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**“CONSIDERACIONES SOCIO-TERRITORIALES EN TORNO AL NEGOCIO
DEL ALQUILER DE VIVIENDAS DE USO TURÍSTICO. EL CASO DEL
MUNICIPIO DE LLORET DE VISTALEGRE (MALLORCA)”**

**“SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE BUSINESS OF
VACATION HOME RENTALS. THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF
LLORET DE VISTALEGRE (MALLORCA)”**

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SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE BUSINESS OF VACATION HOME RENTALS. THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF LLORET DE VISTALEGRE (MALLORCA).

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resumen

Este trabajo analiza las transformaciones socio-territoriales asociadas al auge de las viviendas de uso turístico, en el municipio de Lloret de Vistalegre (Mallorca). Los resultados obtenidos han permitido cuantificar la oferta real de este tipo de alojamiento turístico, conocer su distribución territorial, además de radiografiar la tipología de las viviendas y el perfil de los nuevosempresarios turísticos. Esta investigación, ha permitido constatar la existencia de una importante bolsa de alquileres turísticos no regulados, que contribuyen a incrementar el número de plazas turísticas existente en la isla.

Palabras clave: turismo p2p, viviendas de uso turístico, plataforma de comercialización, alquiler turístico, Lloret de Vistalegre.

abstract

This work analyzes the socio-territorial transformations associated with the boom in housing for tourism use in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre (Mallorca). The results obtained have allowed the quantification of the actual offer of this type of tourist accommodation, to understand its territorial distribution, as well as to radiograph the typology of the houses and the profile of the new tourist entrepreneurs. This research has revealed the existence of an important stock of unregulated tourist rentals, which contributes to increase the number of tourist places on the island.

Keywords: p2p tourism, tourist homes, marketing platform, holiday rental, Lloret de Vistalegre.

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1. Introduction

From the 1980s, tourism development on the island required new spaces for leisure and relaxation, to meet the changes in tourism demand (Salvà & Binimelis, 1993; Seguí, 2006), which led to the adoption of various tourism and land policies, on a supramunicipal basis, which have contributed to promoting the transformation of land from agricultural to tourist/residential use (Binimelis & Ginard, 1998; Luke, 2002; Seguí, 2006; Rullan, 2007; Binimelis & Ordinas, 2012). This process has now reached its maximum expression through the proliferation of houses available for holiday rental. The success of this process is the progressive growth of a Post-Fordist demand, in those seeking individualised, customised and off the beaten track experiences (Ioannides and Debbage, 1997), which has encouraged the development of new spaces and forms of tourism consumption (Urry, 1995).

Traditionally, it was only possible to accommodate tourists in recognised tourist accommodation (hotels, apartments, hostels, etc), and not possible to accommodate them in buildings of residential use (houses), in spite of the fact that this was a longstanding activity (Muntaner, 1980). However, according to Blasco (2015: 105), "This norm was broken with the adoption of the Law 2/2005, of 22 March, on the commercialisation of tourist stays in homes. This law was adopted to legalize the numerous single family houses being rented to tourists in the Pollença municipality, giving them a period of six months for legalization. After this time it would not be permitted to offer homes for tourist rental". Nonetheless, during the years following the adoption of the law, there was no stoppage in the proliferation of housing offered for tourist use (VUT) across the whole of the island of Mallorca.

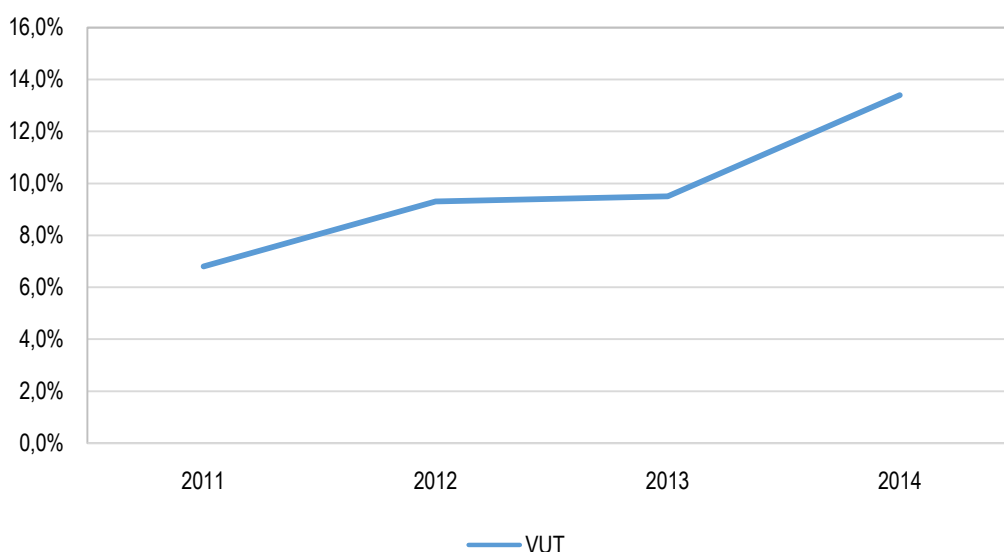
The result of this growth was a situation requiring new policy instruments going beyond a simple regularization of the existing state of affairs. With this aim, Law 8/2012, of 19 of July of Tourism of the Balearic Islands, introduced three articles (arts. 49 to 52) for the regulation of this activity, allowing tourists legally to be accommodated in buildings of residential use, detached or semi-detached, that fulfill a series of requirements (certificate of occupancy, a provider of direct or indirect tourist services, insurance, etc.). At present, Law 8/2012, developed through Decree 20/2015, of 17 April, on the general principles and guidelines for the coordination of tourists affairs; regulation of advisory bodies, coordination and cooperation of the Government of the Balearic Islands, and regulation and classification of tourist companies and establishments. Article 106, on the commercialisation

of tourist accommodation, determines that in accordance with article 52 of Law 8/2012, these dwellings can operate with the following stipulations: (a) Single family dwellings standing alone in their own plot, and isolated in the sense that they do not have other homes adjoining. (b) Single family terraced dwellings, provided it is the only one in that plot. (c) Single family semi-detached dwellings are those located in the same plot, subject to the horizontal property regime, or when on different plots there are single family terraced houses with a separating party wall.

Moreover, under this same article of the law, it is prohibited to commercialize property and advertise tourist housing without the prior submission to the Tourist Administration of a formal application to commence tourist activity, under the general terms of the conditions set out for tourist activities in Law 8/2012 and in this decree. With regard to the commercialisation of accommodation referred to in this chapter, decree 20/2015 follows the guidelines set out in the reform of State Law 29/1994, on Urban Leases (LAU), which was put into effect in accordance with Law 4/2013 of 4 June, concerning relaxation measures for the promotion of the housing rental market. As Martos (2014: 94) notes, "according to article 5 of The Law 4/2013, outside the ambit of this law: [...] (e) temporary assignment of the whole of a house furnished and equipped for immediate use, marketed or promoted through channels for commercial purpose, when subjected to a specific regime, under sectoral regulations". Therefore, the LAU reform excludes all houses that are marketed through tourism channels and they are thus automatically included in the Balearic Tourist Law (APTUR, 2016).

According to data from the Institute of Statistics of the Balearic Islands (IBESTAT), tourism in VUTs in Mallorca has not ceased to increase during recent years (figure 1): In the year 2012 this accounted for 9.3 per cent of tourists, in 2013 9.5% of tourists, and in 2014 up to 13.4% of the total visitors to Mallorca, amounting to 1,291,965 tourists, numbering the legal sector at 10,000. However, some authors, such as Blasco (2015) and Coll (2016), note that the number of VUTs and tourists who stay in them is greater than that, and that a proportion of the tourists included within the category of tourists who used their own properties or the houses of relatives/friends, in reality, stayed in a VUT. According to data from the Balearic Association of Seasonal Apartment and Housing Rental, it is estimated that in the year 2016 this type of offer represents 33 % of the total offer of the Balearic Islands.

Graphic 1. Percentage evolution in tourists in Mallorca staying in a VUT.



Source: Based on data from the Institute of Statistics of the Balearic Islands (IBESTAT) extracted from the EGATUR survey

To understand the growth of the VUT one must refer to tourism consolidation of p2p - peer to peer - (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Pizam, 2014; Guillén & Iñiguez, 2016). Some authors, such as Pizam (2014: 118) define it as the environment in which "the individuals perform transactions directly with other individuals on an internet platform managed by a third party, to offer and buy a variety of products, including travel services, such as lodging, rental of vehicles, food and beverages, and tourist guides". Inside p2p tourism one can broadly identify two types of platforms: (1) not for profit, i.e. there is no economic transaction. Within the accommodation sector, the most popular website by number of members and the paradigm of the "pure" house exchange model is www.homeexchange.com (Russo & Quaglieri, 2014). Since the transformation of Couchsurfing, the other major hospitality exchange web platform, into a for-profit enterprise in the year 2011, www.bewelcome.com has become another of the major reference points of this type of platform; (2) for profit, i.e. with commercial motivation. From the point of view of the commercialisation of tourist accommodation, www.airbnb.com was the first p2p platform created in the year 2008, and since then p2p websites involved in the rental of VUTs have not stopped growing (www.homeaway.com, www.homelidays.com, www.wimdu.com, ...).

The key to this success is to be found in the benefits that both the suppliers and the users of VUTs obtain through this system of digital marketing. From the point of view of the user he achieves the so-called utilitarian value of the internet at the time of acquiring goods and services (Sirdeshmukh, Jagdip & Sabol, 2002; Overby & Lee, 2006; Kim & Oh, 2011), i.e. savings in time and

money at the time of making a reservation against other media (Guillén and Iñiguez, 2016). Moreover, it offers the citizen the opportunity to receive an income through hosting services, and therefore allows an expansion of the tourist accommodation business to a broader spectrum of society, which previously had been limited to a few entrepreneurs. In this case the potential user can rent an entire property, a room and even a shared room. With which, as point out Cuscó & Font (2015: 6), "the profile of the advertiser in these platforms is very complex since it goes from individuals who rent a room to augment their income to help them reach the end of the month, to large companies that in this way make large profits".

2. Objectives and methodology

The main objective of this work is to analyze, using the example of Lloret de Vistalegre, how the municipalities in the interior of Mallorca, which traditionally have been kept at the margins of the major tourism business, have undergone an intense touristification process with the boom in VUT rentals.

This research has focused on different aspects of this type of accommodation such as: the amount and territorial distribution of the VUTs, an analysis of their main characteristics (profile of the owners, type of housing, number of rooms and guests, price per night in high season and low, available services, etc.), also raising the need to address the legal-administrative debate provoked by the growth of this new type of accommodation. On this issue, they are considered as "legal", those houses that are marketed in with-profit platforms, and that have been entered in the register of the Department of Tourism and Sports, and therefore

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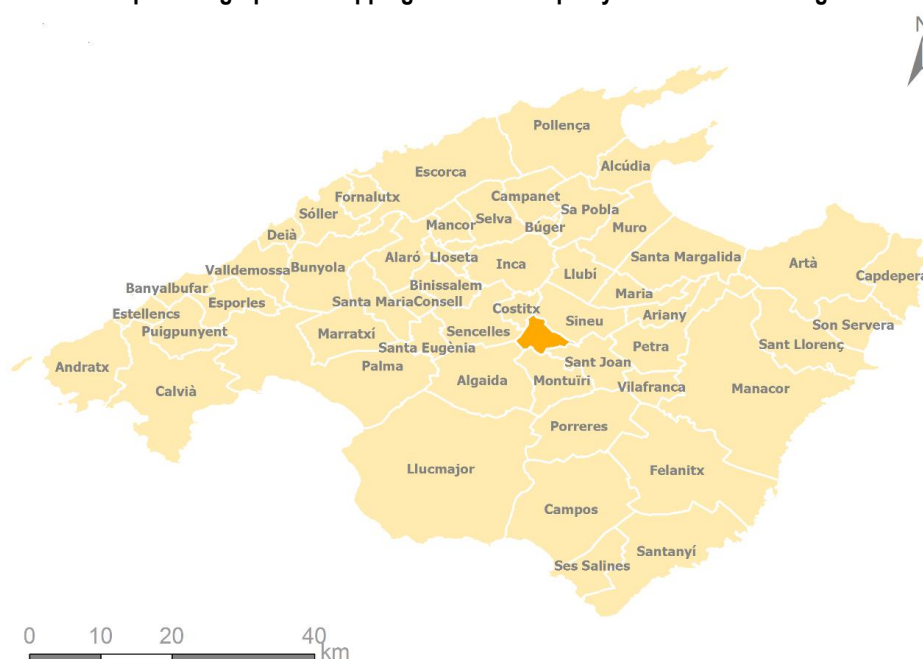
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comply with the conditions laid down in the existing sectoral rules.

However, outside this regularised sector, there may be another that does not conform to the tourism rules and whose data is not known with accuracy. Accordingly, to be able to know with accuracy the number of VUTs that exist in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre, different sources of information have been used: On the one hand, the official data on the registration of VUTs of the Department of Tourism and Sports of the Government of the Balearic Islands (2016), and on the other, the data on VUTs advertised on the commercial platforms, Airbnb, Homeaway and Homelidays, being those with the highest representation in the study area (Map 1).

Subsequently, it was investigated whether the geographical coordinates obtained coincided exactly with the reality. The finding is that they do not, observing that there is a certain margin of error (ranging from 150 meters in urban areas to more than a kilometer in rural areas). This is due to the fact that the marketing platforms analysed in this study do not reveal the location of the advertised properties. In practice, this means that the location that appears on the web advertisements shows only the general area where the marketed house stands. Accordingly, the use of aerial photography was required and exhaustive fieldwork was carried out accurately to map the VUTs. On the basis of the data collected, and using the ArcGIS mapping program, a spatial analysis of this type of accommodation was carried out.

Map 1. Geographical mapping of the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre.



Source: own design

Furthermore, to be able to establish various aspects related to the management of the houses and the characteristics of the householders, an owner survey was undertaken. In respect thereof, we were able to obtain answers from 21 householders that between them owned 30 of the 46 VUTs identified in the municipality.

3. Principal results

Despite the legal regulations on renting accommodation to tourists, the facts indicate that this phenomenon has reached a much greater dimension. The existing supply is much greater than the VUTs that have been registered with the autonomous administration, and thus there is a

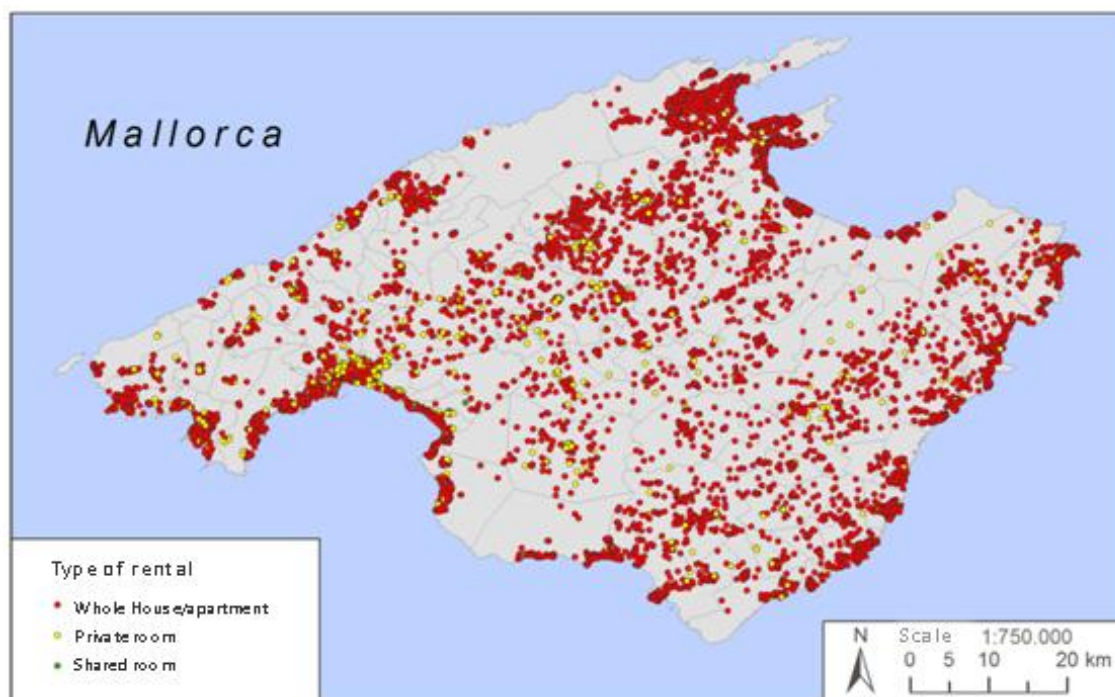
stock of VUTs operating clandestinely. While this is not a new phenomenon (Mateu, 2003), in recent years there has been an expansion and intensification of this type of accommodation across the geography of the island, which has led to the emergence of small tourism businesses (both in the form of owners and companies providing services to the VUTs), which up to this time were completely outside the tourism business.

In Map 2 one can see the territorial distribution of the almost 13,000 houses on the island of Mallorca advertising on the Airbnb platform at the beginning of the year 2016. According to Airbnb data (2016), some 8,000 homes are located in rural areas and 5,000 within the urban cores. At the municipal

level, highlighted are the presence on the coast of: Palma (2,577 houses), Pollença (1,010), Alcúdia (799), Calvia (617), Santanyi (372), Capdepera (308) and Sóller (245), in addition to the interior areas

located between the municipalities of Selva, Inca and Mancor de la Vall, where 324 homes are concentrated.

Map 2. Territorial distribution of the VUT advertisements published on the Airbnb platform in Mallorca.



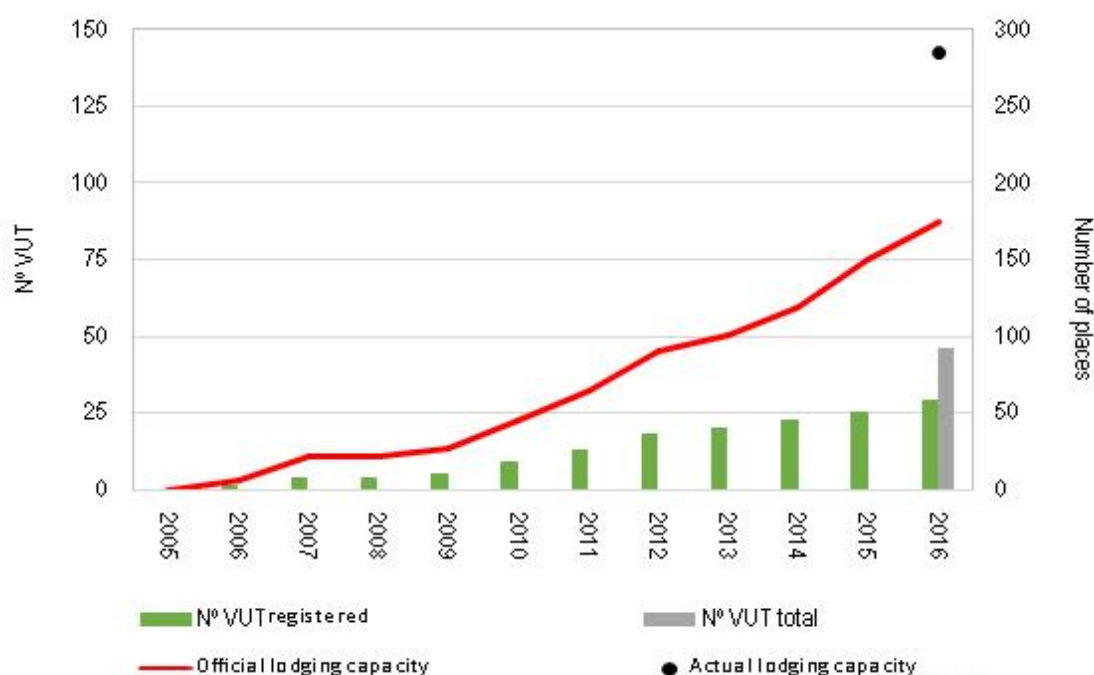
Source: Coll (2016), on the basis of the data of <http://insideairbnb.com/mallorca/> (retrieved 6 January 2016).

The municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre has not remained on the sidelines of this VUT growth process, and has seen its accommodation capacity grow exponentially in the last years. Currently, in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre there are two types of tourist accommodation, two farmhouses and 46 VUTs, which together give an accommodation capacity of 323 tourist beds, of which 38 are in the farmhouses and 285 in the VUTs. It is worth noting that the VUT figure may be higher due to the diversity of platforms that advertise VUTs, and these have not been analysed in this study.

In spite of this boom in absolute figures the numbers still remain insignificant compared with the

accommodation capacity of the coastal municipalities, nevertheless, if we analyze percentage-wise we can observe how during the period between 2005 and 2016 (Graphic 2) the number of tourist places in the municipality has increased by 88%, which represents a very significant increase for a municipality that in the year 2000 had no tourist places (the first tourist establishment that opened in the municipality was the Agro-tourist centre of Son Bauló, in the year 2001). Therefore, within a local context, it is more than obvious that the presence of tourists who spend the night in the municipality is a reality that is becoming more common due to the proliferation of VUTs (figure 2).

Graphic 2: Evolution in the number of VUTs and accommodation capacity.



Source: Own design based on data retrieved from the Department for Tourism and Sport (2005-2016) and the platforms Airbnb, Homeaway and Homelidays (data collected 01-02-2016)

In spite of the fact that the commercialisation of tourist stays in single family houses is a type of lodging regulated in the Balearic Islands since the year 2005, in the case of Lloret de Vistalegre it has been observed that it is above all from the year 2014 that the growth of VUT registrations has been really triggered (Graphic 2), its development being much later than in other municipalities of the island (Mateu, 2003).

From the legal point of view, of the 46 VUTs that have been identified in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre, only 18 have authorization to rent their homes to tourists, 11 have submitted their applications to the administration to commence the activity, and the remaining 17 houses operate without having registered officially, therefore they carry on outside the tourist guidelines.

With regard to the territorial distribution of the VUTs (map 3), this is determined by the structure of ownership of the lands that make up the village. The greater presence is to the south of the municipal area coinciding with the area dominated by small rainfed properties with barn type houses, popularly known as "Rotes". These properties are the result of the fragmentation of the large estates such as those of Son Bauló, Sa Casa Nova and Miralles, which took place during the XVII century (Ramis & Ginard, 2001). On the other hand, toward the north the presence of VUTs is scarcer, due to the large

properties there being not so affected by the fragmentation process, and they have maintained extensive tracts of land. This is the case for the possessions of Son Gelabert de Baix, Son Gelabert de Dalt, Son Joan Arnau, Son Joan Jaume, Son Marron y Es Colomer, in addition to the communal lands of Sa Commune.

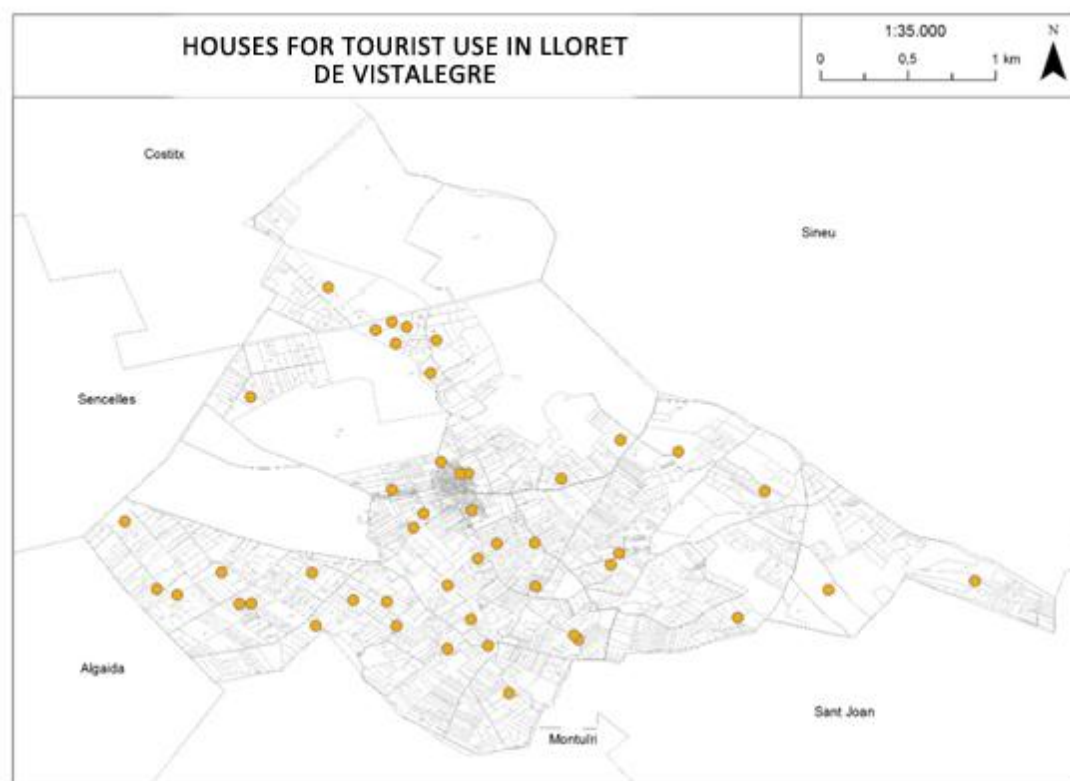
With the advent of the primary sector crisis in the 70s and 80s, construction was favoured during this time of new houses on small rainfed plots that were not profitable agriculturally, or the renovation of old barn type houses as second homes, being a phenomenon popular among the resident population of the islands (Salvà & Binimelis, 1993), giving rise to a process of intensive rural urbanisation (Binimelis, 1998).

The result of these processes of transformation of rural space, in the case of Lloret de Vistalegre, is reflected in the wide settlements spread. Despite being one of the least extensive municipalities of Mallorca, with only 17,44 km², the presence of rural housing acquires a significant importance in Lloret de Vistalegre since, according to data from the census of the year 2015, of the 1,233 inhabitants registered in the municipality, 444 inhabitants resided in rural areas, which represented 36 per cent of the total population of the municipality. There is, therefore, an important structure of rural houses which are used as primary residences.

However, the increase in the number of VUTs in the municipality is mainly among those houses used as secondary homes. Nevertheless, according to the data obtained (year 2016), VUTs represent only 0.1 % of

the village houses, which, in absolute terms, is not statistically significant.

Map 3. Territorial distribution of the VUTs in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre (Mallorca).



Source: Own design based on data retrieved from the Department of Tourism and Sports and from commercial platforms: AirBnB, Homeaway y Homelidays (data compiled 01-02-2016).

The results obtained on the characteristics of the VUTs (table 1) show a clear predominance of whole houses for rent (96 per cent of the supply of VUTs), and so only 4 per cent of the offer is for the rental of private rooms. Of this latter offer, it has been observed that its presence is linked to foreign owners, in contrast, it is not noted that any local owner offers a room in his own primary residence.

89 % of the VUTs are single family dwellings located in the rural area, and only 11% are within the urban cores. One of the main features of the VUT is the availability of a swimming pool, in fact, 87 per cent of the houses have one. Those houses that do not have a pool are located mainly in the towns. As regards the accommodation capacity of the tourist housing in Lloret de Vistalegre, the average is of 3 rooms and 6 guests.

Table 1. Characteristics of houses for tourist use in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre

Property (*)	
Inherited house	90%

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Bought house	10%
Type	
Whole house/apartment	96%
Private room	4%
Capacity	
Rooms	3
Guests	6
Location	
Town	11%
Country	89%
Services	
Pool	87%
No pool	13%
Average price (per house per day)	
High season (August)	171 euros
Low season (February)	140 euros
Management (*)	
Direct (local owner)	30%
Direct (foreign owner)	9%
Through estate agent	61%
Benefit to the renter	
Principal income	6%

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Complementary income	94%
Availability of rental (*)	
Available throughout the year	66 %
Available only part of the year	44 %

Source: Based on data retrieved from the Department of Tourism and Sports (2005-2015), and the platforms AirBnB, Homeaway and Homelidays (data collected 01-02-2016).

(*) The results cover 30 of the 46 TUVs identified.

The average price of the rent in Lloret De Vistalegre during the year 2016 fluctuated between 171 euros in high season (May to September) and 140 euros (the rest of the year). However, it is observed that some houses maintain a fixed price throughout the year, the explanatory cause being that the fact that the owners have less interest in renting housing outside the high season (May to October), or because they have no economic need and/or prefer to enjoy their property during some months of the year, since the majority of owners of the VUTs maintain a deep rooted attachment to their properties, through family and sentimental value. In this municipality, the availability of VUTs is not based on the economic necessity of the owners, as 94% of the owners rent out on a voluntary basis to derive some additional income in addition to their usual work, and only 6% do so by necessity.

Another aspect analysed has been the form of management used in the commercialisation of the VUTs. In this regard, 61% manage their properties through an estate agent (three of which are based in the municipality). The reasons for this functional delegation are due to house owners not speaking foreign languages and/or lack of time to welcome and respond to customers. On the other hand, 39 % of the houses are managed directly by the owners, of which 30% are local and 9% are foreigners.

Image 1. House for tourist use in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre (Mallorca).



Source: <https://www.airbnb.es/rooms/14232800?s=y0EeF7ZV> (retrieved 19-07-16).

4. Conclusions

From the year 2014, in Lloret De Vistalegre, there has been a strong growth in the supply of VUTs, which are located in the southern half of the municipal area, there existing a structure of smallholder character properties. These are the old barn type properties, located in the traditionally agrarian space, which have been renovated and transformed into VUTs and are now being more used for tourism purposes. It is therefore clear that this phenomenon is contributing to the rural urbanisation process which began in the 1980s (Binimelis, 1998).

However, this VUT boom has not equally affected the whole of the local population, but in the specific case of Lloret de Vistalegre has mainly benefited the upper middle class, having small inherited properties, located in rural areas, and that have the economic means to renovate their properties and offer them as VUTs, obtaining in this way additional benefit toward their family income. In addition, this growth in the number of tourist beds has generated new business opportunities (holiday rental agents/Intermediaries) and the reactivation of local companies in food, restoration, maintenance landscaping and construction businesses, etc.

Nevertheless, this development in rural areas also generates new consumption or increases that already existing (water, energy, waste, among others), which creates an obligation to consider as a matter of urgency the need to adapt existing tourism planning to this new reality that presents the destination, with the objective of ensuring an appropriate socio-economically based dynamic in sustainable territorial development.

The prohibition introduced in the reform of the LAU (2013) on disseminating through tourism marketing channels any temporary leased housing, obliges this type of offer to be subject to the regulation of the tourist rules of each autonomous community. This explains that in the Balearic Islands there is a stock of VUT tourist accommodation which operates outside the Law 8/2012 (Blasco, 2015), as is seen in the municipality of Lloret de Vistalegre.

Given this situation, and at a time like the present, when there is a profound socio-political debate on the perception of tourist saturation on the island, it seems more than clear that the growth of the tourist **places** associated with the proliferation of this type of accommodation is one of the factors that has contributed to increase tourism pressure in the territory. In response to this situation, and having ascertained the presence of a stock of

accommodation on offer outside the tourist control regime - Arts. 49 to 52 of the Law 8/2012 of Tourism of the Balearic Islands - which despite its virtues and defects, establishes criteria and conditions for the rental of tourist accommodation (type of housing, certificates of occupancy, ratios and tourist services, insurance policies covering civil liability, etc.), it seems logical that there is a clear need to increase the control on the part of the public administration to ensure greater compliance with the existing rules. In such a way the number of tourist places on offer could be decreased (by excluding the existence of housing that does not meet the necessary conditions for tourist exploitation), and thus to put a brake on uncontrolled growth and avoid loss of destination quality.

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