

# MEDITERRANEAN RESORTS: A STUDY OF CONTRASTING TOURIST DESTINATIONS



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## **MEDITERRANEAN RESORTS: A STUDY OF CONTRASTING TOURIST DESTINATIONS**

### **TEACHERS' NOTES**

- A comparative survey of two very different tourist destinations. **La Grand Motte** - one of the purpose-built resort developments dating from the 1960s - caters to the yachting fraternity of the Mediterranean as well as the holiday apartment market. It contains a wide variety of tourist facilities housed within a modernist architectural setting. **Aigues Mortes** - a walled medieval city, originally on the coast but now inland, served as both departure point for crusades and major trading port and provides a complete contrast.
- It offers a very different range of tourist facilities and attracts a quite different market. Comparisons are made between the built environments of the two places, the services they provide and the number and origins of visitors.
- The journey to the coast from the Eagle's Nest takes about 3 hours (depending on the time of year) so it is worth combining this study with some other units that are based in the same region. Options include
  - Sand dune management
  - Tourism at Pont du Gard
  - Managing Nature Reserves

### **REFERENCE TEXTS**

Burton S and Jeanes A., (1997) '*Central Southern France*' Hodder and Stoughton

## INTRODUCTION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

There has been a tremendous explosion in opportunities for leisure in the developed world since 1950. This has occurred because of a decrease in the length of the working week, an increase in the length of annual paid holidays, rises in real incomes, improved provision of leisure facilities such as golf courses and swimming pools, cheaper and quicker transport, and a fall in the cost of trips abroad because of the development of mass tourism and package holidays.

Studies of recreation and tourism will normally consider two aspects of the subject:-

The fact that recreation and tourism are concentrated in both time and space e.g. beach resorts are crowded in the summer but quiet in the winter. This concentration in time and space will imply that there will be intense pressure on the popular areas having a resulting impact on the environment.

The Lower Rhone region has been transformed in the last few decades. After World War II the Rhone was a difficult river to navigate and the delta area was an economic cul-de-sac - with limited economic activity and a sparse population. To the east of the delta is the port of Marseille, this was highly active but served national demands rather than acting as a stimulus for the regional economy. To the west, traditional agricultural methods were dominant, with a mono-cultural landscape of viticulture. The upland areas surrounding the valley and delta had poor agricultural economies and suffered from high rates of rural depopulation. Apart from Marseille, the urban structure was that of small/medium sized towns with stagnating industry. The overall landscape impression in the 1950's was one of traditionalism and decay although the abundant natural resources gave the area great potential. These resources included the enormous power of the river and its potential as a source of irrigation as well as the hot sunny climate and long expanse of Mediterranean coastline. By 1980 the Lower Rhone region was a striking contrast to the post war impression - the waters of the Rhone had been harnessed, motorways had been built, irrigation and industrial projects had been implemented.

Tourism has been a major development in this area. In 1963 the government took a decision to create a series of new tourist complexes along the coast. This initiative arose for a number of reasons.

- The sudden expansion of tourism in the 1950's, both by the French population and by foreign visitors, found France under-equipped in terms of accommodation and facilities compared to Spain and Italy. This was a threat to France's traditional source of valuable foreign exchange.

- Secondly, whilst other tourist areas were becoming increasingly congested and expensive the 200km of the sandy coastline to the west of the Rhone lay virtually empty.
- Thirdly, the promotion of tourism was seen as part of a general need to improve communications, attract investment, and create new employment in the Languedoc area. The specific causes of underdevelopment on the coast were the lack of roads in a zone punctuated by large lagoons and swampy marshes that were mosquito infested during the summer and lacked supplies of fresh water.

The Inter-Ministerial Mission established in 1963, backed by central funds, proceeded to purchase large expanses of land and to delimit areas of controlled development. It was the task of the Mission to prepare a detailed physical plan for the coastline and to direct its implementation. The plan was completed in 1964 and consisted of 6 new tourist units. A number were additions to existing units whilst others were completely new complexes on the government acquired land. A target capacity of 400,000 visitors was set, including 250,000 to be accommodated in the new complexes, together with the moorings for 10,000 boats. In order to minimise the environmental impact that would have resulted from a motorway being built along the coast, the tourist units were to be linked by spurs to the main inland motorway, and urban development between the units was to be restrained (see Figure 1). Similarly, a programme of afforestation was to be started in the immediate hinterland, and the recreational use of the lagoons exploited under controls.

The implementation of the plan has been achieved under a three tier administrative structure. The Inter-Ministerial Mission has retained overall responsibility while the local authorities have assisted in dual carriageway construction and fly eradication programmes and the installing of fresh water. The task of laying out the new resorts was delegated to Local Development Corporations backed by government and local funds. The private sector has been responsible for the final construction of apartments, hotels, villas and commercial facilities. The buildings must conform to the official plan for the resort, but may be sold on the open market.

## **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

### **LA GRANDE MOTTE**

La Grande Motte is an example of one of the tourist units built on Government acquired land. Construction began in 1965 with a target accommodation for 42 000 persons and a mooring capacity for 1000 boats. The resort was inaugurated in 1967 with the new yacht basin and marina as its focus.

The resort consists of pyramidal blocks - the ground floor being occupied by commercial establishments and the upper storeys are apartments. The central zone is largely pedestrianised. Surrounding the apartments is an arc of campsites, individual villas, open spaces and recreational amenities together with 'holiday villages'.

The success of the complex is in part due to its ease of access following the construction of link carriageways to the inland motorway and proximity of regional airports at Nîmes and Montpellier. However, there is concern that the economic success of the resort is threatened as many of the properties are now owned by multi-national firms. This means that most of the profits go to the parent company and are not necessarily re-invested in the region and that employment is seasonal.

	1968	1975	1982	1990	1999	2006
Population	56	2165	3939	5016	6458	8202

### **AIGUES MORTES**

Aigues Mortes (Dead Waters), originally the site of a port was developed as a walled town in the 13th century by St Louis. It was completely surrounded by marshes and lagoons and therefore protected from overland invasion or enemy attack from the sea.

Recent changes in the rate of deposition have resulted in the silting up of the Lower Rhone region, resulting in Aigues Mortes being 3 km inland from the shoreline. In the late 1960's/early '70's, it was developed as a destination for tourists providing an alternative to the modern resorts on the coast.

	1968	1975	1982	1990	1999	2005
Population	4197	4531	4472	4999	6012	6798

FIGURE 1: URBAN DEVELOPMENT ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST (INSET GRANDE-MOTTE)

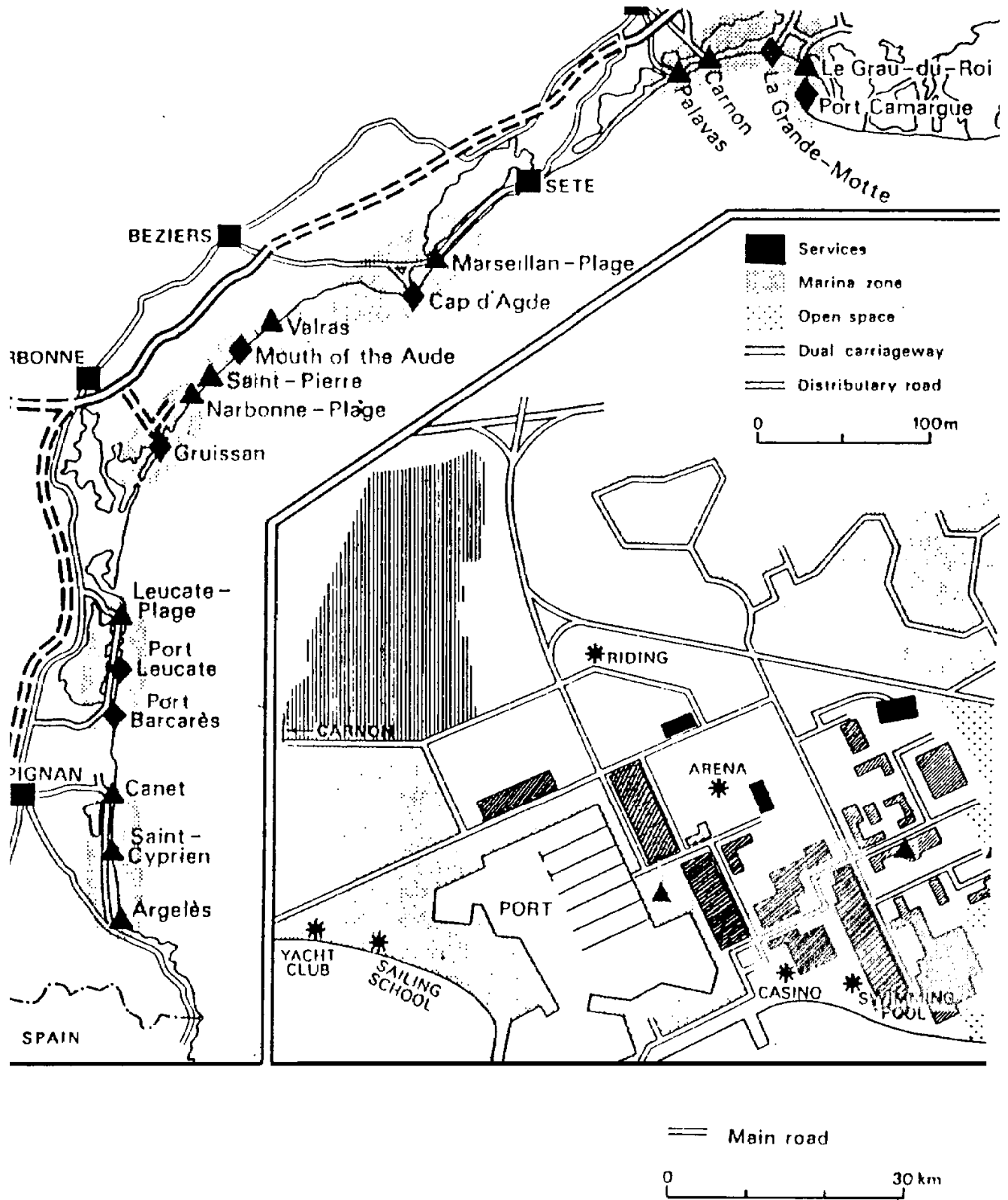
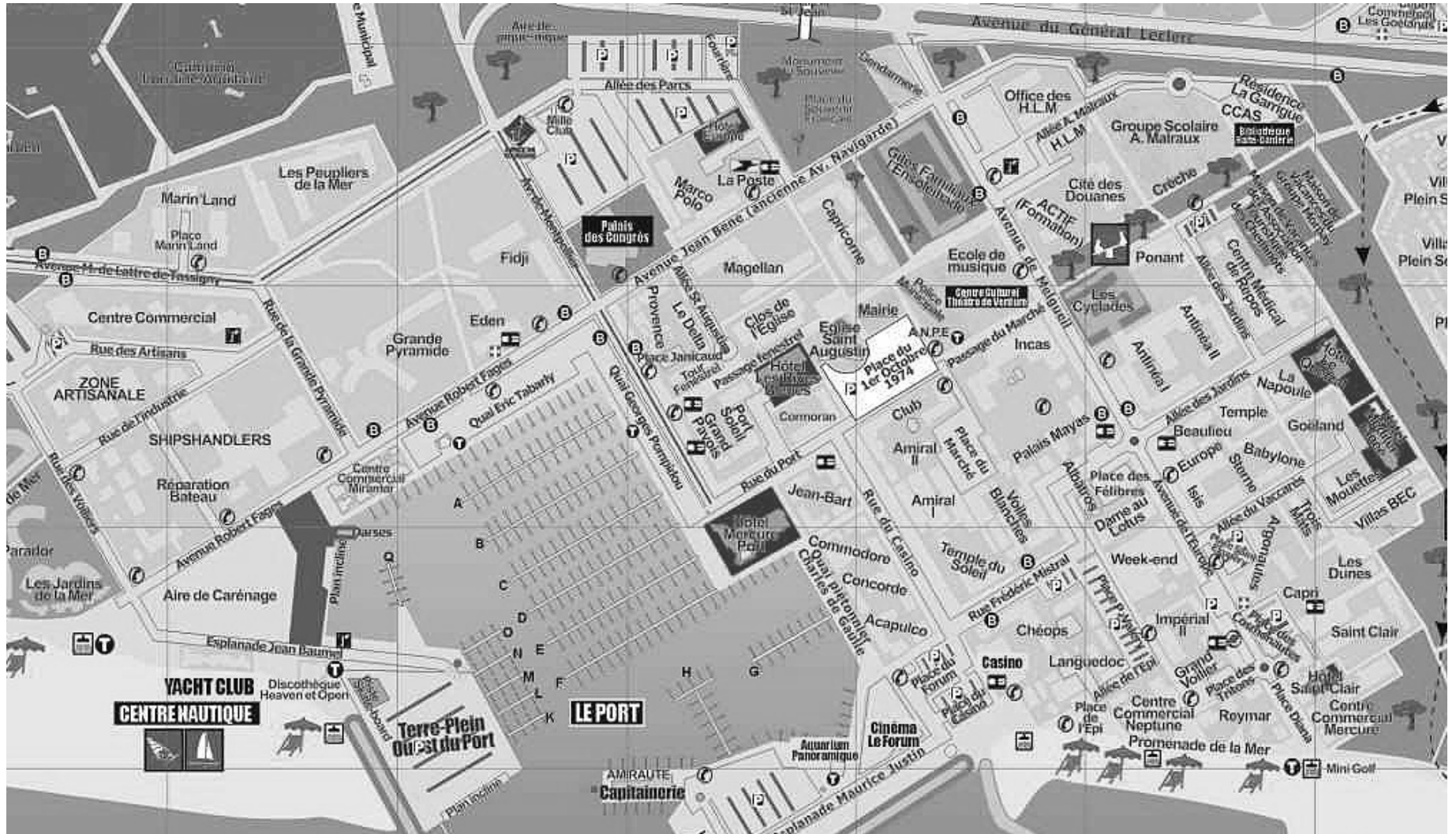


FIGURE 2 – THE MARINA AT LA GRANDE MOTTE



## **AIMS**

1. To investigate the built environment of La Grande Motte and Aigues Mortes.
2. To investigate the facilities available for tourists in La Grande Motte and Aigues Mortes.
3. To determine the origin and numbers of visitors to both resorts.

## **HYPOTHESES**

1. The tourist facilities in La Grande Motte are of a higher order than in Aigues Mortes.
2. Both resorts have a high quality environment
3. More coach parties visit Aigues Mortes than La Grande Motte
4. Le Grande Motte appeals to regular long stay tourists, while Aigues Mortes attracts 'once only' short stay tourists.

## **METHOD AND ORGANISATION OF STUDY**

- At each location, using a base map (APPENDIX 1A and 1B), survey the facilities available to tourists and mark on the map. Mark each function high, medium or low order, depending on the price and quality of the goods/service.
- Carry out a landscape perception study using the bi-polar semantic chart (APPENDIX 2) at ten points in each location (APPENDIX 2A AND 2B)
- At the car parks marked on the respective maps count the number of coaches.
- Carry out at least five questionnaires (APPENDIX 3A and 3B) in La Grande Motte and Aigues Mortes.

## **DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS**

**The tourist facilities at La Grande Motte are of a higher order than at Aigues Mortes. (Hypothesis 1)**

- Make a neat copy of your land-use maps. Calculate the percentage of tourist facilities in each town that are high, medium or low order. Does La Grande Motte have a higher percentage of high and medium order goods than Aigues Mortes? Discuss possible reasons for your results?

**Both resorts have a high quality environment (Hypothesis 2)**

- Re-draw the bi-polar semantic chart with all value '1' on the same side. Calculate a mean score from each word pairing, draw a line joining up successive values for the two towns. Are the results similar for each town? Discuss possible reasons for your results.

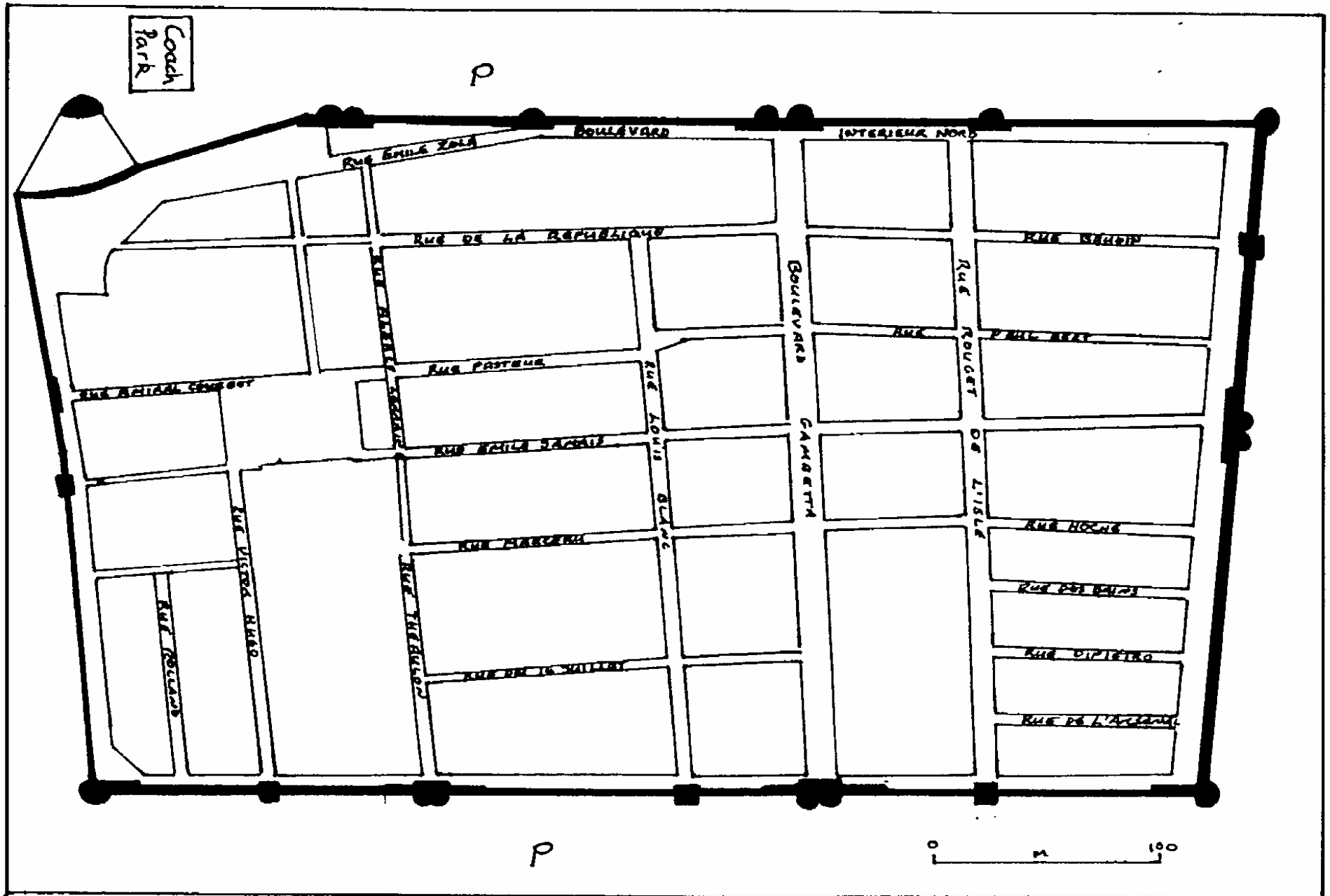
**Aigues Mortes attracts more coach parties than La Grande Motte (Hypothesis 3)**

- Draw a bar chart to illustrate the results of your coach park surveys. Does Aigues Mortes have more coaches than La Grande Motte? What might be the significance of this finding?

**Le Grande Motte appeals to regular long stay tourists, while Aigues Mortes attracts 'once only' short stay tourists.**

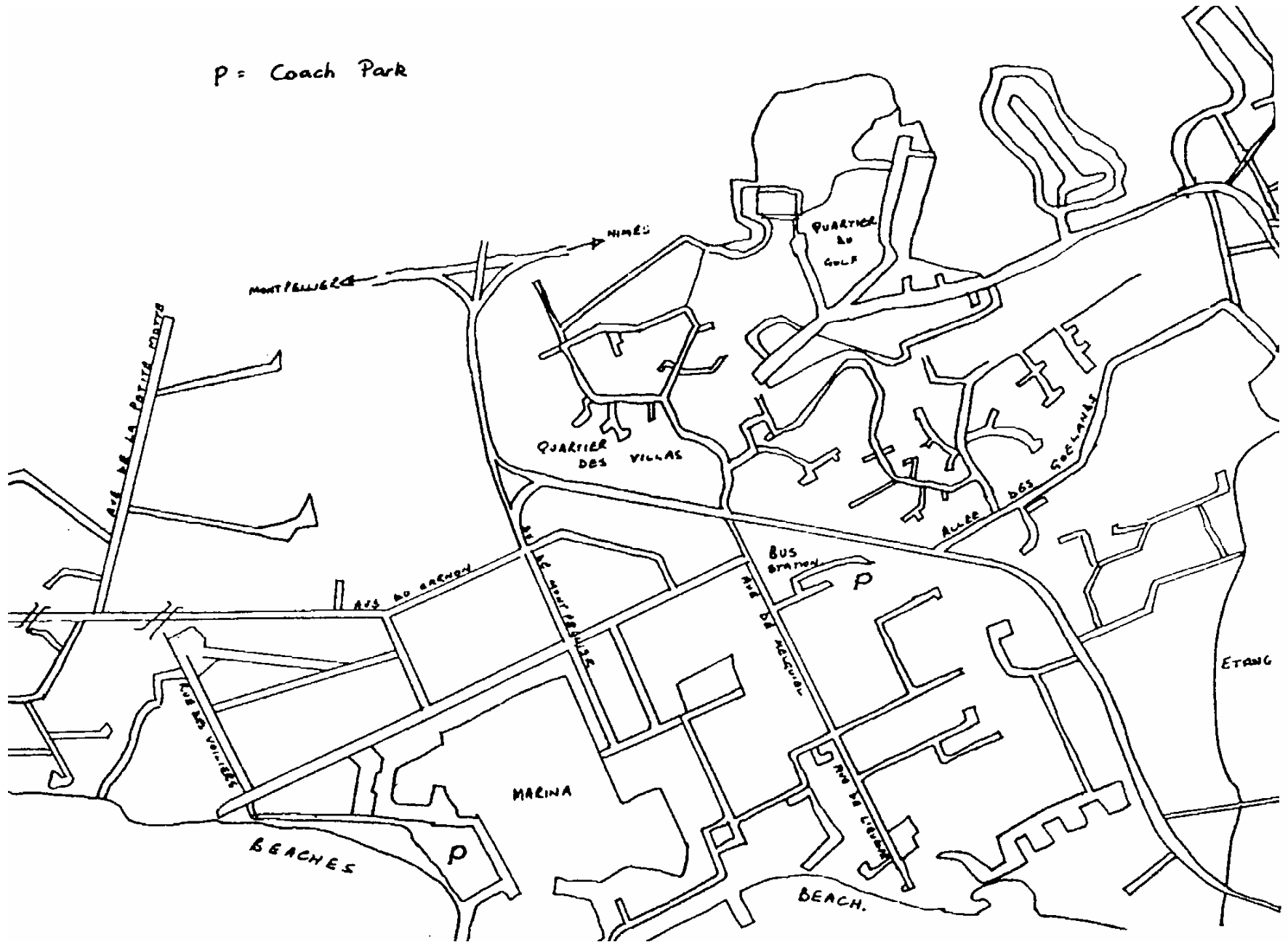
- Tabulate the results of your questionnaires for each town.

APPENDIX 1A : STREET PLAN OF AIGUES MORTES



APPENDIX 1B: STREET PLAN OF LA GRANDE MOTTE

P = Coach Park



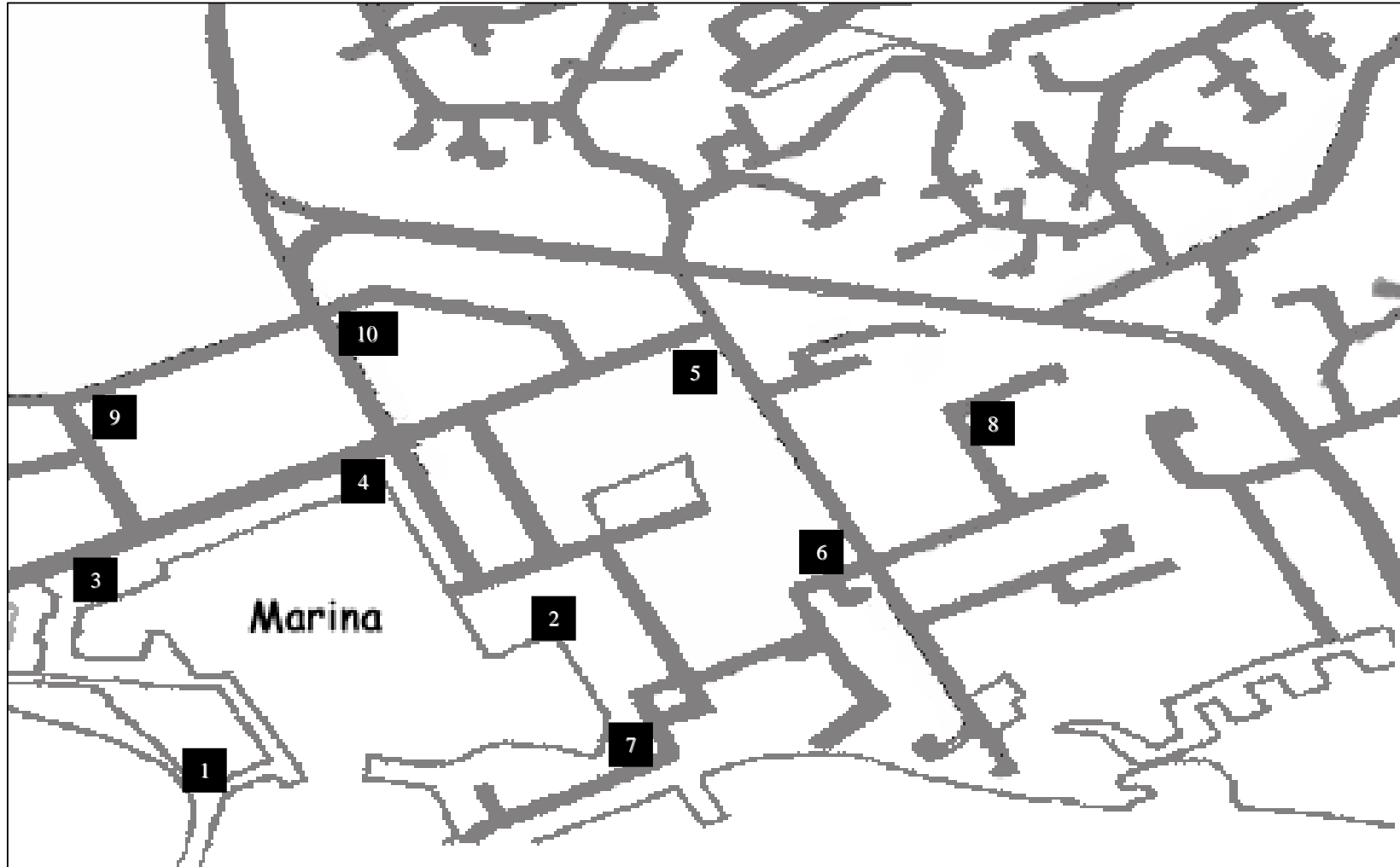
**APPENDIX 2: RECORDING SHEET: Bipolar Semantic Differential Scales**

Settlement .....

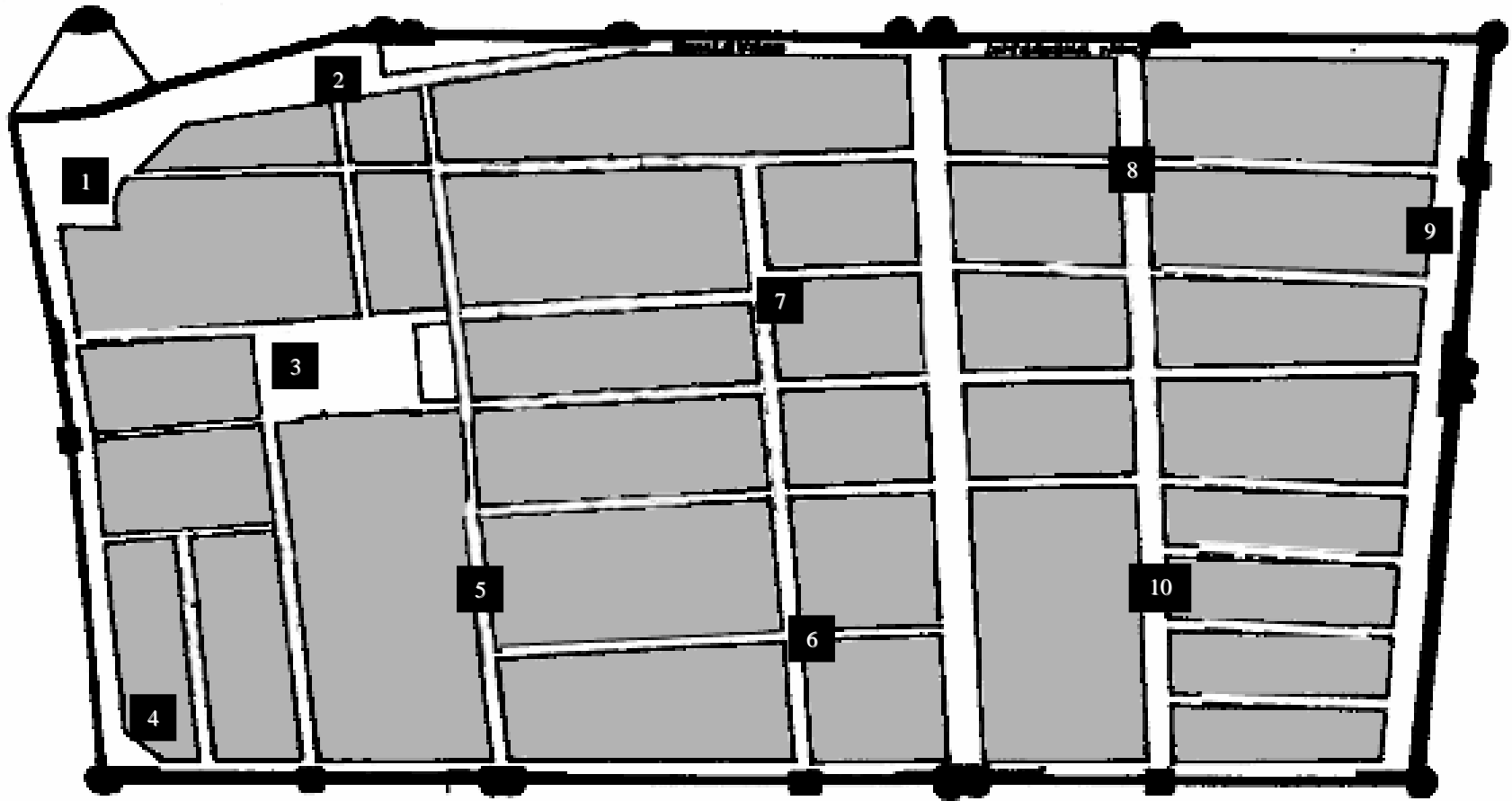
Bipolar Semantic Scales									Site:										Total	Mean					
									1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10							
Unemotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Emotional																	
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Beautiful																	
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting																	
Dull	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bright																	
Discord	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Harmony																	
Cold	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Warm																	
Hard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Soft																	
Frustrating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Satisfying																	
Public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Private																	
Dislike	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Like																	
Unstimulating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stimulating																	
Empty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Full																	
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pleasant																	
Disruptive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Peaceful																	
Colourless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Colourful																	
Disordered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ordered																	
Simple	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Complex																	

Remember to evaluate your technique. What problems are there in using a technique such as this?

APPENDIX 2A – BIPOLAR SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE SURVEY POINTS (LA GRANDE MOTTE)



APPENDIX 2A – BIPOLAR SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL SCALE SURVEY POINTS (AIGUES MORTES)



**APPENDIX 3A: GRANDE MOTTE / AIGUES MORTES /STE MARIE DE LA MER TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)**

I am a student from Great Britain doing a survey on tourists in La Grand Motte / Aigues Mortes. I would be grateful if you would spare a few minutes to complete this questionnaire.

1. Where do you live? .....

2. Have you been to La Grande Motte/ Aigues Mortes before? Yes.....

No.....

If yes, how many times? .....

1. Why are you here today?

a) On holiday.....

b) On business.....

c) Have a second home here.....

d) Have a boat moored here.....

e) Other (please specify).....

2. If you are on holiday here, did you

a) Come on a coach tour.....

b) Travel with a tour company, but not on a coach tour.....

c) Travel independently.....

3. Did you come here

a) For the proximity to the coast.....

b) For the boating facilities.....

c) For the shops.....

d) For cultural / historic reasons.....

e) Other reasons (Please Specify).....

**APPENDIX 3B: GRANDE MOTTE / AIGUES MORTES / STE MARIE DE LA MER TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE (FRENCH)**

Bonjour monsieur / Madam, je suis étudiant(e) Briannique et je fais un enquête géograpique sur tourisme à La Grande Motte / Aigues Morte. Auriez-vous la gentillesse de répondre à quelques questions?

1. Où habitez-vous? .....
2. Est-ce que vous avez visité(e) La Grande Motte / Aigues Mortes avant? Oui.....  
Non.....  
Si oui, combien de fois? .....
3. Pourquoi est-ce que vous êtes ici aujourd'hui?
  - a) En touriste.....
  - b) Pour affaires.....
  - c) Vous avez un mason de vacances ici.....
  - d) Vous avez un bateau amarré ici.....
  - e) Autre raisons (Spécifier, s.v.p.).....
4. Si vous êtes ici en touriste, est-ce que vous
  - a) Faites un voyage organisé en autocar.....
  - b) Faites un voyage organisé, mais pas en autocar.....
  - c) Voyagez indépendamment.....
5. Est-ce que vous avez décidé de venir ici
  - a) Parce que c'est près de la côté.....
  - b) A cause des installations des bateaux.....
  - c) A cause des magasins.....
  - d) Pour les raisons culturelles / historique.....
  - e) Autre raisons (Spécifier, s.v.p.).....

### Appendix 3C: Grande Motte/Aigues Mortes Tourist Questionnaire Summary

Group.....

	Question no.	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Questionnaire No.	Where do you live?	Have you been here before?	If yes, how many times?	Why are you here today? (a – e)	If you are on holiday here, did you: (a – c)	Did you come here: (a – e)
<b>La Grande Motte</b>	1		Yes / No				
	2		Yes / No				
	3		Yes / No				
	4		Yes / No				
	5		Yes / No				
<b>Aigues Morte</b>	6		Yes / No				
	7		Yes / No				
	8		Yes / No				
	9		Yes / No				
	10		Yes / No				

Appendix 4: Map of Ste Marie de la Mer.



Appendix 5: Map of Ste Marie de la Mer showing bipolar survey locations.

