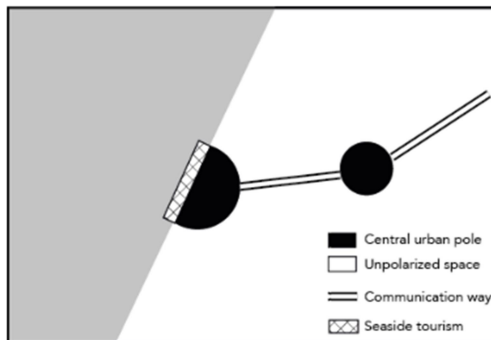


## ARCHETYPE 3

### Small seaside resort with its town centre set back in the coastal hinterland



#### Towns matching this archetype:

- Beach resorts of the Landes or Gironde (e.g. Lacanau-Ocean)
- The bay of Somme; Le Crotoy
- Camargue
- Béziers; Vendre; Portiragnes

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ARCHETYPE

### Spatial configuration

This archetype concerns small beach resorts situated in a predominantly rural area whose market town is located in the hinterland. Peri-urbanisation is recent and not very significant. It is also well defined. Heritage is of less importance in this beach resort compared to those in archetype 5. The coast is either rocky and suffers from erosion or sandy and potentially affected by risks relating to erosion and marine inundation.

### Territorial economy

The area economy is mainly of an *in-place* nature: jobs and services are closely related to strongly seasonal tourism. Recreational and leisure activities are developed in the beach resort whereas productive activities, related to the primary sector (except for fishing), are found in the rest of the *commune*<sup>1</sup>. Tourism tends to be downmarket and property prices are moderate compared with the national average. The residential attractiveness of the *commune* depends on its distance from a large town or metropolis.

### Socio-demographic characteristics

In these small beach resorts, second homes are very common although living standards are average. Few people are economically active due to the seasonal tourist activity and the ageing population. The population in these beach resorts is somewhat uniform but may vary seasonally. Such fluctuation in social groups poses a significant challenge for local politicians, in terms of infrastructure, services and social cohesion.

<sup>1</sup> A level of administrative division in the French Republic. *Communes* are based on historical geographic communities or villages and are vested with significant powers to manage the populations and land of the geographic area covered. The *communes* are the fourth-level administrative divisions of France.

## Innovation pathways

These resorts arose as part of a sustained strategy to develop tourist activity. They were created in the 1960-1970 period as part of the Government's coastal development plans (the Racine Plan in Languedoc-Roussillon, the Inter-ministerial Mission for the Development of the Aquitaine Coast). This shore-based urbanisation led, over the following decades, to the building of protective structures (sea walls, groynes...) to "defend against the sea". These structures have been increasingly destabilised by coastal movement and the physical and economic consequences contribute to a growing concern about risk and associated damages. Local authorities now have to manage the situation they have inherited, concerning both tourist and residential developments undertaken in the three decades following World War Two and the ongoing impact of erosion and shoreline retreat.

## Governance

These beach resorts have little political and financial capacity to launch large-scale operations and transformations. This capacity also depends on the *intercommunalities*<sup>2</sup> where they intervene, as well as on governance structures such as joint associations or public interest groups. However, there are many local environmental protection associations. They want to maintain access to the shoreline and ensure that coastal districts achieve their full potential.

## Psycho-social characteristics

In these small beach resorts, local identity depends on when they were created and is strongly dependent on the sea (fishing port, restaurants, watersports...). The symbolic and identity-based relationships to the place are strong due to the quality of life and persist as property passes from one generation to the next. The emotional bond to the place is strong and there is recognition of risk in particular through knowledge of marine weather events and associated risks.

## ADAPTATION PATHWAYS

### Adaptation pathway (slow progression with anticipation): managed retreat and area reconfiguration

A new European guideline concerning climate change adaptation implemented by a newly created national agency (EX2) and a succession of storms (EX3) in 2022 are enough for

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<sup>2</sup> In France, *intercommunalité* refers to a group of actors and co-operating bodies for all or some of the *communes* in the exercise of their administrative powers.

government, region, department, *intercommunity* and *commune* public officials to come together and agree on a strategy for the managed retreat of both property and activities towards the hinterland (G8, PS3). The political will and the necessary resources (G4) emerge as part of a partnership strategy with a 2060 deadline. The institutional responsibility for this strategy lies with a newly-created joint association (G6) which oversees area development and risk management, in close collaboration with a public land institution (G2) and the various urban-sector operators. This strategy suffers for a while as a new municipal team had questioned the project, but the joint association manages to stay on track and complete the planned purchases, preemptions and managed retreat (G7) between 2030 and 2060. The necessary legal instruments (G6) have been experimented in other sectors in France and the resort benefits from this experience from technical, economic and legal viewpoints (G3). The area reconfiguration resulting from this strategy is based on the strong attachment of all groups (PS1) (main- and second-home owners, long-time tourists) to the resort, in terms of its identity and its local importance. Tourist activities (retail, watersports, restaurants, etc...) continue to dominate but have diversified through partnerships with the main neighbouring towns and metropolises. Solidarity within the area (G2) results from significant political involvement at different levels, in particular between the *intercommunal* and the Region, to achieve an area reconfiguration that would respect the diversity and plurality of usage and activities in the *commune*.

#### **Adaptation pathway (fast progression, without anticipation): stand firm then abandon the seafront under constraint**

The protection strategy that has been followed for a few decades is continued (G8, TI3) without anticipating the problems to come and without any major changes in the local development strategy (strong tourism component for the resort and strong production and recreational component for the rest of the *commune*). However, the high cost of protection (structures, maintenance, restoration...) rapidly increases the local authority's indebtedness to the point of insolvency (ET1). Indeed, with increasing decentralisation (e.g. through GEMAPI prerogative: *Gestion des milieux aquatiques et prévention des inondations* // aquatic environmental management and flood prevention), the State has progressively withdrawn (G1) and a change in the natural disaster system (EX1) means that insurance and compensation conditions are increasingly restrictive and unequal (biased towards the most exposed and expensive properties). Despite support at Regional and Departmental levels (G2) this withdrawal weighs very heavily on *communal* and *intercommunal* budgets. As erosion worsens (EX3) more weaknesses gradually appear in the protection system leading local decision-makers to a *laissez-faire* attitude as they are constrained by a lack of technical and financial resources (ET1). Houses and infrastructure (public roads, car parks...) are neglected and, rather haphazardly, the seafront gradually ceases to fulfil its urban, tourism and economic functions. Local politicians decide to adjust local urban planning and related documents (G7) in return for peri-urbanisation where it is still possible in order to re-house residents who, willingly or not, stay in the

*commune* (because of attachment or dependency). The productive economy develops (forest-wood value chain, new forms of agriculture...) in the rest of the *commune* and new jobs in services appear around the resort. Efforts are made towards restoring and rehabilitating the seafront (G8), which has lost much of its attractiveness and economic momentum, through recreational activities that must adapt to a changing seafront marked by decades of reaction to events.

### **Adaptation pathway (fast progression with anticipation): increase protection and tourism**

Having studied different scenarios and without any signal from the Government (G1) to encourage, help or drive managed retreat (no new legal and economic mechanisms, no new adaptation funds...) the local authority decides, with its public partners and several private partners (property operators and developers, hotel chains, etc....) to rely on strengthened protection (G5, T13) of the beach resort faced with erosion and inundation. In practice this means increasing specialisation of the beach resort on the basis of a more tailored tourist profile (EX9). The objective is to generate sufficient funds for massive and costly protection structures (G8). Several factors underlie the transformation of the resort: physical factors with the collateral impact of erosion which results in a peninsula jutting into the sea (and a major subsidence of the beach that is no longer fit for swimming) together with social and political factors due to a change in the resort sociology: it focuses on tourism for well-off people (ET3) looking for high-quality services (luxury hotels, spas, restaurants with sea views...) and it becomes a showcase to relaunch economic momentum at *intercommunality* level. This process is far from simple and tensions emerge between local authorities on the one hand and the Region and the State on the other. It also leads to a fragmentation in both spatial terms (between the resort and the rest of the *commune*) and social terms (the well-off in the resort and the others elsewhere). Property prices and this form of *in-place* economy widen social inequalities at the *commune* level (SD1) with the first hints of conflict around this location which has developed an emblematic image as the “peninsula for rich people”.