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**Socio-Spatial Transformations in  
Consolidated Mediterranean Tourism  
Resorts**

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Session: Tourism Geographies and Global Change: Local Communities and Economies in Transformation.

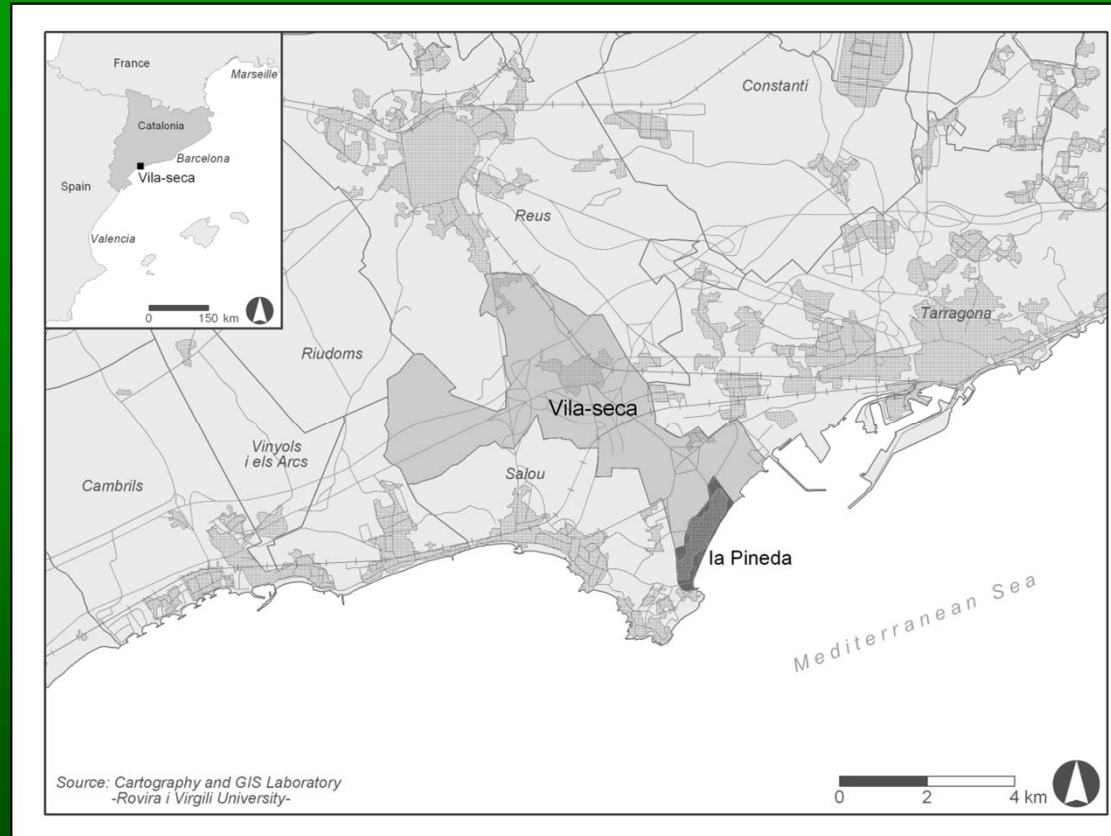
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# Structure

- Introducing Vila-seca (Catalonia) as a rapidly-urbanised Mediterranean resort...
- Our ideas in context: moving beyond existing approaches to coastal resort evolution...
- Coastal mass destinations as major urban structures: Rethinking the evolution of resorts in terms of their urban condition – Cultural Political Economy (CPE) as ‘resortscape’
- Going back to Vila-seca: how can CPE help us to reinterpret the socio-spatial transformation from resort to **city**

# Vila-seca case study (1): Location



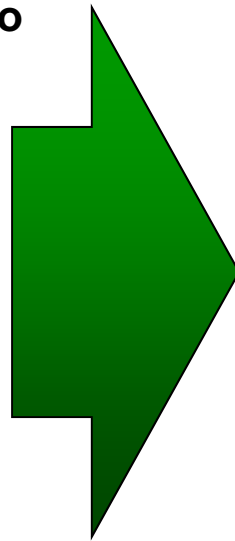
## Vila-seca

- 100 km south of Barcelona
- Central Costa Daurada coastline, Catalonia

# Vila-seca case study (2): Evolution

**1990:** Unfavourable situation for tourism development due to global and local challenges:

- Permanent structural changes in demand.
- Progressive eruption of new technologies.
- Slack activity in early 1990s.
- The destination's lack of tourism notoriety due to the segregation of Salou in 1989.
- Shortcomings in town planning and in the quality of the landscape.
- Environmentally unfavourable context due to the presence of the adjacent petrochemical industry.
- Subsidiarity with respect to other, better known destinations.



**2010:** Rated as an example of how **excellence in the public and private management of a tourist destination leads to greater income for hotel companies and greater job creation** not only in the hotel industry but in all activities related with tourism (Exceltur, 2011)



# Vila-seca case study (3): from resort to city

- Key actions developed for the transformation and renovation of Vila-seca
  - Governance and land-use management
  - Sustainability and resource management
  - Competitiveness and stimulating the productive economy



# Vila-seca case study (4): the path towards the 'urban condition'

- Planning actions emerge as a fundamental axis of political intervention in terms a specific and functional urban transformation model (rather than a resort model).
- Rather than opting for political short-termism, the success of the destination reinvention process in this case is due to:

**....having correctly designed the long-term urban restructuring model** with the destination's specific characteristics in mind (more later).

# From destination to city

Coastal mass tourism destinations eventually become **major urban structures** (Anton Clavé, 2012):

- Urban form uniqueness
- Attracting new social groups as residents
- Attracting new economic and innovative activities
- Diversification along the evolution of the Urban Life Cycle
- Variety of capital accumulation (related / unrelated)

**Rethinking the evolution of resorts in terms of their urban condition – Cultural Political Economy (CPE)**

# From Urban to Cultural Political Economy (Ribera Fumaz, 2009):

## The CPE of...

*Urban morphology of restructuring*

*New and symbolic economies*

*Entrepreneurialism and ethnicity*

*The construction of interurban competition*

## Topics

Cultural-material production of urban space

'Symbolic economy', philanthropy and the leisure industry in postmodern urban strategies

Mobilisation of cultural discourses in entrepreneurial urban restructuring and the construction of race and ethnic difference in growth coalitions

Material-discursive formation of urban competition



# *CPE as 'resortscape'*

## **Political Economy**

- Tourism as...major mechanism of capital accumulation (Britton, 1991)
- Tourism as...urbanisation agent (Mullins, 1991)

*CPE as a theoretical framework for a more holistic and nuanced understanding of mass tourism resorts as cities*

## **Cultural Turn**

- Critical Tourism Studies
- New Mobilities Paradigm

# How can *CPE* help us to reinterpret the 'urban condition' of mass coastal tourism destinations?

- Aligning the **political economy / urban restructuring** of tourism destinations (Zukin, 2005) with poststructural / cultural concerns, such as:

The symbolic economy of 'fantasy places' (Hannigan, 1998)

Relationship between identity and urban space (Lefebvre, 1991)

Consumption of everyday life (Benjamin, 1999, Lloyd, 2002, Maitland, 2007)

Role of spectacle as a driving strategy (Debord, 1995)

# Beyond the Destination? *CPE* in relation to Vila-seca case study

- **New mechanisms of governance**
  - *[Smart and slow land-use planning policies and tools]*
  - *[‘Retrofit’ urban policy and regulation]*
  - *[New PPP governance alliances]*
  - *[Building an atmosphere of political, entrepreneurial and social consensus]*
- **Renewed symbolic foundations for the leisure and knowledge economies**
  - *[Environmental, beach and landscape enhancement]*
  - *[Services-related SMEs incubator]*
  - *[Urban regeneration “spear-head” –PortAventura leisure complex]*
  - *[Tourism and leisure-oriented University and knowledge cluster]*
  - *[Emergence of a new hotel-led model of urban development]*
- **Renewed processes of identity formation**
  - *[Historically themed boardwalk promenade]*
  - *[Image-building (Javier Mariscal pine sculpture) for the destination (and the city)]*
  - *[Cultural programming based on local talent]*

# Thank you!

## Feedback very welcome...

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