 1,195 buildings left, 916 in the Ville Noire and 279 in the Ville Blanche. In the Ville Blanche 7% of the heritage buildings were destroyed, while 39.2% of all heritage buildings in the Ville Noire were destroyed. The total amount of buildings in the city centre is not given, but from maps of the area it can be gathered that the Ville Blanche contains about twice as many buildings as have been considered heritage and the Ville Noire at least four times as many. If one extrapolates from this trend it is likely that the 2003 map is inaccurate now.

Secondly INTACH limits itself to proper buildings within the city limits only. This means that statues and parks in the city centre and anything outside the city centre is not listed. This choice of the organisation means that a few important elements in Puducherry are not listed. Although this research limits itself to the city centre as well, exceptions have been made for the Botanical Gardens directly south of the centre and the industrial mill north of the centre. Both elements are connected to the city centre and are relevant historic-geographic colonial heritage. Statues within the city centre have been listed in this research, because their location and the people on them are telling of the history of Puducherry. It is unclear why INTACH has not listed these statues. INTACH also has not listed the government park and the Grand Canal. While these two elements may not have roofs over them, they certainly are built heritage and they are extremely relevant to Puducherry's history.

Thirdly INTACH has listed all heritage without differentiating between local and colonial heritage. Because this research focuses purely on colonial heritage this is highly impractical.

Van Gorp (2003) also could not use an existing inventory for her research and opted to make her own by observing all built heritage in her research area. Because of the thoroughness and clearly described methodology, her methods have been used in a slightly adapted form in this thesis.

Her research consists of two parts: first she researches secondary sources describing the history of the city, based on these a historic map of the area has been made. Such a map is not enough, certain elements might be destroyed or turned unrecognisable. So for the second part of her research she analyses what parts of that history are still visible in the cityscape, she judges elements on four aspects (Van Gorp, 2003, 91):

*Age*
Elements have to be constructed during French rule. In practicality this means elements will be constructed between the late 1700s to 1954.

*Distinctiveness*
Elements must be distinctive of either the specific history of Puducherry or of the spatial development of colonial cities.

*Consistency*
Van Gorp (2003) argues that a single argument can never be historic-geographic heritage, for that there must be linkages with other elements. The idea is that elements together tell a story about the way a place functioned in the past. These linkages can be based on the time, the function or the location of elements.

*Recognisability*
Elements must still be recognisable as decidedly French or French-Indian. Van Gorp (2003) has determined this aspect by simply walking on the roads and finding out what can be seen, what is recognisable and what cannot be seen. She uses a total of six categories:
- *gone*: it is clear it is no longer there;
- *lost*: it is unclear what happened to an element, but it cannot be found;
- *not visible from the road*: it might still exist, but tourist will no longer be able to see it;
- *not recognisable*: it has been altered or destroyed in such a way that no one can tell what it used to be;
- *recognisable*: it is there, it can be seen and it is recognisable;
- *questionable*: an element can only be observed indirectly by – for example – building lines.

Similar categories will be used in this research, based on this (following Van Gorp) maps will be made on which recognisable heritage will be marked. Because of the lack of information available about the history of the town, it turned out to be impossible to pinpoint 'lost' heritage as it was impossible to find out what was on a location before the current building was constructed. The same reason holds true for heritage 'not visible from the road': in many cases it was only possible to look at something from the road and there was no information on the history of that specific location. One of the biggest problems interested tourists will run into is the fake French buildings that may look real, but closer inspection reveals that none of the elements are where they are supposed to be. Eventually it will become clear that the building materials are concrete and the building is only a few years old. There are a few cases where it is rather obvious.
This research will employ the following categories instead:
- Gone
- Not recognisable
- Questionable
- Recognisable
- Fake

How French heritage can be recognized will be discussed in detail below under the header 'recognizing French colonial buildings'.

Elements that contain all four aspects are considered part of the historic-geographic heritage of a city by Van Gorp, everything else is not. The aspects are ordered from most important to least

important in judging how important an object is for the historic-geographic story of a city.

The researcher has walked on all the roads of the Ville Blanche to take pictures of all buildings. He has also cycled around the Ville Noire to take pictures of French buildings there and Franco-Tamil buildings that can be observed in town. The focus has been on purely French buildings, as Franco-Tamil buildings are less relevant to the historic and geographic story of the town As these buildings are not described in the literature and appear to play only a minor role in the history of Puducherry. The buildings are also spread over town and it is unclear where Franco-Tamil buildings were located that have been demolished by now. Some buildings have been found by sheer chance, but it proved to be too time intensive to find them all.

The researcher has filled in a map showing the location of all built heritage. This map is based on the pictures of the researcher himself and pictures found on Panoramio (www.panoramio.com). All four aspects described above have been used in this research.

*Recognizing French colonial buildings*

*During the times when Pondicherry was rebuild neoclassicism was the popular building style in France. This style was also adopted in the colonies, often with a few minor adaptations to the local climate. Nearly all colonial buildings in Puducherry have been built in this style. To be able to recognize these buildings and to tell real and fake apart some background knowledge about neoclassicism is required.*

*Style elements*

The most recognizable feature of classical buildings is the use of simple geometric forms such as triangles, squares and circles. Neoclassical buildings use the same forms, trying to mimic the ancient buildings. An example of the use of triangles is the pediment, the triangle on top of the entrance. Three examples from very different times and places are shown in images 1.3.1.a, b & c.



*Illustration 1.3.1.a: Pantheon in Rome (Source: travel-tidbits.com, 2010)*



*Illustration 1.3.1.b: US Capitol in Washington DC (Source: Reed, 2005)*

The Pantheon is from the classical times (built around 110AD), the plans for the capitol building are from 1793 and the Ayi Mandapam was constructed during the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870). All three show the typical pediment, pillars to support the structure and an entablature (the horizontal band on top of the pillars).



*Illustration 1.3.1.c: Ayi Mandapam in Puducherry*
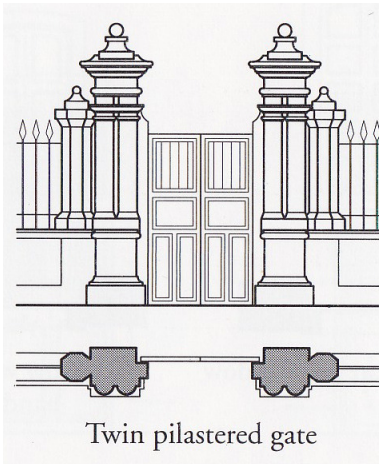
Twin pilastered gate

*Illustration 1.3.2: example of a gate (Source: INTACH, 2004)*

The second vital style element is symmetry, this can also be observed in illustrations 1.3.1.a, b & c and has also been employed in residential buildings. The façades and lay-out are perfectly symmetrical.

Besides these two vital style elements, there are a number of other elements that can be observed in Puducherry. The streetscape in the Ville Blanche is characterized by INTACH (2004) as following: "...continuous wall to wall construction, full or partial street frontage, high garden walls, elaborate gateways (see illustration 1.3.2), and solid walls divided into smaller panels by the use of verticals (pilasters) and horizontals (cornices) (see illustration 1.3.3). These street façades are usually plain and austere, enhancing the effect of the straight and perpendicular grid plan of the town. The exterior wall panels feature flat or segmental arched windows with bands and louvred wooden shutters. In the case of two storied buildings wooden balconies supported on wrought iron brackets are common. The building composition is completed by a continuous parapet usually decorated with loopholes or terracotta pot balusters, or curved. In the case of important buildings decorative features and end ornaments are commonly used."

A number of other architectural features can be gathered from illustration 1.3.5: these are the elaborate stairways and the parapets on the roof. Not shown on this illustration, but also highly recognizable are the the elaborate walls surrounding most colonial buildings. A typical example of such a wall can be seen on illustration 1.3.4.

One last style element is the colour of the buildings, many buildings are painted bright white (see also: Illustration 1.3.1.c), but others are painted in creamy yellow, terracotta or other mild colours.
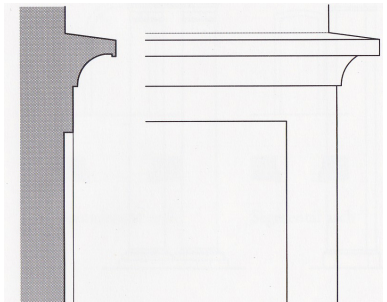


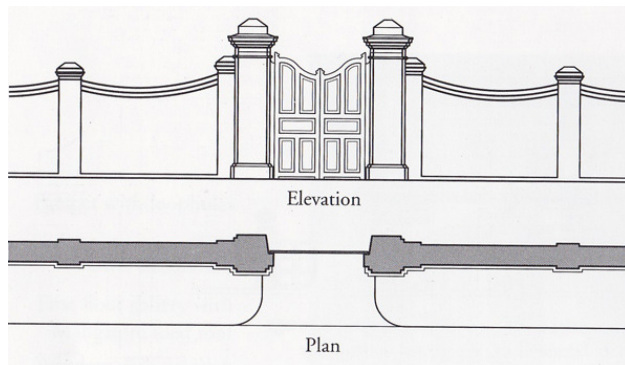*Illustration 1.3.3: pilaster and cornice (Source: INTACH, 2004)*



Elevation

Plan

*Illustration 1.3.4: wall (Source: INTACH, 2004)*

*Franco-Tamil*

Some buildings in the Ville Noire are influenced by the building style of the French, they employ a number of style elements, while still maintaining their typical Tamil looks. These buildings are often quite large and appear to have been owned by upper-caste Tamils. Normally the ground floor of these buildings is traditionally Tamil with a veranda connected with the verandas of adjacent buildings. The Tamil people spent many hours on these verandas, chatting with acquaintances, observing street life and the men of the house tended to sleep on them at night. The first floor has some neoclassical style elements, such as pillars, louvred wooden shutters before large windows or a parapet. This can be observed on illustration 1.3.6, where the top floor's plasterwork has the typical creamy yellow colour normally only found on French buildings. The building is in a state of disrepair, but the pillars and louvred wooden shutters can still be observed on the top floor and the veranda connecting to the verandas of adjacent buildings. Unlike the buildings in the Ville Blanche, the creators of Franco-Tamil buildings did not care about style conventions and only adopted those style elements they appreciated.

Parapet
Pot balusters
Madras Terrace Roof (brick on edge in lime mortar)
Wooden joists
Cornice
Rendered pilaster
Segmental arched window
Rear court
Colonnaded portico
Bifurcated staircase
Entrance court
Entrance gate with piers

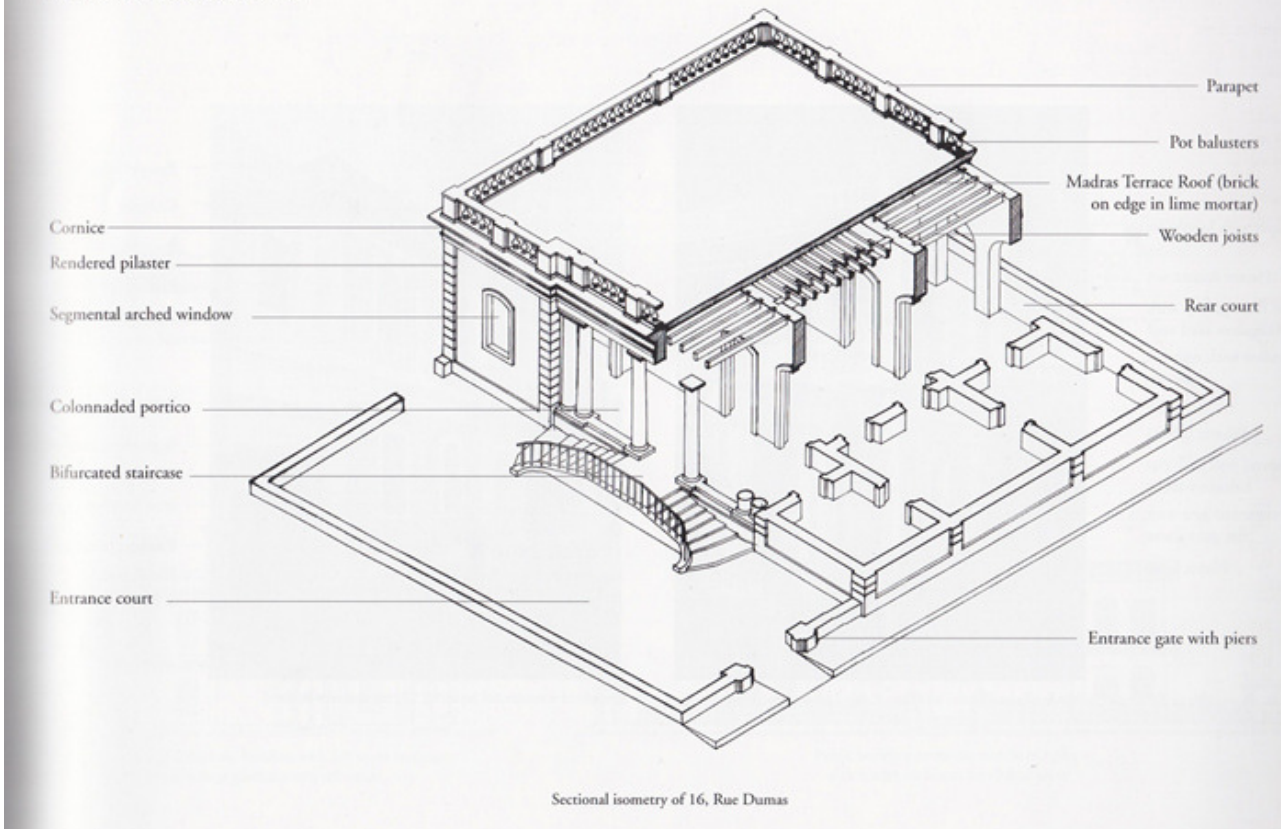Sectional isometry of 16, Rue Dumas

*Illustration 1.3.5: Example of French colonial house (Source: INTACH, 2004)*



*Illustration 1.3.6: Franco-Tamil building on Rue Calve Subbraya Chetty*

*Adaptations to climate*

The French did not adapt to the local climate of South India and staying cool became a continuous battle for many colonists. They refused to let go of their French architecture, but they did make a number of improvements upon the French design. One major change was the use of flat terraced roofs. In France the buildings had pitched roofs, but these proved to be too hot. The French also

attempted to get a breeze through their rooms, they made sure the windows were aligned and there were far more openings in the walls than there were in France. Many buildings also had semi open colonnades and arcades, where people could relax away from the worst heat (INTACH, 2004). Verandas and arcades tend not to face east and home owners often planted large leafy trees in their gardens to create even more shade (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005)

## 1.4 Historic-geographic story of Puducherry

Puducherry consists of a city centre facing the Bay of Bengal, a large urban sprawl and Auroville located a few kilometres out of town. Although there is a large shopping area in the city centre, there are also many shops in the urban sprawl. These shops range from extremely small family-owned shops  to big fruit shops and electronics shops. Auroville is a community based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, it attracts people from all over the world and is one of the biggest attractions of region. Sri Aurobindo was a revolutionary turned philosopher, yogi and poet who fled from British India to French India to escape prosecution. His teachings incorporate yoga with evolutionary philosophy (Sri Aurobindo Society, 2010). For more information about the Aurobindo and his followers, see text box 1.4.1.

*Text box 1.4.1: Aurobindo*
In all tourist information the ashram (a centre of meditation, reflection and enlightenment based around the writings of Sri Aurobindo and his partner The Mother in the 20th century) plays a role. Some sources are positive and others negative, but all seem to agree that this ashram has a huge impact on the town. This is true, the ashram attracts many people and they own a lot of buildings in the city centre (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).
Sri Aurobindo fled British India as a revolutionary, when he came to Pondicherry he turned his mind to yoga and philosophy. His ideas caught the interest of a French lawyer and his wife. The lawyer helped the ex-rebel getting published, his wife was not only charmed by Sri Aurobindo's writing, but also by him in general. As the lawyer's wife and the philosopher started an affair, the lawyer went back to France, divorcing from his wife. The woman did not want to be called by her name any more and became known only as The Mother. Together with her new partner they offered schooling to everyone interested in Aurobindo's ideas. They purchased buildings in Pondicherry, found a school, guest houses and meditation centres to facilitate the ever-growing stream of interested people (Sri Aurobindo Society, 2010). When Aurobindo dies The Mother continues his work and she starts on a new project: a new form of society, right on the outskirts of Pondicherry. Auroville it is called and people from all over the world are invited to live there and experiment with different ways to live together (Auroville, 2010). The Ashram in town also continues to flourish and even after The Mother passes away the ashram grows and purchases more and more buildings in town (Sri Aurobindo Society, 2010).
The Ashram has a policy to paint all buildings grey, this has had a huge influence on the image of the town as less buildings are in their original bright colours. Neither ex-students of the ashram nor mr. Ashok of the heritage protection trust INTACH could explain why these buildings were painted over, mr. Ashok said it was simply 'a design decision' of the ashram. The ashram does maintain their buildings and has only destructed a few buildings to replace them by modern structures.

There is hardly any colonial heritage outside the city centre, this is because the town was surrounded by farmland during the French reign and there were no compelling reasons to further expand the town until well after the independence of 1954 (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).
The city centre itself can be divided in two parts: the Ville Blanche (white town, also known as French Quarter) where the French used to live and the Ville Noire (black town) where the local Tamil population lived. The Ville Blanche is centred around the administrative buildings around the park in the middle of the area, this park is aptly called the Government Park. Most large buildings in this part of the town are either owned by the government or by the ashram of Sri Aurobindo. Auroville and the ashram are two different institutes that have little with each other in common

besides their roots in Aurobindo's teachings. The Ville Noire can be further divided in a Hindu, Christian and Muslim quarter, these quarters are centred around the places of worship. The city centre is neatly divided by a canal keeping the Ville Noire and Ville Blanche apart and is encircled by a big road (see map 1.4.1).



*Map 1.4.1: Sketch of Puducherry's city centre. (facing west). Source: INTACH, 2010.*

*Pre-colonial times*

The first inhabitants were farmers and fishermen attracted by the rich sea waters and the many rivers flowing through the area. The Pondicherry area has eight rivers flowing through it, these are Gingeear, Pambaiar, Kuduvaiar, Malattar, Ariankuppathar, Chunambar, Pennaiar and Uppar. Only four of these end in the sea, while the others meander through the area and turn into groundwater before the stream can reach the sea. (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). The first hard-boiled proof of human inhabitance comes from the first century AD. Archaeologists have found Roman trading goods a few kilometres south of the city centre, together with classical sources this functions as proof of contact between Roman traders and a place called *Poduke*. In the local language the town was called *Vedapuri,* which refers to an ancient learning place mentioned in Hindu legends (INTACH, 2008; 2010).

In the subsequent centuries the area falls under the influence of Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Vijayanaga and Muslim rulers. During the Chola rule the name of town changes to *Puducheri,* which means 'new town' in Tamil. The French name *Pondicherry* is a bastardization of this name[*]. Puducheri developed as a fishing and agricultural town (INTACH, 2008; 2010).

*Early period colonization*

In 1521 Puducheri was (re)discovered by the Portuguese, who only conducted trade with the local population. They were quickly joined by the Danes and the Dutch. The Danes built a factory in 1624, which the French took over in 1673. Twenty years later the Dutch conquered the town for a brief period, but had to return the colony to the French with the Treaty of Ryswick in 1699 (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). So what made Puducheri so attractive to the world powers? Quinn (2000)

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[*]  In 2005 the government changed the name to Puducherry (BBC World, 2006), a curious combination of the old Chola name and the French bastardization of the name. Officials told the BBC it was to reflect the indigenous history of the area.

argues that Puducheri had a healthy climate, a strategic position, a profitable local textile industry and weak local rulers. Over the years France slowly added more small coastal regions to their possessions. Pondicherry remained the seat of their power because it was transformed into a well fortified town.

By the start of the 18th century the factory had been developed in a prominent fortified town with a fort on the current location of the Government Square (see map 1.4.2) (INTACH, 2010). Between 1706 and 1735 the town grew considerably: Raja & Nath Keshari (2005) describe the growth of the town and list five improvements: the fort had been kept in a state of repair, a wall was erected around the town, the streets were widened, a number of new houses were erected, some of them two storeys high, and a court of Justice had been constructed. These improvements can be observed on maps 1.4.2 and 1.4.3: residential areas were added to the south, the fort seems to have grown in size and the wall with guard towers can be clearly observed. More information about these two maps can be found in text box 1.4.2.

Although it took more than a year for a ship to sail back to France, the colony was profitable to the French crown. Quinn (2000) argues that the success of French India was severely hampered by the fact that practically everything was managed from Paris and that the crown held full control on all trade. The state-endorsed monopolies were incapable of adapting to local circumstances like the Dutch and English companies were doing. It can be argued that the only reason why the governors in Pondicherry were successful was because they made sure to mention as little as possible to Paris.

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*Text box 1.4.2: Observations historic maps*

On both maps it can be observed that the shape of the town has not changed much, the fort in the middle of the area is on the location of the Government Park, the wall around the town is on the same location as the large boulevards that encircle the town today and the straight north to south boulevards appear to be on the same locations as today's Mahatma Gandhi Road and Mission Street. On Map X.2 the canals can also be observed, with the Petit Canal feeding the Grand Canal. In a later stage the Grand Canal has been straightened, but it was not possible to find any additional information about this.

The two maps shown on the next pages have been found online with little to no additional information provided. This makes it difficult to determine what the reason for the creation of the maps has been. The first map has been made by a Frenchman, but it is unclear who ordered the map and for what purpose this was. In the legend the cartographer describes the exact location of the town and that it is in the hands of the *Compagnie Royale de Indes Orientales*, which is the French East-Indies company. The second map has been made for an English magazine, it misses a legend, but the clear depiction of fortifications suggests that this map has been used for military goals.
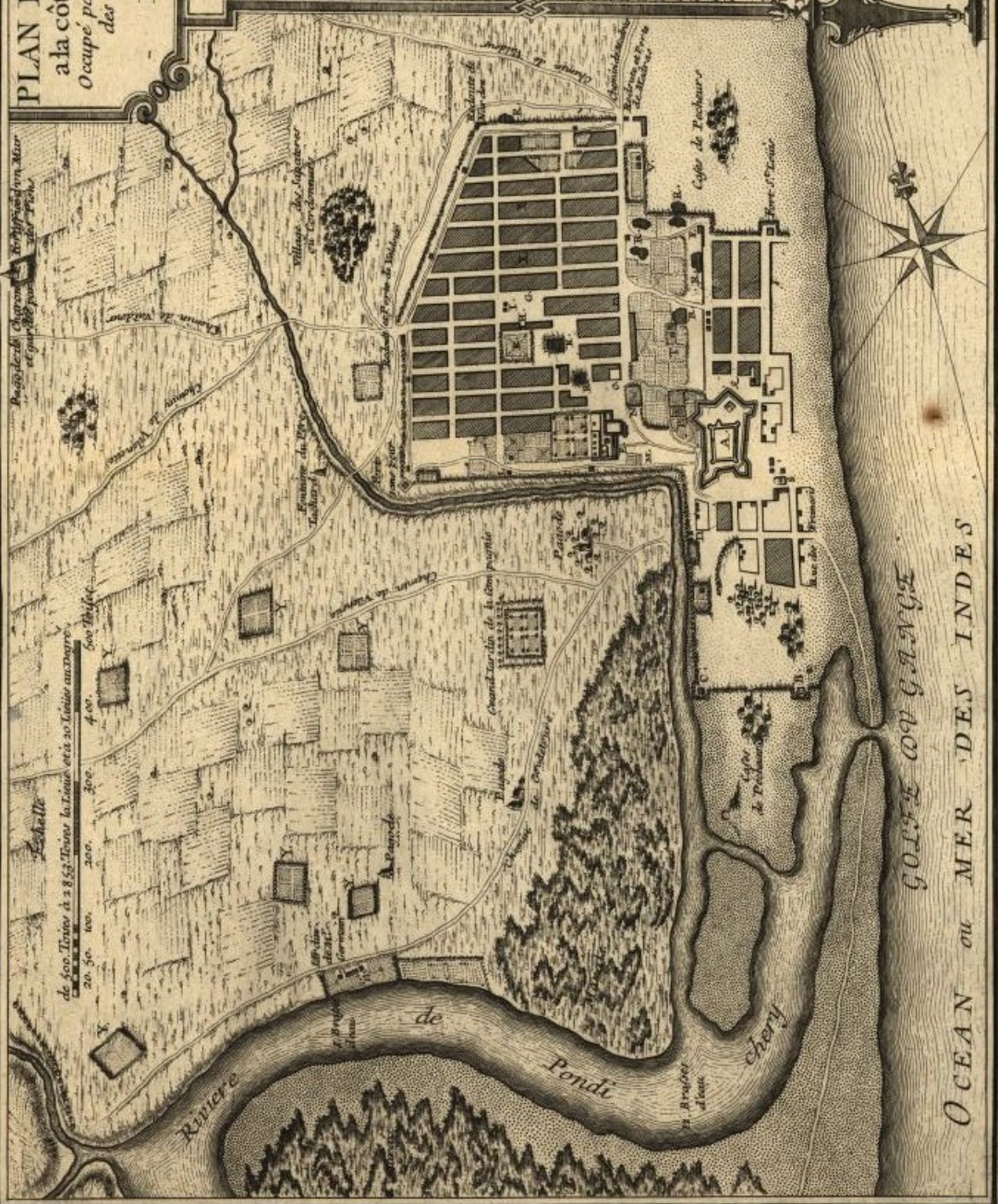
*Map 1.4.2: Pondicherry in 1705. (Source: de Fer, 1705)*

*A PLAN of* PONDICHERRY *in the* East Indies,
Subject to France.

*Map 1.4.3: Map of Pondicherry from 1759 (Source: London Magazine, 1759)*

The French expansion

Despite the economic success of Pondicherry, France had not managed to claim more than a few square kilometres of land in India, while England had possessions on both coasts of the peninsula at that point (King, 1976). France had bigger possessions in North America and Africa and its possessions in the east were still minimal: it took until well into the 19th century before Indochina was conquered (Quinn, 2000). Without the Suez Channel Puducherry was on the absolute outskirts of the French empire and India was not a big concern for the company in Paris This changed when Joseph-François Dupleix became governor general of French India in 1742 and set out to expand French India. Dupleix was a shrewd businessman who was not interested in power or territory as much as he was interested in wealth. He saw power and territory as means to an end in this respect. He formulated his desire to hold the whole southern half of India under French control, including the English city of Madras. Although it was a known fact that these lands were less lucrative than the North with the Ganges valley,



*Map 1.4.4: French India at its largest (source: Quinn, 2000)*

he believed he could still make enough profit to make it worth France's while (Quinn, 2000). Halfway through the 1740s the French possessions almost reflected Dupleix' desires (see map 1.4.4), but further expansion stopped here. Quinn (2000) identifies three reasons for this:

- Dupleix underestimated the opposition within the trading company in Paris: there was little interest in investing more into his endeavour;
- The lands he did conquer were war-torn and did not provide the revenue he counted on;
- He underestimated the power of his English foes, The English outnumbered the French and Dupleix lacked the funds to counter this.

When the war of the Austrian Succession reached a critical state and England and France gave battle to each other Dupleix' budget was decimated by the trade company (which needed the money for the war effort in Europe) and he had to fall back to Pondicherry to fortify the town against an attack, leaving behind most of his conquests. After the war Madras was exchanged with the English to regain some other French colonies in the Americas. Despite obvious lack of interest in Paris Dupleix continued his attempts to expand French India, as did England. In 1754 the trade company refused to help Dupleix any longer and ordered him to come back to Paris with the words: "Your successes do not prevent us from desiring a state of affairs less brilliant and more peaceful. … We want nothing but a few trading stations and some rise in dividends." (in: Quinn, 2000). This preluded the end of French India.

*7-year war and the destruction of Pondicherry*

During the Seven Years War (1756-1763) the company abandoned large areas of French India to make a compact domain around Pondicherry. They also stopped working together with local rulers because they were deemed "crafty and unreliable" by the French. Instead a large French army was supposed to drive the Englishmen from the Indian Peninsula. To this effect Count Lally Baron de Tollendal was sent to India to lead the troops (Quinn, 2000). This quick-tempered and inept general marched his army out of Pondicherry a day after arrival. Early successes came at great costs and Lally de Tollendal had to bully local rulers into giving him money. His ineptness is further proven by the fact that he smashed idols in Hindu temples believing he would find gold inside. After a relatively successful campaign the general forced all French troops in India to come together for an assault on Madras. The army first captured a small English town and Lally de Tollendal led – high on success – his army to Madras. This proved to be his biggest mistake as there was no chance to supply the troops and the fort of Madras was heavier defended than Lally de Tollendal expected. The French laid siege on the fort for two months, but then the British fleet managed to reach the shores and defeated the French army in the Battle of Wandiwash. Lally de Tollendal was sent back to Paris and was beheaded for his failure. The English had driven the French from India and in 1761 destroyed Pondicherry thoroughly in revenge. Not even the Governor's palace and the great churches were spared the British wrath. Only two temples remained[*] (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). Exactly why the British decided to such a drastic measures is not described, it seems their only reason was revenge for Lally de Tollendal's equally destructive *tour de force* through British India.

*The rebuilding of Pondicherry*

In 1765 Pondicherry was given back to the French by the English, as the English believed France posed no threat in India any more,The new governor Jean Law de Lauristan took charge of rebuilding the town. In half a year's time 126 brick houses, 53 tiled houses, 120 thatched houses and 2,000 mud huts were built following the old street pattern that could still be made out. Later, the parade ground of the old fort was renovated with government buildings, administrative offices, warehouses, barracks and a new Governor's Palace on the four sides of the square. The fort itself was not rebuilt. Lauristan made plans to drive the English out of India, but the French were too busy in Canada and Louisiana to get involved in another continent again.

During the American Revolution in the second half of the 18th century France sided with the Americans in an effort to weaken England. France and England declared war on each other and as a result of skirmishes in India Pondicherry shifted hands between the French and English colonists twice. Only after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars was Pondicherry traded back to France in 1815 to make the French leave The Netherlands. Until 1815 the rebuilding of Pondicherry after its destruction over half a century ago was not a big concern and most building activities were makeshift barricades and walls. Part of the deal with England was forbidding the deployment of French troops for military purposes and the development of a big trade network, stopping France from ever conquering the Indian Peninsula again. France had to make do with Pondicherry and a few small possessions in India (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

This did not stop France from improving their current town, the years of peace made the town prosper in a way it had never prospered before. Most landmarks were built after 1816, in the 19th century  bazaars, textile mills, schools, hospitals, a lighthouse and administrative buildings were constructed. Officials started building spacious bungalows in the Ville Blanche, more roads were added in the centre, a number of schools and churches was founded, a large pier was constructed (see image 1.4.1) and a water pipe system brought a higher level of hygiene to the people. This last improvement was celebrated with the erection of the Ayi Mandapam (the arc in the park). With the Industrial Revolution a small industry (mostly centred around the production of fabrics) was started on the outskirts of the city centre. The French made sure no industry would start within the town centre.

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[*]  One of those being the Manakula Vinayagar Temple in the Ville Blanche. Its unique history is described in text box 1.5.1.

Pondicherry became a port of call for ships going from France to Indochina and vice versa. This position was further enhanced by the opening of the Suez canal in 1869. This new role influenced the lay-out of the city: all harbour related buildings were constructed close to the sea and the harbour. The administrative buildings were located within a kilometre of the shore, just far enough to protect them from a sudden naval attack. In this lay-out the residential and educational buildings were pushed to the south side of town. This lay-out has been sketched in map 1.4.5.



*Image 1.4.1: The old pier (Source: Srinivas, 2010)*
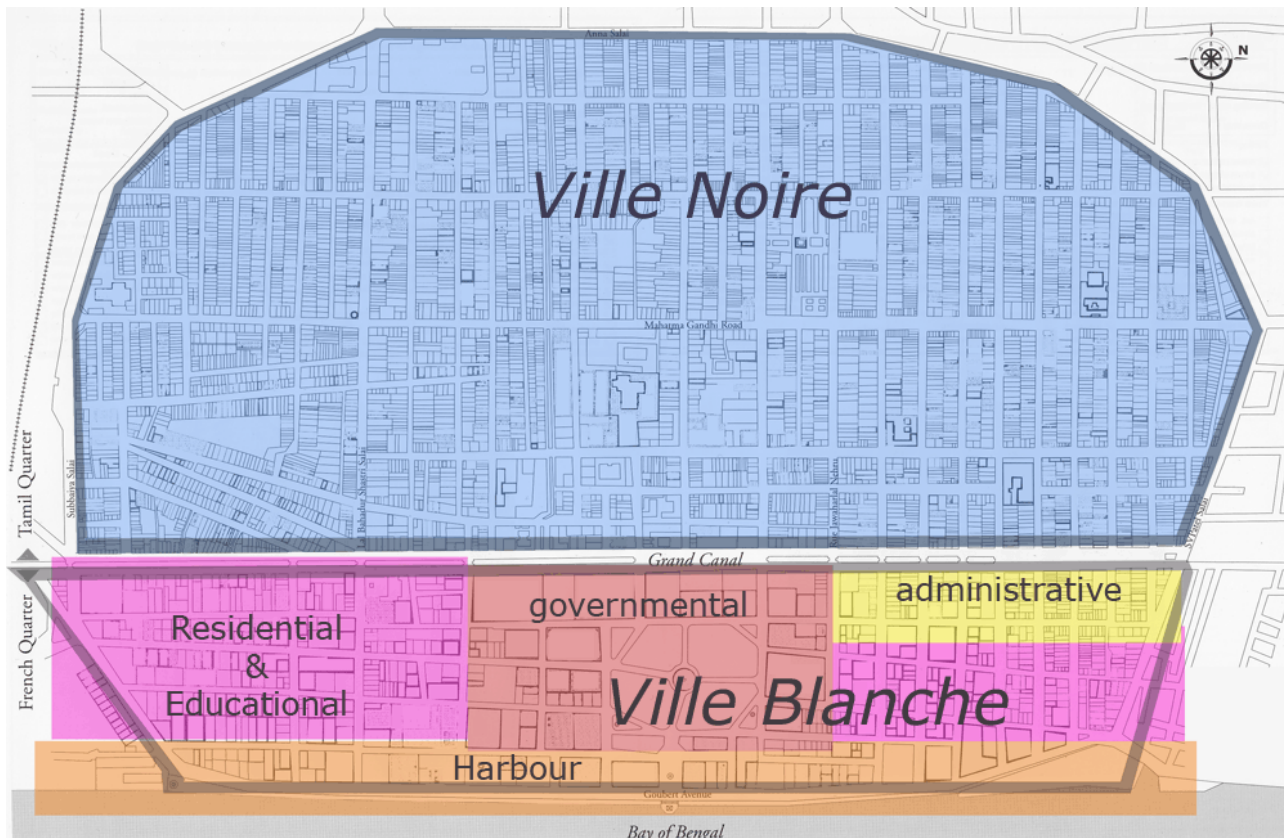
*Map 1.4.5: lay-out of Pondicherry in the 19th century (facing west) (original map: INTACH, 2004)*

The governors were no longer left to their own devices and Pondicherry was turned into a peaceful haven for years to come. The relationship with England improved and Pondicherry got connected to the British road network. In 1879 the railway station was opened on the southern edge of town, right across from the Sacré Coeur d'Jesus church, along the broad boulevard leading straight to the harbour. Pondicherry was even more closely connected to British India.

By the end of the 19th century Pondicherry stopped expanding, there was no need to go past the boulevard limits that had encircled the town for over a century. Within about 100 years the complete town had been rebuild, nearly all buildings in the Ville Blanche were in the same building style, in the Ville Noire nearly all buildings were in traditional Tamil building style, with a few exceptions in the form of Christian churches and some buildings with French influences.

*Fighting for independence*

The relation between the local population and the French colonizer had only worsened after a durable peace was forged with England. During the many wars the French and local rulers worked together and there was mutual respect, but with the common enemy out of the picture and the heroes of the wars long gone the two groups grew apart. The French lived in the Ville Blanche and the local population stayed in the Ville Noire, the two groups interacted as little as possible with each other (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). This is best described by the fact there were only two bridges crossing the canal that divided Ville Blanche from Ville Noire (INTACH, 2004).

With the French Revolution attention was drawn on human rights and the local people in colonies did receive some very basic rights. There was some token representation in politics, limited freedom of speech and locals were allowed to enjoy better education and study in France. With these rights came an awareness among the upper classes of the local population of what freedom and equality entailed (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

When Mahatma Gandhi visited Pondicherry in 1934, students and intellectuals were already well aware of their position. Slowly but surely Gandhi's call for independence reached all people of

Pondicherry. The French initially reacted with brutal violence, for example during the August 15, 1936 Pondicherry Shooting Day. The workers of the mills in Pondicherry wanted to get organised in unions, but the governor forbade this. The workers went on strike and the governor decided to shoot down the striking workers. Fighting broke out between the armed police and the workers, who quickly became enraged upon the death of twelve of their fellows. The fight came into the centre of Pondicherry and workers of the Savana Mills set fire to their factory (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

With Gandhi's success in British India, France's position became ever more precarious. The French rulers had to resort to violence more and more often. When the British left on August 15, 1947 France did not follow suit right away. All attempts by the local population to change their lot were suppressed by French armed forces and the roads leading out of the colony were blocked to prevent Indian freedom fighters from helping the Pondicherrians. In 1954 the situation became untenable and the French rulers had to leave, giving their possessions to the Indian government. Only in 1962 was power officially handed over to India (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

*Post-colonial times*
Pondicherry and the other small French possessions became a Union Territory, which means that the area is directly controlled by the national government in New Delhi. The French people who did not leave Pondicherry received dual citizenship and could continue to live in Pondicherry. The division between the Ville Noire and Ville Blanche continued to exist on the maps and outlook of the town, but for the first time in history Indian people could freely walk in the Ville Blanche (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). There was no fear that France would attempt to win back the colony, support of the people back in France was at an all time low, the Indian state would prevent it and on the international stage the time of colonial empires was over with the USA and the USSR dominating the scene.

With the collapse of the French empire, Pondicherry's position as a port of call also collapsed. The town had lost a large source of its income and many buildings fell in a state of disrepair. Chief among them was the lighthouse, which eventually got replaced by a new lighthouse on a new location in 1970. Another loss was the pier, which was destroyed by a storm and was never rebuilt on that location.

Pondicherry expanded outside the city centre with large residential areas fuelled by the process of urbanisation, while in the centre many buildings were destroyed and replaced by modern buildings. In an inventory of heritage (ie: old) buildings in 1995 about 1800 buildings were identified as part of Puducherry's heritage, in 2003 there were about 1200 buildings left (INTACH, 2004).

With the implosion of harbour activities Puducherry's sources of income have moved away from trade. Although there is still a small harbour, it no longer dominates the townscape. Now tourism (including hotels and restaurants) is the biggest growth industry in Puducherry (Indian Bank, 2007). Every year thousands of tourists visit the town, attracted by either the atmosphere, the ashram of Sri Aurobindo or Auroville.  The old French buildings find new use as hotels, restaurants, bars and lunch rooms and there is a growing awareness that if all heritage in Pondicherry were to be destroyed and replaced by modern constructions the tourist industry might implode.

In the complete union territory the secondary and tertiary sectors make out roughly 45% each of the gross state domestic product. Indian Bank recognizes that Puducherry has shifted from an agricultural economy to a industrial and services centred economy. Within these sectors construction, banking, insurance services, real estate ownership and business services make out a large part of the growth of these sectors (Indian Bank, 2007).

## 1.5 Puducherry's heritage today

*The remainder of this chapter answers the question to what extent the colonial historic-geographic story of Puducherry described above is still visible in the city centre. First the state of protection of heritage in Puducherry will be described, followed by a short description of what INTACH considers the most important parts of heritage in Puducherry. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the results of the inventory of colonial heritage.*

*State of protection*

Protection of old buildings is not formalized, this means that it is easy to destruct buildings. There is some protection: one source of protection comes from a 1963 speech of Jawaharlal Nehru (then Prime Minister of India). When he visited Pondicherry he said the people should try to 'retain the perfume of French culture' (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). Although Nehru was a respected president, his words alone did not stop people from destroying the perfume of Puducherry. This quote is now being used as a way to make people understand that great people from the past have  said that the French heritage deserved protection. Another source of protection could come from the Pondicherry Building By-laws and Zoning Regulations 1972, in these regulations it is written that "No works of construction, reconstruction, enlargement, external repair or demolition of buildings, other than routine maintenance for the proper upkeep of existing buildings can take place without permission in writing granted by Planning Authority/Local Authority as the case may be" (Chapter II,3. Notice. -(a) in: INTACH, 2004).  The article then goes on to define that the Planning Authority/Local Authority has the right to disallow any of these actions based on their considerations regarding a number of architectural features. INTACH points out that four categories of features are relevant to the protection of built heritage: (1) appearance and disfigurements, (6) use of unsightly materials, (9) use of decorations and (10) composition of the building. This set of regulations gives the Planning Authority/Local Authority complete control over what happens to buildings within their jurisdiction, but this set of by-laws was never enforced strictly (INTACH, 2004). INTACH does not go into detail on why this is not done, but it appears that the government lacks the man- and willpower to keep track of all building activities within their territory. A new plan is supposed to be prepared, but it appears this has not passed as of yet.

Awareness that Puducherry's heritage needs protection is growing, the tourist industry in particular is helped by well protected heritage. The government shows more and more interest in protecting heritage, but is hampered by inertia, corruption and lack of funding. Funding is scarce because Puducherry can be described as a poor region. Considering the focus of this research it is not worthwhile to describe the human development of the area in great detail. Instead a short indication of the level of poverty is given based on the Human Development Index (HDI). The choice for this index has been made because the HDI has been calculated for all countries and has also been adopted on a smaller scale for Puducherry (see: Indian Bank, 2007; Watkins, 2008), so it is a  useful and easy to compare indication of human development. The HDI is based on the average life expectancy, education and per capita GDP. Naturally, this index is far from perfect and does not cover the full range of aspects that make out how developed an area is, but it is considered useful enough for a broad description.

Puducherry Union Territory has a HDI of 0.571 in 2001 (Indian Bank, 2007), which places it slightly below the Indian average of 0.619 in 2005 and 0.578 in 2000 (Watkins, 2008). These rates are low, placing India amongst the least developed countries in the world (as an indication, India was ranked 128th in 2005).

INTACH is the main organisation concerned with lobbying for protection and creating awareness amongst the population, home owners and the government. The organisation advocates adaptive re-use: they recognize that things cannot be protected by putting a fence around it, buildings have to be useful for someone, so there will be no reason to destroy them. To this effect INTACH employs a number of architects who draw proposals for renovations of old buildings and they give free advice to home-owners interested in improving their home. INTACH has developed information for tourists, including a heritage trail. The organisation also provides awareness programs to the population, where they explain the significance of the old buildings and show why it is worth

protecting and renovating them.

INTACH's work has success, a number of their plans have been used by the government and home-owners and the heritage route has been used by the Lonely Planet and a number of other sources of tourist information. In a short interview with Mr. Ashok, one of the staff members of INTACH, it became clear that INTACH is a very practical organisation that sets realistic goals: they are aware of the reality of Puducherry and their biggest concern was to protect buildings from complete destruction. When asked if INTACH opposed the grey paint on the buildings owned by the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo he responded that there are far bigger fish to fry. Mr. Ashok did point out that it was mostly Tamil (local) heritage that was threatened, colonial heritage was more popular.

*INTACH's listing*

INTACH has decided to list only a few buildings as grade I heritage, by the organisation's criteria these can be considered the most important heritage buildings in Puducherry. Table 1.5.1 lists these buildings. All but the Iswaran Temple are of French design, making it seem like Puducherry's main addition to the heritage of India lies in its French colonization.

There are many more grade II and III buildings, these are located all over town, with an absence of listed buildings on the two main commercial roads (Mahatma Gandhi Road and Rue Jawaharlal Nerhu). In the Ville Noire listed buildings are scattered, hardly any heritage building is connected to another heritage building. This reflects the fact that the typical Tamil streetscape is less and less recognizable in the Ville Noire. In the Ville Blanche more buildings are connected to each other, highlighting the typical French streetscape that can be observed in this part of town. Map 1.3.1 contains a complete overview of all listed built heritage in 2001[*] .

| Building | Location |
|---|---|
| *Ville Noire* | |
| Immaculate Conception Cathedral | Mission Street |
| Sacred Heart of Jesus Church | Corner Mahatma Gandhi Road with Subbayiya Salai |
| Iswaran Temple | Mahatma Gandhi Road |
| *Ville Blanche* | |
| Cluny Embroidery Centre | Cross of Rue du Bazar Saint Laurent with Rue Romain Rolland |
| Notre Dame des Anges Church | Rue Dumas |
| Town hall | Goubert Avenue |
| Ayi Mandapam (arc in the park) | Government Park |
| Old Lighthouse | Goubert Avenue |
| Raj Nivas (Governor's Palace) | Government Park |
| Pondicherry Museum | Government Park |
| Sri Aurobindo Ashram | Rue de la Marine |

*Table 1.5.1: Grade I heritage buildings in Puducherry (Source: INTACH, 2004)*

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[*]    A newer map has not been produced, but INTACH continues to keep a very close eye on developments in Puducherry.

*Visibility of historic-geographic heritage*

Map 1.5.1 shows the inventory of heritage based on recognizability. The map depicts to what extent the historic-geographic story of Puducherry is still visible in buildings in the city centre. As can be observed large parts of the map are left white, these parts are in the Ville Noire, in these areas no French buildings were found and there were no references in the literature about any colonial buildings that used to be there. The few buildings that have been listed in this area have either been described in literature or have been found by chance by the researcher.

A few observations can be made from map 1.5.1, but first it must be noted that even though a lot of buildings are no longer recognisable as colonial historic-geographic heritage, the streetscape is noticeably different in the Ville Blanche. This part of town is quieter than the Ville Noire and has many trees and cobble-stoned roads. The roads are quieter because the police has blocked access to a number of roads for motorized vehicles, this means there is no noise from cars and autorickshaws on many streets. The roads are designed by the French and are often more spacious than roads outside the city centre. The houses in the Ville Blanche are often luxurious and large, which means that less people live on these roads, this as well makes these streets quieter. Not only does this give the visitor the idea that the Ville Blanche is quieter, it also instils him with the feeling that this part of town is *different*. People who know about the French occupation of Puducherry realise that this difference comes from the fact that this part of town was the colonial city. This general feeling is not enough to claim that the historic-geographic story of the town is recognisable, of course. For that there must be more elements that tell a more specific story.
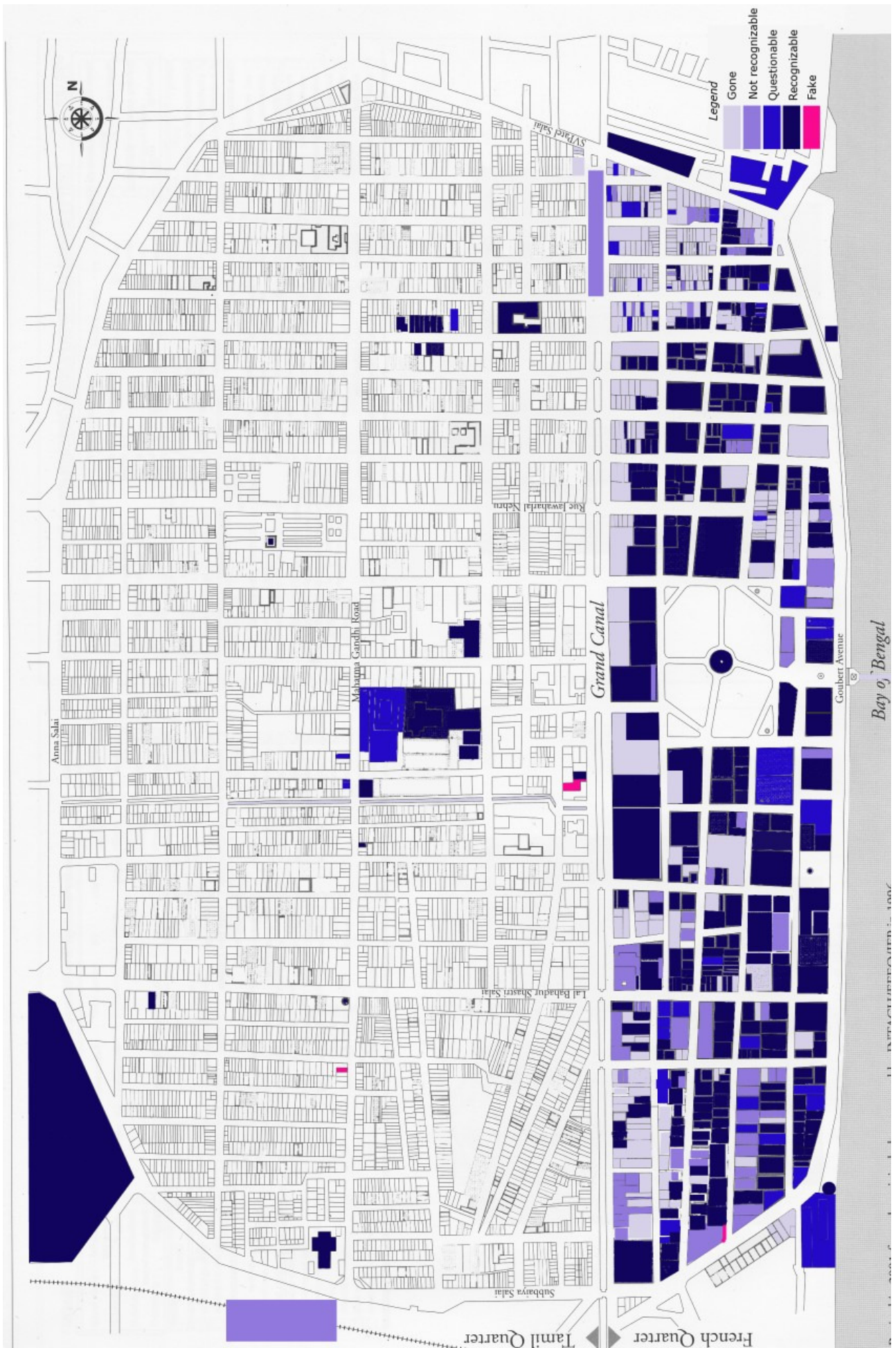
*Map 1.5.1: recognisability of colonial historic-geographic heritage (original map by INTACH, Pondicherry)*

Quite a few buildings are recognisable, these can mostly be found around the Government Park, the beach road (Goubert avenue), the area around the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo north of Government Park and along most roads on the south side of town. Most colonial heritage has disappeared along the Canal, these buildings have been replaced with modern concrete flats. Most of these still follow the building lines, but follow none of the style conventions of neoclassicism. In the Ville Noire there are some recognisable buildings, such as the two churches, two schools and a number of Franco-Tamil buildings. Just outside of the city centre the Botanical Garden on the south-west side of town and the Ashram paper factory on the north side are still in original condition.

The industrial mill (north-east side) can still be recognised as colonial, but it has been changed a lot over the years and is only recognisable indirectly by its location and some preserved elements (such as the old rusty steel constructions of the mill). There are also a number of smaller buildings of questionable recognizability, these buildings show some signs of colonial architecture, such as cream-coloured walls, pilasters or parapets, but were severely altered in recent times, for exampleby the addition of new floors or the replacement of windows.

The northern part of the Grand Canal, the railway station and a few buildings along the Canal and across the Ville Blanche are no longer recognizable as part of the colonial story, it is obvious from either the literature or by their location that there used to be buildings here that were colonial buildings here, but these have been altered to such an extent that they are no longer visible. In the railway station's case only a small statue in front of the entrance serves as proof of the long history of the station.

A number of fake buildings have been spotted in town, these are a hotel in the Muslim quarter, a guesthouse of the ashram on the south side of the Ville Blanche and a powerhouse along the canal. The powerhouse has been built in collaboration with INTACH, the idea was to hide the powerhouses from the canal in buildings that fell less out of line with the general outlook of town. Although it is admirable to work towards the beautification of the Grand Canal, it must be noted that a French looking building is slightly out of place on the Tamil side of the Canal. These fake objects have been found by chance, but they are telling of the popularity of French heritage in Puducherry.

A lot of buildings were not mentioned in the literature but were clearly part of the historic-geographic heritage of Puducherry, most notably are the ruins on the north end of the beach road, (see image 1.5.1) a large industrial mill on the south-western tip of the Ville Blanche (image 1.5.2) and a number of large buildings in town such as an old cinema (image 1.5.3) and a large villa along the beach road (image 1.5.4). It is obvious beyond a shade of doubt that these buildings are part of the colonial historic-geographic heritage of the town, but it cannot be determined what the stories behind these buildings are.

*Image 1.5.1: ruins*



*Image 1.5.2: Industrial mill*

*Image 1.5.3: Pathé cine-familial*



*Image 1.5.4: villa with neo-gothic elements, battlements and neo-classical pillars*

Map 1.5.1 only shows the recognisability of heritage, that is because the other three factors described above in the theory cannot be applied to individual objects, but are instead only relevant to larger areas and groups of buildings. The age factor is unproblematic, it was clear from the outside what buildings originated from the colonial age and which ones were built in a later age. Because the whole centre had been rebuilt by the French, all new buildings in this area have replaced old colonial buildings, the 'gone' and 'fake' categories on map 1.5.1 reflect this. Distinctiveness turned out to be impossible to determine for all single objects. Although the history of a few buildings has been described (see for example text box 1.5.3 on Le Café), most buildings were anonymous.

Consistency between groups of buildings deserves some attention. Neither the Ville Blanche nor the Ville Noire can be considered a consistent whole, only some adjacent buildings on a few housing blocks be considered consistent with each other. In the Ville Blanche this can be observed in the clear building lines, the symmetrical façades and the white, creamy yellow, terracotta red and light grey colours. New buildings (often placed where gardens and parks used to be) that do not follow these consistencies immediately draw attention by either their modern architecture, different colours or by not following building lines as closely as original colonial buildings. In the Ville Noire consistency is mostly observed by verandas that connect one house to the next – including Franco-Tamil buildings. When buildings are demolished in the Ville Noire holes fall in these veranda-lined roads. Nearly the whole Mahatma Ghandi Road is unrecognisable, as are many other roads. Some roads are in better shape, in particular Shri Aurobindu Road and Calvé Supraya Chettiar Street in the north side of town are preserved, but even here there are gaps in the verandas.

*Production colony*

Pondicherry was a production colony that delivered cheap fabrics to France, the industrial mills on the outskirts of town were constructed to industrialize this industry and these can still be observed. The harbour buildings also show this part of history, here the fabrics were loaded in ships and sailed to Europe. Since the harbour activities have been moved outside the city centre, this history of trade is not as visible as it once was. Although the new pier and the lighthouse can still be observed, it is not clear to visitors that trade has been part of Puducherry for hundreds of years.

The colony was not just founded because of the fabric industry, but also because of the cheap workforce already living in the area. France needed these people and was willing to accommodate to their wishes to a level to make them work. This can be observed indirectly by the fact that there are a number of Hindu temples in the city centre, obviously the French were not interested in the Hindu faith, but they recognized that if they were destroy temples that the local population might move away. More information about the peculiar history of one such a temple can be read in text box 1.5.1.

> **Box 1.5.1: Manakula Vinayagar Temple**
> The Manakula Vinayagar Temple is right in the middle of the French part of town and was allowed to stay there even during French rule. This has a lot to do with the relatively open policy of the French rulers regarding other religions, especially after the French Revolution and the division between church and state. They realised that religious freedom reduced the chance of the local population moving away or rebelling and showing some token respect for other religions might even win the hearts of local rulers. When François Martin ruled over the town as its first governor he tried to get rid of the temple that was already there, but he failed. A folk tale claims that the power of the god was so strong that Martin had to fail, a more down to earth explanation would be that Martin gave up after noticing the local population would move away if he destroyed their temple. The temple was never touched by the French, even Mme Dupleix, who had made a point of changing all temples into churches did not dare destroying the Manakula Vinayagar Temple (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005).

The further history of the temple takes another unexpected turn when The Mother (of Sri Aurobindo fame) claims that Lord Ganesh appeared before her and gave her all the money she needed. To thank the Hindu deity she purchased land around the temple and gave it away from the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund Society to Lord Ganesha (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). Ever since, the ashram never lacked funding again, but that can be explained by the wealthy followers who part with their money to either send their children to the ashram school (which functions on such donations and – due to the size of those donations – provides some of the best education in the world) or to the ashram in general.

The temple expanded and dominated the Rue d'Orléans it was built on. After independence the road was renamed to Manakula Vinayakar Koil Street, making it the only exclusively Ville Blanche street with a Tamil name (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). The street and the temple are the clearest example of the French policy regarding other religions and shows the limits of French power.

*Absence of lower classes*
Although it is rather futile to look for proof for something that is absent, it can be argued that the absence of French working class neighbourhoods is an indication that there were no lower class Frenchmen in Pondicherry. All French buildings look luxurious, they are large buildings with – insofar these are not destroyed – large gardens and impressive façades.

*Segregation*
King's theory of the dual city (1976) can be observed in the division between the Ville Noire and the Ville Blanche. In Puducherry's case the two towns are separated with the Grand Canal running straight through the city centre, the colonial city on one side and the native city on the other.

The Canal is a flood channel made by the French and serves as the man-made border between the Ville Noire and the Ville Blanche. Originally there were only two bridges crossing the water, but after independence more bridges were constructed to connect the two parts of town. Although the name *Le Grand Canal* puts to mind a beautiful canal, the reality is a dirty and partly covered open sewer that only gets flushed during the monsoon when a large stream of rainwater flows through it towards the sea. The canal is lined with power houses and vents from buildings. Still, the canal serves as a reminder of the segregation between the French and the local population for many centuries.

King (1976) bases his model on Delhi, he describes that the roads in the colonial city are wider. This is not the case in Puducherry, the roads in both parts of town are roughly equally as wide. King also describes that the colonial industrialized city has separate residential and working areas. Although this is described in the literature on Puducherry (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005), this is no longer visible in the current townscape. With the demise of the harbour in town, the original harbour buildings have found new use or have been destroyed. A number of residential buildings have found new use as well. It was impossible to judge from the outside what the function of a non-governmental building was in the past. Governmental buildings are easier to recognize, they are built in a more monumental style with rows of pillars and large front yards, while residential and administrative buildings are less monumental.

*Building style*
Puducherry has been razed nearly completely by the British and has only been rebuilt by the French in the late 18th and 19th century. In this time period neoclassical architecture was the fashionable style and everything built in Puducherry in this time frame is neoclassical. There are some ruins of older buildings and the street plan stems from before the rebuilding – some even say it was drawn up by the Dutch – but the whole town is a typical example of neoclassical architecture (see for examples: images 1.3.1c, 1.5.7, 1.5.9 and the images on the front page). This building style is still very visible in large parts of town. All buildings labelled as 'recognizable' in map 1.5.1 are

neoclassical in design and many of the buildings that questionable recognizability still share details with neoclassicism. After the reconstruction hardly any new buildings have been made in town, only a few statues, a few industrial mills and a very limited number of buildings within the city centre. Images 1.5.5 and 1.5.6 show two examples of this.


*Image 1.5.5: warehouse on Subbaiah Salai*


*Image 1.5.6: World War 1 Memorial on Goubert Avenue*
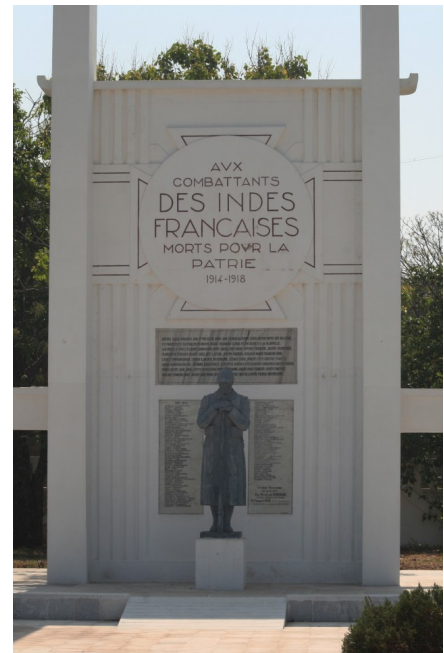

*Image 1.5.7: perfume shop on Rue st Gilles*

*French Revolution*
Puducherry is only indirectly affected by the results of the French Revolution, after a period of rapid changes in policies things settled down under Napoleon (Raja & Nath Keshari, 2005). Although there were many political changes such as the division between church and state and token representation for native people, these had no noticeable effect on the physical form of the town. Arguably, the division between church and state limited the power of the churches in Pondicherry and solidified the position of other religions, but as has been argued above: these other religions were already tolerated before the revolution.

*Wars with England*
Pondicherry was a fort town prior to its destruction, the only object that still reminds visitors of this is the ruin on the north end of the beach road (see image 1.5.1 above). This period is still visible indirectly in two very distinct ways. First: the absence of military objects in town. Because France was no longer allowed to have a military presence large enough to pose a threat to England after England returned the colony to France after the Napoleonic Wars, there are no barracks, marching grounds, imposing walls and other military structures in the city centre. Secondly, however, the location of some military structures from before the destruction of the town are still indirectly visible: the boulevards surrounding the city centre are on the exact location of the old city wall and Government Park with the governmental buildings on it are on the same location as the old fort (compare map 1.4.1 with map 1.4.3).

*Image 1.5.9b: Mahatma
Gandhi statue*



*Image 1.5.8: Statue of Dupleix on it's original location
(Srinivas, 2010)*



*Image 1.5.9a: Statue of
Dupleix on its new location
(the lights are broken)*

*Protection of heritage in post-colonial Puducherry*

Puducherry is interested in protecting it's heritage, but it is certainly not on top of the priority list and it is certainly not putting its French past on a pedestal, as text box 1.5.2 shows. The way colonial heritage is treated can be considered typical for an ex-colony in a developing country where no one believes that the area is still treated as a colony internationally. The Puducherrian government recognizes its colonial heritage as a valuable part of the area and has taken steps to protect and develop that heritage, but it lacks the funding and power to do this as thoroughly as would – in some cases – be desirable (see text box 1.5.3).

The desire to protect heritage can be observed in a number of objects that have been renovated recently, such as Goubert Avenue, Government Park, the old port building (see text box 1.5.3) and the churches. But it can also be observed in a number of objects that have *not* been renovated, even though they are in a rather serious state of disrepair, such as the old lighthouse and the hotel de ville (see image 1.5.10).



*Image 1.5.10 Hotel de Ville (note the weeds growing out from the top of the middle pillars)*

## 1.6 Concluding remarks

The history and geography of Puducherry cannot be described in enough detail to be able to understand the significance of every single object, the focus in the literature is only on a handful of details. However, the town is a clear example of a colonial dual city and this can still be observed when looking at the built heritage of the city centre. Provided a visitor is informed about the story behind this heritage they can learn a lot about the colonial historic-geographic story of the town.

Next to Mahatma Gandhi Statue and right across from the city hall stands a small diner. On the terrace customers look out over the Bay of Bengal while they enjoy a sandwich or some coffee in the sea breeze. The diner is owned by the municipality and it is one of the very few catering businesses that is open 24 hours per day. It is the only catering business allowed on this side of Goubert avenue and it is one of the favourite places for tourists to relax.

Inside, tourists see a lot of old photos and advertisement for the INTACH heritage trail. On the photos they can see a small building on the beach with the word PORT on it (see image 1.5.11). This is the old port building of the harbour and – although not mentioned specifically inside the building – this is the building they are currently in.



*Image 1.5.11: Old port building in the 1940s (source: Srinivas, 2010)*

The original building was constructed during English occupation and it is the only building still visible that has been made by them. The original building was constructed either in the last decade of the 18th century or the first of the 19th century, but it looked nothing like it looks on image 1.5.10, because the two rows of arcades have been added by the French in 1817 and the text on the outside has been added in the late 1940s (INTACH, 2010).

With the demise of Pondicherry as a port of call, harbour activities slowed down. When the pier (seen on image 1.4.1) was destroyed in a storm, it was rebuilt outside the city centre and all harbour buildings were left behind. The port building was taken over by a number of shop owners in the 1990s who slowly but surely transformed the building into an unrecognisable place. This can be seen on photo 1.5.12. There is nothing that reminds the visitor of the fact that this was once a busy port office and it looked rather unattractive on the beach. For this reason the building was bought by the municipality of Puducherry. Plans were made to restore the building in its former glory and to make it an attractive asset of the beach road. This restoration has resulted in the current building on image 1.5.13



*Image 1.5.12: The port building reused in the 1990s (source: INTACH, 2010)*

A second floor has been added and sheds have been added to the front and back of the building. The building looks nothing like the port building on image 1.5.11, but at least it does not look like the building on image 1.5.12 any more either. The way the building has been restored makes it impossible for visitors to see the rich history of it directly.



*Image 1.5.13: Le Café*

# Chapter 2: Tourist information about Puducherry

*This chapter will compare the historic-geographic story of Puducherry as described in chapter 1 with the information provided in tourist information. To analyse this information a content analysis has been performed on a number travel guides, tourist websites and folders. The main question of this chapter is:* What parts of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry does tourist information pay attention to and to what extent do general criticisms on tourist information regarding style and content hold true for these sources? *Attention is given to these general criticisms to be able to assess how typical tourist information on this city is and to discuss some information about Puducherry that is not directly related to the built environment. It also allows this thesis to discuss literature about tourism and explain some of the expectations and believes tourists will have based on the information they gather.*

## 2.1 Tourist imaging – gazing at history

John Urry's book *The Tourist Gaze* (first edition: 1990, second edition: 2002) is by far the most influential work on the subject of tourism and imaging and a large body of research builds on or criticises his work (see: Perkins & Thorns, 2001; Crang, 1996; McGregor, 2000; Knudsen et al, 2007).

In his book Urry describes the history of British tourism and argues – following Foucault's work – that: "[w]hen we 'go away' we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter" (Urry, 2002. p. 1). He argues that the experiences tourists have are being "constructed around the production and consumption of symbols" (Knudsen et al, 2007). Urry goes on to explain that the way we gaze and what we prefer to gaze at differs per time period and culture. Furthermore he points out that tourists have high expectations of where they are going and that these expectations are formed by information tourists receive. These expectations form the gaze of tourists and turns a cow on the road into a scene of typical India for them (Urry, 2002. p. 3).

Urry's theory has been broadly adopted by many researchers (see for example: McGregor, 2000; Jacobs, 2001), but criticism and nuances have been made as well . Perkins & Thorns (2001) in particular have interesting criticism. They disagree with the phraseology and certainty of Urry's book and blame these flaws on Urry's focus on the English history of tourism. They argue that tourism has developed in drastically different ways in other cultures, so the assumptions he makes based on this history might be incorrect in other regions. They feel that Urry has not given enough consideration to these differences. Their main criticism is that the word 'gazing' is insufficient to describe the many things tourists do on holiday. Perkins & Thorns point out that tourists are active rather than passive during their holidays, they go biking, they try the local cuisine, they take dancing lessons, etcetera. Crang's (1996) research on historical re-enactment groups in England can be considered in this light as well. He participated in a group of people who re-enacted historical events as a hobby. The group came together on historical sites, dressed up in era-appropriate outfits and would act as if they really lived during the historical event they picked. Besides acting, they also spent time explaining to visitors what was going on and what their character's role was in that event. Clearly, the actors are tourists: they come to a historical site for only a short period of time as a leisure activity, but they do not share any other traits with the mass tourists Urry describes.

A short critical article by Knudsen et al (2007) puts the emphasis firmly on geography and points out that Urry only describes the interpretation of landscapes by tourists. They argue that "[i]n reality, the meaning of tourist sites/sights is fraught with multiple meanings." They refer here to the idea posed in Marxist, feminist and post-colonial geography that a landscape is contested: different groups of people will see different meanings in it (see also: Wylie, 2007). Tourists are only one of these groups and the meanings they apply to the landscape will be contested by other groups.

Knudsen et al (2007) pose the point that: "Tourism should be understood generally as a discourse among tourists, locals, intermediaries (including government ministries, travel agents and tourism promotion boards), and the physical spaces themselves in which tourism takes place." Although this criticism on Urry does not refute his theory, it does put some perspective on the importance of tourists in society. Urry's theory does not pay much attention to this discourse.

Besides criticism, Urry's theory has also been improved upon, most notably by McGregor (2000). He has done research in Indonesia where he interviewed tourists. Based on his results he further specifies the tourist gaze by sorting all elements in a tourist site/sight in four categories. These categories are:
- *The Known:* what the tourist has seen pictures of and has read about. This is what the tourist expects to see and experience and will compare with the images they have seen beforehand;
- *The Imagined:* what the tourist has read or heard about, but hasn't seen pictures of. The tourist will imagine how it will look and will visit these sites/sights to see how it really is;
- *The Unknown:* the tourist hasn't heard or read anything about these elements beforehand and will run into these during their trip;
- *The Unseen:* the tourist hasn't heard or read about these elements and will not see these during their trip.

The tourist gaze appears in the first two categories, the tourists have been pointed towards these elements and *because of that* they will gaze in that direction. McGregor pays no attention to other tourist activities besides gazing, but it can be argued that when the tourist information tells the reader that a specific restaurant or mountain trail is very impressive that the reader is more likely to visit that restaurant or hike that trail during their travels.

## 2.2 tourist information
Researchers from many different cultural studies have analysed tourist information, all of them with a slightly different focus. Every article is critical about the information provided to tourists and points out the many flaws in it.
Lew (1991) researched a few sources of information aimed at backpackers, tourists and expats. He points out that the information was very specifically written *for* a target group. He argues that tourist information is primarily a marketing tool to attract tourists to a region, the misery is minimized and instead the region is romanticized to appeal to tourist. This is an important observation because it explains many of the quirks in travel guides, including the Lonely Planet. This guide is originally aimed at western backpackers (Mueller, 2007) and this is notable in the text. All information offered and its presentation must be understood as what the publishers of tourist information assume the reader is interested in (see also; Lew, 1991).
All further criticism must be seen in this light: publishers write for their audience and can hardly be blamed for attempting to make a product that sells well (see also Kraft, 2007). This does not make the criticisms any less valid, and the question must be asked if this is really what tourists want to read and what the influence of the texts is on the way they interpret the sites and sights they visit and gaze at.
Criticisms can be divided in three categories: writing style, descriptions of the foreign cultures and descriptions of built heritage. Besides these categories geographers also analyse what parts of a landscape tourist information pays attention to.

*Writing style*
Bhattacharyya (1997) and Kraft (2007) both analysed the Lonely Planet travel guide of India (LP India), they both take note of the authoritative tone in the texts. They note that the guide leaves no room for other interpretations of history or the surroundings. The  This is anything but a recent phenomenon, Gilbert (1999) notices the same authoritative voice in century old travel guides.

Bhattacharyya also notes the rather loose writing style of the Lonely Planet, likening it to someone telling you about his experiences in India over a bottle of beer. It can be assumed that other travel guides employ a more formal and less personal style depending on their target audience.

*Descriptions of the foreign cultures*
Bhattacharyya (1997) accuses the LP India of Orientalism. She points out the only parts of India that get described are exotic and decidedly not modern. Kraft (2007) comes to the same conclusion in her analysis of information about religion in the LP India. Similar sentiments are also aired in Jacobs' (2001) study on spiritual churches in New Orleans, Nelson's (2005) study on Grenada and McGregor's (2000) study on Tana Toraja, Indonesia. It appears that travel guides focus on what makes the tourist destination different from the homeland of the reader, there is a strong focus on 'typical' local flavours and exotic rituals, yet contemporary culture and society are ignored. This is described by Edward Saïd in his influential book *Orientalism* as typical forms of othering, or in Saïd's terms: orientalism. This othering tells the critical reader more about the writer's culture than about the host culture (Saïd, 1979). Saïd focuses on the Middle East (hence the word Orientalism), but his theory has been applied to regions all over the world, mostly by post-colonial writers. So when the LP India describes Indian society as colourful, but also primitive and childish they consider the western society as bland, but advanced and mature. An explanation for why tourist information employs Orientalism comes from Urry (2002), he explains that tourists are looking for things that are different from the place they come from, it is one of the big reasons why people travel. Tourist information helps tourists in finding places where things are different.

*Description of built heritage*
A lot of the places we visit on holiday are built heritage, from the Eiffel Tower to the Taj Mahal these buildings not only look interesting, they also tell us stories about the past and the ways in which the society has developed. It is this story telling aspect that is of interest to geographers, research by Van der Vaart (1998) and Van Gorp (2003) in particular pay full attention to built heritage. Van der Vaart has analysed travel guides to Paris from the second half the 20th century and has found that more recent guides give less information about the built environment than older guides. He recognises four processes:
- *atomisation:* less attention is being paid to the whole area, but only to single fragments;
- *petrification:* less attention is given to humans and the present, more attention goes to buildings;
- *visualisation:* pictures have become more important than text
- *virtualisation:* reality has been reduced to information and image details without context, to which an atmosphere is attached that has little to nothing to do with reality.

*Spatial selectivity of travel guides*
Van Gorp also found these processes in the tourist information she analysed. She also points out that travel guides tend to only pay attention to one or a few cores in a city and ignore the rest of the area. Her main concern was to see if travel guides provide historical-geographical information. This turned out not to be the case, travel guides mostly pay attention to architectural details or give a very small history of a single object, without paying attention to the context.
Van der Vaart (1998) writes that older travel guides tend to provide routes through neighbourhoods with ample attention to the culture and economy of the area. Yet in modern travel guides there are no routes any more and instead only single objects are described and the routes between these objects are reduced to simple directions.
Interestingly, Van Gorp (2003) has also analysed information about thematic routes through city centres and yet found that attention is only on the fragments the route is about. One can walk from fragment to fragment without ever learning about how or why these fragments are there.

## 2.3 Methodology
*For this research guide books, tourist websites, information from travel agencies and written information that can be found in Puducherry will be analysed. The only way to make meaningful observations about the contents of this information is to make qualitative and quantitative content analyses. In a content analysis the content of a source is analysed and categorised (qualitative) or transformed into numbers (quantitative) (Baarda & De Goede, 2006).*

*Qualitative and Quantitative content analyses*
Content analyses have been made in two ways: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative approach is descriptive in nature. Normally there is a lot of attention for the writing style and the influence this has on the text. Usually the amount of numbers is kept to a minimum. Van der Vaart's (1998) description of travel guides on Paris is a clear example of this approach. His article hardly contains any numbers, he prefers to illustrate his conclusions with quotes from travel guides. The quantitative approach is all about numbers, for example: the author keeps track of the amount of times a certain word is used or a certain element described.

The qualitative and quantitative approaches do not exclude each other, Van der Vaart (1998), Van Gorp (2003), Lew (1991) and Bhattacharyya (1997) successfully combine both methods. To give one example: Bhattacharyya describes the writing style of the Lonely Planet guide with examples from the text, while she describes the subjects of pictures by simply counting them. By combining both approaches a more complete description of the information can be made.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches can deal with text and pictures, in the case of tourist information it has to deal with both. The impact of a picture is much larger than that of text, Lew (1991) argues for more attention to the truth in the saying "a picture says more than a thousand words". His own solution is to take text and images together, but to apply a higher value to images. However, it is far more practical to discuss images and text separately. This research will combine both approaches and will discuss text and pictures separately while acknowledging the importance of pictures by describing these in detail. The focus will be on the amount of attention given to colonial geographic-historical heritage of Puducherry and the kind of information that is given. This will answer the following subquestions: *What parts of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry does tourist information pay attention to and to what extent do the general criticisms on tourist information hold true for these sources?*

## 2.4 Operationalisation
Tourist information has been gathered in three ways: buying and borrowing travel guides, picking up flyers and folders from hotels and other tourist places and by browsing the internet. There are far more sources with information about Puducherry on the internet than have been selected for this analysis, a selection has been based on both the quantity, source and address of the source. Since this is a content analysis, it is not worthwhile to discuss pages that do not contain enough content to draw meaningful conclusions from, instead large texts and extensive websites have been picked. The source of the website also plays a role, pages that come from big travel sites – such as Wikitravel – or from big organisations in Puducherry – such as ACTUPONDY and the tourism department – have been sought out specifically. Addresses that would suggest a certain reputability have been sought out specifically, these are .com, .org and .net.in. This selection is subjective and due to the nature of search engines and vastness of the internet, it is possible that other relevant websites have been glossed over.

A division has been made between sources that only describe Pondicherry in a few lines and sources with more text. Sources with less than 100 words will be considered 'small' while everything else is considered 'large'. This division is made because the small sources do not contain enough information to compare them directly with large sources. These sources are being discussed, even though they hardly contain enough information to draw as many conclusions from as from the

bigger sources, because they can be considered representative for a part of the tourist industry that would have been hardly represented otherwise, these are tourist guides and travel agencies. There are no complete travel guides on Pondicherry like there are on big cities like Paris, London and Singapore. Of the bigger sources data will be collected on a number of subjects. Questions will be answered for both texts and images and their captions.

Of every source of tourist information data has been collected about a number of subjects. First some general data will be discussed about the general tone, the writing style, the kind of mistakes that are being made and the kind of romantic style figures that have been employed. Secondly the extent to which information pays attention to the colonial historic-geographic story of Puducherry will be discussed. This is done by a summary of the amount of times certain objects, areas and historic ages are mentioned. Then the kind of information that is provided per object and area will be discussed.

*Data collection*

Data has been collected in a spreadsheet where the questions listed in text box 2.4.1 were answered for every single tourist information source. Due to the qualitative nature of this analysis, most questions were answered by quoting snippets of text or describing images that the researcher believed to be representative of the source. Quantitative questions related to the kind of information that is provided were answered by listing them.

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**Text box 2.4.1: Analysis diagram of text**
1. What areas of the city centre are mentioned?
2. Which objects (buildings, squares, streets, parks) are mentioned?
3. What times in history are mentioned?
4. Per mentioned object: what kind of information is given?
   - Age?
   - Location?
   - (Famous) people?
   - Function?
   - Appearance?
   - Other
5. Per mentioned object and about the city in general: is attention given to the historical or geographic context in which the city has developed?
   - Relation with surroundings?
   - Explanation for location?
   - Explanation for creation?
6. To what extent is the text written from one specific background? (geographical/historical/arts/etc)
7. What is the style?
   - What words conveying feelings are used?
   - Is there room for other interpretations or doubt in the text?
8. Is the information correct?
   - Factual errors
   - Simplifications
   - Other

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The first two questions will shed light on the selectivity of the information: on a limited number of pages only a limited amount of information can be shared and authors have to choose what they want to focus on. The third question describes the information provided, this makes it possible to see how detailed the text is and what facts are provided. The fourth question describes the kind of information given per mentioned element. Sometimes elements are only mentioned in passing, while other times much more information is provided. The amount and kind of information given sheds light on how much attention there is for history and geography.

The fifth question pays attention to fragmentation.

Tourist information is often written from a specific background, such as geography, history or the arts. This background explains some of the choices made by the authors and their background shines through with the choices they make. The sixth question will explain what background appears to be visible. This will be based on the kind of information provided about individual elements (see previous question). The seventh question will discuss the style, this is interesting aspect of the information because it is telling of the opinion of the authors. In the texts attention will be paid to the use of words that convey certain feelings. For example: one can 'walk down the street' or one can 'take a worry-free stroll over the cobble-stoned pavement of the *Rue Suffren*.'

The last question pays attention to the flaws in tourist information. Often reality is simplified in the hope it appeals more to tourists and sometimes the facts are simply wrong. Attention will be given to this, because it is interesting to see what parts of history and reality are willingly or unknowingly skipped over in tourist information.

The analysis of pictures has been done separately, the questions asked for this can be found in text box 2.4.2. It must be noted here that the two biggest sources, the Lonely Planet and Trotter travel guides did not contain any images. Other sources only had a few – usually very small – pictures, the ministry of tourism had the most with 29 photos and 9 old prints. The Heritage Trail folder had 11 pictures and other sources had less than ten pictures. In total 136 images were analysed.

The reasoning behind these questions is the same as those asked about the text. Photos and other images can be made in a specific style, one obvious example is the employment of sepia filters to give photos an instant 'old' look. Another way to make something look old or historic is by omitting modern elements: before taking a photo cars can be moved, people wearing modern clothes can be stopped from walking in front of the camera and waste can be cleaned up. A photo can also be made romantic by using a soft focus or by shooting during a foggy sunrise. On the other side of the spectrum a photo can also have a modern style by using motion blur or by removing old-fashioned elements before a photo is taken. If one – for example – wants to focus on modern night life it is best to leave police officers and beggars out of the frame.

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**Text box 2.4.2: Analysis diagram of images**

1. What location is shown on the image?
2. What objects are shown on the image?
3. What style elements are employed in images? (sepia filters, soft focus, artistic blur, omitting modern elements from the framing, etc)

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Of the small sources the aforementioned questions will be answered insofar this is possible. Questions regarding writing style will be skipped because a few lines of text is not enough to establish a particular style in.

*Used sources*
*A total of twenty sources has been analysed. Some of these sources are in Dutch, when quoting from these sources an English translation is given behind the Dutch quote in brackets.*
Large sources:
- Trotter (2006), Zuid-India Goa. Lannoo, Tielt, Belgium [original title: Le Guide du Routard – Inde du Sud. Hachette, Paris, France] p. 347-361
- Singh, S. (2009), India, 13th ed. Lonely Planet, Footscray, Australia. Lonely Planet: India. p. 1071-1079.
- INTACH Pondicherry (2007), Pondicherry Heritage Trail. Published by INTACH, Pondicherry.
- Kumar, N. (red.) (2010) REPOS: The Images of Pondicherry. Produced and Promoted by TravelMate. In cooperation with Department of Tourism, Puducherry.
- Judy Usha Sheila, S. (2010), City Direct: The Puducherry. Vol 2. Iss. 2. Published by M/s. Purple Swan
- Pondicherry.com (2010), Pondicherry. [online] [Cited: 6-20-2010] <http://www.pondicherry.com/>
- Karthikeyan, G. (2010), Information about Pondicherry. [online] [Cited: 6-18-2010] <http://www.pondicherry.ind.in>
- ACTUPONDY (2010), Actupondy. [online] [Cited: 6-19-2010] <http://www.actupondy.com>
- Tourism Department, Puducherry (2010), Puducherry Tourism. [online] [Cited: 6-20-2010] <http://tourism.puducherry.gov.in/>
- DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010), Pondicherry Tourism. [online] [Cited: 6-19-2010] <http://www.pondicherrytourism.org/>
- Wikitravel (2010), Pondicherry. [online] [cited: 6-20-2010] <http://wikitravel.org/en/Pondicherry>
- HolidayIQ (2010), Pondicherry. [online] [Cited: 6-20-2010] <http://www.holidayiq.com/states/Pondicherry-Know.html>
- Pan India Network (2010) Pondicherry Tourism. [online]  [Cited: 6-21-2010] <http://pondicherryonline.in/TouristPlaces/index.asp>
- Srinivas, S. (2010), Pondicherry. [online] [Cited: 6-18-2010] <http://www.pondicherry.net.in/
- Tourist places in india (2010), Pondicherry. [online] [cited: 6-20-2010] <http://www.touristplacesinindia.com/pondicherry/>

Small sources:
- Saran, S. (2007), Nelles gids: India Zuid.
- Hutchings, J. (1998), Insight Guide India, 6th ed.  APA Publications.
- India Tourism (2010), Incredible !ndia: Ontdek Chennai (Madras) en het zuiden [English: discover Chennai (Madras) and the south]. Giriraj Singh Kushwaha, Karan Singh, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Kuoni Travel Group (2009), India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal. Kuoni, Amsterdam.
- Djoser (2010), Rondreis Zuid-India, 21 dagen [English: round trip south-India, 21 days]. [online] [Cited: 6-20-2010] <http://www.djoser.nl/rondreis_india_nepal/21_dagen_zuid_india/_day/>

*Expectations*

To be able to place the collected data in context, a number of expectations have been formulated in advance.

First, attention will be given to the tone and style of the text and pictures. Based on Bhattacharyya (1997) authoritative narrators and room for different interpretations of the facts will also be paid heed to. Bhattacharyya points out that tourist information often gives one interpretation of reality and presents that as the only possible way to look at things. It can be expected that tourist information will have an authoritative tone, with no room for any doubt or alternative interpretations in the texts.

Second, the information will be written with the implicit goal to attract tourists to Puducherry. Focus only on the exotic and on what makes Puducherry different from the reader's own environment. This *othering* has also been observed by other researchers (see for example: Bhattacharyya, 1997; Nelson, 2005; Kraft, 2007) and it can be expected to be the case in Puducherry as well. Attention will only be given to the positive aspects of Puducherry and it will romanticize the way the town looks.

As has been pointed out by Van Gorp (2003) and Van der Vaart (2000) tourist information tends to only pay attention to single fragments, while the bigger picture is largely ignored. Van der Vaart adds to this that tourist information tends to focus on buildings and history and that humans are largely ignored. The third expectation is that tourist information will not provide much context and that it will mostly describe a few details of history, architecture and geography.

The last expectation is that tourist information will focus on one small area and that the rest of the city is mostly ignored. Van Gorp (2003) points out that tourists are directed to one core area and that the rest of the city is ignored by tourist information.

## 2.5 Results

### *Tone and style*

#### *Authority and doubt*

Only Karthikeyan (2010) shows a sign of doubt when he writes that there "might" be Roman rule and settlement in Poduke. Even highly subjective claims – such as the Trotter's vision on the ashram of Sri Aurobindo – are not preceded by any nuance. Other theories and opinions are not even mentioned, the authors claim to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, no matter how open to debate some issues are in reality. All sources (except Karthikeyan's single moment of doubt) talk about Puducherry, its inhabitants and its history in absolutes: "Pondicherrians are: proud, [...]" (ACTUPONDY, 2010), "Puducherry is a quiet little town" (Tourism department, Puducherry, 2010), "Pondicherry is a peaceful city" (Karthikeyan, 2010), etcetera. This is especially apparent in issues related to the ashram of Sri Aurobindo, which is either described as a fantastic place of reflection and inner peace or as a bizarre cult with no reference to the other opinion.

Nearly all sources mention the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, most of them are neutral or positive about what goes on. By far the most positive is DEXTER Travel Solutions: "visit the world famous Aurbindo Ashram and Auroville and be blessed with a lot of peace and goodness." The Trotter guide is strangely negative. The guide casts doubt on the Ashram's intentions, calling it a 'enorme kapitalistische onderneming [enourmous capitalist undertaking], and claims that the local population is 'on to them' and 'know better'. The guide describes a visit to the ashram as bizarre, off-putting and not welcoming. The guide writes that the people of the ashram treat visitors as 'outsiders' and almost warns people against visiting. Giving critique on the ashram is not wrong, but the Trotter Guide goes very far in their negativity. The guide provides no proof of their negative comments. Srinivas (2010) is also critical, claiming that "not all is fine between the ashram and the locals". He describes that the Ashram is mostly run by people from outside Puducherry and that the ashram owns all the "nicest places in Pondicherry."[*]

#### *Pondicherry - Puducherry - Pondy*

Practically every source mentions the name change of Pondicherry to Puducherry, however almost everywhere Puducherry is still called Pondicherry, even in Indian tourist information. Only the tourism department (2010) is consequent in calling the town by its new name. The Lonely Planet Guide (Singh, 2009) calls Puducherry by its nickname: Pondy. The guide explains that this is what most people call the town anyway. Thus, the new name has not caught on for as far as tourist information goes. The old French name is still the most popular way to name the town. This appears to be a simplification, although Puducherry has been renamed, the old name is more familiar to tourists, so tourist information is not going to confuse tourists. The name change is still mentioned, perhaps because it is a little factoid that livens up the introductory paragraph of the information.

#### *Positive outlook on Puducherry*

Most tourist information is positive about all aspects of Puducherry: HolidayIQ (2010) talks about an "overly coastal town steeped in French nostalgia, eat at the speciality cuisine restaurants, explore the antique shops, and enjoy mornings and evenings at the beautiful sea front", DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010) described the monuments as " not only famous for the history behind them but also for [their] sheer beauty and elegance", while ACTUPONDY (2010) hails the many virtues of the population as following: "Pondicherrians are: proud, pick the aspects of eastern and western

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[*]During the researcher's stay in Puducherry he did not notice a disdain among the local population against the ashram at all. The ashram is one of the most popular ones in India and it attracts thousands of visitors and followers per year, the scathing critiques of the Trotter Guide seem odd and out of place.

culture they think are best and are a very practical people." Other tourist information endorse the general agreement amongst authors that Puducherry is a slice of heaven on earth.

Puducherry is described as tranquil, a perfect blend between east and west, unique, different from the rest of India, charming and Mediterranean. One trait of Puducherry is not specified much, which is the ambience or atmosphere. The Trotter guide (2006) writes "bijzondere niet nader te omschrijven sfeer [special atmosphere, impossible to specify further" and later on mentions a "leuke sfeer [nice atmosphere]". Judy Usha Sheila, S. (2010), also grasping for superlatives, writes about a "scent of the French influence".

It is clearly difficult to specify something like 'atmosphere' in an objective way, but hardly any attempts are made to explain why the authors believes this atmosphere is 'nice', 'special' or 'unique'. When attempts are made the authors talk about the French influence that can be 'felt' or even 'smelt'. The Lonely Planet takes a different position, they are very cynical and draw attention to the things in Puducherry that are not all tranquil, charming and different from the rest of India. They do this in their - almost trademark - colloquial writing style. In reply to the common image of Puducherry as a tranquil town the guide writes: "you're in for some disappointment, *mon ami*", they explain that Puducherry is still in Tamil Nadu... "Honk-scream-screech-honk-chaos Tamil Nadu". Later in the text they flirt with the common image of Puducherry as a tranquil town again:"here and there a shady boulevard that could put you in mind of gendarmes marching past sari-clad belles – HONK!" In the rest of the text Lonely Planet shifts between cynical comments such as "partially covered sewer...we mean, canal" and positive ones such as a "cute little museum" and describing the rundown buildings as being in a state of "déshabillé". Bhattacharyya's (1997) observation that the Lonely Planet sounds like a person sharing information with you over a glass of beer is confirmed here. In comparison, the other sources are rather formal and do not contain jokes.

*Comparing Puducherry*

As has been mentioned under the header 'positive outlook on Puducherry' tourist sources compare the town to France and the rest of India. Curiously, the general conclusion appears to be the following: Puducherry is different from India, it is like France. India is described as noisy, busy and smelly, Puducherry – and by extension: France – are described as quiet, tranquil and clean. Notions of Orientalism in its form of people in the West looking at the East do not hold water in his respect, as many of the sources are written by Indians. The term 'othering' seems to be the most accurate, as this can work both ways.

The Lonely Planet guide deserves special attention in this regard, both because it has been the centre of attention for a lot of accusations of orientalism and because its description of Puducherry is so different from the other sources. With its cynical observation that Puducherry is a lot like Tamil Nadu, the guide is very direct in its comparison between the both. The guide describes Tamil Nadu as noisy, busy and smelly and compares this to the idealistic image of Puducherry described in other information about the city. The guide makes this observation as a foreigner who is – supposedly – coming from a less noisy, busy and smelly place and who would – probably – not consider Puducherry anywhere close enough to the tranquillity, quietness and cleanliness they are used to at home. In this case the allegations of orientalism as aired by Bhattacharyya (1998) seem to hold true in this case as well.

*Romanticizing in text*

All tourist information shows signs of romantic views on Puducherry, even the cynical Lonely Planet guide talks about 'wandering' through the Ville Blanche and calls the Puducherry museum 'cute' and 'little'. Other sources go much further in their romantic style figures in their texts, the website of the tourist department (2010) – to give one example – describes the town as: "Sights are manifold with pastel coloured churches and bright temple towers; Joan of Arc's heavenward gaze vies with the tall carved pillars from Gingee at the seafront; cricket competes with pétanque." Even

the very sober and factual Heritage Trail folder (INTACH, 2007) describes Puducherry as having "a unique charm, which captivates the hearts of visitors". Three sources specifically mention the cobble-stone pavements and in many sources words like 'elegance', 'beautiful', 'tranquil', 'charming' and 'lovely' are used as descriptors of buildings, streetscapes and the general atmosphere.

*Romanticizing in images*

Surprisingly, the images were not as romantic as one would assume based on the romantic descriptions of the town in the text: most images were simple snapshots. Although these images might make a bigger impact on the readers, it was clearly not the authors' intention to convince readers of the beauty of the town through images. On a total of 136 images only four had a sepia filter, 5 had enhanced colours and in 8 pictures it was obvious that modern elements were kept out of sight. On the other hand, no pictures were intentionally made modern, only one picture had motion blur. Most photographs were simple snapshots that were purely functional. Images 2.5.1 to 2.5.5 show examples of snapshots used in tourist information and two edited photos.



*Image 2.5.1: photo of Mahatma Gandhi statue with edited blue sky (Srinivas, 2010)*



*Image 2.5.2: greyscale photo of French Institute (Tourism department, Puducherry, 2010)*



*Image 2.5.3: photo of the seafront on an overcast day (Tourism department, Puducherry, 2010)*



*Image 2.5.4: photo of Mahatma Gandhi statue cloudy sky (Pan India Network, 2010)*



*Image 2.5.5: photo of the seafront without an edited blue sky (HolidayIQ, 2010)*

*Closing remarks*

To the researcher's surprise the tourist information was rather amateurish. In retrospect this could be expected from the sources on the internet as anyone can put anything on the internet and there are normally no editors to control the quality of the writing. But even the published tourist information was mired in spelling errors, simple snapshots and factual errors. It is surprising that even a popular domain such as pondicherry.com only contains a small amount of information about the town. Considering the relative popularity of Puducherry and the fact that the internet has been such a strong tool in finding places to travel to, one would have expected more professional websites providing good information.

***Attention to colonial historic-geographic built heritage***

*Historical dimension*
All sources describe the history of Puducherry, except the small ones, of which only the Incredible India folder (India Tourism,2010) mentions the post-colonial period in some detail. The following periods have been identified based on a literature study of the history: pre-historic, classical, pre-colonial, early colonial, wars with England, late colonial and post-colonial. Because the focus of this research is on the French colonisation this period of history is more detailed.
The pre-historic age encompasses the complete period before the trading with the Mediterranean empires of the classical age. The classical age encompasses the period during which there was contact with Roman traders. The pre-colonial period covers the period during which the area was under the control of Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Vijayanaga and Muslim rulers. This period ends with the (re)discovery of the area by Portuguese discoverers in 1521 which heralds the start of the early colonisation period. During this period the Portuguese, Danes, Dutch and French conduct trade and build the town of Pondicherry. The period ends when Dupleix becomes governor general in 1742. During Dupleix' reign and for over a century after the town is almost constantly at war with the English empire. This period of war finally ends in 1815 in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. The decades after this have been called the late colonial period and it covers the rebuilding of Pondicherry and the struggle for independence. The post-colonial period describes the period shortly after independence during which Puducherry became a union territory and found a balance between its French heritage and its Indian future.
Table 2.5.1 shows how many times certain periods are mentioned.

| Period | Amount of sources mentioning this period |
| --- | --- |
| Pre-historic age | 8 |
| Classical age | 11 |
| Pre-colonial ages | 7 |
| Early colonisation | 12 |
| Wars with England | 8 |
| Late colonial age | 10 |
| Post-colonial age | 5 |

*Table 2.5.1: historic periods mentioned (on a total amount of twenty sources, of which five are very small)*

Both the pre-historic and classical ages are mostly mentioned in passing, sources mostly mention these two periods to emphasize that the town has a long history. One example of how the prehistoric period is describes can be read in the REPOS booklet (Kumar, 2010): "The history dates way back to pre-historic days. It is believed that Vedapuri-the old name of Pondicherry was the seat for the great sage Agasthya." Information about the classical age is mostly given along with a short description of the archaeological excavations outside the town. INTACH (2007), for example, writes: "Excavations […] show that the Romans came here to trade in the 1st century AD."
The pre-colonial ages are mentioned as a preamble to the early era of colonisation, REPOS (Kumar, 2010) contains a clear example of this: "Then, Pondicherry came under the Pallavas, Cholas, Vijayanagara Kingdom and sultans until the European settlements stepped in." Ten centuries are

summarized in one short sentence.

Early colonisation is described briefly by almost all sources, mostly in one sentence listing the other western powers active in Puducherry before the French finally took over for good in 1699. All but four sources that mention the early period of colonisation also mention the wars with England, these four sources do mention the period of late colonisation, but simply claim that the area was under constant control by the French, ignoring the fact the town was destroyed once and conquered often. Two sources that mention the early period of colonisation do not mention the late colonial period, both these sources pay very little attention to history in general and limit their information regarding this subject to a short line or two stating that Pondicherry became a French colony.

The post-colonial age hardly receive any attention it is summarized by simply writing in what year the French left.

Of the large sources the Lonely Planet (2009), Wikitravel (2010) and Pan India Network (2010) hardly pay any attention to the history, they focus nearly completely on the attractions the town currently has and provides hardly any context on why these attractions are in Puducherry.

Although a few sources describe the late colonial period, none of them mention the decades long struggle for independence. Most sources simply state in what year Puducherry gained its de facto independence, but the Trotter guide (2006) goes beyond this by outright stating there was no strife between the French and Tamils. Here it must be noted that the Trotter is a French guide.

In a way ignoring the struggle for independence is understandable: after all, the biggest attraction of Puducherry is everything the French left behind, paying attention to the terrible things the French did might make tourists feel uncomfortable and reluctant to visit the town. There are no real memorials for the struggle for independence in the town as well, so it is very easy to ignore this part of history and it is likely that most tourists do not even know about something like the *Pondicherry Shooting Day.*

The focus in tourist information is on the 'glorious past' and attention to the present and modern is scarce, what the people of today do is no point of interest at all. Not only that: attention to the 'inglorious past' is completely absent. Van der Vaart's (1998) observations holds true completely.

*Objects mentioned*

Over 80 unique objects are mentioned in the tourist information, but only a select few are mentioned often enough to be considered representative of the image created of Puducherry in tourist information.All objects that are mentioned in more than 1/3rd of the sources have been listed in table 2.5.2 below.

| Object | Times mentioned in text |
|---|---|
| Ashram of Sri Aurobindo* | 18 |
| Government Park/Aayimandapam* | 13 |
| Colonial buildings | 13 |
| Seafront | 13 |
| Boulevards | 11 |
| Churches in general | 10 |
| Sacré Coeur de Jésus church* | 10 |
| Museum of Puducherry* | 9 |
| Botanical Garden* | 9 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Street plan | 9 |
| French food | 8 |
| Notre Dame des Anges* | 8 |
| Mahatma Gandhi Statue* | 8 |
| World War I memorial* | 7 |
| Statue of Jeanne D'Arc* | 7 |
| Grand Canal | 7 |

*Table 2.5.2: most mentioned objects*

Except for the Ashram and the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, all objects have been made by the French, and expect for the Botanical Garden and the Sacré Coeur de Jésus church all of them are located in the Ville Blanche.

Map 2.5.1 shows the areas of town that receive the most attention in tourist information. Thirteen sources mention the Government Park and the seafront, these two areas are discussed in a lot of detail and most objects along the park and the sea are discussed in considerable detail as well. These two areas are also shown the most on the pictures. This area can be considered the tourist centre of Puducherry. The Canal is mentioned seven times, usually along with explaining the division between the Ville Noire and Ville Blanche. Curiously the Canal is not described as a tourist attraction, it is mostly mentioned in passing. The Lonely Planet calls the Canal an open sewer . The Canal is mostly used as a way to navigate the town by: east of it is the Ville Blanche, west is the Ville Noire.

Many objects mentioned cannot be placed on a map, because they are found all over the town or because they refer to mobile objects. The Lonely Planet (Singh, 2009) – for example – mentions the cheap price of beer and availability of western food as illustrations of the fact that Puducherry is a union territory and was a French colony and the City Direct (Judy Usha Sheila, 2010) mentions the French street names. Map 2.5.1 shows the top nine of objects mentioned that *can* be placed on a map. An asterisk has been added to these in table 2.5.2. Besides single objects and whole areas, the sources also mention a number of specific roads, these are also shown on map 2.5.1. The thicker the line, the more often a road is mentioned. Most roads are mentioned in relation to the Heritage Trail that goes through parts of the Ville Blanche and the Ville Noire. Most sources only mention the heritage trail as an interesting route to follow, without going into specifics. The Lonely Planet guide only mentions the Ville Blanche part of the route. Only the Heritage Trail folder gives additional information about the route and what exactly can be seen on it, but does not mention specific elements. The folder only gives information about the architecture of the buildings along the route. Other sources mention the general atmosphere along the roads. Mahatma Gandhi Road and Nerhu Street are mentioned as the main shopping streets, no attention is given to the buildings along the roads in these cases, even though the Grand Bazaar and a number of old Hindu temples can be found here.

*Objects shown*

Quite a few images did not show any object or area in specific, in fact: of the 136 pictures only 61 show any specific objects or areas and only 16 different objects are areas were shown in the photos. Table 2.5.3 shows the top 5.

| Object or area | Times shown in pictures |
|---|---|
| Goubert avenue | 14 |
| Government Park/Aayimandapam | 7 |
| Mahatma Gandhi statue | 6 |
| Grand Mosque | 4 |
| Manakkula Vinayagar Temple | 4 |

*Table 2.5.3: most shown objects*

Pictures mostly show the Goubert avenue beach road, the adjacent Government Park and the Mahatma Gandhi statue located on Goubert avenue. Curiously enough, the Grand Mosque is shown four times, even though the information in the text regarding this object does not go far beyond a reference to its existence, the mosque is not even visible from a distance, so it is not a landmark either. The Manakkula Vinayagar Temple is also shown four times, although it is mostly the elephant blessing people in front of the temple that is the subject of the photos. The photos show that the animal is a bigger attraction than the temple she is standing in front of. These are also the only pictures with a living creature as the main subject, in other pictures people are just walking by and are never the subject of the picture.

Most pictures do not show an object that can be placed on a map, in it are details, such as one stained glass window or a pile of flower leaves. A lot of images in the Heritage Trail folder are sketches and photos that are used as examples for the architectural information in the text. These buildings can be found along the trail, but this is not mentioned in the text. The captions of these pictures only give the street name the building is on. Other sources do not have captions that provide more information about what is shown on the images.

Van der Vaart's notion of petrification (1998) holds true, the way the population lives today is not shown in the pictures and instead the focus is on old buildings and statues. The amount of images of details and single buildings also show that atomisation and virtualisation are present.
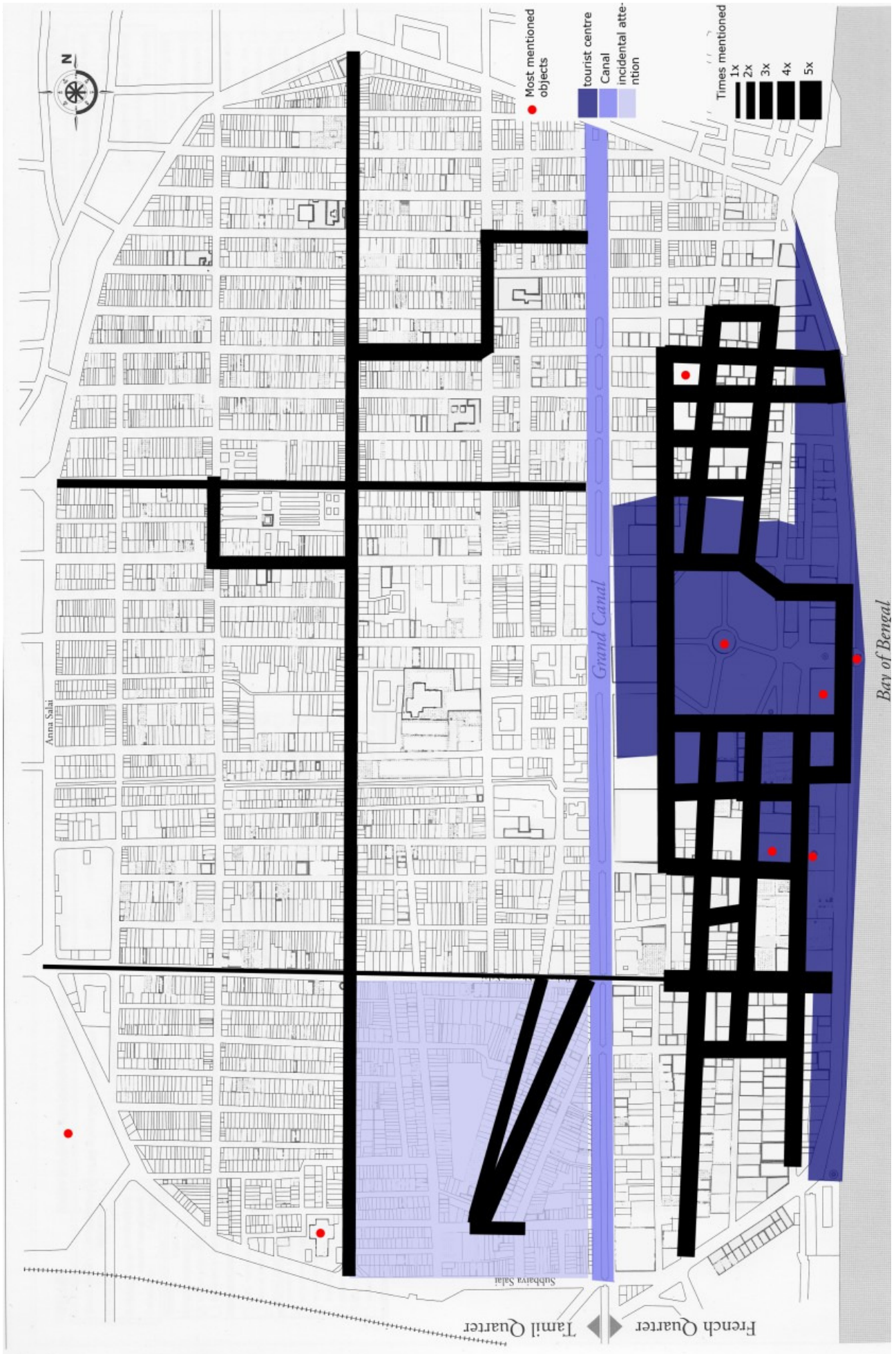
*Map 2.5.1: Tourist attention (original map by INTACH)*

Besides mentioning objects and areas, tourist information can also provide additional information about the age, location, people involved, function, appearance, state of maintenance, building style, reason for creation, development, relation with the surrounding area and the context of the object. Table 2.5.4 shows how many objects and areas are mentioned and of how many of these additional information about any of these subjects is provided.

| Name | Total number of objects and areas mentioned | Number of objects and areas of which extra information is given | Relative (in percentages) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trotter (2006) | 28 | 12 | 42.9 |
| Singh, S. (2009) | 27 | 7 | 25.9 |
| INTACH Pondicherry (2007) | 11 | 8 | 72.7 |
| Kumar, N. (red.) (2010) | 18 | 8 | 44.4 |
| Judy Usha Sheila, S. (2010) | 10 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Pondicherry.com (2010) | 10 | 2 | 20.0 |
| Karthikeyan, G. (2010) | 23 | 18 | 78.3 |
| ACTUPONDY (2010) | 21 | 4 | 19.0 |
| Tourism Department, Puducherry (2010) | 57 | 44 | 77.2 |
| DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010) | 25 | 11 | 44.0 |
| Wikitravel (2010) | 17 | 0 | 0.0 |
| HolidayIQ (2010) | 23 | 5 | 21.7 |
| Pan India Network (2010) | 19 | 15 | 78.9 |
| Srinivas, S. (2010) | 8 | 3 | 37.5 |
| Tourist places in india (2010) | 20 | 3 | 15.0 |
| *Total* | *317* | *140* | *44.2* |

*Table 2.5.4: extra information*

Of more than half the objects and areas mentioned no additional information is offered at all, but even of the objects and areas where extra information is provided, this is often scarce. In many cases only the age, building style of function of the object or area is mentioned. The Tourism Department has put the most effort in discussing objects in areas and what makes them interesting, the department mentions a few basic details about nearly all objects and areas and even describes some of the context of the city and the Ville Noire and Blanche. Karthikeyan, Pan India Network and INTACH also put effort in providing additional information, in the former two cases it is mostly information about the age and function of the building, in addition to other – seemingly randomly picked – factoids. INTACH mostly provides information about architecture.
Other sources provide some additional information, but they do not provide information about the context individual objects and areas can be placed in. Sources mostly mention factoids that seem to have been picked at random.

*Facts wrong*
Unlike the tourist information Van Gorp (2003) analysed there are quite a lot of errors in the information provided, errors range from simple mistakes such as wrong dates and unrealistic words of praise to gross errors and falsifications of history. Listing all of these errors would not be worthwhile, as a lot of mistakes are being made many times over. Instead the common small mistakes are listed in table X.1 and mistakes regarding the building styles will be discussed in more detail below. Unrealistic words of praise are discussed under the header 'romanticizing', mistakes and falsifications in the history under the header 'history'.

| Error | Examples |
|---|---|
| Wrong date | • "De Notre Dame Das [sic] Anges was built in 1952" (Karthikeyan, 2010) - This church was built in the 19th century. |
| Garbled names | • "Notre Dame de'"(Tourism Department, Puducherry, 2010) has to be Notre Dame de l'Immaculée Conception<br>• DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010) mentions one "Napoleon three", this should be Napoleon the Third or Napoleon III. |
| Wrong numbers | • Kumar (2010) writes that the population is 9.73 *lakh*[*] in 2001, but he fails to mention what area this is about. According to the 2001 census (Government of Puducherry, 2010) the total population is 974,345 for the whole Union Territory of Puducherry which encompasses an area many times the size of the city of Puducherry.<br>• Karthikeyan (2010) claims that "the population of this town is 9,73,829[*]" where he gets this number from is unclear and does not compare to any other numbers on Puducherry. |
| Minor errors or simplifications in era before French colonisation | • "In the early 16th century the Portuguese established their supremacy in Pondicherry. They ruled for a while."(Karthikeyan, 2010) – the Portuguese limited themselves to trading and were not interested in ruling over the local population.<br>• HolidayIQ (2010) claims that the Romans lived in the Puducherry region, while evidence only suggests there was trade between the local population and Roman traders. |
| Wrong geography | • DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010) writes: "botanical gardens, which is in the heart of the city" while these gardens are right outside the city centre on the south side of the complete city.<br>• "Pondicherry has a lovely beach, 1.5 kms long, where one can relax, sunbathe, swim or take a stroll along the promenade." (Pan India Network, 2010) there are beaches where one can swim and sunbathe outside of the town, but these do not have a promenade. Vice versa the beach in Puducherry is not good to swim due to the boulders forming a steep curve to descent and sunbathing – especially as a woman – would be rather uncomfortable if not outright dangerous because uncovered shoulders and legs are not accepted.<br>• Karthikeyan (2010) writes that the French "[…] developed an oval shaped, lovely 'boulevard town' – the French quarter.". The complete city centre is oval-shaped, while the French quarter is only one part of the centre. |

*Table 2.5.5: examples of minor errors in tourist information*

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[*] In Indian number notation the dividing mark is placed after two numbers for numbers ranging in the 100,000s and 10,000,000s. This is because of the use of the words *lakh* for 100,000s and *crore* for 10 millions. Example: 160,000,000 becomes 16,00,00,000.

*Building style*

A number of sources make mistakes when it comes to describing building styles or apply the wrong label to some buildings. Although this is relatively minor, it does give wrong information to tourists about historic-geographic heritage.

The REPOS folder (Kumar, 2010) writes that there are three building styles in Puducherry: French, Tamil and Muslim. In reality the Muslim quarter is also built using Tamil traditional architecture (Raja & Nath keshari, 2005). This part of town mostly stands out because it has larger and more luxurious houses. Karthikeyan (2010) claims that the Aayi Mandapam in the centre of the government park is a 'Greco-Roman' building from the 16th century, while in reality this building is a typical example of the neoclassical style and has been constructed in the 19th century to celebrate the introduction of drainage in town. Pan India Network (2010) make a similar mistake when they describe the building styles in town as 'Gothic' and 'Greek-roman'. Karthikeyan (2010) also calls the Ville Blanche a "typical medieval French Township", while the area was not even discovered until well into the Renaissance. DEXTER Travel Solutions (2010) and Pan India Network (2010) both claim that certain buildings are a mix of Tamil and French building styles, while this is not the case. Pan India Network claims that the governor's palace (Raj Nivas) is a mix, while it is clearly a Neoclassical buildings with only some adaptations to the climate. DEXTER Travel Solutions calls the Hindu temples a mix of Tamil and French, while these temples are traditional Tamil-styled buildings.

## 2.6 Conclusions

This chapter answers the following subquestions: *What parts of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry does tourist information pay attention to and to what extent do general criticisms on tourist information regarding style and content hold true for these sources?*

Tourist information focuses on the colonial period of history, mostly paying attention to the era of French rule. Sources do not mention the struggle for independence and wars with England. This selection can be explained from the fact that tourist information has to be concise and the complex history of Puducherry might be too much information for tourists. There is no attention for the negative aspects of French rule, most likely because tourist information is supposed to sell a destination to tourists. When it comes to geography, tourist information only pays attention to the division of Puducherry between the Ville Blanche and Ville Noire, without mentioning how telling this is of the segregation during French rule. Other geographical information is not provided.

Most attention goes to individual objects and details of the town, such as the cobble-stoned roads and street names. These objects and details are not placed in a broader context and appear to function mostly as a list of quaint and surprising objects to peak the interest of tourists. Most objects that are mentioned are buildings and statues, humans and human activity is hardly ever mentioned. One exception to this is the ashram, which is described in detail in nearly every source. Here tourist information describes the philosophy and people behind the ashram in considerable detail.

The expectation that there would be a tourist core area appears to be true: Puducherry has one around the government park and Goubert avenue. Most objects and areas mentioned are in this area. Besides that, the canal and the Muslim quarter receive some attention, but these are mostly mentioned in passing.

In conclusion, tourist information provides a fragmented image of Puducherry with most attention going to single details with no context given. Van der Vaart's (1998) observations mostly hold true: tourist information gives an image of Puducherry that is atomized, petrified and virtualized. However, his observation that images have become more important than text does not hold up: all travel guides did not contain any pictures and the pictures in other sources were mostly unedited snapshots.

The general criticisms on tourist information only hold true to an extent. The employment of a authoritative writing style that leaves no room for doubt can be observed and tourist information

provides a romantic image of the town with hardly any attention given to the negative aspects of it. The Lonely Planet guide is an exception to this: the guide is cynical and appears to have been written in response to other tourist information. The guide makes fun of the romantic descriptions so often found in other sources and instead appears to warn the reader that Puducherry is not as nice as it is made out to be.

The Lonely Planet and other tourist information has been accused of othering in the past, this has been the case in the information analysed in this thesis as well, but with a surprising twist. Instead of describing what makes Puducherry different from the west, it describes what makes it similar to the west. Instead, the surrounding area is described as different and Puducherry is made out to be a safe haven in India. This is a form of double othering: India is different, and Puducherry is different within India. The town is supposed to remind tourists of relaxed French towns and is said to be cleaner and quieter than the rest of India. Following Saïd's observation that othering tells more about the author than about what he describes it can be concluded that tourist information describes India as dirty and noisy and that the countries of origin of tourists are supposed to be clean and quiet. The Lonely Planet's cynical warnings can be seen in this light as well: they directly compare Puducherry to the surrounding province of Tamil Nadu and warn tourists that Puducherry is very comparable to Tamil Nadu.

# Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the following main question: *to what extent does tourist information pay attention to the colonial historic-geographic heritage of Puducherry and to what extent does it pay attention to these historical and geographical dimensions?* To answer this question two subquestions have been formulated: first the colonial historic-geographic heritage Puducherry was described by answering the following question: *What is the historic-geographic story of Puducherry and to what extent is this story still visible in the city centre?* Second the tourist information was described by answering the following question: *What parts of the historic-geographic story of Puducherry does tourist information pay attention to and to what extent do general criticisms on tourist information regarding style and content hold true for these sources?*

The area where Puducherry is today has been inhabited for many centuries, it's rich history has largely been destroyed by French colonizers, who built their own city in the area and called it Pondicherry. This town has been destroyed in the late 18th century, but has been rebuilt in the 18th and 19th century by the French. The current city centre does not show anything about the historic-geographic story of Puducherry from before the destruction. The period after the destruction is still highly visible, with many buildings, building lines, roads and canals still standing. This built heritage shows the colonial history of Puducherry as a dual city with the French living on one side of the canal and the local population on the other and shows visitors many other aspects of the way France managed its colonies. The only feature of a colonial city that is no longer visible is the division between residential and working areas, due to the reuse of buildings it is no longer possible observe this division.

Not only the colonial, but also the post-colonial story of Puducherry is visible: attempts have been made to protect heritage, but – partly – because Puducherry is not as developed as Western-Europe protection is haphazard and easy to circumvent. This struggle can be observed in the ease with which old buildings are destroyed and in the protected buildings that have been renovated in such a way that they are profitable to the owners.

It can be concluded that tourist information does not provide enough information for a tourist to learn about the colonial historic-geographic story. Even the Heritage Trail folder does not go beyond the architectural details and does not mention the stories behind the buildings that are described. There is plenty of attention for fragments that are part of the heritage of Puducherry, but these are hardly placed in any context. Only of less than half of the objects and areas mentioned any kind of additional information is provided, usually about the age, function or apparance. One exception to this is the ashram, of which the history and philosophy are described in considerable detail. However, the ashram can hardly be considered part of the colonial historic-geographic story of Puducherry, it is mostly a contemporary phenomenon.

Tourist information on Puducherry can be described as authoritative and prone to romanticizing. Tourist information has been accused of *othering* in the past: the destination is described as exotic and different from the countries tourists come from. This is also the case in Puducherry, but instead of describing Puducherry as different, it is described as similar to quiet and clean French towns, instead the surrounding area is described as different, noisy and dirty. Tourist information describes India as different, and Puducherry as different in India. The information mostly focuses on the positive (The Lonely Planet being an exception that focuses more on the negatives), this has to be expected, as most information was written with the implicit goal to attract tourists to Puducherry.

These conclusions are mostly the same as those in earlier research, the observations that tourist information is written to attract tourists and that the information offered is superficial and only focuses on details are the same. Tourists who only read tourist information will not learn about the historic-geographic story of Puducherry, for that additional information is required.

# English summary

Puducherry is a city in the south of India, a few hours from Chennai. The city is an old French colony and even though the French have left over half a century ago, the city still holds many relics of the French occupation. This has made the city a tourist attraction (the tourist industry is one of the biggest industries of the city (Indian Bank, 2007)).

The remains of the French occupation are worth protecting, because they can tell a lot about the history of the area and the way colonial cities have developed. Tourism can be considered one of the most effective ways to protect this, because tourists visit this destination specifically to look at this heritage, if the heritage would go away, so would the tourists (Li, 2003). Urry (2003) and other researchers argue that tourists are led by the tourist information that they collect before or during their trip. Tourist information leads the gaze of tourists during their trip: they pay attention to the elements that have been described and will visit these elements. It is interesting to consider what image is created of Puducherry, because it is telling of the reasons why tourists will visit the city. This information can be used to develop heritage.

Prior research on tourist information by – among others – Van der Vaart (1998) and Van Gorp (2003) shows that it only focuses on details and fragments and does not provide any context. The information focuses almost exclusively on one core area and only pays sporadic attention to the rest of the city.

To learn to what extent tourist information pays attention to the historic-geographic story of Puducherry, this story will first describe this story and will then describe to what extent this is still visible in the city centre. The second part will describe the tourist information and will discuss the extent to which this pays attention to the history and geography of Puducherry and in what ways this information is provided. Previous research shows that tourist information is often authoritarian in tone, leaves no room for doubt and only pays attention to the positive aspects of town, this is done to attract tourists (Lew, 1991)

The following main question will be answered: *to what extent does tourist information pay attention to the colonial historic-geographic heritage of Puducherry and to what extent does it pay attention to these historical and geographical dimensions?*

To answer the above question first the historic-geographic history of Puducherry has been described based on secondary sources, after which an inventory of all colonial heritage in the city centre has been conducted (see map 1.5.1). Based on this inventory it can be concluded that large parts of the historic-geographic story can still be observed in the city centre, the town can be considered a typical example of French colonial city.

Tourist information has been analysed by way of a content analysis, 18 sources have been collected and analysed. The following data has been collected: what parts of town are named, what extra information is provided about these, what is the writing style and what is the general tone of the information? It can be concluded that tourist information does not provide enough information for a tourist to learn about the colonial historic-geographic story. The information mostly focuses on details and fragments and does not provide context with these. It mostly focuses on one small tourist core area (see map 2.5.1) and only pays sporadic attention to objects and areas outside the core.

The writing style of tourist information is authoritarian and leaves no room for doubt and other interpretations, attention is almost exclusively given to the positive aspects of the town. These conclusions are not surprising, most information is developed with the implicit goal to attract tourists, if there had been too much information for the negative aspects, tourists would have been scared away. The information mostly focuses on what makes the city different from the rest of India, this is a form of double othering: India is described as different and Puducherry is described

as different from India. Puducherry is described as quiet and clean, while the rest of India is mostly described as busy and dirty. Again: this is not surprising, by describing the city as a kind of safe haven it will attract tourists who want to get away from busy and dirty India for a short while

The conclusion of this research is that the colonial historic-geographic story of Puducherry plays no role of importance in tourist information. Fragments of this story do play a role in the information, but these are not placed in a larger context. Tourist information mostly focuses on attracting tourists by describing the quiet and clean image of the town. Heritage tourists will not be able to learn about the history and geography of Puducherry if they only read tourist information.

# Dutch summary

Puducherry is een stad in het zuiden van India, een paar uur rijden vanaf Chennai. De stad is een oude Franse kolonie en hoewel de Fransen al meer dan een halve eeuw geleden de stad hebben teruggegeven aan de Indiërs is er nog veel terug te zien van de Franse bezetting in het stadscentrum. Om deze reden is de stad een toeristische attractie (de toerisme-industrie is één van de grootste industrieën van de stad (Indian Bank, 2007)).

De resten van de Franse bezetting zijn het beschermen waard, omdat het veel vertelt over de geschiedenis van het gebied en er veel te leren is over de manier waarop koloniale steden zich hebben ontwikkeld. Toerisme kan worden gezien als één van de effectiefste methodes om dit te beschermen, omdat toeristen specifiek naar een gebied trekken om erfgoed te aanschouwen, als het erfgoed zou verdwijnen, zouden ook de toeristen verdwijnen (Li, 2003). Urry (2002) en andere onderzoekers beargumenteren dat toeristen zich laten leiden door toeristische informatie die zij voor of tijdens hun reis verzamelen. Toeristische informatie stuurt de blik van toeristen tijdens hun reis: ze letten op de elementen die van te voren zijn aangegeven in de informatie die zij hebben verzameld. Tijdens hun reis zullen ze deze elementen opzoeken. Het is om deze reden interessant om te kijken wat voor beeld er van Puducherry wordt geschept, omdat aan de hand daarvan kan worden gekeken waar toeristen voor naar de stad komen.

Eerder onderzoek naar toeristische informatie door onder andere Van der Vaart (1998) en Van Gorp (2003) laat zien dat deze zich vooral richt op losse fragmenten en details en niet de moeite neemt deze van context te voorzien. De informatie richt zich bijna exclusief op één kerngebied en heeft weinig tot geen aandacht voor de rest van een stad.

Om te zien in hoeverre toeristische informatie aandacht besteedt aan het historisch-geografisch verhaal van Puducherry wordt in dit onderzoek eerst dit verhaal beschreven, daarna wordt nagegaan in hoeverre dit verhaal nog is te zien in het stadscentrum. Het tweede deel beschrijft de toeristische informatie en gaat na in hoeverre deze aandacht besteedt aan de historie en geografie van Puducherry en op welke wijze informatie wordt medegedeeld. Uit eerder onderzoek blijkt dat toeristische informatie veelal autoritair van toon is, geen ruimte laat voor twijfel en enkel aandacht heeft voor het positieve en deze rooskleurig verbeeldt in woord en beeld om toeristen te trekken (Lew, 1991).

Uiteindelijk zal de volgende hoofdvraag worden beantwoord: *In hoeverre besteedt toeristische informatie aandacht aan het koloniaal historisch-geografisch verhaal van Puducherry en in hoeverre besteedt het aandacht aan deze historische en geografische dimensies?*

Om bovenstaande vragen te kunnen beantwoorden is onderzoek uitgevoerd naar het historisch-geografisch verhaal van Puducherry en de zichtbaarheid daarvan in het stadscentrum. Dit is gedaan door eerst het verhaal te beschrijven aan de hand van secondaire bronnen en daarna door het stadscentrum te lopen en al het koloniaal erfgoed van de stad te inventariseren (zie kaart 1.5.1). Aan de hand van deze inventarisatie kan worden geconcludeerd dat Puducherry een stad is waar nog grote delen van historisch-geografisch verhaal zijn terug te zien. De stad kan worden gezien als een duidelijk voorbeeld van een typische Franse koloniale stad.

De toeristische informatie is geanalyseerd door middel van een inhoudsanalyse, er zijn 18 bronnen van toeristische informatie verzameld: bestaande uit reisgidsen, folders en websites. Van deze bronnen is bijgehouden welke objecten er worden genoemd, wat voor extra informatie daarbij wordt gegeven, wat voor schrijfstijl er wordt gebruikt en wat de algemene toon van de informatie is. Op basis van deze analyse kan worden geconcludeerd dat de informatie over Puducherry onvoldoende handvatten biedt om het historisch-geografisch verhaal van de stad te begrijpen en dat toeristische informatie zich vooral richt op losse details en fragmenten zonder context te scheppen. Informatie

richt zich op een klein toeristisch kerngebied (zie kaart 2.5.1) en biedt alleen sporadisch aandacht aan attracties en gebieden buiten dit gebied.

Toeristische informatie is autoritair van toon en laat geen ruimte voor twijfel en andere interpretaties. Ook is er vooral aandacht voor het positieve en wordt de stad door een roze bril bekeken. Dit is niet verwonderlijk, de meeste informatie is ontwikkeld met het impliciete doel om toeristen aan te trekken, als er te veel aandacht zou zijn geweest voor negatieve kanten van de stad zou dat toeristen kunnen afschrikken. De informatie richt zich vooral op wat de stad anders maakt dan de rest van India, dit is een vorm van dubbele *othering*: India wordt beschreven als *anders* dan de landen waar toeristen vandaan komen en Puducherry wordt beschreven als *anders* dan India. Puducherry wordt beschreven als rustig en schoon, terwijl de rest van India vooral als druk en vies wordt omschreven. Dit is wederom niet verwonderlijk: door Puducherry als een soort van veilige haven te beschrijven zullen toeristen eerder naar de stad trekken om het vieze en drukke India voor korte tijd te ontvluchten.

De conclusie van dit onderzoek is dat het koloniaal historisch-geografisch verhaal van Puducherry geen rol speelt in toeristische informatie. Onderdelen van dit verhaal spelen wel een rol in de informatie, maar deze worden niet van context voorzien. Toeristische informatie richt zich vooral op het aantrekken van toeristen door het rustige en schone imago van de stad te benadrukken. Erfgoed toeristen zullen aan de hand van toeristische informatie echter niets leren over het historisch-geografisch verhaal van de stad.

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