

## Tourism policy and territorial imbalances in Spain (1)

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to analyse Spanish tourism policy and its relation to a series of facts. The research combines an extensive review of the existing studies into the aspects of tourism policy linked to government, geography and economy with an examination of statistical sources. The main issues and findings analysed in this study are highlighted below. Firstly, the evolution of tourism policy of Spain in the last 60 years in relation to the process of national economic development is analysed. Secondly, a limited role of tourism on economic and territorial balance as well as changes in the regional distribution in the supply of hotel accommodation is highlighted. Thirdly, territorial changes related to the supply of hotel accommodation and GDP per capita are discussed. Finally, certain topics are suggested for future debate: tourism and imbalance as well as tourism and development.

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### 1. Introduction

Research into tourism policy has generally focused on specific countries, analysing the subject as a branch of national policy and approaching the

task in large, regional blocks (Lickorish, 1991; Hall, 1991). Many of the references to Spanish tourism policy currently available are to be found either in studies dealing with tourism in Europe in general, in Southern Europe or in the Mediterranean area

(Apostolopoulos et al., 2001), or in series of publications compiled by international organisations such as the OECD and the WTO. Worthy of special mention are the analyses of Spanish tourism policy undertaken by Williams and Shaw (1988) and Williams (1996), which assess the role played by tourism in the national economic development. The effects of tourism policy on the country have been poorly studied (López, 1999). Spain's relationship with tourism varied over 60 years studied, but the evolution of tourism policy can be divided into two main stages identified by Fayos-Solá (1996b).

The first stage between 1950 and 1975, the Fordist phase, brought a series of important developments. Franco's Government understood that tourism held the key to economic growth and improvement of the way Spain is viewed abroad (Correyero, Cal, 2008: 17–21). Indeed, several authors maintain that this period saw the introduction of a uniquely Latin model of development, which was heavily reliant on tourism (Bote, 1998; Casmirri, Suárez, 1998; Vallejo, 2002). In fact, mass tourism was the dominant theme during this period, and tourism-based development is the facet of tourism most frequently studied by Spanish authors (Cals, 1974; Figuerola, 1999; Esteve, Fuentes, 2000).

During the second stage of the study, the post-Fordist phase, Spanish society underwent important economic and political changes: the end of dictatorship (1975), accession to the European Union (1986) and adoption of the Euro (2001). Spain's heavily centralised policy was replaced by a decentralised system overseen by its Autonomous Communities and the tourist towns themselves. This section of the study examines the effectiveness of tourism policies in terms of adaptation to the changes introduced by the post-Fordist model of management based on competitiveness, quality and sustainability (Fayos-Solá, 1996a). Regional policy (Ivars, 2003a), restructuring of the tourism sector (Vera, 1994; Moreno, 2007), and the social and environmental impact of tourism are the aspects most commonly identified by authors as the main consequences of the protracted growth of tourism in Spain.

There are several aims of this study, all related to tourism policy, economic development and territorial imbalances. The first objective is to analyse the evolution of Spanish tourism policy and examine its inter-relationship with other factors (economic, territorial and administrative). Secondly, the study analyses the

development of tourism strategy and its regional effect. Within this topic the author is also interested in highlighting a weak capacity of tourism to reduce regional and economic imbalances in Spain. The main contribution is to carry out an analysis of regional economic imbalances and Spanish tourism policy.

## 2. Methodology

The main data and tourist indicators analysed in the study are foreign visitors, international tourists, tourism receipts and hotel bed places. International tourist data were employed for the period between 1970 and 2010, and foreign visitors were scrutinised for the entire period covered by the study (1950–2010). The hotel accommodation data was used to analyse tourism supply and identify regional differences (cf. Table 1, 2 and 3; Fig. 1, 2, 5 and 6). The choice of statistical sources was governed by clear criteria: uniform data, similar methodology and no time gaps. This approach enabled the author to compare studied processes more accurately.

The most important data sources are the INE (National Institute of Statistics of Spain), Ministry of Information and Tourism of Spain (MIT), Bank of Bilbao (Spain) and WTO (World Tourism Organization). Domestic tourism was not examined as it requires a separate analysis of its own. Instead, the author concentrated on international tourism in view of the role that it has played in economic development in Spain.

In the next stage of the research cartographic analysis was carried out. It helped to study the major changes that took place in the country during the analysed periods of time. The main concerns included the economic imbalances and territorial polarisation of tourism as well as the relationship between these two variables. This technique helped to explain significant changes observed in the evolution of Spanish tourism policy: strong regional polarisation in the period of mass tourism and its spreading in the post-Fordist phase. The administrative unit used in the cartographic analysis was a province. Free GIS software was used: gvSIG Desktop. The first step of the process was to introduce a cartographic basis with the provinces into the programme. The second step was to integrate the databases of the GDP per capita and hotel places into the GIS.

In the third step, the author worked on overlapping databases in different years and analysed the results.

This research is also a theoretical reflection on tourism policy, so it includes a review of the existing literature on the investigated aspects. The author analysed the main contributions of national and international authors who studied the issues of the Spanish tourism policy and reflected on tourism and development.

### 3. Development of mass tourism

The Second World War ended, and the beginning of the 1950s brought fresh opportunities for Spain in the shape of the onset of mass tourism in Western European countries. A key catalyst in the rise of popular tourism was the improvement of air travel, which brought the Iberian Peninsula closer to the main sources of outbound tourism in the rest of Europe (Boyer, 2007). After the decline brought about by the Spanish Civil War and the post-war period that followed (cf. Fig. 3 and 4) Spain had to wait until the mid 1950s for an upturn in foreign tourism.

The above economic measures, combined with a number of new factors, ensured that the 1960s were a decade of enormous growth of tourism in Spain. The keys to this expansion were: (a) the expansion of mass tourism in Western Europe and the USA, and its predilection for the warm beaches of the Mediterranean (Fernández, 1991: 583); (b) the need to improve the perception of the Span-

ish government abroad. Franco's regime had been shunned abroad as a result of its alignment with Germany and Italy during the Second World War (Correyero, 2003: 49); (c) the procurement of foreign currency with which to fund future economic development. Spain's productive infrastructure had been devastated, and the country had been denied the American aid provided by the Marshall Plan (Esteve, Fuentes, 2000: 140); (d) the determined attitude of certain individuals, notably the Minister for Tourism, Manuel Fraga, who saw tourism as an alternative to the Marshall Plan, the development factor that the Spanish economy so desperately needed (Sánchez, 2004).

In the late 1950s, the supply of hotel accommodation was concentrated primarily in the provinces of Madrid and Barcelona (27%) and in certain Mediterranean destinations (Balearic Islands and Gerona). Older Atlantic destinations such as Guipuzcoa were still important in 1958 but would decline over the following decade. At this time, hotel accommodation was highly dispersed among Spain's cultural and business destinations (i.e. the old model of tourism prior to the onset of the mass variety). In the 1960s, however, the concentration of hotel accommodation shifted increasingly towards the Mediterranean Axis and the Balearic Islands, in accordance with the mass tourism model (Table 1). During this decade, most hotels were located in areas with a higher GDP per capita (over national average), with the exception of the Canary Islands, Malaga and Alicante. The peripheral status of these areas varied little over the following decades (Table 2; Fig. 1 and 2).

**Table 1.** Hotel bed places by Spanish tourist province

Provinces	A 1958	B 1960	C 1970	D 1980	E 1990	F 2000	G 2012	Trend
Alicante	2.9	3.4	4.5	6.0	5.3	4.9	4.7	-
Balearic Islands	7.5	10.6	28.8	27.8	27.1	18.5 <sup>b</sup>	13.2	-
Barcelona	10.6	10,8	9.6	7.8	6.9	7.0	8.3	+
Canary Islands	1.0	1.2	6,3	8.4	9.5	13.7	15.7	+
Gerona	6.3	6.6	11.0	9.1	8.4	4.9	3.8	-
Guipuzcoa	6.0	5.8	1.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.6	=
Madrid	16.4	14.9	6.8	5.9	5.3	6.1	7.3	+
Malaga	2.8	3.3	5.0	5.6	5.8	5.5	5.5	=
Valencia	2.4	2.6	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.9	2.5	+
Spanish Mediterranean <sup>a</sup>	32.5	37.4	60.3	58.0	55.1	42.7	38.0	-
Rest of Spain	67.5	62.6	39.7	42.0	44.9	57.3	62.0	+

Explanation: A–G: Hotel bed places in %; Provinces of Alicante, Balearic I., Barcelona, Gerona, Malaga and Valencia;

<sup>a</sup> methodological changes in INE

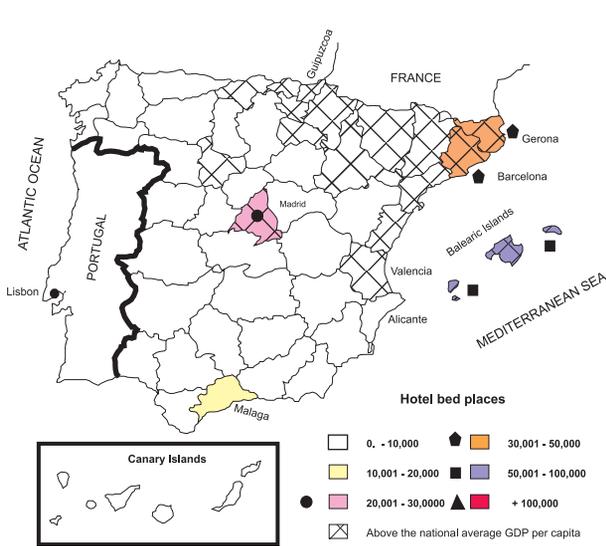
Source: MIT, 1951–1977; Esteve, Fuentes, 2000; INE, 2012

**Table 2.** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and ranking by Spanish tourist provinces

Provinces	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	1955	1964	1975	1991	2008	2010	1955	1964	1975	1991	2008	2010
Alicante	89.2	88.4	88.4	94.0	81.6	79.7	21	21	17	18	34	37
Balearic I.	113.2	129.6	129.6	126.0	107.7	105.6	11	8	5	2	12	16
Barcelona	168.3	149.5	149.5	132.0	118.0	117.5	3	4	2	4	6	8
Canary I.	77.5	74.4	74.4	90.5	87.3	85.6	30	33	28	27	27	28
Gerona	107.3	138.3	138.3	132.0	113.9	117.5	14	5	3	1	9	7
Guipuzcoa	184.3	160.7	160.7	111.0	134.1	135.6	2	3	6	13	2	2
Madrid	165.0	161.9	161.9	140.0	129.6	129.9	4	2	1	5	3	3
Malaga	68.5	69.6	69.6	78.0	77.2	77.5	36	35	33	43	40	43
Valencia	112.3	104.6	104.6	106.0	93.0	93.3	13	13	12	15	23	23
Spain	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0						

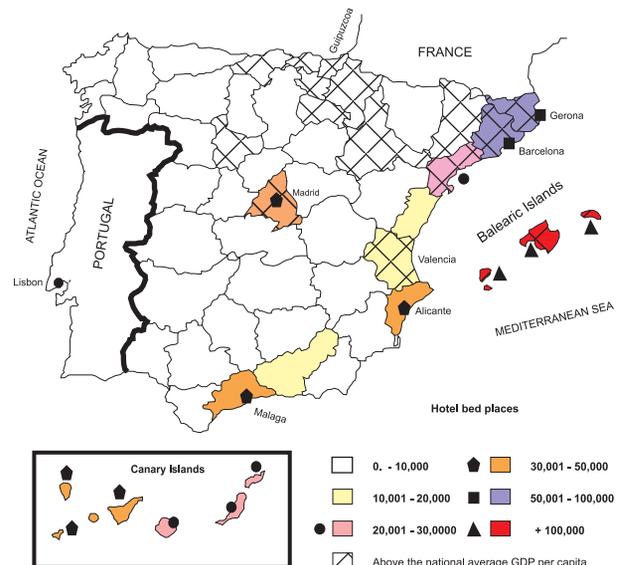
Explanation: A–F – percentage of national average of GDP; G–L – ranking of GDP per capita in all Spanish provinces; 1 = the best position; 50 = the worst position

Source: Banco de Bilbao (Spain) 1955–2000 and INE, 2008–2010



**Fig. 1.** Hotel bed places and GDP per capita by Spanish provinces.1964

Source: MIT and Banco de Bilbao



**Fig. 2.** Hotel bed places and GDP per capita by Spanish provinces. 1975

Source: MIT and Banco de Bilbao

In spite of the reticence displayed by certain political circles and the Roman Catholic Church (Sánchez, 2004: 5), Spain remained fully committed to the development of tourism during the 1960s. Certain internal and external factors ensured that the country could hardly do otherwise (Esteve, Fuentes, 2000), though it did exercise choice over the degree to which the process should be pursued, opting for maximum intensity. This fact was very important over the next decades.

The key influence on tourism policy was exerted by the introduction of indicative planning,

where the brand macroeconomic management implemented by the National Development Plans searched high economic returns by adhering to the model provided by the poles of development. This approach was extended to most countries of Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece), supported by the World Bank, which managed foreign investment (Richardson, 1976; Ivars, 2003b). Development plans focused increasingly on tourism, but saw them more as a means of compensatory payments rather than a strategic economic sector in its own right. Between 1961 and 1969,

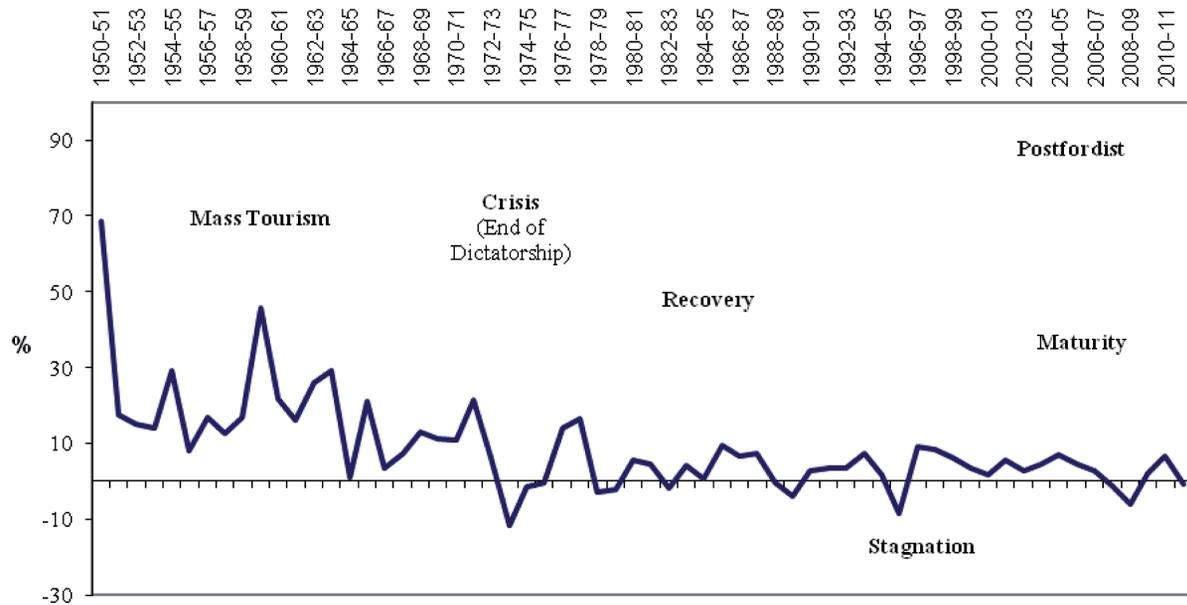
receipts generated by tourism covered 72% of the balance of trade deficit of Spain, 78% in the 1970s, 95% in 1980s, and 102% in 1990s (Vallejo, 2002: 209).

**Table 3.** Hotel bed places in Spain and Spanish tourist islands

	1960	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2012
Spain	130,319	545,798	785,339	814,934	843,337	929,533	1,050,074	1,033,011	1,212,598	1,432,582
Balearic Islands	13,859	157,050	225,727	226,525	226,932	252,189	271,737	191,539 <sup>a</sup>	186,366	188,402
Canary Islands	1,556	34,394	59,781	68,668	71,557	88,730	100,558	141,913	156,930	225,571
Annual growth rate (%)										
	1960 1970	1970 1975	1975 1980	1980 1985	1985 1990	1990 1995	1995 2000 <sup>a</sup>	2000 2005	2005 2010	1960 2012
Spain	318.8	43.9	3.8	3.5	10.2	13.0	-1.6	17.4	15.4	999.3
Balearic Islands	1,033.2	43.7	0.4	0.2	11.1	7.8	-29.5	-2.7	-1.6	1,249.4
Canary Islands	2,110.4	73.8	14.9	4.2	24.0	13.3	41.1	10.6	33.6	14,396.8

Explanation: <sup>a</sup> Methodological change in INE

Source: MIT, Turespaña, 1960–1995, and INE, 2000–2012



**Fig. 3.** Annual growth rate of foreign visitors. Spain

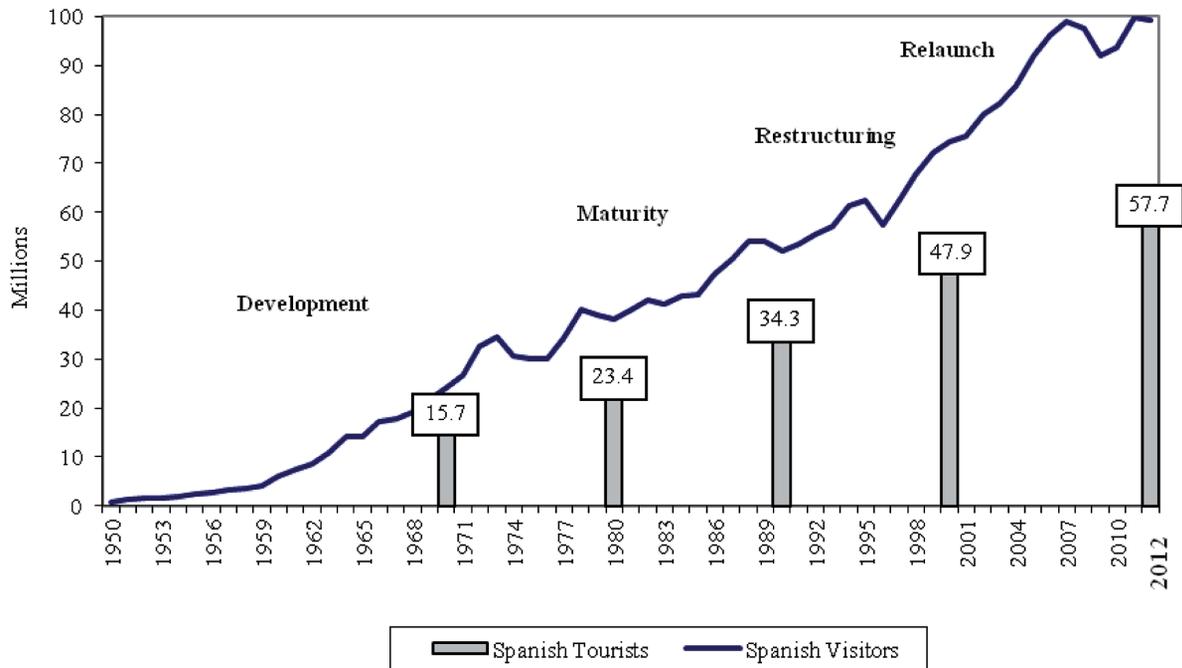
Source: MIT, Turespaña and INE

The 1<sup>st</sup> Development Plan (1963–1967) saw tourism simply as a source of currency and sought almost exclusively to attract the largest possible number of tourists, without taking into account the environmental and social costs this might entail (Moreno, 2007: 231). During the period in which this Plan was in force tourism grew at an annual rate of 16.4%, reaching a total of 17.2 million visitors in 1966 (Fig. 3 and 4). Hotel accom-

modation increased by 318.2% between 1960 and 1970 (Table 3). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Development Plan (1968–71) set a target of 200,000 new hotel places, plus a further 300,000 in other forms of accommodation, aiming to attract 22.3 million visitors in 1971. Private investment moved progressively away from hotel development (31.9%) towards the construction of apartments (39.4%) (Figuerola, 1999: 92–109). Investment in apartments and second homes con-

tinued to rise in subsequent decades. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Development Plan covered the period between 1971 and 1975. In the 1970s, Spain endured a sharp decline in the number of visiting tourists due to the Oil Crisis of 1973, which coincided with political regime change in 1975 (Fig. 3 and 4). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan was more concerned with regional policy, though it

failed to halt the concentration of hotel accommodation in the Mediterranean areas (Table 1, Fig. 2). Economically speaking, this development model was a success – by the beginning of the 1970s, Spain had caught up with Italy, the major power in the Mediterranean tourism, in terms of both foreign visitors and tourist revenue (Fernández, 1991).



**Fig. 4.** Foreign visitors and tourists. Spain

Source: MIT, Turespaña and INE

Certain authors contend that the key role played by tourism in the growth of Italy, Spain and Portugal points to a peculiarly Latin model of development (Bote, 1998; Casmirri, Suárez, 1998; Bote et al., 1999; Vallejo, 2002; Cunha, 2003). The considerable revenue generated by tourism (and also by emigration) underpinned both the industrialisation processes and the development plans pursued by the said nations. These countries also provide the earliest instance of mass tourism playing a key role in socio-economic development, this relationship being particularly marked in Spain. Development based on tourism would subsequently be attempted by other Mediterranean and Caribbean countries, with mixed results in accordance with their differing socio-economic climates (Williams, Shaw, 1988; Apostolopoulos et al., 2001; Blázquez, Caña-

da, 2011). Several authors highlight the importance of the context (economic, social, political, geographical and technological) in which development takes place in determining its ultimate success or failure in a particular country (De Kadt, 1979; Pearce, 1991; Liu, 1994).

Taking stock, the years between 1950 and 1975 were a period of significant growth for tourism. The firm commitment to tourism made by the Spanish government, which offered every possible incentive to private enterprise, ensured that its development in Spain was truly spectacular. However, this in turn had a profound effect upon the environment in the country, with coastal areas of immense natural value becoming built up. All this was done in the name of removing any conceivable barriers to private sector investment and increasing the number of tourists. In 1966, the country's

most heavily-developed coastlines were in the Balearics, Gerona and Malaga. Between 1950 and 1975, an estimated 90,000 hectares of Spain’s surface area were built up in order to cater for tourism (Casanova, 1970: 70). These figures were subsequently dwarfed by the immense development project undertaken in Spain over the following decades.

A further territorial consequence was the enormous imbalance in the distribution of tourism facilities, which were concentrated on Spain’s Mediterranean coast (60.3% in 1970) and in a limited number of provinces. In 1970, the Balearic Islands accounted for 28.8% of all Spanish hotel places, boasting a total hotel supply more than three times greater than that of Portugal (Table 1 and 3, Fig. 2). Between 1955 and 1975, the territorial distribution of GDP per capita changed little. The coastal provinces of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands strengthened their economic position through tourism. The benefits of tourism were not distributed evenly throughout the country. By 1975, the Balearic Islands had fallen in GDP per capita, while Malaga, Alicante and Canary Islands merely experienced discrete improvements in their GDP per capita rankings (Table 2).

#### 4. The post-Fordist phase

After the crisis of the 1970s and the transition towards democracy, the panorama faced by tourism administration in Spain changed dramatically.

The new Constitution signed in 1978 pushed the State into the background, affording greater powers over the management of tourism to the Autonomous Communities (Ivars, 2003a: 656). The State took time adapting to the limited role now assigned to it in this field. The decentralisation of power has made the existence of a dedicated Ministry of Tourism impossible, while some of the Autonomous Communities in which tourism is most prevalent have set up their own Tourism Boards. During this time, the role of the national government in tourism policy has largely been to ensure coordination and agreement. It serves as a meeting point for the various Autonomous Communities, providing a similar link between the representatives of tourist resorts (mainly associations and local councils) and tourism sector entrepreneurs.

By 1991, there had been a significant expansion in hotel places along the Spanish Mediterranean. The main hubs of the already consolidated Mediterranean Axis were located on the Catalan coast, in the Balearic Islands and in Alicante (Fig. 5). The lack of continuity offered by the Mediterranean motorway made impossible the linking and structuring of those tourist areas lying south of Alicante, most notably the Costa del Sol (Malaga). At the same time, hotel places had spread to inland areas (Pyrenees) and parts of the Atlantic coast (Galicia and Asturias). Tourism strengthened the economic position of provinces such as Gerona and the Balearics.

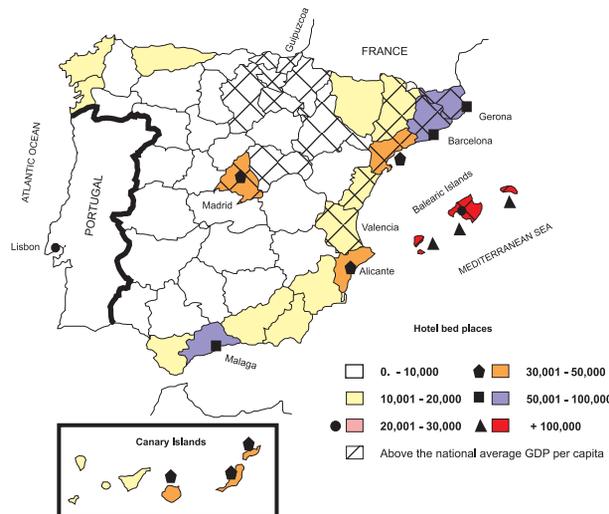


Fig. 5. Hotel bed places and GDP per capita by Spanish provinces in 1991

Source: MIT and Banco de Bilbao

Between 1980 and 1990, tourism demand rose by 46.6% and hotel accommodation by 14.1% against a backdrop of economic development accelerated by Spain's admission to the EEC (Table 3, Fig. 3). In order to limit the severe impact that tourism had been having upon the environment for several decades, a series of new laws were now introduced. Of particular note were the Coastal Law (1988), which enabled certain public domain areas along Spain's coastline to be recovered, and the Conservation of Natural Spaces Law (1989). Although these legal changes initially relieved the pressure on coastal areas, the economic crisis of 1992 dealt a crucial blow. The protective measures taken were powerless to prevent the real estate bubble between 1997 and 2007. Between 1987 and 2006, 74,417 hectares of the Spanish coast were built up at a rate of 2,884 ha/year from 1987 to 2000 and 6,154 ha/year from 2000 to 2006 (OSE, 2010: 417–420).

In the wake of the major events of 1992, namely the Barcelona Olympics and the Universal Exhibition in Seville, Spain was confronted with economic crisis. This time, tourism suffered the consequences directly; the traditional tourism model had finally been exhausted (Vera, 1994). The sector had enjoyed decades of growth but was now unable to compete with the new destinations springing up throughout the world. The year 1992 saw a sharp decline in the number of foreign tourists coming to Spain (Fig. 3 and 4). Between 1995 and 2000, the growth of hotel facilities was tempered and the sector underwent a major overhaul involving the closure of less profitable hotels and a change in their categorisation (Table 3). This grave state of affairs forced the owners of the hotel chains, who now took advantage of the situation, to embark upon a process of internationalisation (Ramón, 2000), in some cases exporting to the Caribbean the same model of tourist colonisation suffered by Spain (Blázquez, Cañada, 2011).

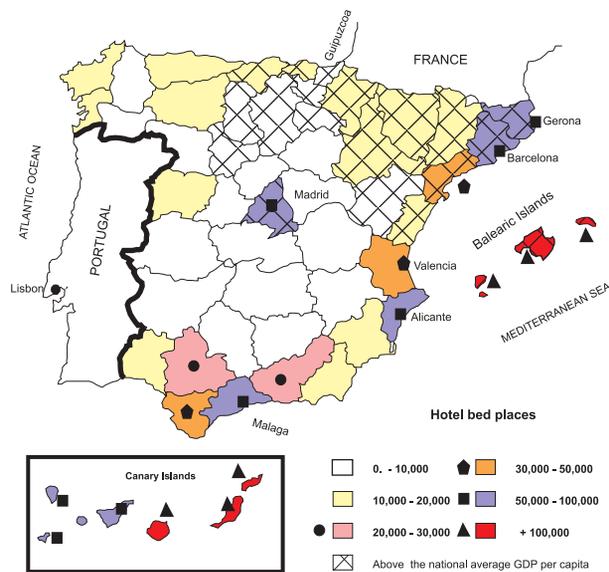


Fig. 6. Hotel bed places and GDP per capita by Spanish provinces in 2010

Source: MIT and Banco de Bilbao

The combination of the slump in tourism, the environmental problems that it had created, and the new administrative order, in which the lion's share of power now lay in the hands of the Autonomous Communities, forced the State to publish the White Paper on Spanish Tourism (1990). This made a series of recommendations that were included in the Master Competitiveness Plan for

Spanish Tourism, Futures I (1992–95). The Futures Plan brought about significant changes in tourism policy and planning: (a) the State, whose authority in the field of tourism had been diminished, was now assigned the role of coordinating tourism policy in conjunction with the other public administration bodies (national, regional and local) and the private sector (Brunet et al., 2005: 210); (b) the ob-

jective was now to restore the competitiveness of the older tourist destinations and enable them to compete on the international stage again by employing techniques similar to those used to revitalise ailing industrial zones (Ivars, 2003b: 323; Moreno, 2007: 349); (c) planning now dovetailed with the incentives given to local and regional development over this period, during which the tourist resorts themselves were handed a key role in stimulating the economy (Milne, Ateljevic, 2001); (d) tourism policy had to take into account the role of territory and environment (López, 1999).

Loss of competitiveness and environmental problems were more acute in the older tourist destinations. With these resorts in mind, the Futures Plan I devised the Tourism Excellence Plans (*Planes de Excelencia Turística*) – a series of social, economic and environmental measures executed in conjunction with public and private sector agents in the location in question. These were similar to the environmental recovery and urban redevelopment measures taken to transform many of Europe's former industrial cities in the 1980s and 1990s (Williams, 1996). The success of this Plan led to its extension as Futures II (1996–99), whose main innovation was the acknowledgment of emerging tourist areas, for which it introduced new Tourism Stimulation Plans (*Planes de Dinamización Turística*) while retaining the earlier Excellence Plans for already-consolidated destinations. The continuity of this tourism planning strategy was achieved through the Integral Quality Plan for Spanish Tourism (PICTE) (2000–06). The PICTE redoubled efforts to improve tourist destinations and products using the same methodology employed previously. Plans which had proved successful in their particular destinations (Tourism Excellence and Stimulation) were retained (Turespaña, 2011).

The final piece in the tourism planning jigsaw was Spain's Horizon 2020 Plan. This Plan has brought some change to a planning process, although it has retained part of the PICTE strategy, principally its inter-administrative coordination. Certain aspects have, however, been given greater priority, among them destination management, the dissemination of new technologies, and environmental sustainability (Foronda, García, 2009).

The creation of these plans has been particularly important in the spread of tourism to new destina-

tions and the enhancement of natural and cultural resources. The government and the tourism sector have made a great effort. It is worth noting that between 1992 and the end of 2010, 253 tourist destination plans were executed at a cost of €646.6 million (Turespaña, 2011). This reflects how tourism policy has adapted to changes in the sector during the post-Fordist phase (Fayos-Solá, 1996a).

Regional governments have been actively involved in plans for destinations (Excellence and Stimulation); regional tourism plans were very similar to the state ones. Regional governments have played an important role in the territory, as they have helped to spread tourism to less developed areas. These governments also opted for diversification of tourism products and the domestic market. The regions have participated in the recent dissemination of tourism to the whole country (López, 2001; Brunet et al., 2005).

In 2010, a remarkable expansion in the number of hotel places took place throughout most of the country, notably on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts, in the Pyrenees Mountains and in the two archipelagos (Fig. 6). This spread can be attributed to the diversification of destinations and tourism products in keeping with the post-Fordist territorial model and also due to the strong investment of the state and regions in plans for destinations in the last twenty years (Brunet et al, 2005; Foronda, García, 2009). The archipelagos are the two most popular tourist areas, although the Balearics exhibit an obvious stagnation due to destination maturity (Table 3). The provinces with the highest economic rankings in the 1990s (Gerona and the Balearic Islands) also suffered a minor setback in 2008, a year in which their respective positions in the GDP and percentage tables were similar to those for 1955. In 2010 Gerona recorded a slight increase in GDP per capita while the Balearic Islands showed a significant drop in this variable (Table 2). The tourism sector was unable to act as a balancing factor for GDP in the country.

## 5. Conclusions

Among the aspects examined here, some results stand out for further debate: (a) there is a close re-

relationship between tourism policy and economic development in Spain; (b) a change in the regional distribution of the tourist accommodation is noticed: it has evolved from a highly polarised tourism model to the one more widespread in the country; (c) and tourism is not the initial cause of the economic imbalance in Spain. There is a constant maintenance of this imbalance over the study period (Table 2, Fig. 1, 2, 5 and 6).

Spatial polarisation is a requirement of mass tourism (Williams, 1996). The territorial distribution of mass tourism in Spain was imbalanced, adhering to a tourism model in which imbalance and accumulation were the keys to improved performance. The Spanish government opted for rapid growth underpinned by low-cost and mass tourism involving foreign investment. This economic growth aggravated the territorial imbalance already prevalent in the country. The location of Spanish hotel supply, dictated by factors such as availability of infrastructure and proximity to European markets, was designed to maximise economic return. The initial polarisation favoured the more economically-developed areas, and this baseline imbalance has not changed since. In the post-Fordist period, there has been a slowdown in the growth of hotel supply in mature destinations and an increase in hotel places in the less developed destinations. The weight of the Mediterranean provinces studied has sharply declined over recent years (Table 1). The general trend is towards the spread of tourism throughout most of the country. In this stage, though variations in the spatial distribution of hotel supply declined, economic differences still persist (Table 1 and 2; Fig. 1, 2, 5 and 6).

It is worth noting that over the 53 years covered by the study, there was little change in economic ranking. None of the Spanish tourist provinces that were below the national average in terms of GDP per capita in 1955 had reached said benchmark by 2010 (Table 2). The situation of the provinces studied is varied: (a) Madrid and Barcelona maintain a high GDP per capita and growth in hotel supply. They are dynamic urban spaces; (b) Girona and the Balearic Islands have a GDP per capita above the national average and a decrease in the supply of tourist accommodation. They are mature destinations that have reduced their supply of places; (c) Alicante and Malaga had a similar pattern but in

recent years Alicante clearly reduced its supply of places; (d) the Canary Islands recorded the highest growth of bed places without increasing their GDP per capita; (e) Valencia is the only province that reduced its GDP per capita; (f) and Guipuzcoa is an example of an industrial area in which tourism is a side line (Table 1, 2 and 3).

Likewise, the Development National Plans failed to redress regional differences (Richardson, 1976); tourism did not work as a regional economic balancer. The less developed tourist provinces continued at the same level of economic development (Alicante, Canarias, and Malaga). None of these surpassed the national average of GDP per capita. The Canary Islands are one of the most important tourist regions in Spain, with a supply of tourist accommodation such as the Balearic Islands, but the Canaries are 20 points below income per capita of the Balearic Island in 2010 (35.5 points in 1991) (Table 2 and 3). Some authors explain this situation due to lack of diversification of the economic structure in the less developed tourist provinces (Vallejo, 2002; Alcaide, 2003). In this way, these provinces become exporters of revenue generated by tourism directed towards industrial regions. Usually, the underdeveloped areas received less investment because they have no industries. This fact does not help to establish facilities to cater for tourists, such that the less developed provinces become importers of goods and services. This case is similar to those studied in the tourist islands of the Caribbean Sea (Villareal, Van der Hurst, 2008). Anyway, further analysis will be required to explain the low capacity displayed by tourism in Spain for improving the economic situation of those provinces in which it is developed.

It is noted that the tourist provinces performed well during the 1991 economic crisis (e.g. Gerona and Balearic Island reached the top position in the ranking of per capita income). By contrast, the 2008 economic crisis has had a severe effect on the tourist provinces. Previous crises affected the industrial provinces, while the 2008 crisis focused on the building sector and real estate that were very important in tourist areas (Table 2).

Certain authors highlight the existence of a Latin model of development based on tourism. The characteristics of this approach are not radically different from those of subsequent methodologies implement-

ed in tourist-receiving countries. Its significance lies in the fact it was the first in the mass tourism era, a period which would ultimately transform the nations concerned into developed countries. In the Latin model, the role of the tourism sector was to provide resources (tourist revenue) that could be invested in industry. Spain's case is unique in that the early days of tourism saw the country open up to and rely upon foreign countries in much the same way as the small tourist nations of the Caribbean Sea would do years later. One characteristic feature of the Latin model is territorial imbalance and weak capacity to produce economic and social development in less developed tourist regions. The growth of tourism often produces territorial and economic imbalances, and in the case of the Latin model, tourism has served to highlight the existing regional discrepancies. The case of Southern Italy is particularly striking (Barucci, Becheri, 1990). This region (*Mezzogiorno*) has undergone little tourism development despite the availability of extensive natural and cultural resources. Other tourist countries in Southern Europe show similar facts, as the cases of Greece and Portugal (Leontidou, 1988; Almeida, 2012). In all these cases, tourism has played a limited role as far as regional balance is concerned. This fact invites to open future debates about territorial role of tourism.

In the last 60 years, Spanish tourism has achieved high economic growth and significant revenues, but that has not helped to improve territorial balance. A set of factors should help to improve the strong growth of tourism. Firstly, the enhancement of new tourism products based on culture, nature and sport; secondly, the spread of tourism to the inland areas of the country should reduce regional imbalances; and thirdly, tourism plans for destinations should take into account the local production: tourism plans should become incentives for local economic activity.

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