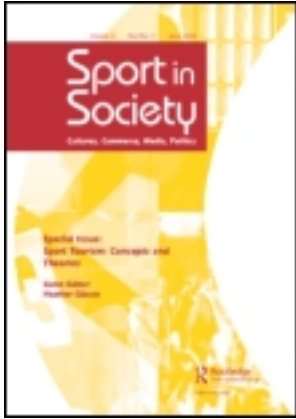


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### Tourism, modernization, and difference: a twentieth-century Spanish paradigm

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## Tourism, modernization, and difference: a twentieth-century Spanish paradigm

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This essay explores the role of tourism in Spanish cultural and political history in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although Spain developed modern domestic leisure practices in the nineteenth century, tourism promoters were dismayed by the small numbers of foreign visitors they received. By the early twentieth century, the project of developing a receptive tourism industry became a major component of a broader modernization programme. The economic potential was clear, but tourism's political value did not end there. Successive Spanish governments regarded the tourism industry as an auxiliary to conventional diplomacy, hoping to present their oft-maligned country as modern and hospitable and to stimulate the development of a modern leisure infrastructure suited to cosmopolitan tastes. After 1945, when Franco's right-wing dictatorship faced international ostracism, foreign tourism became an important form of international relations. In the subsequent three decades, tourism became arguably the Franco regime's most important political and economic good until problems of overbuilding and corruption ended the euphoria of Spain's so-called 'tourist miracle'.

The development of organized leisure travel in Europe and North America is closely associated with several major processes of the modern period, including changing patterns of social and industrial organization, nation building, the rise of mass consumption and the emergence of a modern subjective consciousness. The historiography of leisure and tourism has opened a new front for Hispanist scholars to challenge commonplace assumptions about the country's belated or retrograde experience with modernity. For example, Adrian Shubert has interpreted the bullfight, the greatest emblem of Spanish leisure, not as an Iberian vestige of ancient bloodsport but as a highly commercial, modern spectacle and tourist attraction.<sup>1</sup> Sea bathing, the modern tourist practice *par excellence*, became fashionable in Spain by the 1830s, only a few decades after its initial appearance in northwestern Europe. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the *veraneo* (summer retreat) to the seaside or mountains was a defining custom of the Spanish bourgeoisie, an aspect of class identity that emerged in a manner comparable to its English and French counterparts.<sup>2</sup> French and Swiss hoteliers developed the first organized campaigns to attract international clientele in the 1860s, a cue Spanish holiday resorts followed with little delay. Soon after 1900, Spanish elites began to regard the tourism industry as a regenerative force for economically and socially stagnant regions, anticipating what would become an axiom of development economics worldwide by the end of the twentieth century.

Notwithstanding certain indigenous origins, the history of leisure and tourism in Spain became entangled in an often obsessive struggle to overcome the stigmas of national

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difference and an alleged incapacity to adapt to modern ways. A Spanish travel writer observed in 1851, 'we classify ourselves as one of the least traveling peoples of modern Europe' – a poignant lament in an age when the exploration of one's own identity increasingly took place through the process of displacement, as a stranger among strangers, outside the bounds of one's habitual environs and labour.<sup>3</sup> The charge was not wholly just, but it reflected a widespread anxiety that Spain was a parochial backwater of modern civilization. Spaniards travelling within their country for pleasure scarcely overlapped with foreign visitors, who, to the extent they came to Spain at all, were motivated by a desire to gaze on the exotic or to convalesce in Mediterranean airs.<sup>4</sup> As international travel in Europe reached ever more intense levels – and as Spain remained largely marginal to this process – the greater preoccupation among many Spanish patriots was to bring Spain into the continental travel network rather than to foment travel within the Iberian Peninsula. Integration into the European travel system would thus become a significant component of Spanish modernization, the programmatic attempt to overcome perceived and real national decadence. This entailed infrastructural and economic development, but it is insufficient to consider modernization solely in those terms: the creation of cosmopolitan leisure spaces in Spain and the cultivation of a society in which being elsewhere was a standard complement to sessile routine were major aspects of this broad regenerative project.<sup>5</sup> Successive promotional campaigns were not shy to exploit the exotic imagery of sun-soaked Spain received from romantic travellers of the previous century; the well-known tourist slogan, 'Spain is Different', developed as early as the 1920s, was a direct inheritance of this. But the slogan was disingenuous, for what developers and government planners sought most of all was to present foreign tourists with a cosmopolitan and in some sense dissociated leisure experience – and to present the same to Spaniards. The convergence, albeit partial, of Spanish and cosmopolitan tourist practices over the course of the twentieth century has been one of the most dramatic processes of modern Spanish cultural history, with considerable consequences for European economic and political development.

### Tourism and the stigma of difference

When considered in a comparative perspective, the leisure practices of Spaniards developed in a pattern not entirely dissimilar from that of Great Britain and northwestern Europe, albeit less intensive and somewhat belated: Travel, spectacle, therapy and sublime landscapes became increasingly central to the experience of leisure. An upper crust of tourists travelled in pursuit of health, either to mountain airs or healing waters, producing new venues for snobbery and *arrivisme*. The construction after 1860 of a radial rail network emanating from Madrid afforded middle-class city dwellers access to seacoasts, but the possibility of rail travel only hastened an existing trend. San Sebastián emerged as the most prestigious of Spain's Atlantic resorts, famously the summer residence of Isabel II (and, incidentally, a convenient point of escape to France for the vacationing monarch on the outbreak of the Revolution of 1868) and an early Iberian centre of modern sport, aquatic and otherwise. Other resorts dotted the North Atlantic coast as well as the Mediterranean north of Barcelona and around Cádiz. A small number of 'grand hotels' appeared, but the practice of day excursions to the beach from nearby cities and towns also reached deep into the popular classes. Spa towns sprang up throughout the peninsula; seen as necessary corollaries to choked industrial cities, they purported to provide cleansing hydrotherapy, even to poor urbanites able to obtain a medical prescription.<sup>6</sup> As had become the case elsewhere in Europe, tourism was considered a regular form of economic activity in an increasing number of locales. On the outbreak of the First World War at the height of the tourist season, San Sebastián city officials protested government austerity

measures restricting the use of public funds to promote touristic activities such as bullfights and festivals, insisting that these were not frivolous expenditures but basic infrastructure for the local economy.<sup>7</sup>

Spain's emerging tourism network also began to transform older leisure practices tied to popular and religious customs. Travel guides and touring clubs proliferated, and city dwellers excused to the idyll of village life. Again, as Shubert has argued, the bullfight was a vanguard force. By the 1870s, municipal officials throughout Spain discovered that the additions of a new bullring drew outsiders to local festivals and raised substantial revenue. Railway companies also got on board as early as 1860, offering discounted tickets on bullfight days and taking part in advertising the event beyond the immediate vicinity of the bullring. Tauromachy even provoked debate in Spain over national regulation of leisure time.<sup>8</sup> The bundling of transport, spectacle and leisure time was by this time only a recent innovation in Great Britain, where commercial tourism had been born in the 1840s and began to captivate railway companies during the London Great Exhibition of 1851.<sup>9</sup> Numerous local feasts, with an array of displays generally local in origin and significance, began to draw outsiders, among them many urbanized Spaniards who took the opportunity to return to their home towns.<sup>10</sup> Another, though somewhat distinctive, example of this modest modernization of popular leisure was the boom in pilgrimage throughout Spain after 1900. Although devotional practice does not fall squarely into a strictly binary work-leisure dichotomy, these pilgrimages bore some attributes associated with modern tourism. A major motive was spectacle – to witness a miracle or at least the site where one had taken place.<sup>11</sup> We might additionally note the apparent parallel between the modern pilgrim's emphasis on individual devotional experience and the tourist's subjective quest for understanding one's place in the modern world.<sup>12</sup> As William Christian has observed, a kind of competition for pilgrims arose among various shrines throughout Spain – including the Virgen del Pilar at Zaragoza, the Black Madonna shrine at Montserrat, and the Sacred Heart in Madrid – with parochial economic considerations never far below the surface.<sup>13</sup> None, however, was as successful at luring Spanish pilgrims as Lourdes, in southern France, which with its pageantic and consumerist tone most resembled the modern tourist experience.

The idiosyncrasy of Spanish tourism in 1900 lay not in its modes of practice or levels of industrial organization, but rather in the small number of foreign visitors combined with the zeal with which its institutions endeavoured to court them. Throughout the nineteenth century, and despite the increased leisure movements among the indigenous population, *tourism* implied the arrival of the northern European. The original 'tourists', young Englishmen of noble birth completing their education, had eschewed Spain, and though many romantic travellers were drawn there after 1830, they recorded their experiences as adventures in a strange and often inhospitable land rather than as leisured holidays.<sup>14</sup> The Spanish essayist Ramón Mesonero Romanos returned from an 1841 voyage to Belgium with the idea that 'traveling *touristas*' could become 'a wellspring of wealth' for Spain if only the country could improve 'our roads, our lines of communication, personal safety, good inns and hotels, and the tolerance and good manners of our peasants'.<sup>15</sup> Foreign tourists, as sources of wealth and as a new class of consumer-ambassadors, were the principal targets of incipient government and commercial attention to tourism. Organized initiatives to attract foreign tourists had appeared in Spain in the 1870s as they had in the thriving resorts of Switzerland and France, even though Spain on the whole received many fewer travellers from abroad. Already a minor seaside resort for Spaniards, Málaga developed a campaign in 1897 to attract British and French visitors stationed in nearby Gibraltar and Tangier.<sup>16</sup> Within two decades, several other medium-sized Spanish cities had set about similar ventures, though the major mouthpieces of the international travel industry continued to brand Spain a destination for adventurous travellers tolerant of inconvenience and discomfort.<sup>17</sup>

The concepts of 'regeneration' and 'Europeanization' overwhelmed Spanish politics and social criticism in the early twentieth century, and it is in this context that the first Spanish state initiatives to promote tourism must be understood. In 1905, a group of liberal and conservative deputies led by the Count of Romanones established a 'National Commission to Promote Artistic and Recreational Excursions of the Foreign Public'. The Commission's advertising campaigns reinforced the reigning image of 'sunny Spain', but they also helped to awaken an interest in local cultural and heritage. Historic restoration and preservationism had received state support since the mid-nineteenth century, but gained considerable momentum after 1900. The Marqués de la Vega-Inclán, scion of a prominent military family, dedicated himself to restoring historic sites, most notably the Toledo home of the Golden Age painter El Greco, and converting them into museums or thematic inns.<sup>18</sup> Vega-Inclán led a group of enthusiastic parliamentarians and other national elites in support of further state involvement in promoting tourism, appealing to a style of regenerationist patriotism well in evidence in this proposal by a Catalan deputy to establish a 'Spanish Circuit' touring itinerary: 'The living interests of this country, those anxious for progress ... must second this initiative ... so that ... [Spain may] claim its rightful place among the CULTURED PEOPLES'.<sup>19</sup>

By 1911, a group of likeminded figures had passed legislation to create the Royal Tourism Commissariat, the founding document of which cited 'the admiration that the foreigner feels toward the Spanish artistic heritage' and the need to 'give [it] adequate support within the demands of modern life'.<sup>20</sup> The Regenerationist era produced a series of national laws regulating the tourism industry, requiring municipalities to provide tourist services and providing fiscal incentives for hotels to modernize.<sup>21</sup> On balance, the modest programme was significant less for its achievements than for its precocity, appearing five years before the French and Austrian governments became directly involved in tourism, and over a decade ahead of Italy and Switzerland. In contrast to those more established tourist destination countries, state tourism bureaus in Spain appeared largely in advance of the tourists themselves. Official optimism was not unjustified, however, in view of the increasing vacation time and personal mobility of the era, the corresponding maturation of the travel industry, and the rise of the Mediterranean Riviera as a holiday destination for the European middle classes.

The state did have its role to play, particularly during the 'era of cement and roads' of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30). Classically technocratic, the Primo government financed large infrastructural projects typically in the service of industrial interests. Though tourism as yet possessed no major industry pressure group, a clique of economists, businessmen and nationalist intellectuals launched the short-lived bimonthly *El peregrino y el turista* in 1925 with the aim of forging a national corporate consciousness among those who stood to profit from tourism. In 1926, the Interior Ministry invoked the interests of tourism to justify major efforts to improve roads and public sanitation.<sup>22</sup> Recreational motoring, though still a patrician hobby, enabled better access to remote vacation retreats. Perhaps most emblematic of this trend was the Parador at Gredos, an exclusive mountain resort near Ávila opened in 1928. The Gredos resort was one of Vega-Inclán's most enduring labours, modelled on the rural hotels of California, which combined local character and warmth with modern luxuries, healthy cuisine, open air and green space. The Gredos project reflected the Marqués's interest in developing aristocratic rather than demotic leisure, and served as a gathering place for Madrid socialites, hunting parties and, on one occasion, a place to plot an armed insurrection.<sup>23</sup> Exclusive though they were, Gredos and several other subsequently developed 'Paradors' were perceived to be a national interest, opening remote regions to a new form of economic activity and setting a standard of quality for private hotels to emulate. Their management from the outset fell to a state bureau, the National Tourism Patronate, which replaced the Royal Commissariat in 1928, and they can be considered a component of the state-led modernization campaigns characteristic of the Primo de Rivera era.

On assuming power in 1931, the Second Republic restructured and decentralized state oversight of tourism, but the Republic's most innovative initiative was to attain a seat on the League of Nations Tourism Committee despite representing a relatively insignificant country for world tourism. The committee brokered numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements to streamline the cross-border movement of recreational travellers and encouraged countries to treat such activity as a regular item of bilateral commerce.<sup>24</sup>

The broad cultural shift that would come profoundly to inform modern Spanish social, economic and political history was a new fashion for the sun. Twentieth-century heliolatry supplanted older beliefs in the healing power of coldwater shock and the superior aesthetic of pale white skin. Attention to open park space and greater access to sunlight in urban design had been an element of late nineteenth-century social reform in much of northern Europe, and scholars have recognized an intersection of public health, sunlight, emancipated bodies and mass politics in the subsequent decades.<sup>25</sup> This ethos was increasingly put into practice at the seaside. German *Freikörperkultur* ('free body culture'), along with other similar cults elsewhere, were staples of Europe's *belle-époque* and helped to stimulate the seaside holiday industry. The Côte d'Azur, a resort originally developed in the 1870s as a mild winter retreat, drew ever larger summer crowds by the 1930s. The British seaside resort had by then amassed a long history, but novel to the 1920s was the ubiquitous image of the sun – rather than the parasol – in their promotional campaigns. An interwar advertisement for Bournemouth billed the English resort 'a Mediterranean watering place'.<sup>26</sup> The French fashion designer Coco Chanel capitalized on the tanning fashion in the 1920s by introducing daring feminine swimwear, a reflection of, and incitement to, broader cults of youth and female liberation that would help demarcate an understood boundary between modern and traditional attitudes.<sup>27</sup>

Seaside leisure practices in Spain would begin to change along broader European patterns. Recorded by romantic travellers as places where the sexes did not mix, Spanish beaches became social settings where strangers displayed themselves to one another with diminished modesty. In San Sebastián, as elsewhere in Europe, the opaque waterborne carts for depositing unclad bathers discreetly into the sea fell into disuse.<sup>28</sup> Moral decay at the seaside was a topic of conservative clergy as early as 1913, when the future archbishop of Toledo Isidro Gomá y Tomás would refer to female sunbathers as 'carnal goddesses' in a treatise on luxury and fashion.<sup>29</sup> To others, such iniquity was billed as an attraction, though there is evidence that Spanish resort promoters took care to portray this as a foreign import. The sociologist Beatriz Parra describes an advertisement for San Sebastián in which a beach crowded with sunbathers in risqué costumes is foregrounded by an olive-skinned woman in a full bathing gown coloured with the red and yellow stripes of the Spanish flag.<sup>30</sup>

This blend of cosmopolitanism and exoticism captured the emerging identity of the nascent Spanish tourism industry. If Spaniards and foreigners were unlikely to shed the romantic imagery of a quasi-Saharan *finis terrae*, the appearance of some modern European amenities attracted visitors both from Spanish cities and northern lands. One tourism poster from the 1930s bore the slogan: 'The Romance of Africa, The Comforts of Europe'.<sup>31</sup> According to government estimates, roughly 200,000 foreigners per year visited Republican Spain, of whom half were French and one-tenth were British.<sup>32</sup> San Sebastián, Santander and other northern beaches continued to grow in popularity, though the exceptionally rainy Cantabrian coast faced increasing competition from Mediterranean regions. The coastline spreading outward in both directions from the southern city of Málaga was christened the Costa del Sol in 1930 to appeal to European tourists. The Costa Brava, stretching northward from Barcelona, was a regional watering hole since the latter nineteenth century, and began by the 1920s to attract foreigners, particularly Germans, to the emerging luxury resorts of S'Agaró and Tossa de Mar. The latter of these became known as the '*playa de los alemanes*' before a sharp decline in the ranks of German



tourists after the onset of the Great Depression.<sup>33</sup> Majorca, long a winter home for prosperous English retirees, became by the 1930s a destination of the British Worker Travel Association, an organization associated with the Labour Party designed to bring overseas holidays within the reach of the working classes.<sup>34</sup>

### The development of the tourism industry during the Franco dictatorship

The Civil War of 1936–39 disrupted the accelerating trickle of leisure travel to Spain, though the issue of foreign tourism was never totally removed from the wartime agenda. Under the leadership of the rebel General Francisco Franco, the Nationalist zone began offering propaganda tours to battle sites and other important nationalist shrines in 1938 – a highly original and idiosyncratic propaganda exercise with significant implications for the Francoist war effort.<sup>35</sup> Coordinating efforts fell to Luis A. Bolín, the London correspondent for *ABC* who had chartered the plane that escorted Franco to Morocco to help launch the 1936 coup. Bolín had worked as a Nationalist press liaison during the war's early stages, and his tour operations were largely an extension of his activities with foreign journalists applied to a wider public. After Franco's military victory, Bolín's *Rutas de Guerra* became the *Rutas Nacionales*, which continued to operate overnight motorcoach excursions to many of Spain's historic cities, monuments and scenic regions down to the end of the dictatorship. Moreover, the Civil War occasioned a revival of the cult of St James the Apostle, Spain's patron saint, resulting in the rise of 'pilgrim-tourists' coming on foot, by bus, by automobile and even by air to his shrine at Santiago de Compostela. In contrast to other pilgrimages, the flock to Santiago de Compostela was unambiguously touristic, performed for the sake of spectacle and personal growth rather than healing and salvation. By the 1960s, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela had grown into an annual event attracting Spaniards and foreigners in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>36</sup>

Yet despite its activism in this regard, Franco's New State would never attain much control over the tourism industry, which proved exceptionally resistant to the central industrial management that characterized Spanish economic policy in the 1940s. The Francoist government initially hoped it might be otherwise. When international tourism resumed in Europe after 1945, the regime prohibited foreign travel firms from contracting directly with Spanish hotels and private transport services. Instead, the law required them to hire Bolín's outfit or another licensed Spanish travel agency to mediate all exchange with Spanish firms. From the Francoist perspective, this system offered several advantages: (1) it guaranteed that all fees be paid in foreign currency – which the regime desperately needed; (2) it protected the fledgling industry of small travel agents from being overwhelmed by large foreign agencies; (3) it channelled foreign tour groups toward regions and hospitality firms that were loyal to the regime; (4) it enabled travel agents to steer foreign tour groups away from places where severe war damage, repression, and hardship continued to serve as reminders of the difficulties of life in Spain even a decade after Franco's ascent.<sup>37</sup> To the extent that foreign visitors would be tolerated, the regime hoped that they would be marshalled to further its economic and political agendas.

To the dismay of some ideologues, this National-Corporatist prescription clashed with the emerging realities of international tourism. The first travel agencies to show interest in Spain were British and American, among which few were willing to grant the Franco regime control over their customers' bookings. They demanded relatively smooth border processing, freedom of movement within Spain, freedom to deal directly with hotels and transport firms, and reasonable currency exchange rates. In the words of a British trade representative, Spanish law should be adapted to 'enable a tourist with Cook's, or any other travel agent, to book in the same way as he does when he goes to France or Switzerland'.<sup>38</sup> The system left little room for

independent travellers reaching Spain by rail, car, ship or air. Such passengers encountered suspicion and massive queues at customs points. One might have expected such conditions considering the regime's lingering concerns about the infiltration of exiled dissidents, but the situation did little to favourably impress the increasing numbers of curious visitors. In addition to inconvenience, foreign tourists were frequently subject to what amounted to legalized extortion when border agents required them to convert an extravagant amount of currency into Spanish pesetas at inflated exchange rates.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the large barriers to free travel in Spain, tourists and travel agents showed considerable interest in Spain, its vast coastline, low prices and undiscovered appeal. Wartime advances in aviation and a new pool of experienced pilots made flights to the Mediterranean sun a realizable dream for many Europeans weaned in the interwar years on northern ocean resorts. The Spanish guarantee of virtually uninterrupted sunshine appealed to an emerging class of British holidaymakers, born of the Holidays with Pay Act of 1938, whose vacations were restricted to a pre-determined two-week window. British travel firms began to scour Catalonia and Majorca for hotels willing to offer reduced rates in exchange for guarantees of business loans and a steady stream of clientele. By 1950 several British firms possessed direct contracts with Spanish hoteliers in blatant disregard of Spanish law.<sup>40</sup>

In this moment of great difficulty for the dictatorship, the tourist industry's interest in Spain was difficult to ignore. Many government officials began to consider the possibility that foreign tourism might mitigate some of the generalized hostility the Franco regime faced from several angles. The diplomatic corps was the most active in this regard. Spanish diplomats in Great Britain and France frequently commented on the political benefits to be gained from softening the restrictions on entry and acceding to the liberal business model of commercial tourism. There was also considerable economic incentive, especially as hopes faded that the United States might award Spain significant non-military aid. The Foreign Ministry found an unlikely bedfellow in Juan Antonio Suanzes, the powerful minister of industry and director of the massive umbrella state enterprise known as the Instituto Nacional de Industria (National Institute of Industry) (INI). Suanzes directed his trade negotiators to cooperate with their British counterparts, and, jointly with the Foreign Ministry, created a preferential currency exchange rate for tourists.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the INI infused Bolín's *Rutas Nacionales* with capital to expand the state fleet of touring autos and coaches and develop a large travel agency. The new firm, Autotransporte Turístico de España, SA (Spanish Automotive Tourist Services, Ltd) (ATESA), would become the leading Spanish-owned car rental counter and over the coming decades its buses would shuttle innumerable tour groups from airport to hotel. For his part, Bolín assumed the role of the Spanish tourism industry's chief ambassador, forging ties with the American and British travel industries and adapting Spanish tourism to their exigencies. Travel industry leaders sounded the refrain that their interest in Spain was contingent on the availability of modest hotels that still met international standards of service and comfort, of swift customs procedures and of an efficient transport system.<sup>42</sup>

The two decades following the conclusion of the Second World War constituted the opportune moment to realize the longstanding dream of establishing Spain as an important tourist destination. The Spanish seaside enjoyed important competitive advantages vis-à-vis the older and more expensive Mediterranean resorts of France and Italy. At the same time, other potential competitors remained closed to tourism: Greece and Yugoslavia were slow to recover from their civil wars of the mid and late 1940s (as Spain recently had been, to be sure), and the Black Sea resorts had still to await the *Ostpolitik* of the 1960s before they could begin to capture a share of the prosperous Western tourist currencies. It was also in this period that the problem of distance was solved with the advent of popular passenger air service – a product of new aviation expertise gained in wartime and commercial techniques developed in the peace to follow.



Passengers from Europe's wealthier and climatically drearier regions could now reach the sunny Mediterranean in a matter of hours. The charter flight permitted tour runners to operate at maximum efficiency (much to the consternation of the major European airlines, which fought to restrict the legal status of such flights until 1960). As the operation of charter flights became, in the words of an airline executive, 'a mass production affair', the cost of a Spanish holiday dropped precipitously for European consumers. Loosened restrictions on charter flights can be seen as part of a wave of liberalization in Western Europe that also included the creation of the Common Market in 1958 and relaxation of currency exchange restrictions. In contrast to its fate directly following the Second World War, Spain would not entirely miss this wave of liberalization and integration of the late 1950s. Spain joined the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1958 and within three years fell in line with most West-European standards for customs procedure.<sup>43</sup>

An even more transformative aspect of the liberalizing wave was the 'Stabilization Plan' of 1959, a major overhaul of economic policy which, among other changes, devalued the peseta by nearly one-third. One immediate result of this dramatic policy shift was a substantial reduction in the cost of a Spanish holiday for holders of European currencies. European tourist movement to Spain accelerated almost immediately. It is essential to emphasize, however, that rising tourist rolls were not merely a secondary effect of the devaluation – they were an important factor in the 1959 decision to adopt the new economic policy. As early as 1950, government economists had recognized that much potential tourism revenue was being lost to black marketeers who smuggled pesetas out of Spain and sold them to tourists or travel agents at reduced value. The problem grew worse over the course of the 1950s. As tourism surpassed agriculture as Spain's single most important trade item with most Western European countries, the rich democracies applied considerable pressure to ensure that their tourists' currency would reach Spain through proper channels so that the revenue could in turn be used to fulfil bilateral trade agreements. The only viable solution would be to adjust the peseta to a rate commensurate with its international market value.<sup>44</sup>

As the barriers to tourist entry were dismantled, coastal development intensified. The pace of hotel construction accelerated on the Costa Brava and Balearic Islands and new development initiatives extended down the Mediterranean coast. Absent a nearby Spanish airfield, visitors to Costa Brava resorts often flew to Perpignan, just across the French frontier, then entered Spanish Catalonia by bus; alternatively, they made the entire journey by ferry and motor coach. The travel experience soon would be simplified as charter air travel became routine and the Spanish government invested in the expansion of the nearby Gerona airport. By 1960, several other coastal nuclei had opened up. Runways suitable for mid-sized aircraft were built at Alicante, Málaga and Almería. At each of these airfields, the large majority of arriving flights were non-scheduled charter operations originating in northern Europe. From there, tour groups typically were greeted by a buoyant guide and led onto a bus that whisked them to the hotel, usually very close to the beach. The journey itself – no doubt adventuresome for many on board – fostered comradeship within each tour group. Package tourists earned certain infamy for their propensity to travel in packs throughout the duration of their stay, to sample local culture in contrived and highly mediated settings, and to drink alcohol copiously. The latter habit was in part a product (at least in the British case) of regulated price floors that left each group with a surplus of spending money readily convertible to spirits. Of course, to over-generalize is unjust to the many foreign tourists who sought more individual forms of 'self-expression'.<sup>45</sup>

The collective aspect of popular British tourism would lead to important consequences for the development of the Spanish hospitality industry. British tour groups lodged together, with hotels offering volume discounts to tour organizers in exchange for booking guarantees. Laws requiring Spanish travel agents to mediate the process were frequently ignored; as annual

routines became well established by the early 1950s, neither the Spanish hotelier nor the foreign tour organizer desired to share his profits with an increasingly unnecessary middleman. Government appeals to the hotelier's 'moral duty' to support the National-Corporatist scheme and protect the peseta from free exchange were ineffective, yet the regime lacked the bureaucratic machinery required for much punitive enforcement. Government inspectors stationed in the burgeoning tourist centres of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands tended to be tied more to local business interests than to obsolescent ideologies engineered in Madrid. Maintaining a system of centralized control was a minute concern in these areas compared with luring foreign investment in coastal tourism. Although foreign firms did not sink much capital in the form of direct investment, they provided Spanish entrepreneurs with construction loans in exchange for price guarantees. The Spanish role in the post-war European tourism economy as receptor rather than vendor was thus cemented. With a few exceptions, Spanish travel agents would be relegated to the fledgling position of organizing *ad hoc* local excursions for interested tourists.<sup>46</sup>

### Sea, sun and concrete

The seaside holiday was by far the major draw for most non-Spaniards to enter Spain in the second half of the twentieth century. Surveys of the period indicated that upwards of 85% of Spain's visitors came primarily for its sun and beaches, and the intensity of coastal hotel development compared with interior regions corroborates this.<sup>47</sup> The industrial character of a Spanish holiday, with its emphasis on collective trips and precise commercial organization, overshadowed any number of individual experiences motoring or trekking through less developed regions and absorbing the genius of Iberian art and architecture. Entire coastal villages sprouted in the 1960s with lowbrow commerce, restaurants given to 'international cuisine' of largely unregulated quality, and nightclubs anything but Spanish in inspiration.<sup>48</sup> In one popular joke, an English woman recounted to her friend that she had taken her holiday in Majorca; when her friend enquired where that was, she replied, 'I don't know; I went by plane'.<sup>49</sup>

Franco's Spain, though many principled observers would have preferred otherwise, was forced to accommodate a European leisure culture thoroughly imbued with a libertine and social-democratic ethos. Resort villages and hotels needed to provide efficient service, modern comfort, and ready access both to the beach and to the transport infrastructure, all at low cost to consumers. This emphasis was reflected architecturally in the box-like aesthetic and functionalist uniformity of most of the new edifices, which typically had no rapport with the older, pre-resort appearance of coastal towns. In contrast to the hitherto dominant style of Spain's coastal villages, resort architecture featured square lines and laid stress on open space and sunlight. Lines of access, vision and transport drew visitors and their gazes toward the waterfront rather than the village centre. The better hotels drew from the archetypes of international modernism – such as Le Corbusier's United Nations building and the iconic Hilton Hotels, combining large glass facades, private balconies oriented toward the sea, and sunlit green spaces outfitted with gardens, pools and other recreational facilities.<sup>50</sup>

Yet such models were far too elegant to be applied in the majority of Mediterranean Spain's tourist enclaves. Built hastily and under considerable pressure from land speculators and foreign tour operators, the hotels were with a few exceptions poor imitations of high modernism. The economics of high-volume, low-cost tourism thwarted ambitions of quality in urban design. The rapid sale of coastal agricultural terrains to land speculators drove prices upward, and as a result the objective of maximizing tourist volume and density quickly overshadowed pretensions of inventing another Côte d'Azur. The Franco government has often received blame for failing to prevent the 'architectural horrors' that beset Spanish coasts. In fact, the regime had adopted

urban development laws mandating green space, height restrictions on buildings, and the provision of municipal services. The general disregard for such laws frustrated urban planners and tourism authorities in Madrid throughout the 1960s. As provincial delegations continually reported 'clandestine' touristic developments proliferating with no state approval, Francoist officials quarrelled over how better to enforce the law. Along the southern littorals, the resort village that fully met legal urban-planning standards was a rarity by the mid-1960s, though a decade later this problem had been partially ameliorated through a system of improvements and retroactive approvals.<sup>51</sup>

The retrograde modernism to overtake Spanish resort areas was accompanied by a new cosmopolitan liberality concerning norms of social comportment and of displaying the body. As we have seen, revealing female swimming costumes had been a favoured target of some conservative clergy since the early twentieth century. By the 1950s, the issue had become much magnified and expanded while the politics surrounding it had morphed considerably. The two-piece bikini, a post-war French invention, received its name from the Micronesian site of early nuclear bomb tests that might blind the unprepared eye. This fashion innovation captured what Jean-Didier Urbain identified as the 'polynesianification' of the post-war European beach. The French resort chain *Club Méditerranée*, which established its first enclave in Majorca, exemplified this, mobilizing the techniques and desires of modern consumer society to forge what its founder called an 'antidote to civilization'.<sup>52</sup>

As the European beach experience increasingly mingled Gauguinian atavism with industrialized pleasure, the Franco regime clung to its identity as a guardian against what many ideologues considered modern moral decadence. The resulting conflict unfolded over the course of the next two decades, with moral autarkists struggling in vain against a nexus of commercial interests, diplomatic considerations, and a growing xenophilia among the younger generation of Spaniards. Seaside tourists of the post-war mould flouted the notions of sexuality that had become dominant in Spanish society in the 1940s. As moral authorities sought to close what they feared was a widening gulf between sex and love in the minds of youth, the optics of the cosmopolitan beach threatened to counteract such efforts.<sup>53</sup> State law rendered with studious precision what constituted acceptable seaside attire, requiring women to wear skirts, men to wear trousers, and all chests and backs to be covered. Clergy close to the regime advocated further legislation dividing all beaches into male and female sides.<sup>54</sup> Regime economists and tourism office directors exerted pressure in the opposite direction, citing the overriding concern to present the Spanish 'as a modern people, open to all initiatives and receptive to all suggestions'.<sup>55</sup>

The Franco regime was eager to abdicate its role as mediator of this incipient culture war. Existing public morality laws were never repealed but decisions regarding their enforcement were systematically devolved to the local level. The central government sustained an uneasy balancing act throughout the 1950s, issuing stern warnings against 'unhygienic bathing practices' aimed at domestic audiences while assuring travel agencies abroad that restrictive laws were rarely enforced. The second claim was usually the more accurate one: Mediterranean resorts on the whole were more lax, while the older resorts of the northern Atlantic coast, vacation home to many domestic elites, were somewhat more vigilant.<sup>56</sup> As a rule, local police were instructed by their supervisors to leave tourists alone. The overriding goal of such policies was to avoid giving ammunition to the alleged 'anti-Spanish' coalition of Communists and tourism interests in other Mediterranean countries that so preoccupied the Franco regime. Pressure from local citizens sometimes compelled police to hassle tourists for gross violations of local moral standards, such as walking into stores and cafes in beach attire, and exhibiting lewd sexual behaviour.<sup>57</sup> While many of the older generation fretted over the erosion of public decorum, youth moved, in the words of a Costa del Sol restaurateur, 'from a totally prohibitive world into one of perhaps exaggerated freedom'.<sup>58</sup> The zeal with which

young Spanish men chased women tourists formed the subject of much late-Franco light cinema, including Ramón Torrado's *Un beso en el puerto*, and led one disgruntled Spanish *novia* from the Costa del Sol town of Tajos to invent the following satire of a well-known tourist slogan: *Tajos, ciudad de invierno, en el verano cuernos* ('Tajos: a city to winter in, and in the summer to be cuckolded in').<sup>59</sup>

Rather than accede to the demands of some orthodox conservatives that beach tourism be curtailed, the ministry sought to appease the conflict by promoting a kind of touristic pluralism. Under the direction of the liberal reformer Manuel Fraga, the Ministry of Information and Tourism encouraged municipalities distant from major receptor regions to vie for a share of the expanding market. To this end, the ministry provided modest loans and subsidies for town beautification, festivals and monument restoration. It supported religious tourism, the restoration of religious sites, and the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. The Parador project begun in the 1920s expanded considerably in the late Franco period; 60 were opened between 1963 and 1977, bringing the total to 95. They were with few exceptions distant from major tourist resorts and formed a bucolic contrast to the steely high rises of Benidorm and Torremolinos. During these years, Paradors received roughly one million overnight visitors annually, slightly over half of them being Spanish. Most individual Paradors catered predominantly to either foreign or domestic clients, a pattern of segregation that also characterized most coastal resorts.<sup>60</sup>

Although Spanish tourists were not yet a major addition to the cosmopolitan ambience of many resorts, their rising participation in the 'leisure civilization' of post-war Europe was extremely significant. Liberal elements of the Franco government indeed regarded access to leisure travel as 'a means to demonstrate upward mobility' and also to create markets for tourism in stagnant regions untouched by the new prosperity.<sup>61</sup> Automobile ownership rose considerably in the 1960s with the introduction of the SEAT 600, the Francoist *Volkswagen* that carried millions of prosperous families of Spain's growing urban middle classes to *veraneos* on the mountains and coasts. The Spanish travel agent rediscovered his vocation in serving a newly affluent Spanish population. Long having struggled to find a role in an industry founded principally on reception and hospitality, this branch of the tourism sector now possessed a growing clientele of Spaniards looking to make travel bookings. In 1966, the government took the not uncontroversial step of legalizing the sale of international package tours to Spaniards – causing alarm to those with a stake in preserving the receptive character of the sector, but having the effect of further integrating Spain into the international tourism economy. The weak peseta meant that extended travel abroad remained limited to the wealthy at first, but this would change in the latter decades of the twentieth century as the Spanish currency became stronger and youth became increasingly attuned to the notion of a European Spain. In the mean time, the growing urban middle classes provided markets not only for new resort development, but for interior tourism as well. Transplanted urban dwellers returned to their family villages or took in the pastoral romanticism of rural Spain in short excursions.

Most emblematic of the age, and therefore of the gathering momentum of change in Spanish society, was the beach. By the late 1960s, paradoxically, taking a holiday at a Spanish beach resort was to many Spaniards a badge of cosmopolitan sophistication. In the words of one advertisement, 'Spaniards are taking their summer holidays on the Costa Brava just like everybody else'.<sup>62</sup> The 'imported modernities' of insouciance and heliolatry were no longer the monopoly of foreign tourists. The first bikini to flash across a Spanish cinema screen was worn, appropriately enough, by a German actress, but by the end of the decade even state newsreels depicted Spanish women modelling the primitive garment.<sup>63</sup>

Frequently referred to in public discourse as the 'tourist miracle', the cascade of tourists to descend on Spanish coasts led to excess and degradation. By the late 1960s, complaints of drunkenness, illegal drug use, noise and delinquency were frequent, revealing a growing

disillusionment with the freewheeling *España a go-gó* of the late-Franco period. Government publicists emphasized that overall tourism revenue continued to rise, but overbuilding meant that individual tourists paid less and resorts became too crowded. Scholars, journalists and local administrators began to voice their concerns, but the momentum of massive construction and the promise of unbridled seaside pleasure were difficult to curtail.<sup>64</sup> Few were the Spaniards who did not see the racy advertisements of the resort development firm Sofico, which from 1962 until its ignominious demise in 1974 sold Costa del Sol real estate to Spaniards and foreigners on promises of large returns on the investment. Sofico became an important face for Spain abroad – as a slogan declared, ‘*Sofico es España*’ – but was best known for flooding Spanish advertising media with images of waterskiing, sunbathing and ‘*noches locas*’ full of dancing and revelry. The ‘new way of living on holiday’ was designed for Spain’s ‘modern family’, and was sharply contrasted with ‘classic, that is, monotonous vacations’.

Such advertising became more prevalent in the early 1970s – a reflection not of the firm’s success but rather of its desperation as it struggled to recover its investments in the increasingly overbuilt region. The Ministry of Information and Tourism, which would not survive the post-Franco reshuffling of the civil bureaucracy, had become closely associated with Sofico, permitting it to continue luring investors despite knowledge of its insolvency. When it could no longer deny the scandal, the ministry emphasized the damage the affair might do to the good name of Spanish tourism abroad, and of Spain itself – in other words, the chief preoccupation of state tourism bureaus since they first appeared in 1905. It was only the nascent opposition press that showed sensitivity to the new class of small Spanish investors who had fallen victim to irrational exuberance and corruption.<sup>65</sup>

The Sofico scandal in some sense marked the end of the ‘tourist miracle’. To be sure, tourism continued to expand in terms of volume and revenue, and, apart from a brief slowdown during the oil shock of 1973–74, there was little discernible change in industry trends during and after transition to democracy. The Socialist governments of the 1980s continued to diversify Spain’s tourist attractions, developing art museums and national parks, among others, though the beach remained the largest single draw.<sup>66</sup> But in democratic Spain, the intensity with which Spaniards grappled with the notion of difference withered, and with it the political charge of tourism. Spain was now more or less fully integrated into the European travel network, and currents of domestic tourism converged as never before with those of foreigners. Moreover, Sofico laid bare the excesses of overbuilding and cheap package tourism. As a result, tourism as a political good, as an emblem of progress and modernization, had reached its limit.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Shubert, *Death and Money in the Afternoon*, 9–12.

<sup>2</sup> Valero, ‘El turismo de playa’, 297–29. On the spread of sea bathing for leisure, see Towner, *An Historical Geography of Recreation and Tourism*, 172, and Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*. Two major studies on leisure and the construction of class identity are Walton, *The English Seaside Resort*, and Mackaman, *Leisure Settings*.

<sup>3</sup> The quotation is from Segovia, *Manual del viajero español de Madrid a París y Londres*, 16. The subjective motives of the modern tourist are theorized in MacCannell, *The Tourist*. For a more recent comment, see Koshar, *German Travel Cultures*, 207–12.

<sup>4</sup> See Barke and Towner, ‘Exploring the History of Leisure and Tourism in Spain’, 3–31; Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*.

<sup>5</sup> On the concept of ‘elsewhereness’ as an aspect of modern life, see Löfgren, *On Holiday*, and Baranowski and Furlough, *Being Elsewhere*.

<sup>6</sup> Valero, ‘El turismo de playa’, 300–2; Larrinaga Rodríguez, ‘El turismo en la España del siglo XIX’, 168.

<sup>7</sup> Walton, ‘Leisure Towns in Wartime’, 603–18.



- <sup>8</sup> Shubert, *Death and Money in the Afternoon*, 32–3, 117–18.
- <sup>9</sup> See Barton, *Working-Class Organizations*, 41–72.
- <sup>10</sup> Barke and Towner, 'Exploring the History of Leisure and Tourism in Spain', 26.
- <sup>11</sup> On the optical experience of modern pilgrimage, see Kaufmann, *Consuming Visions*.
- <sup>12</sup> On the nineteenth-century return of pilgrimage to Spanish Catholic practice, see Callahan, *The Catholic Church in Spain*, 262–3.
- <sup>13</sup> Christian, *Moving Crucifixes in Modern Spain*, 13.
- <sup>14</sup> See, for example, the travelogues of Richard Ford, and Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion*.
- <sup>15</sup> Ramón Mesonero Romanos, *Recuerdos de un viaje por Francia y Bélgica en 1840 à 1841* (Madrid: Oficinas de la Ilustración Española y Americana, 1881), quoted in Obregón, 'El turismo rancio en España', 106.
- <sup>16</sup> Barke and France, 'The Costa del Sol', 267.
- <sup>17</sup> Pellejero Martínez, 'Antecedentes históricos del turismo en España', 40.
- <sup>18</sup> Cal, 'La recuperación de los monumentos históricos', 7–19.
- <sup>19</sup> Marianao, *Consideraciones acerca de la necesidad del Fomento del Turismo*, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> Exposition of the Royal Decree of June 20, 1911, quoted in Traver Tomás, *El Marqués de la Vega-Inclán*, 113.
- <sup>21</sup> González Morales, 'La Comisión Nacional de Turismo', 20–4.
- <sup>22</sup> *Gaceta de Madrid*, January 5, 1926; Pellejero Martínez, 'Antecedentes históricos del turismo en España', 62.
- <sup>23</sup> Moreno Garrido, 'Turismo de élite', 33–41. On the 'Gredos Plan' of Falangist leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera, see Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, 171–3.
- <sup>24</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 31.
- <sup>25</sup> See Worpole, *Here Comes the Sun*; Gray, *Designing the Seaside*.
- <sup>26</sup> Lenček and Bosker, *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth*, 185–95, and Gray, *Designing the Seaside*, 31–4; Boyer, 'La mesure des flux', 108–9; Braggs and Harris, *Sun, Fun, and Crowds*, 52.
- <sup>27</sup> On the history of female swimwear in twentieth-century Spain, see Parra, 'La mujer', 189–218. A general discussion of the politics of female fashions in interwar France is Roberts, 'Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France', 657–84.
- <sup>28</sup> Walton, 'The Waters of San Sebastián', 44–5; Valero, 'El turismo de playa', 300.
- <sup>29</sup> Gomá y Tomás, *Las modas y el lujo ante la ley cristiana, la sociedad, y el arte*.
- <sup>30</sup> Parra, 'La mujer', 196–7.
- <sup>31</sup> Instituto de Estudios Turísticos, *Catálogo de cartels oficiales de turismo*, 46.
- <sup>32</sup> Compiled from figures in Vila Fradera, *Hoteles, hoy*, 32; Fernández Fuster, *Historia general del turismo de masas*, 277; and Lavaur, *Turismo de Entreguerras*, 50.
- <sup>33</sup> Barke and France, 'The Costa del Sol', 266; 'Plan de Promoción Turística de la Costa Brava', internal report of the Dirección General de Turismo, 1974, Archivo General de la Administración (henceforth, AGA) 3: 49.22/59882.
- <sup>34</sup> Barton, *Working-class Organizations*, 199.
- <sup>35</sup> See Holguín, "'National Spain Invites You'", 1399–426.
- <sup>36</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 153–55.
- <sup>37</sup> These goals are outlined in correspondences from the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs to the Spanish Embassy in Washington of May 24 and June 5, 1939 (AGA 10: 26.02/12625). The regime's concern to preserve the strict currency exchange system was reiterated in a circular of December 20, 1951, entitled 'Aviso a las Agencias de Viajes' (Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, R-5183, Exp.3).
- <sup>38</sup> John Walker to Mariano de Yturralde (Spanish Director General of Economic Policy), June 19, 1948, Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, R-5104, Exp. 6.
- <sup>39</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 43–4.
- <sup>40</sup> This process is described in Bray and Raitz, *Flight to the Sun*, 55–67.
- <sup>41</sup> The document establishing the preferential exchange rate is found at AGA 10: 26.02/8994, folder PE 3/7. For the wider context of Spanish trade policy in the late 1940s, see Guirao, *Spain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe*.

- <sup>42</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 59.
- <sup>43</sup> See Lyth and Dierikx, 'From Privilege to Popularity', 97–116.
- <sup>44</sup> General overviews of document requirements at European borders are given in Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 147–9, and Turack, *The Passport in International Law*.
- <sup>45</sup> This argument is developed in Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 82–91.
- <sup>46</sup> An interesting exploration of individualism among package tourists is Wright, 'Sun, Sea, Sand, and Self-Expression', 181–202.
- <sup>47</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 60.
- <sup>48</sup> See, for example, data cited in Cals, *Turismo y política turística en España*, 44.
- <sup>49</sup> Graves, *El fenómeno del turismo*, 9.
- <sup>50</sup> An excellent elaboration of resort architecture in one region is Morales Folguera, *La arquitectura del ocio en la Costa del Sol*, 21–7, 72–99. On the uses of sunlight and open space in twentieth-century public architecture, see Worpole, *Here Comes the Sun*, 49–68.
- <sup>51</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 169–75.
- <sup>52</sup> Urbain, *Sur la plage*, 151; Furlough, 'Packaging Pleasures', 65–81.
- <sup>53</sup> A rich account of male-female relations in Spain in the 1940s is Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, 91–115.
- <sup>54</sup> See Abella, *La vida cotidiana bajo el regimen de Franco*, 110–11.
- <sup>55</sup> 'Plan Nacional de Turismo. Estudios preliminares' (1952), AGA 3: 49.02/14415.
- <sup>56</sup> This was the judgment of the popular French travel writer Ogrizek, *McGraw-Hill Pocket Travel Guides – Spain*.
- <sup>57</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 78–80, 144–5.
- <sup>58</sup> Quoted in Fraser, *Tajos*, 206.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 204. On Torrado's film, see Crumbaugh, "'Spain is Different'", 261–76.
- <sup>60</sup> Francisco Soriano Frade, 'Estudio comparativo sobre los Paradores de Turismo, 1976-1984', Instituto de Estudios Turísticos, CDTE 4519; Ministerio de Información y Turismo, *El turismo en 1967*, 69. Statistical breakdown of Spanish and foreign holidaymakers by region is also given in *idem*, *El turismo en 1968*.
- <sup>61</sup> Tourism Committee of the Plan for Economic and Social Development, 'Medidas de política económica precisas para el desarrollo del turismo', July 22, 1963, AGA 3: 49.06/29652.
- <sup>62</sup> Barbaza, *Le paysage humaine de la Costa Brava*, 688.
- <sup>63</sup> This was Elke Sommer in *Bahía de Palma* (Juan Bosch, 1962). See Kowalsky, 'Rated S', 190.
- <sup>64</sup> See, for example, Amando de Miguel, 'Una revisión de las ideas sobre el turismo', *Mundo Internacional*, January 7, 1971.
- <sup>65</sup> Castellà-Gassol, *El libro negro de Sofico*, 84–7, *passim*.
- <sup>66</sup> Venancio Bote Gómez, Manuel Marchena Gómez and Enrique Santos Pavón, 'La descentralización autonómica y la diversificación de la estrategia de desarrollo turístico', 149; Manchado, 'Cultural Memory, Commerce and the Arts', 92–100.

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