**THE POST-STAGNATION PHASE OF THE RESORT CYCLE**

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on the development of contemporary beach resorts in the post-stagnation stage of the resort cycle which has not been as closely examined as the earlier ones. But sufficient evidence has now been accumulated to test assertions referring to the model. The Catalan coast, with its long tradition of both international mass tourism and second home development, is particularly suitable for empirical analysis. The paper proposes an alternative model for the expansion of new resorts, with the basic objective of reconciling environmental impact with tourism development. **Keywords:** cycle of evolution, tourist resort, Catalonia, carrying capacity, post-stagnation, re-orientation, market segmentation, tourism environment.

**Résumé:** Le cycle des stations: la phase de post-stagnation. Cette recherche porte sur le développement des stations balnéaires contemporaines dans la phase de post-stagnation du cycle des stations, laquelle n'a pas été examinée d'aujourd'hui que les précédentes. Mais on a maintenant amassé assez d'évidence pour vérifier les affirmations par rapport au modèle. La côte catalane, avec sa longue tradition de tourisme international de masse et de résidences secondaires, se prête bien à l'analyse empirique. L'article présente un modèle alternatif pour l'expansion de nouvelles stations, avec l'objectif principal de réconcilier l'impact environnemental et le développement touristique. **Mots-clés:** cycle d'évolution, station touristique, Catalogne, capacité de charge, post-stagnation, réorientation, segmentation du marché, environnement touristique.

**INTRODUCTION**

Although Gilbert (1939), Christaller (1963), Plog (1973), Miossec (1976), and Stansfield (1978) put forward ideas on the evolution of tourism resorts, it is generally recognized that the article by Butler (1980), entitled "The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution", introduces the model of a product life cycle for individual tourism resorts. Spanish resorts are frequently cited as representing the advanced stages of this model and, in fact, Butler considered that in 1980 the Costa Brava resorts exemplified the characteristics of the stagnation stage when...
the peak number of visitors [was] reached. Capacity levels for many variables will have been reached or exceeded, with attendant environmental, social and economic problems. The area will have a well established image but it will no longer be in fashion (Butler, 1980:8).

The model foresees future development in terms of organized mass tourism, a declining market, an increasing number of weekend or one-day visits, and the conversion of hotels into apartments for permanent settlement or retirement homes. By this stage, many resorts have suffered declining patronage because of changing fashion and consumer tastes, resident resentment and environmental change. Rejuvenation, or renewed development will almost certainly require, in Butler's opinion, a complete change in the attractions on which tourism is based.

In Catalonia in 1980, the massification of tourism was a relatively recent phenomenon. Sixteen years later, however, sufficient evidence has been accumulated to make it possible to test the validity of these assertions referring to the latter stages of resort development, both on the Costa Brava and on the entire Catalan coast. During this period, general awareness of environmental issues has increased, and sustainability objectives have been set. Butler's cycle concept has undoubtedly aroused great interest and has been a topic for discussion and testing throughout this period. Reviews of subsequent contributions and theoretical overviews have been made by Agarwal (1994), Getz (1992), Haywood (1986), Ioannides (1992), Oppermann (1995) and Smith (1992).

An initial difficulty in the application of the model is the identification of the various phases of the cycle. A destination resort cycle's points of inflexion are only evident post-facto, especially as its form depends on both internal and external factors (Haywood 1986). Therefore, the life cycle is a hypothetical development path, not an independent mechanical process (Ioannides 1992). It is generally recognized that the identification of the phases of Butler's cycle is based on capacity levels and demand/visitor numbers (Debbage 1990) and that "decline is rooted in visitor numbers exceeding capacity levels at the destination" (Cooper and Jackson 1989:382). However, although the concept of carrying capacity is problematic as it involves subjective perceptions (Wall 1982; Wilkinson 1990), Cooper and Jackson (1989) consider that, provided the changing pattern of demand is taken not as an independent variable but as one dependent upon marketing and managerial action, then:

the life cycle can be used as an analytical framework to examine the evolution of tourist destinations within their complex economic, social, and cultural environments (Cooper and Jackson 1989:382).

Another difficulty is that the life cycle approach is destination specific and there are difficulties in identifying stages and turning points (Brownlie 1985; Haywood 1986). The latter can be identified by using leading indicators such as growth rates of visits; level of visits compared to market potential; percentage of first-time visitors; numbers of competitors; levels of prices and profits; advertising, pro-
motional, and price elasticity; and the emergence of new destinations that meet customer needs more effectively (Day 1981; Doyle 1976; Haywood 1986; Rink and Swan 1979). Cooper and Jackson suggest that the stage of the cycle reached by a destination can be identified by plotting the rate of change of visitor numbers, visitor expenditure, type of tourist, market share, or profitability (Cooper and Jackson 1989:381). Moreover, the level of aggregation is not clearly defined (Brownlie 1985; Kotler 1980; Rink and Swan 1979; Weaver 1990). Geographical scale is important for the tourism area life cycle as each destination area is a mosaic of resorts, which comprise different elements (hotels, facilities, etc.), each of which exhibits a separate life cycle. Depending on the scale taken, each may be at a different stage in the cycle. The unit of analysis is therefore crucial (Cooper and Jackson 1989:381). Similarly, domestic and international markets can produce different demand patterns and hence differing curves (Brownlie 1985; Haywood 1986). This has, in fact, been demonstrated by Strapp (1988) in his study of second home development in Sauble Beach, Ontario.

Although life cycle extension has been discussed in the tourism literature (Butler 1980; Cooper 1990; Cooper and Jackson 1989; Hinch and Butler 1986; Keller 1987; Strapp 1988) and Butler (1980:9–10) has identified a hypothetical model with five possible patterns of development, there is, as Agarwal (1994:204) points out, a general lack of empirical validation of the final post-stagnation phase. She also identifies an urgent need for the theoretical reformulation of the post-stagnation phase, and proposes that more theoretical evidence must be placed on the differing ways by which this can be achieved. In her opinion, restructuring needs to be viewed as a continual process operating at different levels (Agarwal 1994:205). Agarwal further proposes the introduction of a "re-orientation phase" between stagnation and post-stagnation. This phase represents continual efforts at restructuring, and is characterized by market targeting, specialization and segmentation. At the same time, substantial investment is channelled into tourist accommodation and attractions, as the image of the resort undergoes radical transformation.... Efforts are concerned primarily with reviving and renewing the dwindling tourist industry. It is this feature that makes the reorientation stage fundamentally different from Butler's rejuvenation phase. Greater emphasis is placed on encouraging growth and market maturity, rather than on accepting decline (Agarwal 1994:206).

Several other authors had already discussed the possibility that the life cycle in general can be revitalized or rejuvenated. Biggadike (1981) discusses the extension of the product life cycle through targeting a new market segment(s), whereas Enis, La Garce and Prell (1977) suggest that the sales of a product in the maturity stage may be revitalized by appropriate modification of the product form. According to Benedetto and Bojanic (1993:560), tourism life cycles can be extended or revitalized as a result of conscious, deliberate decision-making on the part of management (for example, by introducing a new attraction). This is referred to as a strategic life cycle.
extension, but changes can also occur as a result of the operation of external factors (in other words, those which are not controlled from within the destination). Benedetto and Bojanic refer to the resulting process as environmental life cycle extension, a term which could cause confusion, as it includes factors such as cheaper or improved accessibility, or legislative measures which affect supply or demand. Nonetheless, the distinction between internally and externally generated stimulants is valid.

Obviously, policymaking and implementation are essential components of life cycle extension. Martin and Uysal (1990), however, argue that each stage in the life cycle will reveal different capacity thresholds and requires different policy responses. During stagnation, many tourists can be accommodated, but social problems can generate resident opposition to growth. Tourism policy can be related to this dynamic interaction of capacity and life cycle, with the aim of achieving a desired position or improving unacceptable conditions. They insist on the importance of planning actions at all stages, placing priority on regulations and environmental protection in the early stages, and management of change during the subsequent stages, in order to prevent deterioration or decline. They conclude that plans can be formulated to control changes, if the changes can be predicted. Getz (1992: 753), however, questions whether or not the life cycle model is truly predictive, and whether planners and policymakers will be able to use it.

This paper briefly examines the evolution of tourism in general along the Catalan coast while focusing attention on three resorts in particular. It is assumed at the outset that the region’s tourism structure now corresponds to the latter phases of the tourism life cycle, accepting as an initial hypothesis Butler's assertion that the stagnation phase had been reached by 1980 in Catalonia. Certainly if a loose interpretation of this phase, in terms of alarm signals concerning environmental problems and falling profit margins or economic viability is accepted, the region fits within this category. Some observations on the validity of this classification are made in the paper, although the principal objective of the empirical analysis is to identify the strategies applied for life cycle extension in the post-stagnation period within the study area. In the light of the experience acquired in the region and of recent developments, new trends in resort development can be identified. The ultimate objective is to indicate valid strategies for future development which can be more generally applied in planning and, in the light of these experiences, reformulate the model.

In the three case studies, the role of planning, and of its absence, are examined. Certainly the laissez-faire policy applied throughout Spain during the growth stages of tourism, with the consequent absence of planning measures, is largely to blame not only for over-development, but also for the lack of product definition (Priestley 1995a). However, in these resorts which have already suffered a process of stagnation, planning and management, with the objective of attracting predetermined market segments, are playing a fundamental role in the attempt to re-establish stability in the tourism industry and guarantee its viability in the future.
DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE COAST OF CATALONIA

At the macro-statistical level, the coast of Catalonia is normally treated as a single unit, whereas, in reality, considerable diversity in the type and degree of tourism development exists. Large-scale development in the region dates from the mid-50s (Barbaza 1966), but the pattern of expansion of each village, the occupation of coves and the formation of ribbon urban development and establishment of campsites along virgin beaches has varied greatly, as a result of the unequal operation of a number of different factors. These include the characteristics of the natural environment on each stretch of the coastal fringe, accessibility, local initiative, municipal policy, the availability of private investment, and inertia (Priestley 1995a, 1996).

Second home development, constructed for the region's city dwellers (especially from Barcelona) during the 70s and 80s and superimposed upon the existing structure, further influenced the entire pattern of tourism development. Thus, accommodation supply for short-stay visitors and, consequently, international mass tourism demand, was concentrated in a small number of large resorts (notably, Platja d'Aro, Lloret de Mar, Calella, and Salou, and to a lesser extent, Roses, Tossa de Mar, and Sitges). Campsites were concentrated on the northern and southern sections of the coast (from Roses to Blanes and from El Vendrell to Montroig del Camp), while second home development has spread all along the coast and throughout its hinterland (Priestley 1996) (Figures 1 and 2).

Western Europeans have traditionally constituted the majority of visitors to Catalonia. French visitors, who arrive mainly by road in private cars and occupy campsites and private accommodation in preference to hotels, have always been the most numerous. Britons initially dominated the demand for short-stay hotel and apartment accommodation, but demand from the German market has gradually grown to such an extent that it now exceeds that of British nationals. The constant diversification of the market to include other European nationalities (Italy and Eastern European countries in particular) is the keynote of present trends.

Despite the constant growth of tourism, fluctuations in demand relative to supply caused periodical "crises" in the tourism industry after 1973. The repercussions of the first crisis were most strongly felt in the high seasons of 1974, 1975, and 1976, when a fall in visitor numbers was registered. They were, however, largely a consequence of general worldwide economic trends in the aftermath of the petroleum crisis of 1973 (Cals 1988:630), and political uncertainty at the time of the transition to democracy after Franco's death in 1975 (Cals 1982:631, 633), rather than as the result of changes directly related to the tourism market—although the revaluation of Spanish currency together with the devaluation of the US dollar were also contributory factors. But these general trends did serve as a warning to the tourism sector, and thereafter the rates of growth in demand were slower and subject to fluctuations.

However, it must be clearly understood that the number of tourist arrivals did continue to increase while, at the same time, the con-
struction of hotels continued, although the principal component of growth was second home construction. The major problem facing destinations was that of economic viability as profit margins dropped. Prices did not keep abreast of inflation and average expenditure per tourist also suffered a gradual reduction (Cals 1982). The deterioration of the environment (both natural and built) and insufficient infrastructures had also become problematic and this transferred to the tourist in the form of a drop in the price/quality ratio. In the 90s, however, tourist demand has increased once more, mainly because some potentially direct competitors in the Mediterranean basin have been faced with problems of political unrest or outright warfare, but recent successive devaluations of Spanish currency (30% in three years) have also contributed to encourage increasing numerical demand, although profit margins continue to drop.

In spite of the signs of decreasing economic viability over the last two decades, it has only been in recent years that new policies and measures have emerged to counteract the negative trends which had become apparent. Under the Franco regime, the underlying objective of tourism policy was to achieve numerical growth in demand at all
costs (Cals 1974; Priestley 1995b) and no form of control of the physical expansion of resorts was contemplated. Moreover, the over-development of individual resorts was not identified as a problem. Fuster Lareu (1972), in a study undertaken within the framework of the government Development Plan, identified the problem as one of "strangulation" rather than "saturation". Such strangulation was defined in terms of insufficient labor force in expanding resorts, accompanied by the need for immigration and the consequent provision of housing, education, and vocational training; insufficient revenues and political/administrative structure at local level; and inadequate public service provision (drinking water, sewage disposal, and accessibility). Saturation was viewed exclusively as a question of marginal economic viability. Fuster Lareu not only identified the problems caused by lack of planning for tourism development, but he
also focused attention on the absence of basic urban infrastructures and necessary services to accommodate the increasingly large permanent and seasonal populations (mostly employees in the tourism sector and second home owners). It was, in fact, this lack of basic infrastructure that led to the general deterioration of environmental quality in resorts—a situation which was, no doubt, a consequence of the very limited financial capacity of municipal authorities (Cals 1974; Priestley 1995a). Thus the uncontrolled expansion of resorts was a secondary consequence of attempts to increase municipal funds by charging fees for building permits.

A number of points of coincidence and discrepancies with previous case studies can be identified. Smith (1992:304) defined the evolution of beach resorts as “essentially a form of urbanization” and this is certainly clearly evidenced in Catalonia, where only small stretches of coastline remain undeveloped. Strapp (1988), in reference to Canada, identified the second home phenomenon as an extremely important component of tourism demand, and Cals as early as the 70s made a similar observation about the Catalonian coast (Cals 1974:59). However, rather than replacing the demand, as demonstrated in Strapp’s case study, it has, in most cases, fitted in alongside international tourism in Catalonia. A characteristic of development not noted in other case studies is the high level of resident participation throughout the process of development. Tourism enterprises were, by and large, small-scale and owned and managed by the local population, as shown by a study undertaken by Cals in 1975 (Cals 1982:162–165, 179). Foreign investment in Catalonia was very limited (Cals 1982:31–32, 165), and outsider involvement was restricted to the construction sector, mainly involving Spanish building contractors, and to the purchase of second homes, by mainly Catalonian city-dwellers and other Spaniards and foreigners (Cals 1988:637). Resentment or opposition to development has been limited to specific cases in which the conservation of natural environments, deemed to be of considerable ecological value, was the major issue at stake. (Ioannides 1992:726). Local involvement has not decreased over time, as Butler (1980:8) predicted and as Debbage (1990) identified in his study of oligopolistic trends in the Bahamas. In fact, local entrepreneurs have, in some cases, set up their own hotel chains, investing not only locally but also in other regions and abroad (e.g., the Guitart Hotels chain, which has developed from small beginnings in Lloret de Mar).

Attention has already been drawn to the problem of geographical scale in the empirical testing of Butler’s model. In the case studies presented, it was considered essential to undertake an analysis at the level of individual resorts in order to identify the pattern of development, the problems involved and the solutions adopted. This is justified by the fact that, contrary to the case of Canada (Keller 1987), policy- and decision-making for tourism is almost totally a municipal responsibility, and this is clearly reflected in the great diversity of tourism development on the Catalan coast. However, the choice of three examples (in Catalonia there are 69 municipalities with a coastal front) introduces a further problem, which can only be resolved by subjective judgment (Figure 1). No two resorts have fol-
allowed an identical pattern of development, but two of those chosen can be considered representative of frequently recurring types of circumstances. The first is Lloret de Mar on the Costa Brava, the paradigm of mass tourism resorts. Platja d'Aro, Calella, and Salou could also be included in this category, although Salou no longer faces the same problems as the remaining resorts since the opening of a major theme park (Port Aventura) in the immediate vicinity in May, 1995. In some respects, it could be compared with Atlantic City (Stansfield, 1978) for there are clear indications of "rejuvenation" symptoms, although the opening of the park is obviously too recent a phenomenon to allow definitive conclusions to be reached.

The second resort selected is l'Estartit, with a population of 1,723 inhabitants, lying 6 km from the inland town of Torroella de Montgrí (6,047 inhabitants), on which it is administratively dependent, a circumstance which causes difficulties when analyzing statistics. The two settlements are functionally independent, although they are united by a unique hill mass, the Massís del Montgrí, with each situated at one end. l'Estartit, tucked under a rocky promontory at the head of a long sandy beach, is one of the many formerly isolated fishing villages on the Catalan coast, where the combination of agriculture and fishing was barely sufficient to earn a meagre living. Local enterprise, piecemeal measures and the injection of some outside capital have permitted its growth as a tourism and second home resort, the most generally recurring element on the coast. Sitges, the third resort, is somewhat unique in that it was one of the first two resorts to develop (together with Tossa de Mar), but, after the 1973–76 crisis, it rejected its role as a destination for mass tourism, redefined its objectives, and completely restructured subsequent tourism development.

As a result of the different patterns of development, the present structure of tourism accommodation in the three resorts shows marked contrasts (Figure 3), although these differences were already visible 20 years ago (Table 1). Total capacity in Lloret de Mar far outstrips that of the other two resorts, almost doubling capacity in Sitges and more than doubling it in Torroella–l'Estartit. The predominance of private accommodation in all three resorts is a clear indication of the importance of the second home sector. Only Lloret de Mar has a well-developed hotel sector capable of catering for the mass tourism market.

The principal indicators used to identify the pattern of development in each resort are permanent population and capacity levels of all forms of accommodation, in the absence of reliable statistics for demand. The periodicity of data collection is variable, depending on the agents responsible. Although the analysis of data focuses on recent developments, statistical information over a longer period is provided, in order to offer a historical perspective on the pattern of growth. To develop the case studies, direct interviews and field observation were undertaken to complement the limited published documentary sources available. The statistics presented in the line graphs (Figures 4–6) represent hotel accommodation—a universally accepted tourism indicator—and population. The latter is included as increases are mainly a result of immigration related to new employment oppor-
Figure 3. Tourist Accommodation in Resorts Studied (1995). Source: GdC (1996)

Table 1. Characteristics of Tourism in Lloret de Mar, l'Estartit and Sitges in 1975

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Lloret de Mar</th>
<th>L'Estartit</th>
<th>Sitges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Population</td>
<td>8,186</td>
<td>5,288*</td>
<td>11,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalent Populationb</td>
<td>37,664</td>
<td>9,830*</td>
<td>26,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Hotels (beds):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Star</td>
<td>5 (1,026)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2 (701)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Star</td>
<td>24 (6,967)</td>
<td>2 (163)</td>
<td>4 (358)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Star</td>
<td>64 (10,844)</td>
<td>7 (473)</td>
<td>40 (1,539)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Star</td>
<td>110 (9,805)</td>
<td>21 (1,979)</td>
<td>58 (2,419)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>203 (28,642)</td>
<td>30 (2,615)</td>
<td>104 (5,009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average No. Beds/Hotel</td>
<td>141.1</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Beds/Inhabitant</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures refer to Torroella de Montgrí and l’Estartit
bBearing in mind additional capacity occupied only seasonally
Source: based on MdIT, 1974; RATE, 1981.

opportunities created in the tourism sector, and therefore it indirectly but accurately reflects the pattern of tourism development. Campsite accommodation is not included, as no reliable sources for the period before 1989 are available. Likewise, private accommodation is excluded for several reasons: the national building census is only compiled once every ten years; census statistics do not make a clear distinction between accommodation for short-term tourism demand, second homes and vacant houses; and, although the development of second homes in Catalonia is widespread and the impacts are far-reaching, the phenomenon is related much more closely to local social,
cultural and economic factors than to the processes involved in tourism development.

Case 1: Lloret de Mar

The evolution of hotel development in Lloret de Mar reasonably closely follows the hypothetical path traced by Butler (1980) (Figure 4). The stage of consolidation was reached in the early 70s, and stagnation quickly set in. This fact would tend to confirm the assertion made by Cals (1988:630) that the crisis on the Costa Brava had begun before the 1973 petroleum shortage. Lloret certainly epitomizes a case of spontaneous overdevelopment. Its 1,600 meter-long beachfront was already occupied by small private homes long before the arrival of large-scale tourism development, and thus afforded little opportunity for hotel construction. As a result, large-scale development stretched inland, specializing in large hotels, many of which had a low category rating. The permanent population grew much later, as immigrant workers, who had come on a seasonal basis in earlier years, were able to settle and form families.

Lloret is the paradigm of the application of the national policy of numerical growth at all costs, based on price restrictions. By the end of the 80s, the saturation of carrying capacity was evident. In such circumstances, supply outstripped demand and many tour operators were able to negotiate further price reductions (to as little as one third of official prices), with the attendant negative consequences on product quality. Few hotels closed down, but rising unemployment led to emigration. Points of conflict, symptomatic of imminent decline, included poor quality service in hotels, poorly qualified employees, congestion in the urban center, the absence of complementary activities as alternatives to the beach, and no unified commercial policy in
the hotel sector. The net result was a drop in satisfaction levels of visitors and a general loss of image as a tourism product and destination in both the international and domestic markets.

The 1992 summer season marked a turning point. A series of factors combined to make occupation rates the lowest ever: the strong position of the Spanish peseta on the currency market; the blockage of access to Spain by road as a result of a lorry driver strike in France; poor weather in Catalonia for a period of several days at the beginning of July; and a steep rise in the price of hotel accommodation as a result of unfounded expectations of demand, and fear of general congestion, during the Olympic Games (July 25 to August 9). The resultant drop in demand finally caused hoteliers to reflect upon the extreme fragility of their product and its market.

One of the outcomes of the 1992 crisis was an immediate acceleration of the process of voluntary closure of obsolete or uncompetitive accommodation units. At the same time, several measures were instituted, as a result of both private and public initiatives, in an attempt to restore lost image and upgrade product quality. These focus on improving the two basic elements of the tourism product: accommodation and the beach. The first initiative was a marketing campaign, Lloret Prestigi, undertaken by an association of hotel, apartment, and campsite proprietors, with the support of the municipal council. Membership in the association was granted to those proprietors whose premises complied with a series of quality requirements, mainly related to prices, contracting procedures and service standards. Despite initial enthusiasm, the campaign has not enjoyed widespread support, and only 20 accommodation units, which comprise approximately 10% of all units, are currently involved. More recently, in 1996, the Lloret Association of Hoteliers has devised a 3-year plan to improve quality/price ratios of accommodation within the framework of the Spanish government sponsored “Plan de Calidad Turística” which forms part of the overall plan to revitalize tourism, “Plan Marco de Competitividad del Turismo Español” (Secretaría General de Turismo, 1992). Improvements to the beach and seafront area in Lloret, implemented by the municipal authorities since 1994, have involved increased care of the environment; the diversification of available services and recreational activities; the segmentation of the beach and seafront for different uses; a system of payment similar to a ski resort forfeit to facilitate access to the services and activities provided; and the introduction of a new administrative structure, in particular the creation of a single overall managing body to coordinate all relevant services. As a result, consumer satisfaction has increased. In 1996, a 3-year plan was introduced, involving additional measures to improve the tourism environment, partly financed by the Spanish Ministerio de Fomento within the framework of the “Plan de Excelencia Turística”, which also forms part of the “Plan Marco de Competitividad del Turismo Español.”

Municipal authorities, however, recognize that further reductions in supply are necessary, as carrying capacity is still exceeded. In particular, there is a need to eliminate some low quality establishments which cannot be upgraded satisfactorily. Nevertheless,
there is general acceptance of Lloret’s role as a mass destination for sun/sand/sea tourism, and no fundamental change in product design is contemplated. Emphasis is placed on improving the price/quality relationship of the basic product together with the provision of complementary activities. It is hoped that demand can be maintained through good management and marketing, if lost image can be restored. The ultimate objective, after an initial reduction in capacity and the introduction of improvements in the tourism environment, is to achieve the sustainability of the economy and of the product. Only time will tell if this policy is successful.

Case 2: Torroella de Montgrí–l’Estartit

The relative isolation of Torroella de Montgrí–l’Estartit on the northern extreme of the Costa Brava protected it from rapid mass hotel development during the 60s and early 70s, and although modest growth occurred during this period, maximum hotel capacity has never exceeded 3,000 beds. Tourism development was concentrated in the 70s, coinciding with the expansion of the second home phenomenon and the rising popularity of camping and caravanning (Mundet 1994). By 1982, campsite capacity had reached 12,500 (a figure which has remained constant with only minor fluctuations up until the present time) and private house and apartment capacity was 17,500 (a figure which has continued to increase gradually to 25,000 in 1994). A basic, undifferentiated sun/sand/sea product was provided, offering restricted opportunities for employment after 1980 and similarly limited economic development. The hotel subsector has traditionally relied mainly on the British market, which has fluctuated continuously since 1985 in consonance with general economic trends in the United Kingdom. The relative strength of Spanish currency in comparison with sterling after 1990 aggravated the pattern of fluctuations. The resulting path of development thus reflects a situation of consolidation in the early 70s rapidly followed by stagnation and decline by the mid-80s (Figure 5). Several factors account for this premature decline, including peripheral location of l’Estartit within the tourism region; its excessive dependence on a single market; the lack of any distinguishing element as a complement for the basic product; unimaginative management; and little promotion.

The reversal of this trend began in 1990, when the Illes Medes, a group of small islands just 1 km offshore were pinpointed for environmental conservation on account of the wealth of species of marine flora and fauna present in the surrounding waters. Maximum protection status was obtained in 1990 when the area was declared a Natural Marine Park. Protection brought renown, and well-designed niche marketing has attracted increasing numbers of underwater divers to the resort. Such is the demand that the carrying capacity of the Park is already exceeded at the peak of the summer season. Increasingly strict controls on the number (reduced from 800 daily submersions in 1994 to 450 in 1995) and behavior of divers are exercised, in order to maintain use within the limits of sustainability
of the natural environment, in spite of some opposition from the enterprises involved. Hence the diving season lasts much longer than traditional beach-oriented tourism, with the attendant positive effects on hotel occupancy rates. The number of diving enterprises in the area has increased from three in 1983 to nine, providing 12 boats, in 1996. The fidelity of clients was demonstrated in a study carried out in 1991 by the Economist Intelligence Unit, when 80% of divers were found to be repeat visitors and 95% declared their intention to return. In addition to the diving enterprises, there are 19 sightseeing boats, and two environmental education centers for large groups composed mostly of school-children. Altogether, between 80 and 100 new jobs directly related to these activities, and mostly well-paid, have been created. The economic benefits generated in 1994 are summarized in Table 2.

Plans to further enhance the image of the resort as a unique natural environment are based on the attraction of the Montgrí massif and, to a lesser extent, the wetlands known as Les Basses del Ter Vell, adjacent to existing coastal development. The Montgrí massif is a barren, garrigue-covered, calcarian plateau, which extends 6 km east-west between Torroella and the coast at l'Estartit and occupies a total surface area of 3,500 ha. One of the few well-preserved areas of natural interest on the Costa Brava, it is rich in flora and fauna, particularly birds of prey (Fortià 1997:32). Urban infringements and economic exploitation (two property developments on the lower slopes near the coastal fringe and one quarry) are relatively insignificant, despite the fact that official recognition as an “Area of Natural Interest” came as late as 1992 (GdC 1992), and that explicit protection of the natural environment—an objective of the local administrative authorities (Fortià 1993:221-224)—has not yet been obtained. Les Basses del Ter Vell, a former river outlet, is a bird sanctuary on 30
Table 2. Economic Activities Related to the Illes Medes (1994–95)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Income Generated (million $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underwater Diving:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dives in Protected Area</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dives Outside Protected Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maritime Excursions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursion boats</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Josep Capellà, Manager of the Torroella–l'Estartit Tourist Information Office (personal communication).

hectares of lagoons and reeds. In the General Urban Plan of Torroella, the area is classified as a natural reserve, thus guaranteeing its survival and conservation (Fortià 1993:240, 247). The promotion of environment-friendly activities in these natural areas should provide an alternative to beach-based activities and develop tourism throughout the municipality. Local authorities have, however, been reluctant to promote the use of these areas until adequate legal protection for the natural environment has been obtained. This would appear to be a paradoxical, though well-founded, precaution against possible damage to the environment as a result of uncontrolled private development. Torroella has also been developing complementary activities based on its architectural heritage and cultural events. These include guided visits to the medieval castle on the peak of the Montgrí massif, and the increasing popularity and fame of its international music festival which has been held annually since 1982.

In the case of l'Estartit, it is clear that the stagnation of demand occurred long before potential maximum carrying capacity had been reached. The entire length of the wide, 3.5 km-long beach is not backed by dense highrise development, maximum beach capacity has never been reached at the height of the summer season, and valuable natural areas have been saved from destruction or irreparable damage. Thus, the stagnation phase of the cycle of evolution is not always related to carrying capacity, but can be provoked by insufficient capacity of attraction of the product offered in a competitive market. The pattern of demand is similar in both cases. The importance of defining a target segment, based on a type of demand (underwater diving) rather than a specific geographical origin, in an attempt to reverse demand trends, is clearly demonstrated. Moreover, the relatively low-key development that existed beforehand (small family hotels in a quiet resort) meant that the new market sector could be slotted directly into the existing tourism structure, thereby eliminating the often necessary process of adjustment in the accom-
modation sector. These recent developments are compatible with and complementary to proposals to expand the tourism market through the future promotion of the Montgrí massif and Les Basses del Ter Vell wetlands. Nevertheless, the ultimate objective is not further expansion of the resort, but rather improving the economic viability of existing enterprises, consolidating clearly defined market segments based on natural resources, and partially redistributing activities throughout the municipality. Obviously, the sustainability of the natural environment is the key to sustaining not only the tourism product but also tourism as an economic sector.

Case 3: Sitges

Tourism in Sitges had its origins at the end of the 19th century, when it was frequented by famous artists and writers, attracted by its picturesque setting, benevolent winter micro-climate, proximity to and easy access by rail from Barcelona just 40 km away. Fame brought further growth as a fashionable resort, and in 1919 the entire lowland plain to the west of the settlement (1.8 km long and 300 m deep) was laid out as the first second home property development on the coast. Luxurious mansions rapidly occupied the beachfront. When international tourism began to grow, the fame and image of Sitges and its proximity to Barcelona airport made it an obvious choice of destination. After 1950, there was a gradual increase in the number of hotels, accelerating into a boom between 1957 and 1967 (Figure 6 and Table 3). It is, however, difficult to assess the number of beds available, as many hotels used “annexes”, often consisting of apartments or spare rooms rented in the vicinity of the hotel. A study carried out in 1963 (Miguelsanz i Arnalot and Higueras i Miró, 1964) revealed

Table 3. Hotel Accommodation in Sitges (1952–96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of establishments</th>
<th>No. of beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>5,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>5,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: based on Priestley (1983), Vinyet Villa, Director of the Sitges Patronat de Turisme (personal communication).

official capacity to be 3,623 beds, whereas real capacity was 6,181. A 1975 survey (Priestley, 1983) showed that annexes were still used, but to a lesser extent (905 beds in annexes, in comparison with 4,742 in registered establishments).

Two factors are responsible for this situation. In the first place, the entire seafront was already occupied by private housing, and urban building regulations did not permit high-rise construction there nor were the influential proprietors willing to give up their privileged position. As a result, large town houses were converted into hotels and their expansion was improvised as demand increased. Second, the local population and administration showed little interest in the expansion of mass tourism, and several ambitious development proposals involving large-scale investment by outsiders (such as a marina project in 1961, finally shelved in 1971) were rejected with no regrets. The provision of accommodation thus proceeded on a piecemeal, improvised basis as demand increased through inertia and reputation.

The importance of Sitges in the early stages of tourism development in Spain should not, however, be underestimated. In 1963, the Sitges tourism industry earned 833.5 million pesetas, 1.8% of the total for all of Spain. Moreover, in 1967, Sitges was the second most important earner of foreign currency in Catalonia after Lloret de Mar.

In the 1967–73 period, the demand–supply situation stabilized. But
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the aftermath of the 1973 economic crisis revealed the basic defects of the hotel structure: small size (in 1970 only four hotels had a capacity of more than 100 beds); low category rating (only two belonged to the four-star category); and inadequate location—mainly in the narrow, inaccessible, noisy streets of the town center, without the possibility of providing complementary services, such as even a small swimming pool. As early as 1966, it became clear that Sitges was falling behind other centers (Lloret de Mar, Benidorm, Torremolinos) in terms of the quality and size of hotels. The loss of economic viability of such units became evident in the face of economic stagnation, domestic inflation, new legislation on amenity provision in hotels and stricter implementation of taxation on employees in the mid-70s. The net result was the rapid disappearance of numerous smaller hotels (Table 2), many of which were reconverted into, or rebuilt as, apartments or single-family residences, while some became retirement homes, trends identified in the stagnation period of Butler’s (1980) model. The vast majority of tour operators also ceased trading in Sitges, where economies of scale could obviously not be applied. Therefore, it could be asserted that the mid-70s marked the turning point in the development of tourism in Sitges. By 1988 hotel accommodation had dropped from the 1970 figure of 5,271 beds in 131 establishments to 4,498 beds in 73.

The general reaction to these changes was a sense of relief rather than lament. Mass tourism development had been thrust upon Sitges, not sought, and no serious attempt at restructuring the sector was made. In fact, the hotel sector was never an important element in the economy. In 1975 there were 834 employees of whom 693 (83.1%) were seasonal staff, to whom must be added 205 proprietors and members of their families also employed in the hotel industry (Priestley 1983). Immigration in response to employment opportunities obviously did not take place. The coincidence in time of the rapid expansion of the second home phenomenon probably also exerted considerable influence on the attitude adopted at that time. The traditional role of Sitges in this sector must be remembered, and expansion has been continuous, filling in available unoccupied plots, and expanding to the overlooking hills and eastward along the rocky coast where a marina has also been provided. Most development is in the form of low-rise blocks of flats set in gardens, or detached houses. Minor changes in urban legislation in 1965 permitted the construction of four-storey apartment blocks set in gardens to be constructed along part of the seafront. But in 1976, all 50-year-old buildings were designated for conservation as architectural heritage, a measure which has virtually fossilized the remainder of the seafront mansions and most of the town center including numerous large Renaissance-style town houses. By 1963, 1,030 second home units (comprising 4,600 beds) already existed, and the number steadily increased to 3,961 by 1970 and 8,009 in 1991.

Sitges awoke from its lethargy in 1990, when the design of a strategic plan stimulated thought and subsequent action, and the imminent celebration of the 1992 Olympic Games in nearby Barcelona seemed to offer the opportunity of reaping some marginal benefits,
especially in the form of rapid returns on hotel investment, as the price of accommodation in the summer of 1992 soared and advance reservations flowed in. An examination of the rapid growth in the hotel sector since this date reveals certain developments. One is a rise in the quality of hotel accommodation through the upgrading of existing hotels (from two to three stars and from three to four stars), the construction of three new four-star hotels, and the disappearance of obsolete plant. As a result, net loss of hotel capacity over the 1990–96 period was a little over 300 (dropping to 4,300 beds in 51 establishments in 1996), but the proportion of four-star category accommodation rose from 22.4% to 46.4% in the same period. Another development is target market diversification, based on the provision of extensive conference facilities and other amenities, such as gymnasium and body-care facilities, the promotion of cultural events and festivals (such as the International Film Festival), and marketing campaigns based on a quality label for four-star hotels and by insistence on tradition and the architectural charm of the older town center hotels.

The inauguration of a motorway in 1992 as a much-used alternative to the sinuous cliff coast road from Barcelona (in spite of high toll charges) has also had an important influence on tourism by attracting higher-spending trippers for evening dining out. It has also encouraged an increase in the permanent population of Sitges as a dormitory town, in spite of the high price of property, the third most expensive in Catalonia in 1995 after Barcelona and one of its adjoining dormitory towns. Increasingly improved railway services are also used by a large number of commuters. Therefore, the dependence of Sitges on tourism continues to decrease.

CONCLUSION

Cooper and Jackson (1989) contend that difficulties arise in using the life cycle in planning future strategies for resorts, because of its nondeterministic nature. Local and global agents and circumstances influence tourism development, not the inevitable course of the cycle. They conclude that the life cycle model reflects policy decisions made for the destination and is thus destination-specific, and turning points in the stages are only visible with hindsight. However, if the model is seen, as Butler (1980) intended, as a flexible framework or a hypothetical development path, not as an independent mechanical process (Ioannides 1992:714), then case studies, which empirically test the life cycle concept in individual situations, can contribute to the formulation of more generally applicable conclusions.

First of all, some observations, based specifically on the evidence of the case studies presented, can be made. There are obvious difficulties in defining the phase of "stagnation" (Figure 7). Lloret de Mar presents no problem as the pattern of development closely follows the path traced in Butler's model and there are clear indications of a close relationship between the stagnation of demand during the 80s and the surpassing of carrying capacity limits. In l'Estartit, at the end of the 80s, there were clear signs of the stagnation of demand and in
Sitges, in the early 70s, accommodation supply did not meet the requirements of mass tourism. Nevertheless, in neither case could it be asserted that the absolute capacity levels—one of the principal bases for defining the stagnation phase in the model—had been reached. In l’Estartit, stagnation came as a result of structural problems and competition from nearby resorts which offered a similar but better-marketed product. In Sitges, it was the product itself, especially accommodation, which was unsatisfactory, as a result of a policy which discouraged and even prevented further development of mass tourism. Therefore, both evidenced certain symptoms of a lack of competitiveness in the tourism sector for which they were then catering and, as a consequence, a loss in economic viability. The criteria of market competitiveness and economic viability may thus be more valid indicators than carrying capacity in measuring stagnation and, indeed, these are also valid in the case of Lloret de Mar. It could in fact be said that l’Estartit and Sitges (the latter for the second time) are now in the "re-orientation phase" which Agarwal (1994) introduces between stagnation and post-stagnation.

In spite of the divergent nature of the three resorts studied, all have coincided in the timing of the design and introduction of restructuring measures in a quest for long-term stability but not growth. Lloret de Mar and l’Estartit were forced by necessity, while Sitges took advantage of the favorable circumstances prevailing. A recurring characteristic has been the close coordination between municipal authorities and private enterprise on the supply side, in an effort to plan and implement measures to restructure the tourism sector. The survival not only of individual enterprises but of the entire economy of the resort depends on the success of these measures, and cooperation is a fundamental requisite. These changing attitudes are a result partly of an increasing understanding of the process of tourism development, and partly of the recognition of the development of a changing mar-
market—more diverse and more discerning—and the necessity of adapting supply to demand.

The types of measures applied also have several characteristics in common. In 1986, Haywood (1986:161) observed that “the management of a tourist area, from both a macro and a micro point of view tends to be focused almost entirely on marketing” and pointed out the need for a planning dimension. Certainly, this dimension has been incorporated, albeit tardily, in the Catalan tourism resorts. Planning has concentrated on problem definition, pinpointing of the strong points of existing tourism structures, and strategic action to correct defects. Two major recurring preoccupations can be identified in the case studies: the price/quality ratio of the product offered; and product differentiation, which is linked to market segmentation. Similar measures have been introduced in all three resorts: accommodation plant renewal and refurbishing; the elimination of obsolete accommodation units; general improvements in the built and natural environment; and the undertaking of market studies with the aim of forecasting future trends and hence facilitating adaptation to changing markets.

But, above all, each resort has aimed to satisfy a limited number of market segments by offering a specialized and differentiated product and a series of complementary subproducts within the more general scope of vacations in the sun, taking advantage of acquired positions and image. Future increases in demand should be achieved through the lengthening of the season, and by attracting visitors from a wider range of origins, a measure recommended by Hovinen (1981), rather than through the physical growth of the resort. In fact, Lloret de Mar aims to reduce accommodation capacity, unlike l'Estartit where hotel capacity has always been limited, while in Sitges the vast majority of the ill-adapted establishments voluntarily went out of business some time ago, and the remainder are expected to do so shortly. None of the three resorts plans to increase accommodation capacity.

Differing opinions on the issue of product specialization have been expressed. Hovinen (1981) considers that a varied tourism product has most chance for success, but other authors favor specialization strategies (Debbage 1990; Meyer-Arendt 1990). Haywood (1986; 167) puts forward both arguments, by drawing an analogy from nature. He states that species specialization undoubtedly constitutes an advantage where there is strong competition, and this is an important rationale for tourism area specialization. On the other hand, highly specialized species have difficulties in adjusting themselves to sudden or drastic changes of environment; in terms of tourism this is interpreted by him as suggesting that tourism areas aimed at narrow market segments or specialized applications have shorter life cycles than more broadly-based areas. However, he overlooks one important point: the environmental changes referred to are “sudden”, whereas tourism motivations and markets tend to change gradually. Certainly, although in all three resorts specialization is not limited to a single subsegment, product specialization would appear so far to be successful. Nevertheless, the limited time elapsed since the adoption of new policies makes it impossible to reach definitive conclusions, and other
factors which operate on a short-term basis may disguise or distort long-term trends. This is particularly so in the case of Lloret de Mar, where demand is quite sensitive to the relative value of foreign currency, which has been favorable over the last few years. In Sitges, contradictory evidence exists: one of the four-star hotel projects offering attractive complementary activities has run into financial difficulties, while, at the same time, demand from the conference market is constantly increasing.

Certain differences in policy instituted by the three resorts do, however, exist. Lloret de Mar is seeking increased economic viability through improvements in the quality and image of the same basic product, whereas efforts in l’Estartit and Sitges are being concentrated on product differentiation and target-marketing. Unique elements—the natural marine environment in l’Estartit, and location, prestige, and tradition in Sitges—are being exploited. One contrasting aspect and, in fact, a paradox should be mentioned: Lloret de Mar and l’Estartit have grown from small fishing villages into resorts whose economies depend on tourism, whereas in Sitges, traditionally an internationally famous resort, tourism has become a profitable sideline.

A second, more general series of issues can be raised, related principally to planning. Although Butler’s model has been criticized for being more a descriptive than a prescriptive tool (Cooper and Jackson 1989; France 1991), in his initial proposal, Butler (1980; 10) introduced the subject of planning, complaining that, at that time, planning for tourism always foresaw continuous growth. In hindsight, it could be argued that Butler’s model is excessively fatalist, pessimistic, and even catastrophic. Why should the inevitability of the stagnation and decline stages be accepted, or even Argawal’s reorientation phase? With the empirical testing which has taken place, and 16 more years of experience, will it not be possible to change the pattern of development in resorts and areas which have not yet reached “saturation” levels? The key to success would appear to be adequate planning, as suggested by various authors (Butler 1980; Cooper and Jackson 1989; Getz 1992; Haywood 1986; Ioannides 1992; Smith 1992). Nevertheless, specific planning proposals are seldom put forward, and many are simply management proposals (Martin and Uysal 1990).

One key factor which has generally been ignored in studies on aspects of the life-cycle concept is reference to the role of environmental quality in tourism demand. Butler (1980) did not ignore environmental aspects in his initial proposal, when he pointed out that such changes with growth are inevitable, but that if the level of development is maintained within certain predetermined capacity limits, it is easier to protect the environment and so conserve attractiveness, which, in turn, allows the center to remain competitive over a longer period. Haywood (1986:167) makes reference to the fact that, as the change takes place, the characteristics that determine suitability also change, thus emphasizing the need for long-term planning of tourism-area strategy. However, it is Jensen (1989) and Meyer-Arendt (1990) who most clearly define the relationship between tourism development and the environment. They correlate the degree of
interaction between visitors and the setting, and reach the conclusion that as development increases, the negative impacts on the landscape also increase. The resulting hypothesis is that both the form of the resort and the level of environmental modification are dependent upon the stage of evolution. Empirical testing, however, has demonstrated a more complex relationship, in which factors such as the intensity of tourism demand, the fragility of the environment, and the influence of initial tourism development, all affect the tourism–environment relationship.

A common defect can be attributed to these approaches: all accept

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**Process in Cycle of Evolution According to Butler**

**Natural environment**
- Development/Quality
  - High
  - Low
- Critical limit of carrying capacity
- Consciousness of saturation conditions
- Time
- Origin of Tourism Development

**Built environment**
- Development/Quality
  - High
  - Low
- Critical limit of carrying capacity
- Consciousness of saturation conditions
- Time
- Origin of Tourism Development

---

**Proposed/Ideal Cycle of Evolution**

**Natural environment**
- Development/Quality
  - High
  - Low
- Critical limit of carrying capacity
- Time
- Origin of Tourism Development

**Built environment**
- Development/Quality
  - High
  - Low
- Critical limit of carrying capacity
- Time
- Origin of Tourism Development

---

- = number of tourists/extent of tourism development
- = environmental quality

**Figure 8. An Alternative Model for Sustainable Resort Development Process in Cycle of Evolution According to Butler**
the inevitability of environmental degradation, overdevelopment, and resort stagnation and decline. Therefore, the experience of past development, such as that encountered on the Catalan coast, must serve to address these issues in the face of future development. It is true, however, that where development has been most intense, as in Lloret de Mar, the need to apply far-reaching measures to counteract environmental degradation is greatest, yet paradoxically most difficult. Nevertheless, it must also be remembered that, in terms of tourism development, impact does not inevitably lead to conflict, as demonstrated by the example of l’Estartit in general, and of the Illes Medes in particular. An alternative model for the expansion of new resorts is therefore proposed (Figure 8). It is not simply a reformulation of the excessively fatalist post-stagnation section of Butler’s model. The basic objective is to reconcile environmental impact with tourism development, which is fundamentally a form of urbanization (Smith 1992). For that reason, the pattern of the process of change of the natural and built environments and of tourism growth are depicted separately. The underlying criterion is that both the rate and the level of maximum development must be maintained within limits which reduce impact on the environment to sustainable levels, a recommendation made by Butler (1980:11), but never formulated as a model. Obviously momentum will be slower than in the past, but this should not be defined as stagnation, for it is predicted and consists simply of self-imposed limitations to growth at optimum levels, which can be maintained indefinitely. Careful planning is undoubtedly necessary, but this proposal could be the key to more rational tourism resort development in the future.

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