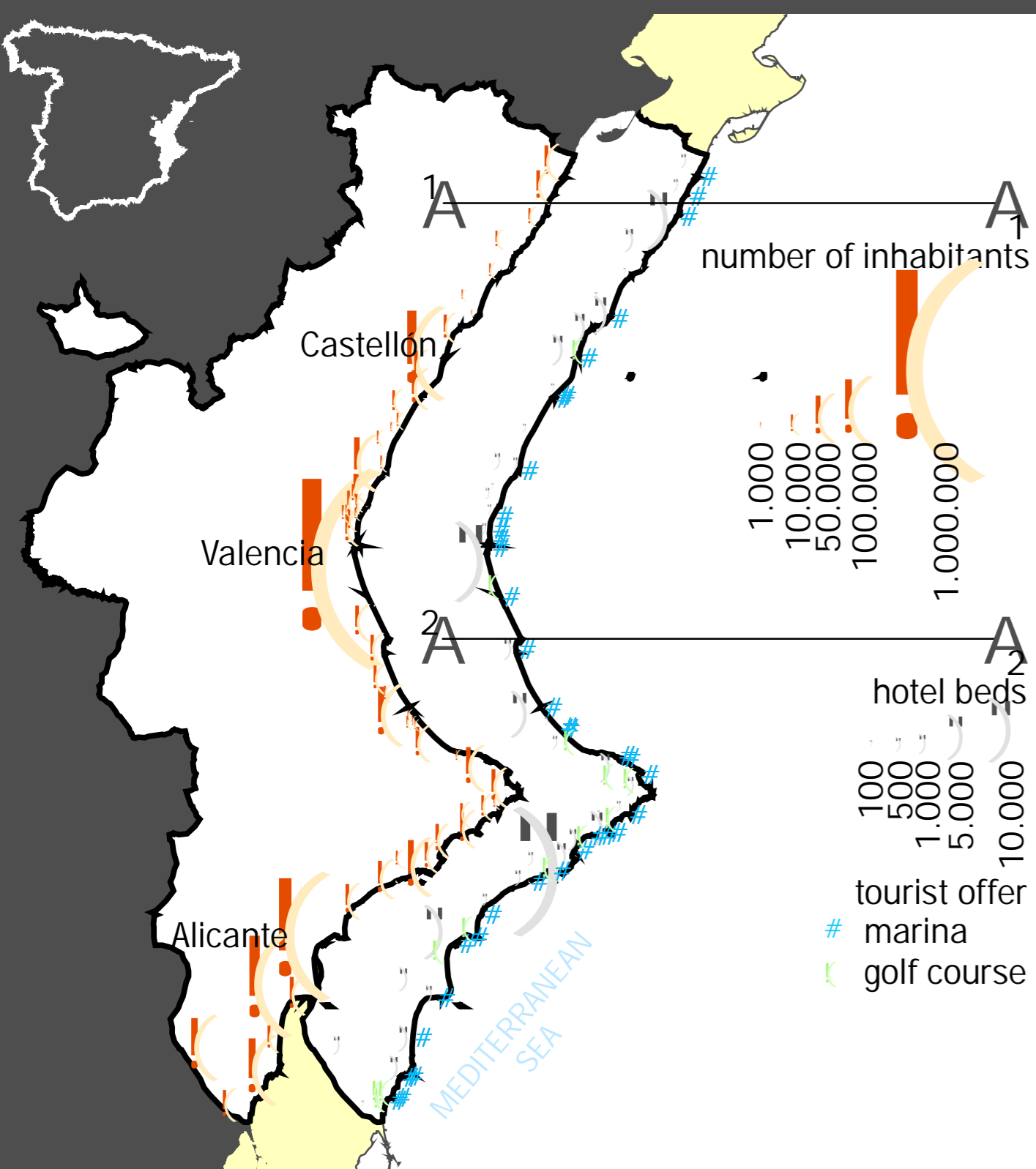


Managing degrowth in tourist conurbations

The Valencian Model [Spain]



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

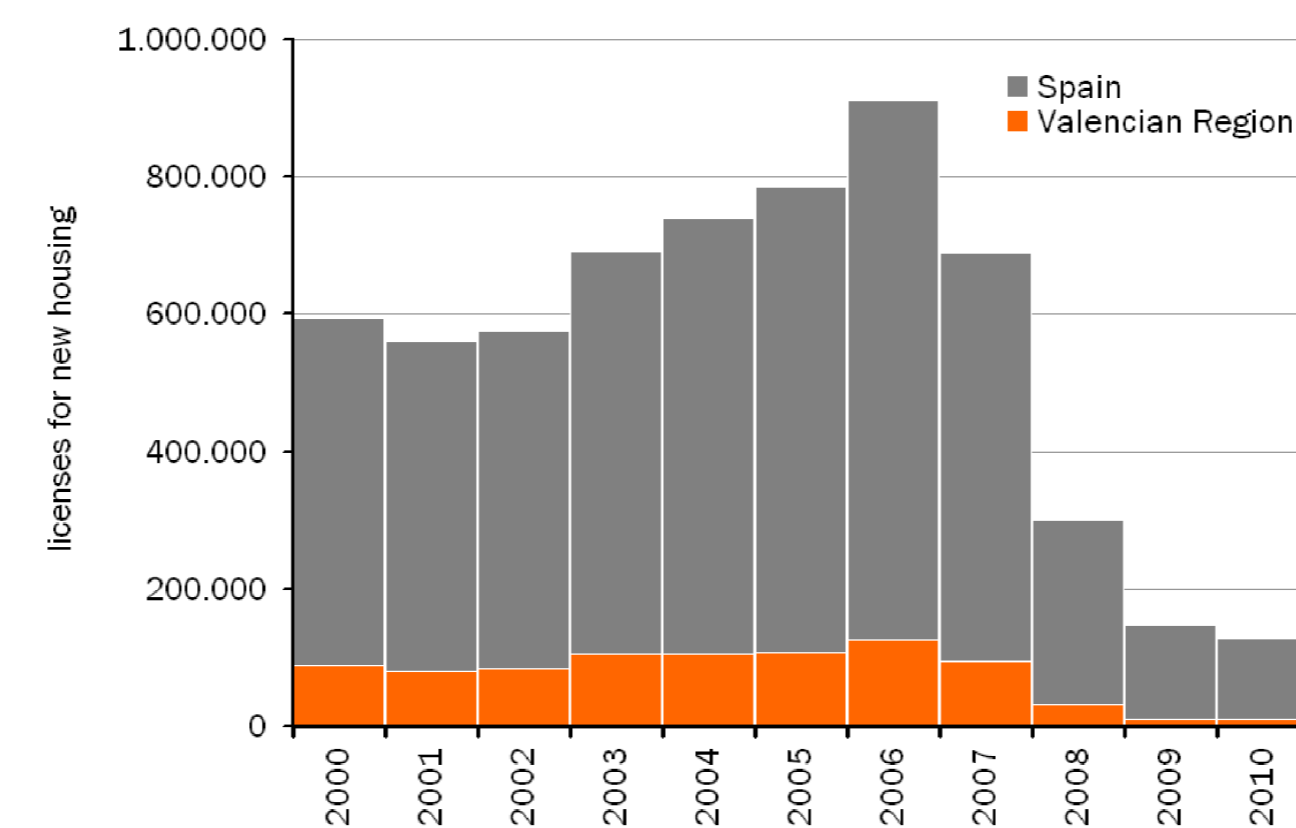
The crash of the housing bubble in 2007 started a new cycle of territorial uncertainties, where it is necessary to rethink the principles of land and urban planning. In Spain, the so-called "urban tsunami" (Fernández, 2006; Gaja, 2008) during 1997-2006, provides a full of unfinished developments, empty houses and infrastructures to means to construct new scenarios. Absurd landscapes of real estate fever, show the difficulties to access to decent housing for many families, and the eviction of many others, the high values of unemployment in the construction and the collapse of many financial institutions and construction companies.

In this context, some regional public administrations have developed techniques for containment of urban sprawl (Rullán, 2011), some even considering measures of urban degrowth - as it has happened in the Balearic Islands (Blázquez, 2006).

Degrowth strategies are based on reformulation of our forms of habitat (Cattaneo & Gavalda, 2010) and integration into the urban environment (Reyes, 2011), trying to rebuild the territorial resilience (Hopkins, 2008). The relocation of economic activities in the territory seems to be a basic premise. It is therefore very important that local administrations - as the competent bodies in the planning of the territory in Spain, are reasonable in their urban planning projects. However, this does not usually happen, and there are still many barriers to overcome.

TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

The first coastline of the Valencian region, is one of the more transforms around the Mediterranean areas. The driving force behind this transformation for decades has been the tourist immigration, and specifically the real estate business linked to the second residence. (maps 1 and 2). One of each two km is urbanized at the beginning of 21st century (map 3). Between 2004 and 2006, at the peak of the Spanish housing bubble, in this region were awarded licenses for 315 thousand new housing construction (graphic 1), as well as the ways of communication and tourist infrastructures linked to the phenomenon of urban expansion.



Source of data: Ministry of Public Works, Spain.

Measures to contain the urbanization of tourism

In this context appeared some legal measures to contain the spatial and demographic growth that threatens the coast. The new regional laws of urban and regional planning introduced thresholds to urban expansion and established a quota of sustainability to curb urbanization euphoria of many municipalities.

But since 2007, paradoxically the capitalist crisis had hampered urban growth. In the opposite direction, the Valencian Government has suppressed the containment measures and has issued new laws to reactivate the real state and the tourist-tertiary complexes construction. These are measures that propose more bricks against the crisis of the brick.

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2004

- Land Planning and Landscape Protection Law;
 - arts. 81/82: resource consumption thresholds !
 - arts. 83/84/85/86/87: sustainability assessments !
- 2006
 - Regulation of Territorial and Urban Planning and Management;
 - annex 1: thresholds of sustainability for the consumption of soil!
 - Action Plan for the Coastline (not in force);
 - decongest the urbanized coastline !
 - promote urban activity towards inland municipalities !
- 2010
 - Law on urgent measures to expedite the exercise of productive activities and the creation of employment;
 - repeal of annex 1 of Regulation of Territorial and Urban Planning and Management (2006)!
 - Global Plan of Tourism;
 - promote the tourist urbanization in inland municipalities !
- 2011
 - Decree Law on urgent measures for the implementation of territorial strategic actions;
 - measures to promote the urbanization, construction of tourist complexes, etc. !

DIAGNOSIS OF THE TOURIST CONURBATIONS

The first coastline municipalities have had a more expansive dynamic (maps 3 and 4). According to Greenpeace (2007), the 50% of Valencian coast would be urbanized, but there are still many latent urban projects -Gaja (2011) indicates that there are 49 128 hectares suitable for urban development in the region. In the coastal tourist conurbation, could develop still 15 287 hectares (map 5).

However, at the current situation it seems little probable and inadvisable to reactivate latent operations. According to the report of Caixa Catalunya (2012), on the residential sector in Spain, in the Valencian Community, there are 209 725 new homes in stock - more than 20% of all Spain.

But the most worrying is the amount of urban spaces that remain unfinished, and as part of these new absurd landscapes of the brick (see pictures). They are areas that have been degraded, but due to its characteristics, they present new opportunities beyond the real estate.

