

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# CHANGING ECONOMIC TERRITORIES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF POBLENOU AND SANTS IN BARCELONA—THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM (2005-2016)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the post-crisis city of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are new realities of local economic space from tourism. Within the tourist system there has been a proliferation of so-called urban tourism, which is associated at the same time by competition among cities to attract tourists from their artistic, cultural and leisure attractions (Judd and Fainstein 1999; Selby 2004; Bertonecello and Iuso, 2016). The so-called urban tourism appears as an alternative niche market (Meethan, 2001; Vera et al, 2013.).

In this context, the city of Barcelona, and the 1992 Olympic Games as a starting point, is constituted as urban tourist destination internationally with an increased volume of tourists arriving in 2016 to 9.8 million visitors (Barcelona City Council, 2017). The impact of the tourism sector in 2016 is obvious: tourism accounts for 12% of local GDP, 19% (2,000,000 million) of the total turnover of the commercial sector, and representing 13.8 % of employees of the city (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017).

It is in the second decade of this 21<sup>st</sup> century when the tourist success in Barcelona, with an increased supply and tourism demand, also generates externalities in non-central neighborhoods. In these areas traditionally not receiving urban tourism, mobilization of neighborhood associations and citizens' movements claim to reduce the number of visitors and minimize the impacts of tourism activity. In this scenario, the local government is challenged to intervene in the regulation of the sector without destroying it.

The objective of this research is to describe the evolution of Barcelona as a tourist destination, presenting tourism impacts and examine the actions of urban actors involved in territorial development in 2005-2016. As study cases, the tourist activity in the productive space of two neighborhoods with an industrial tradition is analyzed: Poblenou and Sants. The working hypothesis: a decentralisation of tourism in Barcelona has led to social tension and community protests in neighbourhoods with little prior experience of tourism. The methodology is based on statistical data and in-depth interviews.

## 2. FROM THE INDUSTRIAL CITY TO THE TOURIST CITY

Urban tourism in cities takes place in the framework of urban transformations with urban policies that devote resources to the creation of urban settlements related to value-added services (Sassen, 2006; Musterd and Murie, 2010; Dot, 2015).

The global tourist growth is evident. International tourist arrivals worldwide have gone from 25 million in 1950 to 1,235 million in 2016 (World Tourism Organization, 2017). An evolution of the tourism system that is characterized by different changes. On the one hand, the way people consume tourism. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the tourist industry is no longer dominated only by large tourism companies (airlines, hotel groups and tour operators). The expansion of the Internet with the emergence of digital platforms (such as Airbnb, Couchsurfing and Uber), together with the growing demand for new consumer experiences are features of the new tourism practice (López-Palomeque, 2015; Richards, 2016).

And, on the other hand, the generation of territorial, economic, social and environmental impacts is increasing coinciding with the growing number of visitors. The boom of the tourist sector in the cities is causing a high tourist density of the main cities that can be measured from the relationship between number of citizens and overnight stays. This overcrowding is affecting the urban space, generating impact processes such as turistification (Makhlouf, 2015; Cocola, 2016) and gentrification (Sequera, 2013; Dot, 2015).

The impact of tourism in cities is very relevant. The response to these impacts is the self-organization of the social movement that is carried out in a reactive and proactive manner, manifesting itself from legal actions with the support of neighborhood associations and the scientific and professional community (Casellas, 2016). In parallel, there is also the need to govern it. The public sector (city councils or other governmental institutions) is the political and urban manager, with the objective of promoting the local productive space with activities (including tourism). For this reason, municipalities have different territorial and sectorial plans to order and correct urban growth (Simancas, 2016).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The collection and treatment of the information for the territorial analysis for the 2005-2016 period has been carried out using quantitative techniques based on statistical data published by public organizations (from the Department of Statistics of Barcelona and the Consortium of Turisme de Barcelona). And on the other hand, with qualitative techniques with in-depth interviews. The aim of 5 sample interviews, with social civic agents and members of business and commercial associations, is to collect the impact of the urban transformation from tourism. The methodology has been applied to the case study on a double territorial scale: on the one hand, the city of Barcelona; and on the other hand, on a larger scale, the neighborhoods of Poblenou and Sants. Due to the lack of disaggregated data at the neighborhood level, in some parts of the research, the district scale is used statistically: it corresponds to Sant Martí for Poblenou neighborhood and Sants-Montjuïc for Sants neighborhood.

#### 4. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this research, the evolution of Barcelona as a tourist destination is investigated in the first place. At the end of the period studied (2005-2016) more than 9 million visitors were registered, which produced 19.1 million hotel overnight stays, 9.2% and 8.5% respectively, more than a year before (2015).

The article examines, secondly, the offer of hotel accommodation in Poblenou and Sants neighborhoods. This is done from statistical data. The first one is related to the transformation from urban projects according to different land uses. Thus, in the period 2005-2016 in the districts of Sants-Montjuïc (which is where the Sants neighborhood is located) and Sant Martí (which is where Poblenou neighborhood is located), 39% of work licenses awarded for Barcelona. Compared to the city as a whole, in the case of Sant Martí there is a territorial concentration of basically non-residential uses, but offices (55.1% of the entire municipality accumulation) and hoteliers (22.4% accumulation). On the other hand, the concentration in the case of Sants-Montjuïc is different with 5.6% of hoteliers usage throughout the city.

Taking into consideration the offer of hotel accommodation, an evolution of intense accommodation is observed in the case of Sant Martí (it goes from having 13 facilities in 2005 to 38 in 2016), and weaker in the case of Sants-Montjuïc (it goes from having 29 accommodations in the year 2005 to 45 in the year 2016).

In the third place, the article includes for the period 2005-2016 the response of the neighbors and the local public administration to the problems and impacts caused by the occupation of certain public spaces and by the change of the commercial fabric. That is why two public spaces have been studied: Rambla del Poblenou (in Poblenou neighborhood) and Plaça d'Osca (in Sants neighborhood). These are two spaces where the percentage and intensity of leisure / restoration and trade land uses (partly dedicated to tourist consumption) increase, which has generated tensions between commercial and business needs and those of the local population.

The field interviews carried out in 2016 show that the type of consumer of the space and the service does relate (partially) to tourists in the case of Rambla El Poblenou. A fact that has been increasing in the period 2010-2016. On the other hand, the presence of tourists is not evident in the case of Plaça d'Osca, its users being mainly residential local type. Confirming that there is a mutation of the productive space and urban uses based on the tourist function in Sant Martí district, which is non-existent in the district of Sants-Montjuïc.

In the two public spaces studied, the social mobilization organized through different platforms or neighborhood associations, has claimed at the same time the need to act by the public administration, with the aim of curbing the trend and obtaining spaces for own uses of the residents. In the city as a whole, the City Council of Barcelona intervened through the strategic tourism plans of the years 2009 and 2015. Both plans included actions to manage the tourist mass. The latest plan (2015) also includes actions aimed at deconcentration of tourism. Specifically, in the case studies of Rambla del Poblenou and Plaça d'Osca there has also been a response from the municipal government with the suspension of new licenses in 2014 and 2016 respectively. These answers must give way to urban planning to regulate the use of both spaces through urban plans.

