



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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University of Valencia

Rafael Mesa and Javier Esparcia

Rafael.Mesa@uv.es & Javier.esparcia@uv.es

Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments Global Strategic Plan for Tourism in the Valencian Community (2010-2020)

Valencia, Spain

1. Overview

The Global Strategic Tourism Plan of the Valencian Community (2010-2020) (PEGTCV), is drawn up by the Valencian Tourism Agency, from which various planning instruments are designed, such as the Tourist Areas Plan, the Operational Marketing and Operational Plans and the Inland Tourism Master Plan. The PEGTCV plans to increase access to low cost flights, as well as create new transport infrastructures, improve the quality of services, consolidate the current tourist areas (rural-inland, coastal and urban), and aim to achieve a strong national and international position.

All of these actions lead to great challenges, ranging from the reduction of the strong seasonality of work to environmental challenges. This may be reached from a growth that goes from a variety of policies and actions, such as the increase of new infrastructures, or the supply subject to an increase in urbanization.

2. Main Challenges

Suburbanization

- > In recent years (1998-2008), the Valencian coast has seen a strong increase in real estate which has had repercussions on the tourism sector (such as the increase in the supply of hotel places, but also the growing pressure on environmental resources (causing, for example, some problems in water supply). In this process, the increase in diffuse urbanization has been seen as a threat because of the lack of adequate urban planning (Obiol and Pitarch, 2011).
- > The complex coastal space (only a narrow coastal strip) bears an important economic burden, including both maritime and port infrastructures. However, on this stretch of coastline there are almost two major areas of action: urban planning on the one hand and infrastructure (mainly transport) on the other. As a consequence, there have not

been any real land use planning initiatives that combine both fields of action (Farinós and Tovar, 2010).

Rural depopulation

- > The development of rural tourism has been an objective for authorities and many inhabitants of the localities. At the same time, there are notable differences in tourism potential between rural municipalities. In general, tourism development policies can help alleviate rural depopulation of municipalities in the interior of the Valencian Community.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

Tourism strategies are more and more using digitisation opportunities, both in terms of user relations and organisation. Examples include improved access and availability of information, tourism offers are presented on the Internet, and direct contacts between destination and visitors through social networks are possible. The collaborative economy and the use of Big Data are changing tourism models.

All these changes have an impact on leisure, transport, forms of consumption, accommodation and the environment (as White Paper on Tourism in the Valencian Community has pointed out -Turismo GVA 2016-).

3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

Tourism has to be approached in a global, transversal and multidisciplinary way, as a means of ensuring that it has multiplier effects on the territory in which it takes place.,

Cross-sectoral relations are present even if they can still be significantly improved. Therefore, cross-sectoral partnerships can offer a greater business opportunity.

Although tourism is increasingly present in the field of spatial planning, and is often part of LEADER strategies, its role can be reinforced further through coordination with other sectoral policies such as those relating to natural areas, environment, green infrastructure, culture, urban planning, mobility, etc.

3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

Some of the basic characteristics can be found in the proposals made by INVATTUR (the Valencian Institute of Tourism Technologies; see the dedicated S-VAL4), for example related to business innovation (programmes for the creation and promotion of tourism companies, marketing courses and intelligent destinations, as well as programmes for the digital transformation in tourist destinations).

Local Action Groups of LEADER are significantly contributing to mobilise population and related initiatives (see the dedicated G-VAL3). LEADER has traditionally devoted high attention to tourism initiatives, promoting, during the 1990s and early 2000s, the offer of accommodation, such as rural tourism houses, and then, more recently, the complementary offer.

In addition, other relatively innovative initiatives (in this specific context) are promoting measures to support related-tourist business. Examples are the maintenance and improvement of the quality of services, the creation of a guide for the financing of projects and investments, as well as the promotion of the internationalisation of Valencian tourism companies.

4. Effectiveness Indicators

There are several weaknesses in tourism planning. On the one hand, in the PEGTCV, there are no mechanisms to limit urban expansion, among other reasons because legally it is not the most appropriate instrument for this. Nevertheless, some orientations in this direction are indicated in the White Book of Tourism of the Valencian Community. In particular, it must be borne in mind that in the Valencian Community there are more than 200,000 hectares of Protected Natural Spaces (PNS), and that many of them border on large tourist destinations, with the result of processes of urbanisation around some of these natural designed areas (with the consequent tensions and conflicts, even if they are potential or latent).

In this case, the Natural Parks of the Valencian Community either lack Public Use Plans (in which tourist activities are analysed and made compatible) or they have become obsolete due to the rapid changes in the forms of use of tourism products. Nevertheless, in the Territorial Strategy of the Community of Valencia it is foreseen to promote changes that allow greater compatibilities, such as better transport connections (Figure 1).

One of the most important aspects is the growth of a tourism model based on low-cost transport (mainly by air) with the supply and availability of accommodation within the framework of the collaborative economy. The growth of this model is assessed as negative in the White Book of Tourism of the Valencian Community (Turismo GVA, 2016), due to the limited positive effects on local economies, among other aspects. However, although the White Paper echoes this problem and the need to address it effectively, it does not propose ways or guidelines for intervention.

Overall, tourism is an activity with rapid changes in recent years, and neither regulations nor their forms of governance keep pace with such changes, especially those deriving from the digital economy.

Related to effectiveness of urban-rural relations, gastronomic tourism plays a very important role as rural producers can sell their products in (other) tourist destinations. Moreover, each rural environment has its own characteristics, making it more or less attractive to tourists, such as the landscape, culture and the provision of quality services.

As for cultural offers in rural areas, there are some deficiencies to point out, both in the lack of – adequate – agreements between municipalities for offers oriented towards cultural aspects, and in the design and promotion actions.

Rural areas, which increasingly concentrate rural tourism supply, lack, however, an adequate and sufficient cultural provision, which tends to be concentrated in coastal areas and urban centres. For this reason, one of the great challenges is to improve a tourist offer that combines rural tourism (with all that this implies, landscape, gastronomy, etc.) with a more stable cultural offer that also arouses the interest of potential visitors.

5. Illustration and further information

The images below are provided to illustrate the examples given. In the referenced documents, more examples are included.

For example, the Natura 2000 Network and the Green Infrastructure (Figure 1) makes the protection of natural habitats and species present in these spaces compatible with rational and sustainable use. This is one of the issues affecting tourism. Given that Green Infrastructure, the coastal axis and the Natura 2000 Network act as ecological corridors avoiding conurbation, urban planning tries to correct these problems. On the other hand, the protection of the natural environment has implications for rural or nature tourism, such as the conservation of the landscape and rural heritage (Turimo GVA, 2016).

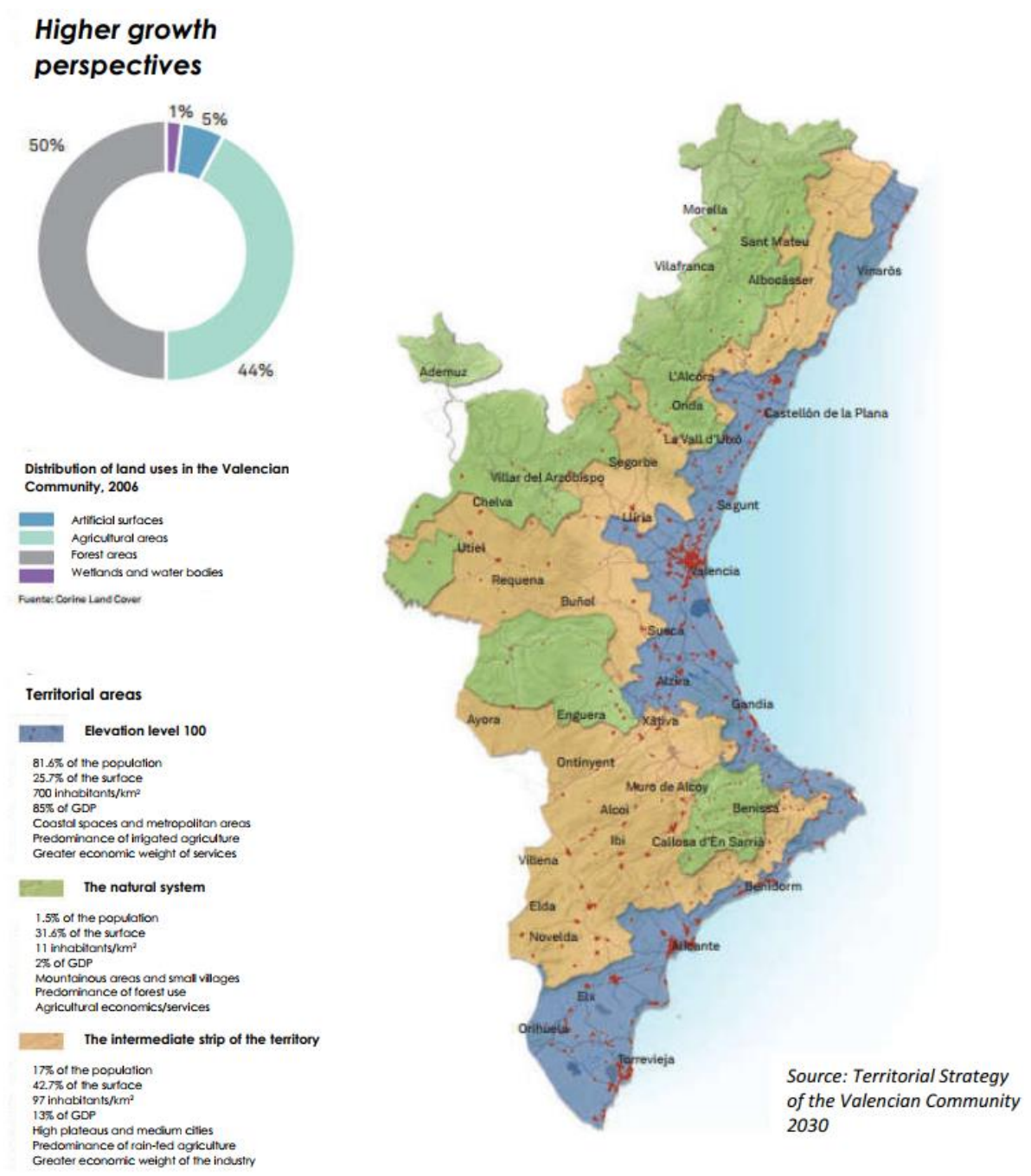
Figure 1. Forecasts of connectivity between urban spaces and Protected Natural Areas



Source: Territorial Strategy of the Valencian Community 2030

However, prospects for urban growth are identified in the coastal and pre-coastal area (Figure 2). Although could be seen as contradictory, this growth has been above the needs of the population but at the same time it has been an important economic activity in recent years. It is also important to point out the relationship between urban growth and water supply, as well as the risk of flooding due to artificialization of the soil (anthropogenic sealing).

Figure 2. Main Territorial areas of the Valencian Community



As the Tourism White Paper of the Valencian Community (Turismo GVA, 2016) points out, investment in transport infrastructure does not in itself generate long-term socio-economic benefits. For this reason, it is necessary to combine measures in order to turn them into potentials. At present the private vehicle monopolizes the arrival at the tourist destination and has repercussions due to high traffic congestion, without a balanced use of the remainder available transport infrastructure (Turismo GVA, 2016) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Main transport infrastructures in the Community of Valencia.



Source: Turismo GVA, 2016

6. References

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