BARCELONA IN COMMON: RECLAIMING THE RIGHT TO THE TOURIST CITY

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ABSTRACT

A coalition of leftfield political groups, civic movements, and grassroots organizations led by social activist Ada Colau has won the Barcelona municipal elections of 2015, and, though with a minority of seats, is now governing the Catalan capital. Commentators believe that the key issue that determined this success has been the positioning of this coalition in relation to city tourism. Until only recently considered a best practice in urban regeneration and successful transition from industrial city into a global tourism capital, Barcelona has lived in the last two years a radical change in the public perception on tourism: from 'manna from heaven' to serious issue which is compromising the quality of life of its citizens.

This paper looks into the factors which may have determined this shift and the associated success of the Barcelona en Comú candidature. These go from the objective growth of tourism beyond what could be considered a 'social-economic carrying capacity' threshold for an urban system, to the affirmation of a critical discourse on tourism. This new discourse marks a radical turn over previous 'boosterist' policy approaches and situates tourism at the core of the debate on progressive urbanism: the state of health of cities in the age of mobilities, the reclamation of the right to the city and public goods, and the role of redistributive institutions face to the global pressure of capital. It then follows the steps of the 'Barcelona in Common' candidature and identifies its communicative and participatory strategy as the main factors behind this turn.

KEYWORDS: governance, boosterism, discourse, tourism impacts, Barcelona

INTRODUCTION

Many cities and regions which have had a history of tourism development during the second half of the XX century and now find themselves in a stage of maturity, are starting to question their 'tourist destiny'. At one level, they are caught in a day-to-day struggle to redress the balance between the benefits produced by tourism and the costs that it is imposing on their communities, with the additional problem that while the former are short-term, measurable and accountable, the latter are the result of long-term 'encrustations', difficult to attribute to

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tourism in causality terms, and subject to a high degree of relativism. At another level, they are engaged in a broader reflection on their shifting nature as places, which interrogates the very meaning of citizenship in the 'age of mobilities', the blurring boundaries between public (or common) and private, and the inevitability of an hegemonic socioeconomic regime which sees tourism as naturally morphing with other strategies of economic growth.

This debate, though, is mostly relegated to academic circles and critical community groups. The force of discourse produced by the global tourism growth machine and its local allies – the media, the construction industry, the service sector lobbies, and mostly compliant city governments –, which focuses strongly on the benefits of tourism, both from an economic and from a cultural perspective, has largely prevented such concerns to be seriously picked up by political agendas, especially in places that came to depend on tourism as last-instance job generator. This is especially the case in many 'hot' tourism regions of the Mediterranean, where, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of the late 2000s, tourism is been hailed as the only economic sector that has not subsided and could help failing local economies to recover, a fact that has been sensibly enhanced by the parallel degeneration of political situation in Middle East, specifically in traditional tourist destinations like Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey. However, possibly the 'tourist bubble' linked to the construction sector had been in the first place one of the determinants of the extraordinary dimensions of that slump (Garcia, 2010); and, anyway, even when tourism profits continued to rise, very few jobs have been created and the contractual conditions in the sector have worsened radically (Economistas frente a la crisis, 2015).

Thus the very fact that some local administrations do engage with this type of systemic reflection is remarkable: on one hand, it might be the result of the growth of tourism having reached a 'red alert' limit in terms of social impacts (demographic loss, socio-spatial polarization and erosion of the quality of life of specific collectives), debunking boosterist storylines and requiring a realignment of economic and social interests; on the other hand, it could be the result of extraordinary political circumstances or an altogether urban regime change that has prompted the surfacing of alternative visions and discourses.

These circumstances may arguably have come together in the case of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia and second city of Spain. The city has been able to literally reconstruct itself after the end of Franco's regime in 1975 and, thanks to the boost given by the 1992 Olympics, has turned into a world-reference in strategic planning for urban regeneration, and a staggering case of success as a tourist destination. For decades, tourism has grown into a pillar of the city economy and has been actively promoted by different administrations, regardless of the dwindling balance between benefits and costs imposed especially in the most central (and socially weaker) neighbourhoods which have been the main focus of the touristic transformation of the city.

Yet when the slump of the Spanish economy – causing the destruction of some 3.3 millions of jobs between 2008 and 2012 (425,000 only in the metropolitan region of Barcelona) – revamped grassroots political activism in the whole country, the municipal elections of Barcelona marked a government change in favour of a coalition of civic movements, 'Barcelona en Comú' (Barcelona in Common – henceforth BeC), led by Mayor Ada Colau. BeC's 2015 campaign has been characterised, among another things, by a strong critique of the way in which previous administrations have been dealing with tourism development and urging for a radical turn. Not only it proposed to apply radical solutions to the most evident problems

caused by tourism to the citizens, but it also suggested that a resilient city 'with tourism' can only be defined within a new integral and cohesive urban project which regains control over the city's 'commons'. This storyline has clicked with the public opinion sensibility, and the local media, even those which have a 'middle class' readership and are critical with the new government, have significantly opened up the debate on concepts which seemed taboo only a few years ago, like de-growth, taxing, and labour conditions. In short, an alternative discourse on tourism was crafted, which problematises it and challenges its encasing in the wider urban development arena.

This paper aims to analyse such change in government and its radically new posture towards tourism, and to reflect about the intricate relationships between its potential determinants: objective conditions (the over-the-top growth of tourism), the associated shift in the societal sensibility on tourism, the agency of politics and urban elites in regard to tourism, and the process of construction and diffusion of discourses on tourism. Bridging the field of political economy of place-making with the new 'turns' which inflate the tourism research agenda, such as the mobilities paradigm, we ultimately seek to clarify which are the main elements that can be held responsible for having managed to turn a critical discourse on tourism into a hegemonic one; and thus, whether a similar course of action could be possibly replicated in other cities.

This research is based on the personal experience of the authors as activists-academics in the sense suggested by Chatterton et al. (2007), having been involved since the beginning in the construction and development of BeC, contributing our personal expertise to the collective exercise of analysis of the 'tourism issue' of Barcelona, and the design of response strategies. Besides it is based on documentation on tourism politics in Barcelona in different periods, and on a number of interviews with key stakeholders in the institutions, in the private sector and in civic groups.

The paper is so organised: the next section introduces the topics of tourism, boosterism and civic resistance in post-industrial cities. The third section looks at the construction of Barcelona as a tourist city and the discursive strategies deployed by different administrations. The fourth contextualises BeC's electoral success in the present conditions of tourism in the city and illustrates its policymaking and discursive agenda. Finally section five concludes reflecting about the general value of Barcelona's policy turn to other contexts and cases.

ENTRY POINTS: BOOSTERISM AND TOURISMIFICATION IN POST-INDUSTRIAL CITIES

Boosterism is a well-researched topic in urban studies. The term has been introduced to define the discursive politics behind the development of large cities as manufacturing centres and national consumption hubs during the XIX-XX century. However it has been picked up also in analyses of their transition to the post-industrial, knowledge economy in the last decades of the XX century (Jonas & Wilson, 1999), when they started to engage in a global competition for the attraction of new high skilled residents, international capital, and wealthy consumers. The new competitive context pushed growth coalitions - now stranding to the global value chains of the new financialised economy - to engage in large projects of 'urban renaissance': infrastructure development, flagship sports and cultural venues, rehabilitation of historical buildings and sites, requalification of shopping areas, and so forth. Such strategy focused both on city centres – arguably their most distinctive assets for a competitive 'urban atmosphere',

providing the 'thickness' in social relations that is the main fuel of a dynamic knowledge-based economy – and on new suburban extensions, branded as new hyper-accessible hubs for business and residential functions. The attraction of new dwellers in refurbished central areas, marking a stage of 'reurbanisation' after a long period of decline and abandonment, was part of this strategy: new wealthy residents have been lured into the revamped real estate market of old historical cores with carefully crafted promotional strategies highlighting the advantages of living 'close to everything' (often at the expenses of crowded-out original residents), but also 'floating populations' of commuting workers, shoppers, and tourists.

The importance of tourism in urban regeneration strategies is proved by the unprecedented to growth of international arrivals in large cities at the turn of the century (Law, 2002). Urban tourism itself as a 'form of tourism' can hardly be defined in terms of travel motivations, but rather in relation to the wide range of products and experiences that can be accessed in dynamic, diverse and (mostly) wealthy urban areas. The relation of tourism with the 'urban renaissance' is twofold: on one hand tourism provides easily-created (though mostly badly remunerated) jobs to the non-negligible sectors of the society who have been left behind in the transition process: low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, women, minorities, and even to those young 'starters' who have chosen to migrate into cities for education and social opportunities (Servillo et al, 2012). On the other hand, tourists are attracted by the revamped urban dynamism, the manifold intangible cultural expressions, the rehabilitated historical areas, and the large range of new cultural, educational, civic landmarks through which cities have rebranded themselves and their skyline in order to be 'on the map' (Evans, 2003; Landry, 2006).

Research has shown how places that are seen as amenable by the top layers of the tourist market are also very strong in attracting manpower and investors (Evans, 2009; Smith, 2006). Thus the circle is closed: the post-industrial city has established a virtuous relation with its tourism, which makes a remarkable counterpoint to the 'model' of other types of tourism destinations: either places that are 'constructed' or urbanised exclusively around tourism (as seaside and mountain resorts) or where tourism ultimately crowds out other original urban functions (as smaller heritage cities and rural communities).

This general model holds for most western cities in the 'core', with a few examples of great success repeatedly quoted in the literature regarding national capitals and some large cities with global positioning, a large number of 'second-tier' cities, and a few cases in the 'global south'. Mediterranean cities went through this process at their own pace; on one hand, due to the enduring weakness of their regional economies, on the other, because of the distinct urban morphology, with larger historical cores whose conservation value and regulatory frameworks have impeded the magnitude of urban transformations that have been seen in the 'northern' counterparts. Besides, for cities like Rome, Istanbul, Athens, or Lisbon, tourism is all but a 'marginal' sector of the economy, on account of their historical characteristics, and their location in the proximity of large scale coastal destination areas. Thus in these cities the embracing of tourism by the growth machine has been less related to large-scale urban transformations and rather marked by a rent extraction objective relying on the amenity value of historical heritage and the lower-than-average wage levels paid in the tourist sector.

Most such cities have had to innovate in forms of governance and planning practices in order to achieve the large-scale transformations needed to be competitive in the global arena. On one hand they had to fine-tune development strategies to the interests of global companies

and investors, which needed to be lured into operating and setting regional branches not only on account of the traditional location factors (access to markets, highly-skilled labour pools and accessibility) but also of amenities and brand values. On the other hand, they needed to reunite old and new economic, social and political stakeholders into a shared vision and strategy for the city's future so as to facilitate the large scale projects which would allow a successful transition to the new economy (Van den Berg and Braun, 1999).

The technical process which enabled the implementation of the new agenda has been strategic planning, which at the verge of the 1980s became the dominant framework for urban planning and management. Strategic planning encompassed a set of new governance practices and arrangements, from the delegation of decision-making power to growth coalitions (Miraftab, 2004), to the development of mixed-funding schemes (the public-private partnership), and the procurement of social support with the pacification of conflictive issues that had marked the previous decade and frequently paralysed local political action. Building consensus thus is part of the process of strategic planning and is seen to rely critically on the discursive power of text, which transforms strategic documents into norms; Vaara et al. 2010), and on the pervasiveness of media communication, which articulates and channels these norms to society.

Hall (2006) characterises this as "neoliberal competitive discourse", building on ideas and structures of (neoliberal) community development, entrepreneurialism, business vitality, place attractiveness, and competitive advantage. In this sense, strategic planning is about the construction of a storyline which is "seen as 'the discursive cement' that keeps a discourse-coalition together" (Hajer, 1995, p. 65, quoted by Fazito, 2016). Critics look at strategic planning as having brought about 'unique thought' (Swyngedouw, 2004)[2] about the inevitability of neoliberal politics, yet ending up widening social breaches and dispossessing communities from democratic control over their own destinies (Arantes et al., 2000). The role of the media as key agents of strategic planning is analysed by McCombs (1997), who notes how by filtering the 'salience' of problems affecting the public opinion they inherently shape the community agenda and reduce the visibility of contrasting visions and differences. In this sense, Mc Cann (2004) argues that the role of the media is 'normative' in nature, as it legitimises hegemonic ideas about what is 'good' in the politics and policy of local (economic) development, and that the discursive power of the media should be central to political economy approaches to urban studies

The 'tourist destiny' of post-industrial cities is part of this picture. Neoliberal storylines focusing on tourism development as an opportunity for more dynamic, wealthy and competitive city have been crafted by power coalitions and aired by the media in relation to cultural events (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012), culture-led urban regeneration (Lee, 2009), hotel development (Türkün, 2011), and more recently also to the emerging 'sharing economy' of low-budget hospitality (Bialski et al, 2016; Arias & Quaglieri, 2016). Strategic planning in tourism has been driven by the goal to align the opportunities of opening up new markets and attract international investors with the upgrading of existing human, physical, environmental and cultural resources, frequently overruling physical and social planning frameworks, which are regularly defiled as 'corsets' impeding the attainment of a tourism-friendly environment.

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[2] 'penseé unique' in the expression introduced by I. Ramonet (http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1995/01/RAMONET/6069)

Even in the face of evident issues arisen by tourismification – social segregation produced by urban regeneration projects, the increasing costs of services subject to the inelastic demand of visitors, increased mobility impediments, the corporatisation and privatisation of public space and heritage assets, the banalisation of cityscapes taken over by global brands – the pro-tourism discourse remains hegemonic, though allowing for 'adjustments' towards sustainability, mostly in the purely symbolic realm of marketing and representation, seldom in terms of redistribution policies and 'hard' planning.

Civic movements (often supported by critical academic circles) who reclaim the 'right to the (tourist) city', or more specifically challenge 'tourismification' projects, are generally silenced by the very practice of strategic planning, which artfully selects the stakeholders involved in the formulation of new versions about the city, or are counterpointed by media campaigns that warn about the risk of shunning investors and threatening the employability of the weakest and more needful sectors of the society. Some of these 'resistance' movements can be blamed for losing sight of the increasing interlacing of tourism with the neoliberal city; while it is arguably unrealistic to claim for 'a stop on tourism' in cities that are hubs to multiple interrelated mobilities, very few cases of a grassroots project of a sustainable city 'with tourists' are today on the table. One of these could be that of Barcelona, which we proceed to illustrate in the next section.

THE 'BARCELONA MODEL' AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TOURIST CITY

Barcelona is an historical city, with an important heritage cluster, the Old City (*Ciutat Vella*, including three neighbourhoods linked by the iconic Ramblas, and the popular waterfront quarter of Barceloneta). Yet it is also the political and industrial core of Catalonia, and one of the most important cities of the Mediterranean; its hugely diverse modern fabric allows for a range of 'urban tourist' practices that are increasingly intermingled with the quotidian environment of a cosmopolitan city. Barcelona claims to be a 'city of neighbourhoods', and currently it could be described as a city of 'tourisms' which to different extents overlap, eschew or reinforce one another: from the archetypal 'mass cultural tourism' crowding along the Old City and at the main sights, to contemporary 'creative' experience tourism in trendy and diverse areas like el Raval or Gràcia; from beach and wild nightlife tourism in the seaward side of the city to high-level shopping tourism in the prestigious Diagonal and Passeig de Gràcia outlets; from attendance to cultural, professional and sport events to spending a formative season in Barcelona as an Erasmus student, Barcelona has them all and plenty of them. As is suggested by the mobilities turn in the social science, which challenges the positivist epistemology of tourism as 'extraordinary mobility' interfering with the development of places, tourism today is an integral and inextricable part of Barcelona's fabric and highly representative of its diversity and dynamism, in good or bad.

Barcelona has undergone extensive modernization processes, especially through the XX century urban extensions and more recently through its 'Olympic transformation', a wide process which took initial momentum with the staging of the 1992 Olympic games and eventually involved the recuperation of its old industrial areas to the north and on the waterfront as iconic post-industrial residential, production and consumption spaces. This process opened the way for a broad image change and the development of a large-scale

supply of infrastructure, marking an inflection point for Barcelona as a tourist city, leading to a steep rise in visitors and an enormous success as global Mediterranean destination.

Ironically enough, Barcelona has been trying to become a solid tourist destination since, at least, the end of XIX century, when the city hosted the 1888 Universal Exhibition. The success of that event triggered a tradition of 'intermittent capital of Spain' that continued with the 1929 Universal Exhibition, the frustrated candidature for the 1936 Olympics, the 1952 International Eucharistic Congress and Franco regime's project for the 1982 Universal Exhibition. These landmarks conceal pervasive work on its material landscape, through a continuous process of urban interventions that urbanized or reshaped vast areas in relatively short periods of time. Until the beginning of the 1950s that effort was, however, mainly focused on tourism as a side-effect of major events or more consistent activities such as commercial fairs, congresses and holidaying in the coasts of Catalonia. The construction of the Gothic Quarter followed this logic: around 1908 the municipality decided to recreate an exemplar medieval district in the core of the old city, interspersed with Roman remains. The main historical mansions and palaces of the centre were dismantled and reassembled, corrected, completed and properly set in scene, in order to recompose an attractive focus for visitors (Cocola Gant, 2011). Such pastiche, half historic falsification and half philological restoration, had a double purpose: to the Barcelonans, it was to remind the past glory of the port that ruled over the Mediterranean for three centuries; to the visitors, it was supposed to work as a seductive *mise en scène* capturing the pure essence of a southern European medieval city.

The events of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the severe economic recession that followed for fifteen years, halted such strategy of construction of an attractive urban destination. The season of boosterism (*desarrollismo*) started when the several political and military agreements signed by Franco in the period 1953-59 with the US and the rest of Europe triggered a new period of recovery and expansion of the Spanish economy, and tourism and associated activities, like construction, became the pillars of Spain's way to development (Baidal Ivars, 2008); however, the effects of this change were scarcely appreciable in the Catalan capital. In spite of the efforts of the municipal administration to pave the way for builders and real estate promotors, tourists used to step in the Catalan capital as a mere gateway to the surrounding seaside destinations in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. According to municipal studies of the 1980s, out of the approximately 900,000 visitors per year of the period, only one third was actually visiting the city and, thus, considered as proper tourist. The severe social and material decay of the historical centre also explains the poor consistence of the tourist market in Barcelona. With the most of the architectonic heritage suffering either a possible demolition, in order to be replaced by modern blocks, or some serious structural problem, it is not surprising that even the nowadays celebrated buildings of Gaudi were, at the time, seen as uninteresting to visitors or locals, except for the value of the land they occupy.

When the new democratic administration made it to the city hall, in 1979, one of the problems that it faced was indeed the scarcity and obsolescence of hotels, most of them also used to shut down in the summer months. In 1982, after the celebration of the FIFA World Cup, the Barcelona City Council (BCC) considered that the opportunity to use this event to start a new process of upgrading of the city for international tourism had been substantially missed, due to

the delay in the works and the poor image of a city still seen, by most of the visitors, as a declining industrial city with no proper tourist supply of international standards.

This realisation eventually led to the decision of the BCC to reshape the identity of the city in the sense of a creative, democratic and vital southern European Capital. The process, started in the second half of the 1980s, was somehow facilitated by the parallel construction of a democratic and modern post Franco Spain, marked by a new stage of consensus and collaboration between human and institutional resources otherwise in opposition. In 1980, BCC had launched an urban plan to order and regulate hotels, pensions and hostels of the city, a good part of which were still used as surrogate of (by then still missing) public housing or, even worst, as a kind of no-man's-land where drug, petty and organised crime, and prostitution could develop their activities out of the public sight. In 1981, the foundation of the Patronat Municipal de Turisme (Municipal Corporation for Tourism) marked a first institutional step to provide common orientation to the tourist sector. In the pre-Olympic Barcelona every single political, social and institutional stakeholder was more than welcoming any initiative aimed to increase the number of visitors but, at the same time, the global mainframe was still underdeveloped and even the most articulated strategies of promotion of the city or of urban renewal were targeting mainly, if not exclusively, the very same Barcelonans, in a declared effort to restore the locals pride for their city and with the less upfront aim to reinstate the basis of Catalan identity and identification after the dire years of dictatorship. That was, for instance, the case of the campaign "Barcelona posa't guapa" (Barcelona, make yourself beautiful), launched in 1985 as a program of financial and technical help for those who wanted to clean, restore and rehabilitate the façade of their building. Another successful program was the plan of small urban interventions for providing the most degraded neighbourhoods with pedestrian areas, squares and sculptures (PERI Plan). However, the ambitious strategy of build a new social democratic society through an extensive program of urban transformation would have probably remained a dream, like in many Spanish cities of the period, if in 1981 the BCC did not make the biggest, unexpected bet for a city whose administration was still in the verge of the economical default: the candidature for hosting the Olympic Games of 1992. When the official assignation was announced, in 1986, it was clear that the event would have been used as an opportunity to accelerate, widen and complete the transformation of Barcelona from a decaying port into a thriving, modern and efficient metropolis.

It was in those years that the BCC, led by charismatic mayor Pasqual Maragall, designed a financial scheme which came to be known as 'Barcelona model', a private-public joint venture with a majority control of the City Hall that was supposed to guarantee the economic sustainability of the necessary transformations to properly host the Olympic Games; transformations conceived as a permanent improvement of the city rather that merely sport-oriented facilities or other temporary structures to be disposed once the event was over, as it was normal up to that edition of the Olympics. The architectural and urban quality of these transformations quickly raised international interest, enhancing the effects of the many municipal campaigns for promoting the city, both as a tourist destination and as an opportunity for investment. When the Olympic Games took place, in the summer of 1992, the formula of 'Barcelona model' had already shifted from its original financial connotation to a more generic and seductive communication storyline. Even if not planned, such shift was adopted as an effective synthesis of the city's vision about its own urban program and the correspondent promotional strategies. After the worldwide approval for the preparation and

organization of the Olympic Games, the city lived in a sort of enchantment reflected in the works of several writers and movie directors, mostly celebrative and prone to a certain hagiographic tone. Authors like Benach (2015), Delgado (2007) and McNeill (2003) talk of a hegemonic discourse that minimized, if not silenced, any alternative positions towards the municipal strategies, whether the few criticisms were coming from the academy or from the residents' association. Within this framework, tourism was still not seen as a central axis of BCC administrative action: even if the number of visitors was growing and the city started an organic promotion of its Middle Age and Modernist heritage, the figures were too small to represent a key element in the urban development.

An important change came with the announcement, in 1996, of the next big event to be hosted in the city: The Universal Forum of World Cultures (here after: Forum) to be held in 2004. The controversial decision was taken as a sort-of back-up solution after a declaration of mayor Maragall about the possibility that Barcelona hosted a Universal Expo in 2004, which was openly dismissed by the Universal Exhibition Bureau, since a similar event was already scheduled for Zaragoza in the same year. As a regular event under the UN patronage, the Forum had not had a successful development until then and the BCC endorsed Maragall's (by then, President of Catalonia) idea with no clear idea of its impacts. On one side, the event represented an unprecedented opportunity to bring back the powerful momentum provided by the 1992 Olympics to complete the project of urban transformation in the last part of the city that was still to be recovered, the North-Eastern seashore. On the other hand, the event was largely unknown in term of procedures and contents and there was no clear plan as to how to catalyse human and institutional resources.

The new mayor in service from 1997, Joan Clos, saw the touristic promotion of the city as an efficient tool in attracting a global audience to the event, and to convince international investors in being involved in the real estate boosting sector that was supposed to grow around the operation of Forum. Amid the many initiatives of the period, it is convenient to remember the declaration of 2002 as "Year of Gaudí" and of 2003 as "Year of Design". Previously, in 1993, the municipal patronage of tourism had been upgraded to the level of an actual company, *Turisme de Barcelona*, a consolidated enterprise with a 5% share of the budget provided by institutional actors, and the controlled by the prouvate sector or generated through its own activities. The parallel 'price fight' for low-cost airlines in Europe and the exponential spread of the internet with portable devices created the perfect conditions for the affirmation of the image of Barcelona as a global tourist destination, in spite of the relative failure of Forum as an event (the total amount of visitors had been almost 40% lower than expected).

The popularity of Barcelona as a tourist destination is also due to the sensible effort of BCC to highlight lifestyle, above any other aspect, as the main asset of the city. In 2002, the municipal agency for the urban renewal of the historic centre, Ciutat Vella, launched a campaign called "Viu bé, viu a Ciutat Vella" (live well, live in the old centre) which had quite a success in convincing many foreigners, much more than the locals from other districts, that Barcelona could be the perfect stage for the so-called expats lifestyle, with an explicit reference to an in-between profile of 'global denizen'. The public agencies Barcelona Plató and Barcelona Film Commission also worked to facilitate the visibility of Barcelona in TV, movies or ads. As a dessert, the epic success of the local soccer team (which started, in 2006, an unprecedented

and, so far, unparalleled season of national and international achievements) has fuelled even more the already skyrocketing growth of Barcelona as a tourist destination.

The extent of the tourist success can be appreciated in Figure 1: by 2005 the city was had more than doubled the figures of only ten years before, giving the sector the undisputed role of lifebelt for an economy severely hit by the global crisis of 2008.

Figure 1 – Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Barcelona, 1990-2014.
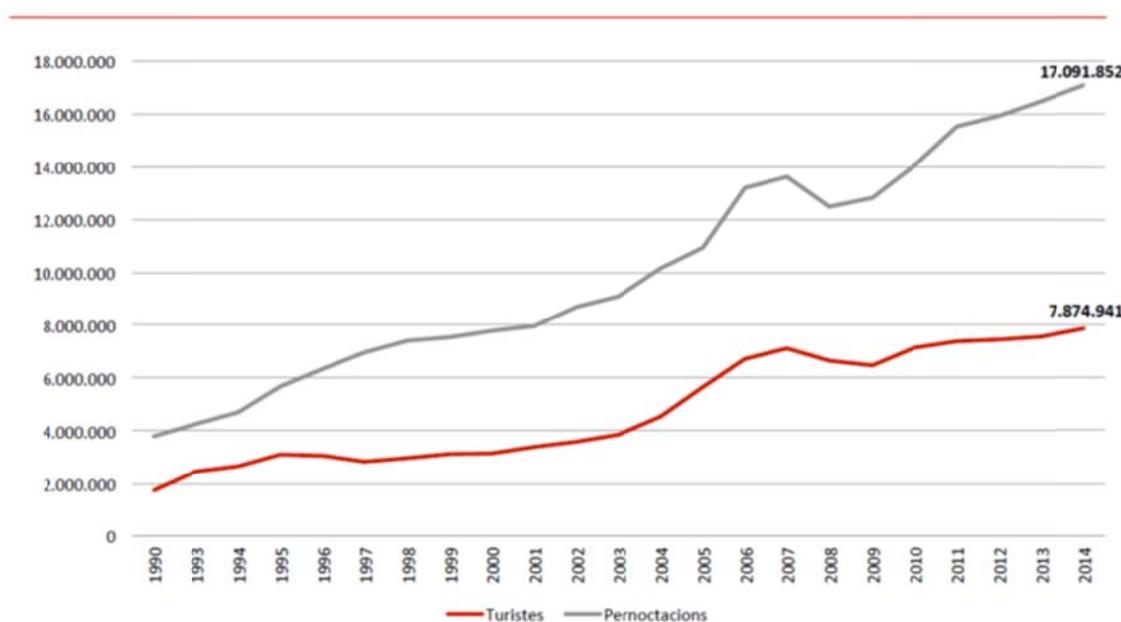
The last years in service of Mayor Clos, of the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) as his predecessors, as well as the following mayor Jordi Hereu, who ruled in an alliance with other two left-wing parties ('tripartite'), have been characterized by a political attitude defined, by many observers, as "business friendly", because of the many urban modifications in planning aimed to permit the construction or the creation of new hotels and other kind of touristic facilities, such as the renewal of the Old Port. The successful renovation of the most degraded urban areas, specifically of its historic centre, has been considered as the proof of the ability of BCC to recover the city under the concept of a better and creative lifestyle for its citizens (Smith, 2005).

Even the next mayor Xavier Trias (2011-2015), of the nationalist and conservative party Convergència i Unió (CiU), did not dare to discuss the improvements lived by the city in the previous 30 years. Nevertheless, already in the immediate aftermath of Forum, several scholars, intellectuals and residents associations started to question whether the by then world-wide famous 'Barcelona model' had turned (or had been from the beginning, as suggested by Casellas, 2006) from 'social project' to machinery mainly oriented at rent extraction. Mayor Trias, unwittingly, corroborated this critique when he decided that more than a 'model' he would have promoted the 'Barcelona brand', a "seductive cocktail of primary colours" that would have offered to the world the first example of a proper 'Smart City',

completely interconnected, ready for the new cosmopolitan lifestyles of new and old residents.

At the verge of 2015 tourism was as strongly intertwined with urban (business) strategies as ever since the key defining moment of the 'Olympic reconstruction' of the city. The Poble Nou neighbourhood, the object of a pervasive operation of urban regeneration and physical transformation of the old industrial core of the city into a 'knowledge-economy district' (the 22@), attracts into its refurbished factories, creative spaces, and stylish restaurants a large number of tourists beyond the hi-tech workers who work and live in the area. The success of Barcelona as a hub for creative industries (especially design, music and media production, fashion) has engendered a substantial supply of large events and a strong brand as 'creative tourism' destination which is actively supported by Turisme de Barcelona. The most important event of Barcelona is arguably the World Mobile Congress, which the city boasts (with the title of 'Mobile World Capital') in terms of maintaining a leadership in digital technologies as a pillar of its post-industrial economic reconversion, but which also brings to Barcelona some 90,000 delegates yearly and unlimited attention on the media. The success of cruise tourism in the city backs up the strong competitive position of port-related services as one of the most important sectors of the metropolitan economy. Recently, Barcelona has also become a hub for the new p2p hospitality platforms, as Airbnb, which quotes Barcelona as a "preferred destination" and one of those with the higher number of hosts globally (12,000 vs 25,000 in London, a city almost 5 times as large).

These examples show how today it would be impossible to 'separate out' tourism from the city's spatial and socio-economic organization, as it is suggested by the application of conceptual paradigms – such as the mobilities turn and relational turns – in the analysis of the processes of place construction. The high degree of intermeshing of public and private interests is arguably a reflection of a very careful operation of linking the physical development of the city to its branding as a business-friendly, cosmopolitan and creative place.

Yet the social support on which the BCC counted in the epic pre-Olympic season, when competition between cities was still limited and the whole Barcelonan society felt involved, in a way or another, into the big enterprise to reconstruct a democratic city open to the world, started to fail by the decade of the 2000. In the new context of unprecedented mobility of capital and people, reconvening social concerns and growth objectives which are directly influenced by the global market is not so easy anymore (Degen, 2003; Selfa Clemente, 2005). In the post-Forum, post-crisis Barcelona, the relentless growth of tourism and the polarization of the society started to appear connected – the tourist transformation of the city was not anymore seen as a blessing by everybody, but something that was deepening the divide between 'winners' and 'losers', along class, spatial and age and gender lines (Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli, 2012).

THE CRISIS OF THE 'BARCELONA MODEL' AND THE RISE OF NEW CIVIC RESISTANCE

The progressive growth of the dimension of tourist activity in the city, which has for a long time been welcomed by most citizens and political forces, has started to be questioned in recent years, especially on account of the social impacts that it is producing in the most central areas. Critics especially point to the progressive displacement of population, resident services and functions from these areas, under the pressure of the visitor economy and real estate

speculation. This has been further increased by the expansion of p2p tourist rentals: even when a cap was imposed by the Trias government in 2013 on rental apartments, the 'alegal' status of the offer marketed in Airbnb and the like eluded such regulation (Arias Sans & Quaglieri, 2016). It was recently calculated that approximately 1 apartment out of 7 in the Gothic Quarter are currently 'on rent' in Airbnb; this very neighbourhood has suffered a 40% decrease of resident population in 2010-2015. In many other areas of the city, where the severe budget cuts undertaken in the aftermath of the crisis have led to the demise of social services and projects of general interest, hotels and other forms of tourist accommodation have mushroomed, marking a process of substitution of stable with floating population.

Another issue regards the covert 'expropriation' of public space in areas of strong concentration of tourist activity: for instance the City Hall estimated in 2014 that from 240,000 (in weekdays) to 320,000 persons (in weekends), only 21% citizens of whom are Barcelonans, flow daily across the Ramblas. This iconic avenue cutting through the Old City, once the meetingplace of citizens from the whole city, is now largely perceived as having lost its symbolic significance to the locals and is steadily emptying out of traditional commerce and functions. Other areas of intense pressure have been found to be the Old Port waterfront and the proximity of the Sagrada Familia area. Possibly the most remarkable development in this sense has been the enclosure of Parc Güell (Arias Sans & Russo, 2016), a World Heritage monumental space, which came to be overcrowded by tourists, but also a public park, since 2014 is fenced and made accessible to tourists only upon payment (while residents can access it for free upon registration and reservation only in special days).

Citizens' lives are also affected by the noise, pollution and impediments for daily routines produced by tourist coaches, cruise ships, and rental bikes. All these aspects hint at a well researched phenomenon in tourism studies (e.g. Maitland, 2008), which is the progressive intrusion of tourism in quotidian spaces: residential dwellings, streets, markets, etc., possibly generative of innovation and idiosyncrasy, but certainly also of conflict and exclusion when the power relations on which such embodied practices of 'visitation' stand are so strongly biased in favour of tourists, as it happens in many Mediterranean cities. Political forces and organised citizens have taken up to blame the 'uncivil' behaviour of tourists and demanding a harsher regulation and sanctioning, but the analytic eye cannot transcend from the fact that material practices are the direct reflection of a city – or specific neighbourhoods – which have been constructed and signified as 'touristic', and left to be emptied out of anything else (possibly the main mechanism behind this having been the very liberal regime of concession of licences for tourism accommodation and the new impetus provided by the 'informal' sector of p2p hospitality).

Thus the 'Barcelona model', the consensus project strategically integrating public and private agents into a cohesive, democratic, dynamic city is today increasingly questioned in its capacity to produce long lasting benefits for large sectors of the society. Arguably, tourism – and the increasing dimension that it came to occupy in that project – could be blamed for being the trigger of this change in perception, having produced the most evident disjunction between the dream of a cohesive city and the harsh reality of rising urban values, contested commons and badly paid jobs. Only a few years ago, a large majority of Barcelonans, regularly above the 80% in an annual survey conducted by the city hall, claimed to be very satisfied with tourism and considered it a driver of the welfare of the city. This favourable opinion may have been pushing different administrations to continue in the operation of 'tourismification' of the city

and especially of the Old City. However in the last two years an increasing number of citizens declared to be 'concerned about the problems created by tourism', and ranked tourism as the fourth most important issue faced by the city after unemployment, safety and cleanness, but the first among the residents of neighbourhoods of highest tourism concentration (Ortega, 2016).

So what has changed so radically in the last years to mark this inflection? Possibly the number of visitors has reached some kind of 'carrying capacity' limit, very complex to calculate, but evidently intermeshed with the 'functionality' of the urban fabric for its citizens. Recent research (spurred by the growing attention dedicated by the new government to identifying the real dimensions of the problems of tourism) include in the count also the day visitors from neighbouring regions and destination areas on the coast, cruise passengers, and the large number of 'transients' which can only be described as mobilities touching down in the tourist environment of Barcelona: foreign students, congress attendants, short-stay expats, etc. The total number points at some 30 million visitors per year, which in relative terms falls short of the visitor-resident ratio calculated in many other 'problematic' tourist cities but in Barcelona has a very strong factor of concentration in few neighbourhoods – it could be said that in the Old City, visitor-resident ratios and the level of tourist activity in public spaces is comparable to that of a place like Venice, which, for the last 20 years is cited as 'worst case scenario' of socioeconomic dynamics triggered by tourism.

The other question has to do with the emergence of a new political actor, Barcelona en Comú (BeC), which, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, has managed to organise and voice the discontent of the sectors of the society most affected by the crisis as well as the impoverished middle-classes.

What bears little doubt is the fact that in the verge of a few months the political discourse on tourism has shifted considerably, from a boosterist one to a highly critical one. While the former, upheld by the previous administrations independently from their political colour, underlined the role of tourism as one of the main development drivers of the city, and for decades has been central to the construction of consensus between administrations, economic and social agents on the 'tourist future' of the city, the latter questions the encasing of tourism in the city and problematises its economic, social and environmental impacts. The new discourse calls for radical action in tourism policy, not merely to mitigate its effects but more globally to shift towards a new model of sustainable city 'with tourism': e.g. a city which is able to accommodate multiple mobilities and flows into a cohesive, inclusive and democratic space where the city's assets are preserved and valorised for the common good.

CHANGING DISCOURSE ON TOURISM: FACTORS AND CHANNELS

In this section we illustrate three main factors which could be held responsible for the successful transition to a new polity on tourism in Barcelona. Namely, these are: 1) the idiosyncratic nature of BeC; 2) the participatory framework of policymaking that it endorsed; 3) the role of the media in airing and legitimising new discourses in tourism.

Barcelona en Comú is seen as the 'heir' of two remarkable waves of political activism. The first is the tradition of neighbourhood associationism, itself a derivative of citizen solidarity and unionism movements, inscribed in the republican and anarchist history of the Catalan capital

of the XX century, suffocated during the Franco regime but resurfaced in its final stages and in the period of the 'transition' to democracy. The constellation of neighbourhood citizens' associations came to be a key player in the design of democratic institutions and in the negotiation of the 'urban renaissance' programme which included the social and physical regeneration of the Old City as well as the Olympics renewal.

The second refers to a more punctual period of social engagement and protest in Spain and elsewhere in the world as 'Occupy' movement, which materialised in multitudinous 'campings' in the heart of the cities. It came to be known as 15M from the date, 15 March of 2011, when the first tents were set up in the squares of Porta del Sol in Madrid and Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona. Protestors attacked a financial and political establishment which 'brought the crisis and made the people pay for it'. For a couple of months, the 15M campers set up first experiments of 'commoning' of goods and knowledge, discussed about direct control of the citizens over public spaces and services, and organised the civic reaction against the legacy of the crisis: mounting household debt, evictions, privatisations, food and energy shortage, employment cuts and retailed workers' rights. In a sense, this movement revived and rejuvenated the old associationism tradition of Barcelona, becoming intermeshed with it when the activity displaced from occupied squares to neighbourhoods, yet introducing to it the language, global framing and work methods which reflect the socio-organizational machinery of the knowledge society.

When the protest subsided (in Barcelona, also under the force of the police who eventually stormed over the occupation), commentators blamed the movement for not having a political project which could credibly make its way to the institutions. However a few years later that sparkle germinated in a constellation of local movements. These included special interest groups protesting against austerity policies and the privatisation of services of general interest (healthcare, education, transport, water and energy supply, etc.), known as *mareas* ('tides'), and more transversal movements reclaiming radical changes in representation mechanisms to build 'real democracy', a social audit of public debt, a stricter public control over banking practices and corruption. These movements were remarkably detached from any of the traditional parties with parliament representation, and started to network between them to build a new coalition, which eventually became *Podemos* ('we can').

One of the stronger grassroots movements born in this period has been the 'Platform of the Affected by the Mortgage Crisis' (PAH). This group rallied against the Spanish law that obliges evicted tenants to continue to pay the debt to the bank after they lose their house: a very sensible issue in a country where the total number of evictions for incapacity to pay the mortgage has been estimated in 171,000 since July 2008, 46,550 only in the first trimester of 2012. Besides, the local ramifications of the PAH physically intervene to stop the judicial execution of evictions and provide legal and personal support to the eviction victims.

The leader of the PAH, Ada Colau, a young Barcelonan activist, has been one of the 'visible faces' of the new social movements in Spain since the days of the 15M and has been quite successful in raising the matter of evictions to the public debate, with memorable speeches given at the Spanish and at the European parliaments. Its reputation was such that when in 2014 the new movements connected with the Barcelonan neighbourhoods associations and with the critical sectors of the academic world, she was a natural choice for leading the new coalition into a project of candidature for the oncoming municipal elections.

Colau put together a 'steering group' which included some of the most visible spokespersons of the 15M, neighbourhood activists going way back into the social fights of the early seventies, key figures of the political group *Iniciativa per Catalunya – Verds* (a federation of the Catalan Communist Party, Catalan Unified Socialist party and Green Party, which governed Barcelona and the Catalan government in the tripartite coalition and eventually decided to dissolve into the new formation), prestigious academics and promising researchers from the 4 public universities of Barcelona, renown environmental and gender activists and some figures from the burgeoning Catalan independentist movement, to which, however, the new coalition never adhered formally. The ideological orientation of this group was very fragmented; however the common trait was a progressive profile looking beyond formal 'party structure' and bridging the social-democratic, marxist and anarchist traditions of the pre- and post-Franco Barcelona with the new impetus of the global neomarxist left bred in the age of Global Fora, Occupy movements, 'Arab Springs' and Latin-American postcolonial governments.

An outspoken but well-mannered and down-to-earth person, Colau broke rapidly into Barcelona's houses with a clear message: this Barcelona, which was a city of the people, is not ours anymore; and we have to claim it back, starting from the most damaged neighbourhood of the post-crisis landscape, left behind by the neoliberal branding apparatus of previous administrations. She started to acquire national and even international visibility (Hancox, 2016), and soon became a symbol of personal and collective emancipation but also the target of resentful comments by the political establishment.

This municipal candidature was replicated, with nuances, in other cities of Spain – more remarkably, in the capital Madrid - and was equally successful, forming a powerful alliance with the Podemos coalition. The key figures in BeC and in the new municipal government stood out for their relative lack of political experience in previous administrations. However, many of the elected counsellors, in spite of the generally young age, had a solid experience as civic activists, managers of social entities, and/or academics. The activist background has arguably been important to cement their reputation with neighbourhood entities. The social managerial background justifies a leniency in political action to prioritize social return.

The academic background, and remarkably the over-representation of social scientists, can be considered one of the key issues behind the capacity to craft and popularise a new discourse on the city, at the same time far removed from the corporative-friendly rhetoric of mainstream politics (in which, comparatively, political posts and key decision-making positions have been occupied by liberal professionals like lawyers, economists or entrepreneurs, although in the case of Barcelona it must be considered how architects and planners have played a very important 'intellectual guidance' role) and at hand with emerging 'critical' paradigms which helped to revision a diagnosis of the city and to innovate in governance design. Acclaimed sociologist Manuel Castells and geographer Jordi Borja, two eminent intellectual figures that played a key role in the definition of the Barcelona model, have looked at the 15M and at the successive concretion of BeC with sympathy, while political scientist Joan Subirats has been very actively involved in the construction of the new coalition and the process of definition of the program.

Though tourism was not high in the list of political matters that drove to the formation and eventually the success of BeC at the 2015 municipal elections, it soon turned out that any critique of the context of post-crisis Barcelona and the crafting of a political program reclaiming the 'right to the city' and its commons had to deal with the urgent challenges posed

by out-of-tracks tourism development. Thus BeC had to take a radical position in questioning the 'benefits' produced by tourism and its encasing in the city, and highlighting its 'costs' to the citizens; something which also the most progressive administrations in previous decade had never done, limiting themselves to proposing adjustments to a model which was nevertheless considered successful and apparently with limitless possibilities of expansion.

The very participatory framework of BeC, first in the phase of campaigning and drafting the program, and afterwards in the design of policy mechanisms, ensures that tourism is been given a resonance beyond expectations in the public discourse. Tourism-related issues came up regularly at the more than 130 neighbourhood meetings organised by BeC during the campaign, and questions on how BeC was to deal with the 'hot potato' of tourism were always asked at TV debates. BeC has crafted its electoral program through a process of diagnosis, organised in matrix form between thematic areas and neighbourhood discussion groups, with an ample and transversal participation of citizens and pre-existing civic entities. The resulting proposals have been filtered through a mechanism of open web consultation.

After the successful elections, this structure has partly been maintained, some neighbourhood being more active than others, with the mandate of overseeing the implementation of policies, keeping the 'pulse' of emerging claims and widening the constituency base of the coalition. Although one of such thematic groups has been specifically dedicated to the definition of the 'tourism problem' of the city and the drafting a first set of 'high-impact' reforms, some others (namely, those devoted to urban planning, economic development, labour conditions, culture and governance) have dealt with tourism in their works; besides, most territorial groups today are now actively engaged in the redefinition of tourism policy. The municipal government has reorganised the structure of policy-making in the field of tourism, convening a 'Tourism City Council' – a large assembly representing local stakeholders and producing the main inputs for the formulation of a city strategy on tourism –; a new Strategic Plan for Tourism 2016-2020 has recently been launched, also strongly based on a consultative process format.

Remarkably, the first measures taken by the new council have been a one-year ban on the concession of licences in the whole city for new accommodation establishment of any type, which has been particularly controversial for having put on stand-by many investment projects already underway, and the passing of a new Tourism Accommodation Plan which strongly constrains - and in specific areas of the city halts - the concession of licences in the next years. Besides, since the elections, the opposition to platforms facilitating tourist apartment rentals (around 40% of which has been estimated to lack a formal licence and not paying taxes) has hardened, leading to the issuing of hundreds of sanctions and, recently, a new package of measures that directly target the 'collaborative' platforms like Airbnb.

The many controversies around tourism in the various neighbourhoods of the city where the life of citizens are mostly affected are not easily redressed in the short term, being the results of decades of 'incrustations' in policy with respect to housing, public space, conservation, promotion, and so forth. Besides, the new regulatory frameworks that the municipal government is planning to enforce need to be negotiated with upper levels of government which in many are not always singing the same tune, from the Catalan government to the EU competition directorate. In the absence of new integral plans and strategies that are still in the making, the impression is strong in the public opinion that the new administration is 'not doing enough' to stop the escalation of tourism in the city, while opposition parties (including those which have been previously in power) blame the new government for having had too much of

an 'heavy hand' against tourism businesses, risking to erode the sizable competitive advantage that the city is enjoying. The opposition can exert a notable pressure on the new government, which only holds a minority of seats in the city council; very recently (May 2016), BeC has been forced to pact a government collation with the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) in order to stabilise political support; this has spurred criticism among BeC's constituency, as the PSC has governed the city for many years and could be blamed responsible for having established the polity basis for the current situation. Arguably as a response to these apparent shortcomings, the civic society has mobilised once again forming a 'neighbourhood association for sustainable tourism' (ABTS), autonomous from BeC, which channels the neighbourhoods' associations frustration with the slow progress in the policing of tourism and acts as 'watchdog' of the administration.

In general, however, Colau's government enjoys a very high popularity, improving its approval rate above the electoral results, and has become a 'brand' of new and effective style in city politics at national and even international level. One aspect that is particularly valued is the fact that she is "doing something against tourism", though this remains a strong concern for many social collectives.

The media have taken note of this shift, and arguably, have contributed to it, airing certain messages and opinions of social agents that until the recent political turn had little visibility, opening a debate on the most critical topics, and presenting a different, more problematised image of the city as a tourist destination. We can distinguish several types of media:

Local or regional media, as newspapers that are produced in Catalonia and autonomic (Catalan) or local TV stations. These media, some of which, like La Vanguardia, have national diffusion, reflect matters of Catalan interest, obviously reserving to the capital a central spot. La Vanguardia is considered close to the conservative establishment (like the Convergència i Unió coalition party, now disbanded, which governed Catalonia for most of the post-Franco period) and the business sector, though it enjoys a very transversal readership.. El Periodico is the newspaper with the amplest readership, has a slightly more progressive and 'popular' inclination and has been traditionally closer to the Socialist party which held for a long time the mayoralty of Barcelona (in counterpoint with the Catalan government). Both newspapers publish Catalan and Spanish language editions; the former is currently inclined to support the Catalan independist movement while the latter is critical about it. The public Catalan TV3 channel could be described as mostly aligned with the government, while other TV media like the local BTV have been supportive of the emergent political coalition and is traditionally airing the opinion of grassroots movements and civic activism.

Catalan media have been generally supportive of tourism development in Barcelona and in Catalonia, providing the most important channel for the diffusion of a boosterist discourse and regularly highlighting the quantitative growth of tourism activity but not the problems that it was starting to generate in certain areas. With nuances, they have started to pick these issues in connection to the many episodes of uncivil behaviour of tourists in areas of strong concentration of tourist activity, which produced strong resentment in the public opinion, and have opened a debate on the conditions of tourism. While La Vanguardia generally maintains the importance of the tourist sector for the city and admits to the necessity of adjustments in the management model, El Periodico has recently adopted a more inquiring approach to issues of occupation of public space, land uses, cruise tourism development and labour conditions.

Though not explicitly supporting Colau, it does acknowledge the necessity for a turn in tourism policy and is generally benign about the new government's undertakings.

The *neighbourhood or activist media* has a long tradition in Barcelona, in synchrony with the important role of citizens' associations and even radical activism in the political debate of the city. Among them, the historical *La Veu del Carrer* ('the voice of the street') is the highly respected official 'organ' of the Federation of the Neighbours' Associations of Barcelona, and is published twice a month since 1991; in 1992 it provided ample airing to the critical voices questioning Barcelona's Olympic transformation and has been a channel of leftfield opinions since then. A more recent actor is La Directa, an online bimestrial tabloid which could be considered the official channel of the constellation of radical antagonist movement since 2006, and has had a central information role during the celebrated period of the 15M movement. Both dailies have been recurrently critical with the 'tourist model' of Barcelona, its redistributive capacity and the consequences of the social and urban change that it fostered in many neighbourhoods, focusing for instance on housing problems, neighbourhood life, inclusion, and contestation of private investment in urban development. These media also have covered various cases of corruption or the questionable legal bases of tourism-related projects and are very keen on airing the voice of neighbours who are most affected by tourism-related externalities, such as evictions from areas that are revalorized by new hotel development projects, collectives affected by the rising costs of public services, or tourist sectors workers whose contractual relations are increasingly precarious.

The *international press* has been regularly highlighting Barcelona seemingly endless achievements as a cultural and tourist capital of the Mediterranean since the 1990s; and it has also duly covered the city's hardships during the worst years of the financial crisis, in the late 2000s, as well as the current disenchantment of the city with its tourism. Periodicals like The Guardian, the Financial Times, the Economist (see for instance http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2015/06/tourism-barcelona), or Vice have especially questioned the sustainability of further tourist expansion and have pointed at the big issue with rental accommodation as being responsible for disrupting neighbourhood life.

Finally the social media are strongly present in the current debate. Pro- or anti-tourism groups and civic movements are very active in Facebook (with a slight prevalence of the latter) and opinions on punctual facts about tourism and tourism policy get a high coverage on Twitter. A more nuanced, critical stance is taken by blogs, often dynamised by academic circles, like *La Trama Urbana*, whose first critical pieces on Airbnb and its role in the real estate market have had a very strong repercussion, or *El Bloc*, a blog on architecture and urbanism in Barcelona, which engages with the current tensions produced by the presence of tourism in the city.

It should be highlighted that BeC from its beginning made a strong use of the social media both as an internal organisational and decision-making tool and as a channel to engage citizens in its project and to test the public opinion sensibility. The media strategy and practices of the new social movements in Spain are analysed, among others, by Micó & Casero-Ripollés (2014), Mattoni & Treré (2014), and Monterde & Postill (2013). These authors focus on mobile technologies and their impact in bringing about a new model of 'revolution 2.0' in three ways: 1) as an effective organisational tool of protest and action; 2) a communication tool which empowers individuals against hierarchical structures in the collective construction and propagation of discourses and representations; 3) as a platform to assemble or 'hack' sources of information and reassemble them in creative storylines.

BeC effectively enabled the 'co-production' of visions on tourism from the bottom at neighbourhood level, with a very strong representational power from text and images. It is quite different to talk about 'pressure indicators' or to watch a whole collection of video of tourists storming over a neighbourhood at 3am, or to read about horror stories of citizens evicted by a realtor to make space for a brand new Airbnb rental. It also used media technology to craft, negotiate and approve the main electoral program for tourism, and it is actively using Tweeter and other social media to inform their constituency about the internal workings of the organisation and of the municipal government, and to signal events or propagate opinions of common interest. In this way, it managed to bring back tourism policy into the realm of the quotidian of a city, whereas in the past political agency was perceived by the citizens to be all about rhetoric and technicalities.

CONCLUSIONS

The recent (and ongoing) experience of Barcelona with its new approach to tourism policy arguably stands as an unprecedented example of a shift in political discourse, possibly not only on tourism but more broadly on the relation between place and mobilities, so much more remarkable for having taken place in a city which only a few years ago was considered a big success in strategic planning for the transition to a modern, cosmopolitan and welcoming 'cultural capital of the Mediterranean'. The critique of previous 'boosterist' approaches to tourism do not just hint at a redressing of the most evident problems created by the tourism growth into the interstices of most citizens' everyday life – the most problematic possibly being the housing market having been 'hijacked' by collaborative tourism platform and rent-extraction practices – but rather point at the necessity to find new avenues by which just and democratic cities are constructed and managed in the 'age of mobilities'.

After situating the tourism politics of Barcelona in the framework of modern urban transformations, grassroots resistance to the Franco regime and later in the burgeoning neoliberal planning practices and discourses, our paper has illustrated the context that arguably led to a change in government. We have explained the `paradigm shift' in tourism politics as having been fundamentally conditioned by two orders of factors.

The first is the over-the-top growth of tourism, a reflection of the embracing of the 'growth machine' discourse of pursuing tourism to recover the post-crisis economy, which ultimately produced a disaffection of large sectors of the society against the 'Barcelona model'. It could even be said that the 'Barcelona model' has been killed by tourism, and this also hints at a fundamental epistemological transformation of tourism which pervades the social sciences today, from marketplace and economic sector to a large and heterogeneous set of embodied practices which intervene in the construction of the places and are strongly relational in nature and based on structures of power and representation that escape the control of local 'governments'. Thus, we recall the pioneering work of Guido Martinotti (1993), reclaiming that a 'sustainable city' is one that finds an effective and just encasing of multiple mobilities in the urban space: Barcelona has been (and still is) a city that cannot balance the obvious benefits produced by further tourism growth with the costs that tourism mobilities are imposing on the community, especially in terms of social polarization and spatial justice.

Secondly, we have looked into an 'endogenous' set of factors, which have been the emergence of a new political actor, Barcelona en Comú, its new style policymaking and its success on

producing and diffusing a new critical discourse on tourism, which, if not already an hegemonic one, is certainly a contender for the boosterist one. We have situated the constitution and constituency of BeC in the long wave of anti-establishment and 'anti-crisis' movements known as 15M and have noted how the very people which have taken lead roles in BeC have backgrounds which have facilitated a surfacing of new visions on tourism. We have accounted for the importance of a participatory framework in the assembling of a critical discourse on tourism and a program to re-join tourism to a cohesive urban project; and we have pointed at the role that the media have in propagating it, both from mainstream positions that have been forced to pick up and follow on some of the most critical issues that Barcelonans are facing, but also focusing on 'militant' media and new social media which are constructing and diffusing a storyline which is very different – and supported by very different evidence – on how tourism intervenes in everyday lives and how citizens should claim back their right to the (tourist) city.

Our paper falls short in the definition of what a new 'model of tourist city' should be, because that is still in the definition stage; besides, it remains to see whether the BeC government will have the necessary support and endurance to pursue it even in the face of the countless day-to-day emergencies provoked by tourism. However, current debates about new decentralised forms of governance over the city 'commons', on tourism as a form of 'temporary citizenship' for the 21st century metropolis, on the state of the environment and the necessity for transition to a post-carbon mobility model, as well as the muddy ground of collaborative tourism – which promises to disenfranchise tourism from the agency of the industry, but is also opening new 'biopolitical' avenues of rent extraction and labour exploitation (the so called 'Uberization of society': Stiegler *et al.*, 2016) – point to a new urban world where tourism becomes a key matter for urban resilience. Barcelona is one of the few cities that is actually fostering this debate and translating it to political action.

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