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URBAN INTERVENTION ON THE COASTLINE OF CATALUNYA. A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF TOURISM

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Keywords: waterfront; urban planning and tourism; urban law; tourism development.

Abstract

This article presents a brief summary of the relationship between tourism, urban law and municipal planning in Spain. It sets out the arguments which led to a change of model in a new era of tourism, although other forms of tourism have not yet replaced Fordist mass tourism, which remains hegemonic.

Furthermore, it exposes several cases which illustrate how territorial planning helped review and amend some harmful provisions for the rampant urbanization of the Catalan coast. This attitude points to a qualitative change of mature vacation spots. These cases are preceded by a presentation of an unusual counter-proposal for the protection of the coastline of Tarragona, carried out at the beginning of the 1980s.

Resumen

El artículo presenta un breve resumen del paralelismo entre el fenómeno del turismo, la legislación de ordenación del territorio y la planificación urbanística municipal en España. En él se establecen los argumentos que han conducido a un cambio de modelo en una nueva era del turismo, aunque éste no haya reemplazado ni eliminado el turismo de masas de la etapa fordista, el cual sigue siendo hegemónico.

Se presentan, además, diversos casos ilustrativos de cómo, a través del planeamiento, se han podido reconducir proyecciones agresivas de la urbanización sobre el litoral catalán, apuntando hacia a un cambio cualitativo de los destinos turísticos maduros. Estos casos vienen

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precedidos por una propuesta sorprendente para proteger un sector de la costa de Tarragona en los años 80.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s, many municipalities in our country experienced an explosive growth at a galloping pace. This was due to the expansion of tourism, which was propelled by the advent of paid holidays, mass production of the SEAT 600 car and affordable prices for foreign tourists. The rapid growth continued in the 1970s, causing irreversible damage to a large part of the Spanish coastline.

Those were years of constant pressure and demands which led to a boom in tourism and construction. There was a strong impulse to build in order to accommodate the greatest possible number of tourists at any cost, in accordance with a firm commitment of the Franco regime to obtain the revenue needed for neutralizing Spain's commercial deficit, as it can be deduced from the Law 197/1963.² The slogan *Spain is different* was the characteristic claim of mass tourism, a phenomenon hitherto unimaginable in our country, which had brought 11 million tourists to Spain by 1963. In this context, territorial and urban planning failed to keep pace with rampant development pressure.

Consequently, many municipalities drafted planning documents that could be described as *expansionist* to accommodate new tourist facilities. Many of these plans classified vast areas as suitable for development, without taking into account unique natural features and landscapes, especially along the coast. Furthermore, these plans were boosted by permissive policy towards development and land consumption, in order to promote tourism and encourage investments in private property. 1969 Coastal Act (Ley de Costas) - the first national coastal planning act approved in Spain - explicitly prioritized these objectives, instead of the preservation of ecosystems.

Within the coastal public domain the Act distinguished: the beaches, the coastal strip, bounded by the reach of sea waves in the worst known storms, and the territorial sea, including all its natural resources.

The explicit consent to the presence of private property, nestled on coastal land, expressed in the Act is surprising. This possibility was granted *without prejudice to acquired rights* from the moment the land was classified as public domain (Art 1). Thus, among other atrocities, the Article 5.3 of 1969 Act states that the land reclaimed from the sea, as a direct or indirect result of construction works, would become a private property of entities that had carried them out. In this way many enclaves of the Spanish coast became privately owned (Torres-Alfosea, 2010). Furthermore, it took eleven years to adopt the Regulations of the Coastal Act. Although the applicability of the Act was unclear for a decade, this wavering situation was never too worrying for Franco regime.

² A legislative act 197/1963 (passed on December 28, 1963) which regulated areas and centers of national tourist interest.

The outcome of this lack of sensitivity was a bleak picture. Today, it is difficult to find an area of coastline that was circumvented by the development fever, which pushed the property sector to engage in speculative investment on the coast until the restoration of democracy at the end of the 1970s. Since then, many of the planning documents that had been drawn up under 1956 *Ley de Suelo* - the national Land Act - have been reviewed. The impact of the 1973 oil crisis contributed to these reviews by slowing down the expansive dynamic of the construction and, with it, the urbanization pressure. The lack of rigour in 1956 Land Act marked a period characterized by the erratic enforcement and continuous misinterpretations of its loopholes. Only with the arrival of democracy and the approval of the 1975 Land Act and its regulations concerning planning and territorial management, ratified by Royal Decree in 1978, many of the planning documents in force, based on inaccurate demographic trends and allowing abundant tax revenues, were reviewed and their provisions for excessive urban growth reduced.

Step by step, the collective awareness of the need to protect the coastline was raised and new amendments of the 1978 Spanish Constitution had to face the issue of private property, legally acquired while 1969 Coastal Act was in force, in the terrains that should have been publicly owned. But only ten years later, with the approval of 1988 Coastal Act and its 1989 Regulations, the qualitative step towards the active protection of the Spanish coast was finally made. The new regulations, revolutionary for the time, greatly expanded the public domain and defined four landward zones adjacent to coastal public property, as follows (Torres-Alfosea, 2010):

- The *protected area* (servidumbre de protección) would occupy a 20m wide strip of land, measured from the inland limit of the shore on urban land or developable land with approved planning documents, and 100m strip on non-developable land or developable land without approved planning documents. This area has replaced *easement of salvage* (servidumbre de salvamento) of the 1969 Coastal Act. Residential and hotel development were forbidden within this area.

- The *access passage area* (servidumbre de tránsito), specially designed for seafront promenades (Articles 27 and 44.5 of the Act), is a 6m wide strip from the edge of the public domain to the interior but it could reach up to 20m in places where traffic is difficult or dangerous (i.e. to access coves at the bottom of a cliff). It has replaced the former *easement of vigilance* (servidumbre de vigilancia litoral). Building in this area was generally prohibited, and it could be authorized only in case that no alternate locations could be provided.

- The *area of free public access to the sea* (servidumbre de acceso al mar) which replaced the previous *easement of passage* (servidumbre de paso), granted free public access to coast every 200m for pedestrians and every 500m for waste management, surveillance or rescue vehicles in urbanized areas.

In addition, the article 30 of the Act determined that all future territorial and urban plans for land included in the *zone of influence* - an area with a minimum width of 500 m. from the landward limit, must respect the following principles for the protection of the Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain: a) In stretches with beach, accessible for vehicles, sufficient land must be reserved for car parks, to guarantee parking outside the *access passage area*; b) Buildings should be adapted to the provisions of planning legislation, in order to avoid screens of buildings or over-

development on the coastline. Building density must never exceed the average allowed for developable land suitable or earmarked for development in the municipal area.

In this way, a new urban planning model that sought to displace construction activity away from the coastline towards the interior was imposed and, eventually, it became a conditioning factor for the revision of urban planning documents at all levels.

Awareness raising initiatives were further boosted in 1987, after the publication of the The Brundtland Report by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, which highlights the degradation of ecosystems, including the coastline among the most fragile ones, and especially after the celebration of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the theoretical bases for the sustainable development were established. The Rio Summit subsequently resulted in a document known as *Charter of European Cities & Towns towards Sustainability*, adopted at the First European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in Aalborg, Denmark. Two years later, the Lisbon Strategy was devised, which proposed strategies aimed at involving key sectors and stakeholders in task of promoting environmental issues and developing educational programs at all levels.

Moreover, in 1997, solely in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, 118 municipalities signed a declaration entitled *Councils towards sustainability* in the town of Manresa and, therefore, made a commitment to promote sustainable development in towns and cities, employ the principles of Local Agenda 21 and encourage participation of economic and social sectors in initiatives aimed at improving sustainability.

In parallel initiative, the Environment Department of Government of Catalonia made a major advance in the protection of areas of natural interest and wetlands along the coast. All these actions have led to a progress in consolidation of a sustainable development model in Catalonia, and towards greater awareness for the environmental and landscape issues, made possible with adaptation of Catalan law to the European Union Directives.

Another important fact pointing to the institutional awakening to the deplorable state in which the enormous pressure of recent decades had left our coastline,³ were the demands for the adoption of appropriate measures for the preservation of environmental and landscape values in those few areas which had not yet been urbanized. To that end, the Government of Catalonia have elaborated Urban Development Master Plans for the Coastal System (*Planes Directores Urbanísticos del Sistema Costero*, PDUSC, see Figure 1), thanks to which many kilometres of the Catalan coast have been saved from urban development (Aguirre, 2007; Nel-lo, 2012).

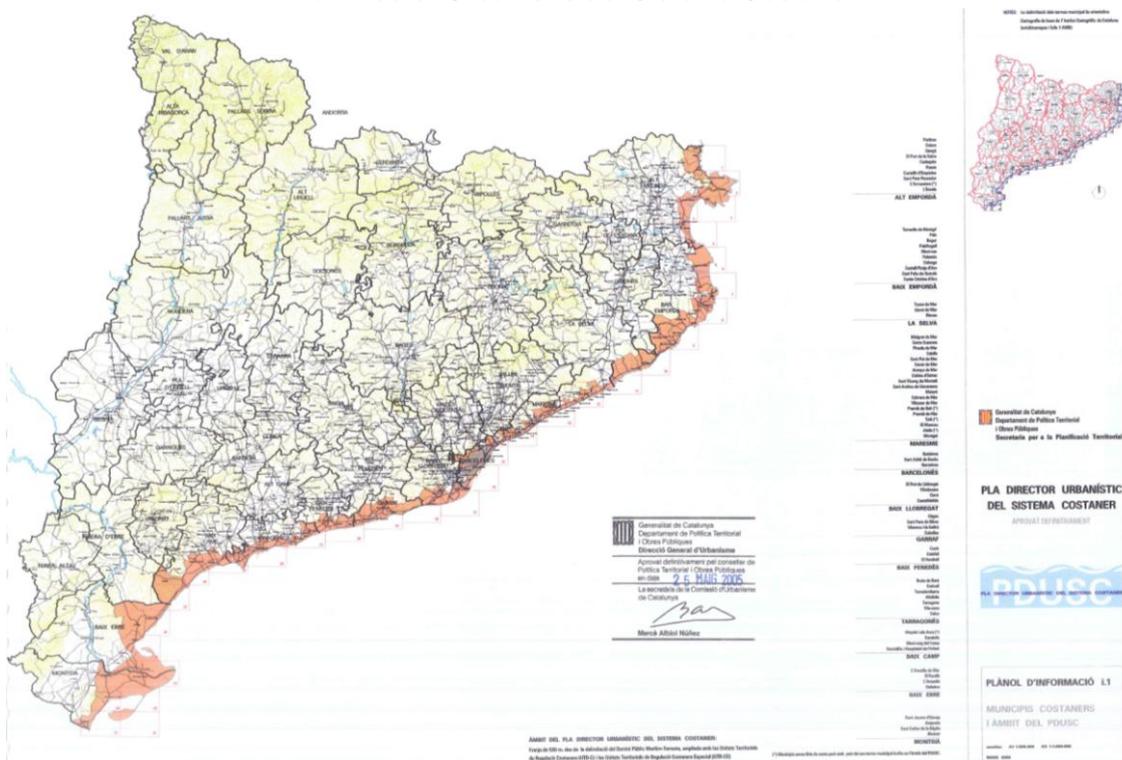
In a document about general goals and purposes of these planning regulations it was stated that: "[...] many stretches of the Catalan coast are occupied by continuous urban sprawl, which, if consolidated with the soil that remains free of occupation, will represent a severe barrier between the hinterland and coastal and sea ecosystems, as well as an impediment to the mobility and will jeopardise scenic, cultural and recreational assets which make these spaces a valuable social and economic resource [...] In order to preserve the Catalan coast, as a space of high environmental quality, as cultural and natural heritage and as an essential resource for

³ A reference to the state of affairs on the coast described by Vicente and Gutiérrez (2004).

economic development, it is necessary to take immediate actions that would result in appropriate urban planning measures" (Secretaria per a la Planificació Territorial, 2004: 3).

In this sense, PDUSC, compound of PDUSC-1 (approved definitely on May 25, 2005), which identified all non-developable land and non-demarcated developable land, and PDUSC-2 (approved definitely on December 16, 2005), which tried to preserve various areas of demarcated developable land, provided a full protection to the most of Catalan coast (Generalitat de Catalunya, DPTOP, 2005).

Figure 1. Coastal municipalities of Catalonia and areas included in *Pla Director Urbanístic del Sistema Costaner*



Source: Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Política Territorial i Obres Públiques, 2005.

Although this paradigm shift in coastal management can be attributed to the approval of PDUSC and the end of the real estate boom period in the second half of 2000s, real estate boom period, it was, in fact, a process initiated 40 years ago. Back then, the first democratic municipal councils began revising the expansionist planning documents on the coast under the new Land Act and its regulations. They set up criteria for declassifying coastal land where it was legally and economically feasible or, if construction works have already been undertaken, they worked on redirecting the impact of the detailed planning documents towards more flexible solutions that would ensure the maximum possible protection for the existing natural assets. Many revisions, drawn up according to these guidelines in those early years, managed to reduce the exorbitant growth forecasts for many coastal municipalities and, consequently, to reestablish them as an attractive tourist destinations.

It should also be noted that the excessive urban growth attributed to tourism has substantial cost to local economies. In case of a tourist destination, the effects are especially harmful, since its attractiveness lies in the quality of its landscapes and in its capacity to provide high quality environment, far superior to the urban areas from which most visitors will have come. This is the paradox we come across: facilities developed to capitalize on these environmental assets, generally contribute to its degradation.

The environmental degradation will immediately reflect negatively on the attractiveness of the area, with a consequent progressive decrease in the number of visitors, who in the current tourism market have a much larger number of destinations to choose from. At best, the locality can attract *cheap and cheerful* market sector, offering itself as a destination with little or no added value.

It is also noteworthy that the strategies for upgrading the Catalan tourist destinations have advanced significantly over the last few years (Anton-Clavé, 2002). Indeed, the renewal strategies (correction of deficits in the urban fabric, image improvement, refurbishment of tourist establishments) which characterized the second half of the 1980s, were replaced with the strategies that underpinned the idea of uniqueness of a destination (product differentiation, new public buildings, market segmentation) in the early 1990s and since 1995, with sustainability strategies (recovery of natural and cultural assets, evaluation of new resources, design of sustainability programs).

Still, tourism should not be seen only as a municipal income strategy, but also as the main reason to promote sustainable development, because without preservation of its natural and cultural assets, an area will quickly lose its appeal as a tourist destination.

Over the last two decades, the tourism industry has undergone significant changes caused by, on the one hand, a diversification of tourist motivation for visiting certain destination, and a growing concern for social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism, on the other. This behaviour is, undoubtedly, part of the current phase of acceleration and the intensification of globalization processes. It is important to clarify that the phase identified as *the new era of tourism*, has not yet substituted the Fordist phase, characterized by mass tourism, which remains hegemonic (López-Palomeque, 1999).

In the current context, and from a geographical point of view, we can identify two main processes which can be understood as different manifestations of the spatial generalization of tourist activities and which affect Catalonia and other consolidated *sun and sand* tourist destinations: a) The process of the *internationalization* of tourism; b) The process of the *internalization* of tourism, in other words, the spatial extension of tourism throughout the whole territory or the *touristification* of the territory.

The new context also imposes diversification of the supply, both in regard to the activities and the types and quality of the accommodation, the rediscovery of the cultural tourism and appreciation for the natural landscape assets.

In addition, it is important to take into account the recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 30 May 2002, concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone

Management in Europe, as well as the Auken Report on the Impact of extensive urbanisation in Spain on individual rights of European citizens, on the environment and on the application of EU law, approved by the European Parliament on 26 March, 2009 (A6-0082/2009). The report is extremely critical to the implementation of the Spanish Coastal Law considering that it "impacts disproportionately on individual property owners who should have their rights fully respected, and at the same time insufficiently on the real perpetrators of coastal destruction, who have in many instances been responsible for excessive urban developments along the coasts, including holiday resorts, and who had good grounds for knowing that they were invariably acting contrary to the provisions of the law in question" (Auken, 2009: Whereas Q). The report directly accuses all levels of authority (central, regional and municipal) as "responsible for setting in motion a model for unsustainable development that has had extremely serious environmental consequences, as well as economic and social repercussions" (Auken, 2009: Whereas S).

This harsh report highlights 39 points of concern that criticize arbitrary application of the law, impunity of the Spanish administration actions and the lack of respect for the rights of owners, especially regarding the lack of a legitimate financial compensation for lost property (Torres-Alfosea, 2010). Furthermore, it makes 36 recommendations and calls on the Spanish administration "to ensure that no administrative act that would oblige a citizen to cede legitimately acquired private property finds its legal base in a law which has been adopted after the date of construction of the property in question" (Auken, 2009: Petition 4).

Recently we have witnessed a step backwards in the protection of the coastal landscape, with the adoption of the Act 2/2013, of May 29, for the protection and sustainable use of the Coast and the amendment of the Act 22/1988, of July 28, of the Coastal Law, which favour private interests. This new Coastal Act favours privatization of Maritime-Terrestrial Public Domain, reduces its surface and its capacity for public use by extending administrative concessions to private property. The opportunity to take advantage of lowered urbanization pressure on the coast as a result the real-estate crisis and apply a more equitable law was missed, giving place to legislation that, far from the protection of the coastline, satisfies stakeholders' interests through long concessions without public bidding processes.

2. Case Studies

In the following lines several cases will be presented that illustrate how urban planning in Catalonia has influenced the change of the tourism model.⁴ In each case, except for the first, 2005 Urban Development Master Plans for the Coastal System have played an important role: 1) The urban counter-proposal for *Cala Mora* in Tarragona, in the early 1980s, marked a change in model, from a low density residential scheme to a more sustainable layout that took the coastal landscape into account; 2) The Municipal Urban Planning document of Lloret de Mar encouraged the protection of coast and interior, focusing on the quality tourism and promotion of new facilities; 3) The Municipal Urban Planning document of Mont-roig del Camp, which unprecedentedly reduced the amount of developable land on the coastline; 4) The Municipal

⁴ The author has already exposed some of these cases on the 6th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism in Barcelona (IFOU), from January 25th to 27th, 2012 (Roca, 2012).

Urban Planning document of Sitges made a step towards the consolidation and improvement of an already solid tourism model.

2.1 The Counter-Proposal to the Planning Document for Cala Mora. Reversal of the Negative Impact of Urbanization on the Landscape

At the beginning of the 1980s the new Territorial Planning Document for Tarragona was drafted. This document opted for a considerable reduction of the previous planning document proposals. This plan managed to declassify and protect some particularly interesting spots along the coast, which included an area of 48 Ha., located in the east of the municipality that was designated for urban development. In this extraordinary place, whose characteristic silhouette was defined by a large pine-tree forest and cliffs in the encounter of the mountain and the sea, *Cala Mora S.A.* Company planned to build a housing complex (see Figure 2).

In the last session of the Provincial Planning Commission of Tarragona, held before the transfer of powers to the Government of Catalonia (September 30, 1978), the local planning document and the draft for urbanization of that area had simultaneously been adopted. The planning document further developed the proposals made in 1973 General Urban Plan and aimed to build broad roads and up to 18 m. wide streets that would form a dense network with a total length of more than 8 Km.

Figure 2. ***Cala Mora* mountain, showing the protected area and the medieval castle of Tamarit**



Source: Estanislao Roca, 1994.

By the time the drafting of an alternative planning document began, almost 7 Km. of road, of which only 660 m. were completely urbanized, had been built. The impact of deforestation caused by cutting the street network through the forest was astounding. Bulldozers had demolished one of the best preserved and most beautiful landscapes of the Catalan coast. On the rugged slopes of *Bosc de Segú*, massive site clearing and landfill earthworks created a new

and Dantesque landscape, isolating the remains of the forest between the winding roads (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Images of streets cut through the forest on the seafont.



Source: Roca (1981).

The unsettling picture allowed us to envisage what would have been the final result of the transformation of that area, had it followed proposals of the local planning document in force, such as the division of forest in more than 300 lots of between 900 and 1.800 m², with an occupancy of 30 to 40% of the total area in steep terrains (above 20%). And if, apart from the houses, access ramps, swimming pools, patios or private tennis courts had been built, the result would have been devastating: the almost total destruction of this magnificent forest.

The counter-proposal to the Territorial Planning Document implied reducing the number of lots in the *Cala Mora* sector to some 15 units and building on the previously opened street network, taking advantage of the existing bulk earthworks. The developer, associated with one of the country's major banks, felt that, despite the significant reduction of buildable area and decrease in development costs, the new plan would not only protected the remains of the forest, but could also be attractive for the real estate market different from the current one. The individual lot buyer would be replaced by a small number of larger property developers, to enable better quality control. So, the modification of the local planning document, filed by the developer itself, was soon agreed satisfactorily and without compensation and consequently incorporated into the Territorial Planning Document (AA.VV. 1988: 1-82).⁵

Thanks to the new proposal, there was no need to cut down any more pines. The former plots would become part of the public green space or would come under privately or jointly owned green spaces, within newly built units. Positive that everything went according to the plan, I continued using this case in my lectures at the Barcelona School of Architecture until the year 2000. But I was shocked to realize that there had been many changes in proposals for that site. In 1989, the municipal planning document was modified yet another time, to meet the demand for single-family houses for affluent consumers. New proposal, similar to the one we had come up against in 1982, has been incorporated in the recent 2013 municipal urban planning document, with minor adjustments. The proposed model provides lots for a total of 711 homes

⁵ For more details, see *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana: Tarragona* (1988), published by the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Planning (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo).

and the application of regulation parameters will probably lead to the definitive destruction of much of that once magnificent pine forest.

It is worth mentioning that in 1997, as a part of the revision of the Territorial Planning Document of Tarragona, the Government of Catalonia classified a wide coastal area as an area of natural interest, and elaborated a plan for special protection of the natural environment and landscape of Tamarit-Punta de la Mora. Subsequently, PDUSC-1 reaffirmed this area of special protection by incorporating it into the UTR-C176 PEIN Tamarit-Punta de la Mora document and qualifying it as non-developable land, adjacent to a large area of non-developable coastal land, with maximum degree of protection, on both sides of the Gaià river mouth.

2.2 The case of Lloret de Mar. A Change of Model

By the time that drafting of the new municipal planning document had started, Lloret de Mar had already begun to change its planning policies, with the intention of specializing in tourist services, reducing urban density and with the goal of attracting tourism of higher quality. The germ of this idea was a result of the findings of several studies and modification of the previous planning document, elaborated by the same team which would draw up the new Municipal Urban Development Plan (POUM).⁶

The new POUM would further boost this new municipal trend and its main proposals were (ROCA, 2007): a) To move away from dispersed low-density urban model, which was considered land-hungry and unsustainable, in favour of a more compact urban model that would enable economies of scale in terms of urban infrastructure, economic activities and public transport, which was impossible in the past because of the size of the city and its dispersion on the territory;⁷ b) To replace urban expansion strategies by strategies of renewal of the existing urban fabric as the only way to modify, control and improve the urban area; c) To develop transport infrastructures that would maximize access to different urban areas.

Regarding town planning policies, the following actions settled as a priority: a) A strategic plan for the renewal of 19th century historic district, that would transform this area into the backbone of the revitalization of Lloret de Mar. The recovery of its symbolic value and its functional role would constitute an added value for the image of the new Lloret, and bring an end to its physical and functional decay; b) A pedestrian-friendly streetscapes project, as a part of the historic district revitalization plan; c) A strategic plan for upgrading and improving of public space in the town, especially in the historic district; d) A strategic plan to rationalize parking areas for more efficient use of parking space, as well as a specific project for the seafront promenade.

Regarding the landscape and natural areas, the following actions, based on the principles of sustainable development and tourism management, were set as a priority: a) The protection of landscape, not only because its role is crucial in maximising tourism potential of a place, but also because the only way to create a truly sustainable cities is to understand an urban system

⁶ The decision of the Lloret de Mar Town Hall to halt the construction of 1.000 new homes on the 33 Ha. area of Sant Quirze was celebrated and praised by Greenpeace report *Destrucción a toda costa* (Greenpeace, 2004:33).

⁷ Dr. Ricard Pié, in 2004, argued that the conversion of tourist spaces in urban areas should also occur in mature areas of the Costa Brava, proclaiming *ara toca fer ciutat / It is time to build city* (Pié, 2004).

as a part of a balanced structure in which built and unbuilt space are equally important. Apart from being a static backdrop to human activity, landscape is also a stage on which this activity takes place; b) The use of the full potential of landscape, which means rediscovering Lloret de Mar. The high concentration of tourist facilities along the coast and the hegemonic role of *sun and sand* tourism model had overshadowed a great potential of attractive natural surroundings and a prominent forested landscapes in the municipality for a long time. If adequate strategies to connect the coastline with hinterland were formulated, Lloret de Mar could add new social value to these attractive landscapes. Furthermore, the incorporation of nature and culture should enhance the image of the municipality, its role as a tourist destination and establish the new model for the city; c) In order to address the goals associated with the two prior actions, protect and add value to the landscape and the environment, territorial planning should address the entire municipality and devise ways of connecting different territorial fragments, giving priority to the hinterland-coast connection; d) Potentiate *Camí de Ronda* - a road between the towns of Lloret de Mar and Tossa de Mar - which reveals the attractive coastal scenery that is still, despite the heavy urbanization of the coastline, one of its most valuable natural resources.

Figure 4. Urban Development Plan of Lloret de Mar



Source: Roca (2007).

In the new Urban Development Plan (see Figure 4), some remarkable sights, which were marked as suitable for development in previous planning documents, were protected, as is the case with two large sections of the coast: the Cala Morisca area, bordering Tossa de Mar town and Costa Marcona area, that form part both of a green corridor which connects the sea with the hinterland and the Cadiretes Massif natural area. In another area (Cala Banys), on the west of Lloret beach, a large urban park with a hotel complex integrated into the landscape was proposed instead of a previously planned low density housing scheme.

Another notable proposal managed to protect a magnificent pine forest between the Fenals beach and beautiful Santa Clotilde gardens (see Figure 5). The forest, spreading over an area of about 4 hectares, occupied some plots of land that had been classified as apt for development and were owned by two well-known real estate companies. Through a *planning agreement* the ownership of the forest was transferred to the municipality in exchange for lots with an equivalent development potential, on a site next to *Avenida de Blanes*, the Western entry gate to the town.

Furthermore, alongside the existing sports facilities, which include an athletics track, it was proposed to create a new sports area, containing a sports hall and an Olympic-size indoor swimming pool thus consolidating an attraction potential of sports tourism as a supplement to the current tourism products. In order to make a full use of the great potential of existing sport facilities and accommodation in the town, a proposal to build a sports university was also made, thus widening the range of tourism activities and avoiding the monoculture of seasonal tourism. These measures, together with the development of local cultural resources, the construction of a new theatre and cultural centre (see Figure 6), the consolidation of the high end accommodation options, the improvement of the public space quality, the rehabilitation and upgrading of a golf course in line with Committed to Green environmental management programme and the revaluation of interesting architectural and natural landscapes of Lloret, acted as a catalyst for changing the town's tourism model through urban planning.

Figure 5. **Santa Clotilde Gardens and Fenals Beach, Lloret de Mar**



Source: Left: Roca (2008). Right: ICC (2013).

Figura 6. **Socio Cultural Centre, Lloret de Mar. Architect: Daniel Mòdol**



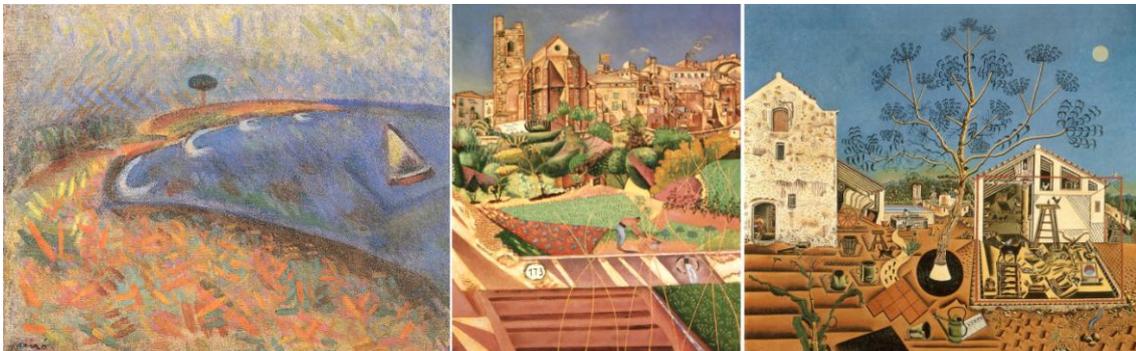
Source: Bernadó (2012).

2.3 The case of Mont-roig del Camp: Planning the Territory of Joan Miró

The director of the drafting team of territorial planning documents for Mont-roig del Camp had a special motivation to work on them, since he spent long periods of time living there and since he had the opportunity to personally meet the painter Joan Miró and talk to him in the last years that he spent living on his farm in the municipality (Roca, 2006a).

For Miró, the essence of Catalonia was present in Mont-roig and the particular he felt about and looked at that incredible landscape, immortalized in his paintings, largely inspired the team that drew up the new planning document for this municipality (see Fig. 7). The paintings that embodied diverse landscapes of Mont-roig served as references in drawing up the general principles and goals for the new planning document and as allies in raising public awareness during the drafting of proposals for the protection of the natural and urban landscapes.

Figure 7. **Some of the paintings that Joan Miró painted while living in Mont-roig del Camp**



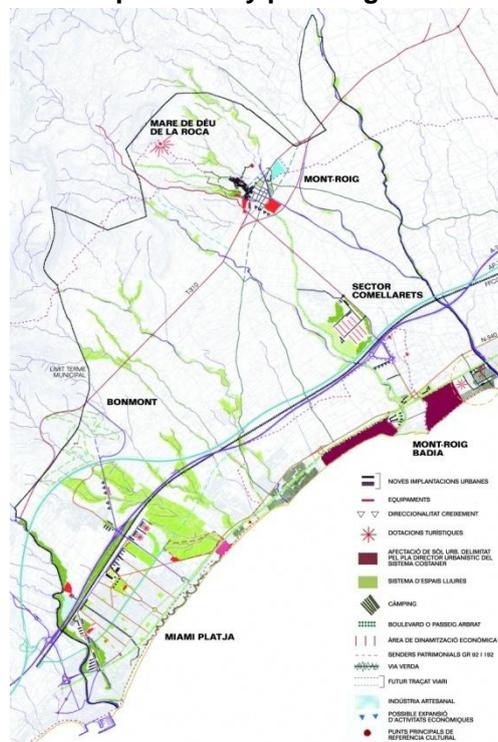
Source: Giralt-Miracle, 1994: 78, 97, 102; Platja de Mont-roig (1916); Poble i Església de Mont-roig (1919); and La Masia (1921-1922).

Mont-roig is one of many municipalities where, according to the earlier planning document, 100% of the coastline was designated for urbanization aimed at tourist exploitation. Coastal protection criteria, set by the recently approved PDUSC, was incorporated into the new planning document and extended to protect up to 5 Km. long strip as declassified coastline land, classified as non-demarcated developable by the previous planning document. This way, the new planning document accomplished to reduce the earlier provisions for new housing stock by half.

It is noteworthy that, thanks to important consolidated campsites (such as Els Prats Village, La Torre del Sol and Playa Mont-roig, which won international in quality tourism); the coastal land they occupied was not urbanized, despite the provisions of the previous planning document. This circumstance allowed to establish a specific land use category - *camping on non-developable land* - without much opposition from managers and owners of camping facilities, and to avoid the development of new residential areas and the excessive presence of concrete on the coastline. In case of Playa Mont-roig campsite, a high range hotel complex was built and carefully integrated into the landscape.

However, in other areas of developable land that was declassified, there was a strong resistance from lot owners and developers, with housing development plans approved or in pipeline that would have mortgaged the future of the coast, if they had been built. It is important to stress that criteria approved in the first phase of the POUM allowed to defend declassification, by the means of all available urban planning instruments and legal mechanisms (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. An illustration from the preliminary planning document for Mont-roig del Camp



Source: Roca (2004).

Although it did not have much in common with Miró's landscapes, the POUM had to face the reality of Miami Playa, a very extensive urban area on the south of the town. This area was a result of 1950s planning document that promoted the occupation of the first line of the coast with isolated apartment blocks and a few hotels and designated vast areas in the interior for low density housing. With over 60km of wide streets and avenues and lack of some urban services, this area was undoubtedly one of the most important challenges of POUM.

It was proposed to save the few remaining vacant lots on the coastline, classifying them as open-space system and green areas, and transferring their original land use towards the interior, as well as to transform the side street of the N-340 national motorway into a large urban boulevard and to renew the urban landscape. Low density of vast urban territory of Miami Playa could be increased and funds obtained through the process could be used for improvement of urban infrastructure in order to create a more sustainable, functionally integrated and environmentally efficient urban model.

As in Lloret de Mar, new planning document wanted to upgrade the tourism model in Mont-roig by revaluating its natural landscapes, beaches, the environment, mountains, rural landscapes as well as its agricultural land and local culture. The creation of a contemporary art centre that would house the works of famous painter had also been proposed.

The house where the artist painted his famous painting *La Masia*, along with many other buildings of architectural interest, was included into an extensive catalogue of architectural heritage. Among these buildings there are over 100 traditional dry stonewall huts, which are a valuable asset for possible cultural tours around the area, in addition to the already established tours of the sights in Miró's paintings.

Attention should also be drawn to the scenic beauty of the landscape surrounding the sanctuary of the Mare de Deu de la Roca, nestled in steep picturesque red sandstone mountain that gave name to the town and became a true watchtower overlooking the vast territory of Baix Camp.⁸

It can be asserted that, following the approval of the new planning document, many of the landscapes immortalized by Joan Miró in his famous paintings entitled *Pueblo e iglesia de Mont-roig* and *Playa de Mont-roig* are today protected. This would not be the case if the area had been developed in line with the previous planning document. Nowadays, we can still enjoy contemplating this magnificent landscape and hope that it will never change.

In line with the commitment of attracting high quality tourism, luxury hotels were placed in strategic points in the area, one of the most important golf courses in the country was remodelled, criteria for renovating local campsites were established and one new campsite, Camping Les Arts, was designed by the prestigious Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza. In short, this award-winning planning document triggered a long list of actions aimed at building a qualitative tourism model adapted to the demands of modern times,⁹ encouraging diversification

⁸ Mont-roig means Red mountain in Catalan.

⁹ The POUM Mont-roig del Camp was recognized as an exemplary contribution to sustainable development with the ICS Prize.

and improvement of the accommodation supply and rediscovering the unique natural landscapes and cultural contents in this municipality.

2.4 The case of Sitges. Develop the Blanca Subur of 21st century

Sitges, a town only a few kilometres from the Grater Barcelona, had not been exempt from the impact of the tourism industry on the Catalan coast, but it has responded to it differently from many other Catalan towns. First of all, it is important to mention that until recently the distance between Sitges and Barcelona had been much greater than the difference of latitude and longitude would make us believe. Garraf Massif was a great barrier until Vilanova-Barcelona railway line opened in 1881. Thus, in the late 19th century, Sitges became a fashionable place among Barcelona's wealthy class and intellectuals, so it was turned into a kind of modernist colony.¹⁰ One thing leads to another so Sitges discovered tourism and it gave an atypical response - urban growth and transformation of local economy happened simultaneously and gradually (see Figure 9).

With its ups and downs, Sitges has been linked with both domestic and international tourism for more than a century and nowadays it is well established as a reference point for international tourism. In this context, the Municipal Urban Development Plan opted for the high quality tourism throughout the year.

Within the demand generated by overnight-stays tourism, the following components are distinguished: a) Holiday tourism, which creates demand for long stays (usually a week or more), linked to the traditional *sun and sand* tourism model. This type of tourism is associated with other components such as nightlife, active tourism, etc. and requires three different types of facilities: i) private residences, ii) spaces for rent and tourist apartments, iii) hotels; b) Business, fair and convention tourism. This segment includes both direct demand generated by conventions and meetings held in Sitges, and demand for overnight stays, generated by proximity to Barcelona. The largest exhibitions and congresses in the capital can cause overcrowding of tourist facilities closest to the venues and excess demand is channelled to municipalities that have good communication and a quality hotel offer; c) Cultural tourism creates demand for short trips and weekend breaks. It is linked to very specific topical deals (Romanticism, wine-gastronomy, etc.). This kind of tourism usually requires its own space in small family-run hotels where a closer contact between visitors and the *theme* of their visit can be achieved; d) Arts Tourism. It is a tourist demand linked to the strategies of the arts spaces, generated by both the artists and the people who form part of this industry: art collectors, exhibition visitors, critics, spectators. It shares much of the demand profiles with cultural tourism; e) Active tourism, linked to the daytrips in nature and sport practices in Sitges or as part of circuits; f) Leisure tourism. This is a tourism demand often limited to weekend breaks and short stays. The main goal of these tourists is to enjoy the nightlife. From theme tourism in concrete sectors of demand it is spreading to other users and sectors, largely as a by-product of the deals offered by low cost airlines and it has turned the Catalan coast (and even its capital) into an ideal destination for these activities. This branch of tourism requires Hotels and, more recently, tourist apartments that provide more privacy.

¹⁰ Consequentially, Sitges now has a rich architectural heritage and one of the most interesting historical centers of our country.

Although some slots of these segments of demand are overlapped, each of them corresponds to a specific type of offer, type and category of accommodation, size of tourist facilities, etc. In either case, we should point out the role that Sitges wants to develop in the context of a future European territorial strategy, towards its establishment as a unique quality tourism destination.

Now, we will refer to the article written by Oriol Bohigas in *El País* on January 22, 2003, entitled *Sitges, la fea* (Sitges, the ugly one) which denounced the existing urban planning chaos to draft the POUM in 2002 (Bohigas, 2003: n/p).¹¹ Sitges had experienced rapid and chaotic urban growth after 1992, when the first section of the Pau Casals Highway was opened and train lines were electrified. Many second homes were turned into first homes and thousands of other housing buildings were built. In addition, more than 50% of economically active population in Sitges worked in Barcelona; therefore, there was a high commuting level between two urban areas.

Figure 9. **Panorama of Sitges**



Source: Roca (2013).

Territorial planning document, supported by PDUSC, addressed some dysfunctions in the expected growth, especially in the slopes of the Massís del Garraf, very close to the Natural Park (ROCA, 2006b) areas and integrated road network and an open-space system into a well-structured territorial model. Thus, a system of parks was created from Els Colls - Miralpeix Park

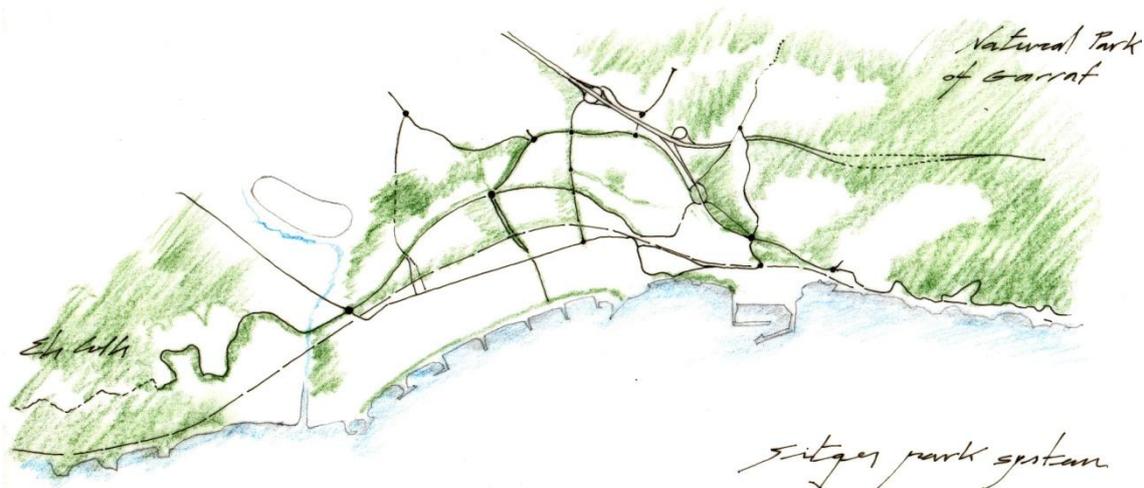
¹¹ "I had not been to Sitges in a long time. Although I was familiarized with its urban degradation, this time I was stunned by so many atrocities, so many mistakes, such contempt to a tradition of culture and tourism vivacity that once promised the prospect of certain social and urban excellence... Rampant suburbanization degraded the natural landscape was unimaginable..." (Bohigas, 2003: s/p).

to the Garraf Natural Park.¹² These green areas, passing through the urban fabric, were complemented with innovative Art Space, a building complex that would accommodate contemporary art hub and that was conceived as a place for creation, presentation and entertainment, promoting cultural and educational tourism.¹³ Parks and open spaces were integrated into a continuous system of spaces for pedestrian and bicycle use, separated from the vehicle traffic areas (see Figure 10).

In addition, it was proposed to take the railway underground, which would help to improve physical and visual connections between currently separated urban fabrics and to locate of a new train station in the centre of la Plana Oeste neighbourhood,¹⁴ at the intersection of Cami dels Capellan and Santa Barbara-Sofia avenues. With the creation of a *park & ride* area, this new centre would provide location to future municipal buildings and other public facilities, which would establish it as a dynamic area in the west of Sitges.

Among other actions, deployed to control and enhance urban growth, are: avoiding of an excessive hotel building, improving the quality of the existing park and strategic locating of new establishments, such as Hotel Dolce Sitges in Can Girona, next to Terramar Golf Hotel. New hotels sought to accommodate cultural, active, holiday and business, conferences and fairs tourism, therefore complementing the Hotel Gran Meliá which has one of the largest Congress halls in Catalonia, where important events, including the International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia, take place.

Figura 10. The Municipal Urban Plan of Sitges. Conceptual scheme of the park system



Source: Roca (2005).

¹² Els Colls-Miralpeix is a vast coastal area that stretches all the way to Sant Pere de Ribes. Previously enlisted as a developable land, it was classified as non-developable unprotected land in new POUM. We must mention an excellent experience of the Consortium dels Colls i Miralpeix - Costa del Garraf, a public body created to manage coastal areas in a sustainable way. It develops projects and activities in five lines: biodiversity, landscape, mobility, climate change and governance of the territory.

¹³ Cau Ferrats for the 21st Century are a reinterpretation of the Cau Ferrat concept, initiated over a century ago by the versatile modernist painter Santiago Rusiñol.

¹⁴ The proposal to take the railway underground was the subject of the Urban Task Force Sitges 2005 congress organized by the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP).

3. Conclusions

Over the past decades, we have witnessed a period of change of tourism model and the response that tourism industry gave to the new times has happened simultaneously and, perhaps in a dialectical relationship, with a shift in urban planning, well-documented in the last territorial planning documents for the coastal system. A diversification of tourist motivation for choosing a holiday destination has resulted in the subsequent diversification of the options that the industry offers, while a growing concern for social, economic and environmental factors has spread in the collective consciousness which resulted in various actions that tried to minimize the negative effects of tourism.

This behaviour of the tourism industry is undoubtedly a part of the current phase of acceleration and intensification of globalization processes that are internationalizing tourism and spreading its effects throughout the country, beyond the coastline. However, the nature of this new era of tourism has not yet replaced nor eliminated the effects of the Fordist phase, characterized by mass tourism, which still dominates the sector. These two phases overlap and coexist.

During the Fordist phase, the tourism industry was characterized by the elaboration and use of standardized products, mass produced at the lowest possible cost and oriented towards very large and rather homogeneous markets. Such an approach led to occupation of the coast in form of large hotel complexes which made available free beach access and direct contact with the sea to broad population on vacations, regardless of the relationship of these complexes with nearby consolidated urban areas. The propensity to incremental and cumulative production of the old model puts in danger the entire coastline, clogging it with infrastructure and, consequently, eliminating the main value of the offered product, which is undoubtedly the landscape quality.

The changes that have taken place in the tourism supply and demand since the last decades of the 20th century have been characterized by a new trend in the demanded and offered values and qualities, by a specific market segmentation, more flexible production, distribution and consumption factors, and a tendency toward the exploitation of synergies and economies that would enhance the production and activate the market in order to achieve acceptable levels of profit. This drift in tourism trends undoubtedly creates a new challenge for urban and territorial planning (Vera-Rebollo, 2011).

We are witnessing a vague differentiation of tourism in comparison to other activities such as sport, culture, or the entertainment. This fact favours a more sustainable planning adapted to local needs, as tourism infrastructure overcomes its exclusive seasonal use. Also its geographic concentration is lower, which allows better integration with the consolidated urban uses. The crisis of overcrowding, from the point of view of both production and consumption, nowadays causes a consumer to react against the homogeneous supply and lack of quality or differential value, and also guides urban planning to abolish *developmental model* for the coast because, increasingly, new tourists reject images of hotel massification that degrade coastal landscape. New tourists no longer seek services but want experiences that would satisfy their emotional system - a fact that should guide us towards incorporation of both physical and intangible assets to the production system of these experiences, trying to set up new spaces for discovery, relationships and sensations (Anton-Clavé, 2009).

The new context imposes a change of model towards diversification of tourism offer that goes beyond the traditional *sun and sand* product - cultural and active tourism are being rediscovered and natural landscape heritage is revaluated as an object of consumption for leisure holidays. These phenomenon lead to the necessary care and protection of coastal landscape, and preservation of its natural qualities and social values, and advocate for sustainable development of the tourism industry that coexists adequately with local interests and rights.

In this sense, a long and complex process of modification of the provisions of urban plans which, under expansionist paradigms of the past, compromised significantly the quality and preservation of coastal areas, has started. It is intended that the cases presented in this article point to possible ways to follow in the future and in other regions. It is shown that, in the field of urban planning, there is a whole world of possibilities which can contribute positively to a change of tourism model, making the land consumption more rational and offering optimistic prospects for sustainable development.

The substitution of expansive to more compact models which allow to free terrains with ecological and landscape value; the implementation of management mechanisms that allow to transfer development projects to the areas where they would have less impact or where they integrate better with existing land uses; the promotion of natural, architectural and social heritage by establishment of routes and spaces for its observation and understanding; availability of land and strategies for successful implementation of other tourist activities that would enhance the diversification of supply are only some of the mechanisms that should be taken into account. In sum, urban planning is a broad field for experimentation and innovation, currently faced with the challenge of managing the contemporary tourism, planning spaces to satisfy the needs arising from it and looking for the optimal integration of these newly planned spaces with existing urban systems.

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