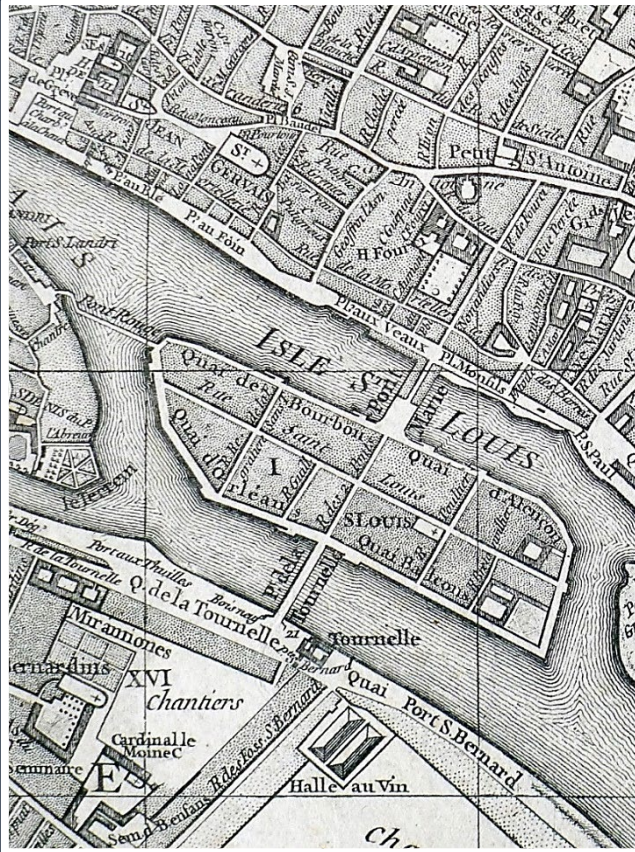


# SPANISH GEOGRAPHY AT CONTEMPORARY TIMES. STATE OF THE QUESTION (1972-2022).



Spanish contribution to 35th IGC. París 2022. Time for Geographers.  
Spanish Committee of the International Geographical Union



International Geographical Union  
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**Societat  
Catalana de  
Geografia**



MINISTERIO  
DE TRANSPORTES, MOVILIDAD  
Y AGENDA URBANA

INSTITUTO  
GEOGRÁFICO  
NACIONAL



# **SPANISH GEOGRAPHY AT CONTEMPORARY TIMES. STATE OF THE QUESTION (1972-2022)**

Spanish contribution to 35th IGC. Paris 2022

Time for Geographers

**Spanish Committee of the International Geographical Union**

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## Research in Tourism Geography conducted by the Tourism Group of AGE (2012-2020)

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**Abstract:** Tourism centered research has enjoyed a long history as an independent branch in Spanish geography, due to the magnitude and importance that this sector holds in our territory. This reality has its most consistent manifestation, among many other forums, in the activity carried out by the Tourism Group of the Spanish Geography Association. Its scope and relevance is especially evident in its biennial conferences, whose topics and contributions are used to conduct a small review of the scientific production carried out by the research groups between 2012 and 2020. Its preliminary diagnosis reveals great dynamism in the adaptation of the research to the lines of interest that have been institutionalized through the financing of the various projects. However, certain shortcomings are still evident; especially, in relation to the critical treatment of tourism, the economic, social and environmental dynamics derived from global change and the incorporation of analyses with a focus on gender.

### *1. Introduction*

The concept and analysis of the tourism space has been evolving over time and throughout the implementation of the tourism industry. Being a space where tourism supply is based and towards which the demand is oriented, the approach has been expanding towards new interpretations arising from the interest in researching the management and planning of this territory, its perception, ownership and enjoyment. Tourism is a major consumer and generator of space, which converts it into an important transformation factor of the territories in which it is developed. This transformation does not always occur in a balanced way, due to the different interests of the actors involved and the important role played by power relations in these processes. Hence, there is an interest in more holistic approaches that address the tourism space as a system which is not exclusively determined by tourism activities, but which is immersed in a dialectic (not always harmonious) between actions and stakeholders.

These considerations fully justify the crucial role that geography has as a discipline in the analysis of these territorial phenomena and, consequently, the importance of

tourism geography as a line of teaching and research. With respect to teaching, the participation that tourism geography has had and continues to have in higher education qualifications in Tourism, with compulsory and optional subjects, is highly relevant (López Palomeque, 2010). With the approval of the regulations for incorporating higher education studies in tourism into universities (R.D. 259/1996 of 16 February), the qualification evolved from being oriented towards business management and tourism activities to a qualification in which territory has greater relevance, together with its different forms of organisation and economic, social and environmental concerns (Vera, 2001). In this way, geography has acquired presence and relevance and is visible in the new Degree, Doctorate and Master's degrees which have proliferated in recent decades in practically all of the Spanish public and private universities.

Meanwhile, geographical research focused on tourism has acquired greater prominence in Spanish academia as an autonomous field, particularly in the territories in which the incidence of the sector is higher. The need for a better understanding of the tourism phenomenon and a rigorous knowledge of the characteristics and trends of its dialectic with the territory have given rise to an increasing effort to adequately respond, in both a basic and applied way, highlighting the leading role of the university in this process (López Palomeque et al., 2014). A reflection of this protagonism is the emergence of scientific journals promoted from tourism geography (*Cuadernos de Turismo*, *Investigaciones Turísticas*, *Papers de Turisme*) and the noteworthy number of papers written by Spanish researchers as well as the increase in the number of articles on tourism published in the scientific journals specialised in geography.

The first analyses carried out in 1996 on the studies of tourism activity from a geographical perspective considered that the scientific production was scarce in proportion to the importance of the tourism phenomenon in Spain (Anton et al., 1996). Nevertheless, pioneer studies have been conducted since the 1960s, such as those by J. Vilà Valentí (1962) "El valor económico del turismo", by B. Barceló (1964) "El turismo a les Illes Balears", or the studies by E. García Manrique (1968) and (1969) on the implications of tourism for the regional economy of Mallorca and on Spanish tourism. Furthermore, several degree theses were presented in the universities of Murcia (Sarrión, 1962; Melendreras, 1964; Rodríguez, 1965), Zaragoza (Pons, 1967) and Barcelona (Rexac, 1967). Currently, according to the *Informe sobre la investigación geográfica en España: 2013-2020* (Report on geographical research in Spain: 2013-2020), there are 17 research groups dedicated to tourism from a geographical perspective. This is the most prolific line of research of Spanish geography in terms of the number of publications, research projects and doctoral theses (Fernández-Mayoralas, 2021).

Spanish tourism geography has also produced an interesting number of reviews and analyses of its scientific production, covering contributions from the beginning of the 1960s to 2013, published both in national journals such as *Estudios Turísticos* (Antón, López Palomeque, Marchena and Vera, 1996), *Agricultura y Sociedad* (López Ontiveros and Mulero, 1997), *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense* (García and de la Calle, 2004) or the *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles* (Corral and de San Eugenio, 2013), and national publications, such as *Antrophos* (Luis Gómez, 1988) and international publications, contemplating the analysis from a European perspective, *Emerald* (Wilson and Antón, 2013).



A relevant role in these types of studies and in the efforts to keep the research up to date has been played by the *Grupo de trabajo de Turismo, ocio y recreación* (founded in 1992 in Castellón) and currently called the *Grupo de trabajo de Geografía del Turismo de la Asociación Española de Geografía -AGE* (Tourism Geography working group of the Spanish Geography Association) (López Palomeque, 2008). An example of this dedication are the papers presented in the national symposia of AGE, such as those by López Palomeque, (1984) and Troitiño Vinuesa (2008); the monograph on tourism geography research in the different autonomous regions, coordinated by Fernández Tabales, García and Ivars, in 2010 or the contributions to international congresses, such as the text presented in Spain's contribution to the 27th Congress of the UGI presented by Valenzuela, López Palomeque, Marchena and Vera (1992). Moreover, in autumn 1997, the first report on tourism research in the autonomous regions of the *Boletín Informativo Grupo 10* (n° 0) was published (López Palomeque, 1997). This first report was dedicated to Catalonia and was followed by the other autonomous regions. Years later, contributions began to be made in different formats, revealing the concern about the impacts generated by tourism, such as the *Manifiesto por el derecho a la vivienda* (Grupo de Turismo y Grupo de Geografía Urbana, 2019) and more recently, in 2021, about bringing the research closer to training and management with the *Diccionario de Turismo*, which includes the terms relating to current Spanish geotourism research (Blanco et al, 2021).

Within this framework, over the last three decades, the Tourism Group, known as Gruop10 has organised a biennial symposium in order to present and contribute research on the recent evolution of the tourism phenomenon from a geographical perspective. The symposia reflect the dynamism of the Group which has notably increased the number of its members over the last decade. The table shows how each edition has been organised by different universities, which allows the reality of the different territories to be seen *in situ*. On each occasion, the minutes of the main contributions have been published and are included in the bibliography section of this text.

Table 1. Symposia carried out by the tourism, leisure, and recreation group (AGE) 1990-2022. Source: own elaboration based on information from Grupo10. \*The minutes may be consulted at: <https://www.age-geografia-turismo.com/publicaciones/actas-de-coloquios-1/1990-2002/> and <https://www.age-geografia-turismo.com/publicaciones/actas-de-coloquios-1/2008/>

Year	Item	Themes	Organiser/ Place
1990	Tourism and territory in Spain	Theoretical perspectives Case studies	Universitat de les Illes Balears. Palma (Mallorca)
1992	Tourism and geography	Tourism and development The restructuring of tourist destinations Impacts of tourism Tourism and education	Universitat Jaume I. Castellón
1993	Tourism education, the restructuring of destinations and new products	Innovation and product development The restructuring of mature destinations Tourism and education.	Universitat de les Illes Balears. Palma (Mallorca)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Organiser/ Place</b>
<b>1995</b>	Inland and urban tourism	Development Experiences Policies	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid Toledo
<b>1996</b>	Tourism and destination planning	Good practices in planning Management methods and tools Development policies of new tourism products	Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Tarragona
<b>1998</b>	Tourism and the city	Cultural tourism The tertiarization of Spanish cities Urban planning and tourism planning Higher education courses in tourism	Universidad de Las Palmas. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
<b>2000</b>	Tourism and urban transformations in the twenty-first century	Cities and large events: tourism and urban transformations Tourism and planning in spaces of natural interest: synergies and conflicts The urban heritage of the twenty-first century	University of Almeria Almería
<b>2002</b>	The geography and management of tourism	Local policy and management of tourist spaces New technologies in tourism planning and management Teaching, research and professional activity in the field of tourism	University of Santiago de Compostela. Santiago de Compostela
<b>2004</b>	Tourism and territorial change: Emergence, acceleration, overflow?	Growth of mature destinations Alternative uses of new tourist destinations	University of Zaragoza. Zaragoza
<b>2006</b>	Tourist destinations Old problems, new solutions?	Opportunities for urban tourism Rural and interior tourism destinations Coastal tourist destinations Tourism geography in teaching, research and	Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Universidad de Castilla La Mancha Cuenca

<b>Year</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Organiser/ Place</b>
		professional activity, elements for debate	
<b>2008</b>	Tourism spaces. Commodification, landscape and identity	Policies and planning of tourist areas: The contribution of geography Landscape and identity in the promotion of the image of tourist destinations. Landscape, local identity and territorial competitiveness: new analysis and planning techniques	Institut Universitari d'Investigacions Turístiques (IUIT) University of Alicante. Alicante
<b>2010</b>	Tourist spaces and destinations in times of globalisation and crisis	Tourism, city and transport Images and cultural representations of tourist spaces Coastal and interior tourist spaces and destinations	Universidad Carlos III. Colmenarejo
<b>2012</b>	Tourism and territory. Innovation, renovation and challenges	Tourist destinations, between renovation and reinvention New tourist places and products Tourism in the face of climate change	Universitat de Barcelona and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Barcelona
<b>2014</b>	Tourist spaces and territorial smartness. Responses to crisis	Challenge of the ICTs in the tourist destinations in the twenty-first century Tourist spaces responding to crisis: from resilience to opportunity?	Universidad de Málaga and Universidad de Sevilla. Málaga and Seville
<b>2016</b>	Tourism and crisis, collaborative tourism and ecotourism	Tourism and crisis Ecotourism and nature conservation Collaborative or social economy and tourism	Universitat de les Illes Balears.  Palma (Mallorca)
<b>2018</b>	Theories, models and tourist destinations in times of change	New theories and practices on tourist displacements Planning and territorial management of tourism Tourism and gender	Universidad de León, Universidad de Valladolid and Universidad de Salamanca. León

Year	Item	Themes	Organiser/ Place
2020	Tourism sustainability: <i>overtourism vs undertourism</i>	Tourism sustainability: theoretical framework, diagnostic indicators, planning and management proposals, etc. Time-space models of <i>overtourism</i> and <i>undertourism</i>	Universitat de les Illes Balears and IME Maó (Menorca)
2022	Between the recovery and transformation of tourism in a post-COVID world: a geographical perspective	New socio-economic dynamics and territorial processes New paradigms New perspectives and research methods Interior destinations	University of Castilla La Mancha Cuenca

Based on this evidence, this study seeks to conduct an updating exercise, reviewing the scientific production which is reflected in the contributions made by the research groups in the tourism geography symposia of the Group between the years 2012 and 2020. It is considered that the systematisation of these contributions contemplates the most consolidated approaches in Spanish tourism geography, without excluding its previous roots in our academia and in the activity developed by other areas of study or in other institutional environments other than the AGE. An interesting task for the future, on a larger scale, would be the compilation and exhaustive analysis of studies, lines, research groups, production, theses carried out, etc. in tourism geography in Spain from 2010, the date of the study carried out by Fernández Tabales, García and Ivars so as to continue the existing tradition.

## 2. Topics addressed in the symposia from 2012 to 2020

Each of the symposia of the Group has had a defined theme structured around two or three topics addressed by the contributions. The topics correspond to the lines of interest of each moment, revealing a parallelism with the themes addressed institutionally in tourism and identifying with the strategic lines of tourism planning and the finance of research projects in order to respond to social challenges. There is also a geographical approach focused on the critical analysis of the phenomenon. Resuming the aforementioned review and analysis tasks of the previous scientific production, below, each of the five biennial symposia held between 2012 and 2020 are presented individually. The information is systematised with a summary of the topics addressed in each symposium, with relevant quantitative information represented in three graphs which show the evolution and enable comparisons to be made. They include i) the distribution by sex of the authors of the papers and posters; ii) the topic of the contributions received in each edition and iii) the word cloud elaborated with the keywords of each paper and poster, eliminating the terms *tourism* and *tourist* in order to highlight the most studied topics.

## 2.1 Tourism and territory. Innovation, renovation and challenges

There have been many tourism symposia whose keywords have included the terms *crisis, challenges or changes* throughout the history of Grupo10. Nevertheless, as expressed by J.A. Corral in a review of the study “Turismo y territorio. Innovación, renovación y desafíos” (López Palomeque et al., 2014), going beyond this concept, the greatest presence is had by the prefix “re” before a number of verbs to express the intention to resolve problems caused by an unsustainable tourism development model in many of the destinations analysed (restructure, reconvert, reinvent, reconfigure, redirect, reposition, regenerate, revalue, rediscover, revitalise, rejuvenate, rehabilitate...) (Corral, 2015:651).

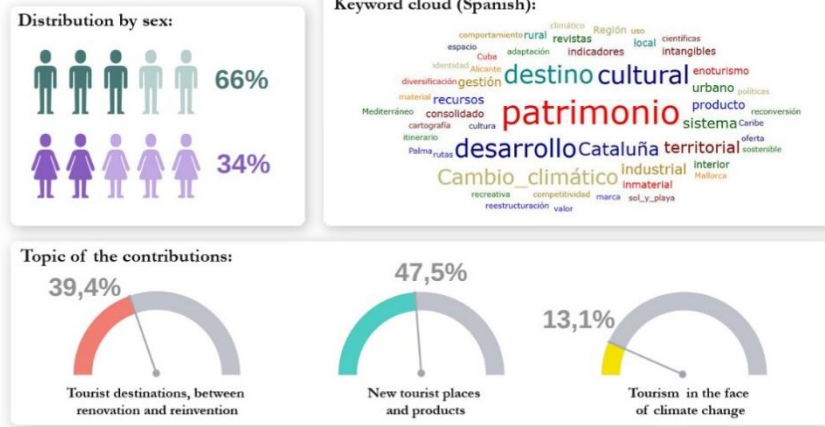
In the 13th Symposium of the Tourism, Leisure and Recreation Group held in Barcelona in 2012 by the Universitat de Barcelona and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the proposed lines of action focused on this underlying idea of a crisis of the model which had been latent in certain mature destinations. In this respect, both the opening conference, given by Dr. Douglas Pearce (Victoria University of Wellington), with the title “Tourist Destinations: concepts and implications for their management in times of change”, and the first paper, presented by Dr. Enrique Navarro Jurado (Universidad de Málaga), “La reestructuración de los destinos litorales. Entre la retórica y la lentitud de los cambios” (The restructuring of coastal destinations. The rhetoric and slowness of the changes), were framed within Line 1- “Tourist destinations, between renovation and reinvention” as a clear proposal for research and contributions focused on the attempts of many destinations to overcome saturation and decline. Additionally, Line 2 “New tourist places and products” sought to address the initiatives of many emerging destinations to reach phases of development and consolidation through the enhancement in different cases of the natural and cultural heritage. The proposal of Dr. María García Hernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) analysed the tourism scenarios at the turn of the millennium in Spain, reviewing the tourist consumption trends, the changes in products, in the business environment through technologies (ICTs) and in the destination planning and management models. In Line 3 “Tourism in the face of climate change”, Dr. Jorge Olcina Cantos (Universitat d’Alacant) addressed the challenge that the tourism activity and certain specific destinations have to address urgently to respond to a climate which is not immutable. In a scenario of globalisation, the relationship between tourism and territory is changing, with climate change acquiring great relevance as a result of the global warming experienced on the surface of the planet over the last few decades. This implies that the phenomenon of climate change constitutes one of the major environmental, social and economic challenges faced by the tourism sector. This is how it should be considered and it is necessary to find response strategies which, from adaptation and/or mitigation, can maximise opportunities and minimise drawbacks. Furthermore, the capacity of adaptation and reinvention of the tourist activities affected constitute a path to maintain competitiveness in regional economies and protagonism in territories facing new climate scenarios. In parallel, examining these lines of reflection reveals that among the research teams there is a permanent principal line of interest, which is the public management of tourism, addressed in this case within the framework of a round table, with the title “The public management of tourism: Past, present and future”. All of the contributions received were

published in a volume titled “Tourism and territory. Innovation, renovation and challenges”, edited by Tirant lo Blanch, in 2014.

Figure 1. Summary table of the 13th Tourism and Territory Symposium held in Barcelona in 2012.

Source: own elaboration

### XIII TOURISM AND TERRITORY. INNOVATION, RENOVATION AND CHALLENGES Barcelona 2012



## 2.2 Tourist spaces and territorial smartness: responses to the crisis

As in the case of other spaces for debate, the central themes of the symposia organised by the Group seek to address the problems of the moment affecting the inter-relationships between the territory and the tourist and leisure activities, focusing on the processes and most relevant trends emerging in response to the future, giving visibility to the social reality and the interests of the research groups. In 2014, the coordinators of the 14th Symposium of the Universities of Málaga and Seville addressed the challenge of overcoming the mere descriptive analysis of a hot topic which is still controversial today: the relationship between tourist spaces and territorial smartness as a response to crisis. Today, this topic could form part of the debate of the Smart Tourist Destinations (STDs), as the presence in subsequent symposia shows, and could even constitute the principal theme of the 2022 symposium in which territorial smartness is related to the digital transition as elements to respond to the current crises.

In order to study propositional and projective aspects in more depth and the responses that can be adopted by tourist spaces to the problems inherent in them, the research presented by the different groups and authors is aimed at addressing the conceptual, methodological and instrumental keys for understanding and explaining the dynamics which form the base on which tourist spaces can become “smart territories”. At that time, smart territories were understood as being those that sought a balance between economic competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainability, able to use the appropriate technical and political instruments to construct their own competitive advantages as tourist destinations in a global context.

Within the overall debate, one of the proposed themes addressed a recurring topic in the research in tourism geography, the response to “tourist spaces responding to crisis:

from resilience to opportunity?”, which was of crucial interest as this topic had the most number of contributions: 20 of a total of 28 (Fig. 2). The papers presented evidently show how the tourist spaces and destination could not remain detached from the systemic crisis that was affecting Spain in its various manifestations.

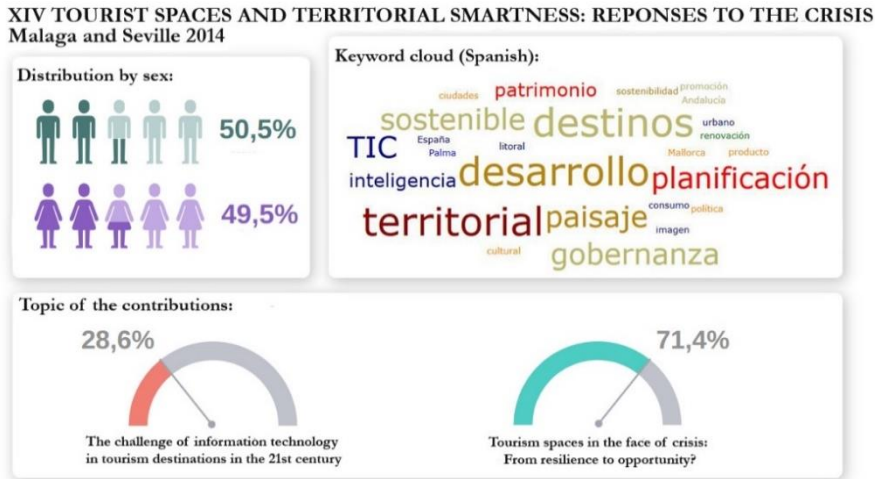
Despite being one of the sectors that was experiencing a high level of activity, tourism was marked by uncertainty, particularly due to the surety that the crisis would change the economic, institutional, socio-labour and cultural context in which it had developed over the previous decades. Based on this consideration, with respect to the coastal, rural or urban tourist spaces, a wide range of options materialised in different proposals: from resilience strategies focused on attempting to recover action guidelines in the territory, similar to those prevailing in the pre-crisis phase; to those that advocated the need to use the crisis to rethink and reformulate the essential lines which, until then, had marked the relationships between tourism and territory, giving rise to new concepts based on a more harmonious relationship between the two. The conference of Dr. Daniel Hiernaux (Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro) titled “Territorio y turismo en los países emergentes en un contexto de globalización: imaginario y realidad” (Territory and tourism in emerging countries within a context of globalisation: imaginary and reality) addressed the key concepts that were manifested in the majority of the research papers presented: territorial development, planning and sustainability (Fig. 2).

As a future formula in this respect, the second line of debate was opened with its corresponding contributions (less than in the first). The conference of Dr. Carlos Lamsfus (CICtourGUNE- and Universidad de Deusto) focused on the challenges that information technologies had (and continue to have) in the tourist destinations of the twenty-first century, highlighting the importance of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the different components of the tourism sector, particularly in the destinations. The research presented showed how the mechanisms of promotion, information and reservation have changed rapidly to adapt to consumers who increasingly plan their trips autonomously. Therefore, ICTs have acquired a decisive role in the promotion of destinations, in information, planning instruments and increasingly in the integrated management of the destination in order to obtain a higher online presence and contribute to improving their image, attracting more visitors and learning the direct opinion of the client. Many contributions considered that ICTs were also essential for Territorial Smartness to advance by offering a tourist territory accessible to the demand and residents, better integrating the visitors and increasing the quality of the tourist experience and the life of the residents. In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics, the territorial structures and the instruments necessary for the generation and use of this knowledge, it is essential to coordinate the actors, manage information, detect impacts, etc., through a good use of ICTs. The risk of confusing the smart destination with the digital destination has already been indicated; ICTs are only an instrument to obtain a better management of the territory in benefit of the local society.

All of the contributions presented were included in the minutes of the symposium “Tourist spaces and territorial smartness. Responses to crisis”, coordinated by the Scientific Committee of the universities of Málaga and Seville in 2014.



Figure 2. Summary table of the 14th Symposium on tourist spaces and territorial smartness: responses to the crisis, held in Málaga and Seville 2014. Source: own elaboration



### 2.3. Tourism, crisis, nature and the collaborative economy

The 15th symposium on Tourism, Leisure and Recreation, held in Palma in 2016 and organised by the Universitat de les Illes Balears, was framed within the evolution that the tourist destinations were experiencing, between the search for sustainability and alternatives to saturation at a moment of maximum tension and global crisis. As is usually the case in the proposals of Grupo10, the principal objective was to foster the debate on hot topics in the agenda of Spanish and international geography, which, on this occasion, focused on the analysis of the relationship between tourism and the crisis from an ecological and political point of view, taking the critical and international approach of critical geography. The first theme opened with the conference of Dr. Robert Fletcher (Wageningen University), titled *"Cannibal Tours Revisited: The Political Ecology of Tourism"*, proposed a debate on the relationship between tourism and the systemic crisis being experienced. The most number of contributions corresponded to this topic (31 of 53) which emphasised the reactivation of the tourism and real estate sector, with a prominence of concepts such as territorial management, economy, crisis, but also new elements of tourism development and commodification, such as Airbnb (Fig. 3).

Within these responses to the crisis, those considered particularly interesting were related to the collaborative or social economy, the topic of the second line of discussion. The debate was conducted in a round table with the participation of the different social agents involved, such as: Albert Arias, ex-director of the Strategic Tourism Plan of Barcelona 2016-2020, Joan Miralles, of the Asociación de Apartamentos y Viviendas de Alquiler de Temporada de Baleares (APTUR) and Dr. Asunción Blanco, geography professor at the UAB and member of the TUDISTAR research group. These participants held an intense introductory debate on the proposals of the so-called collaborative economy. Deregulation promoted by the platform economy in the field of tourism (through cases such as Uber or Airbnb), tourist rental, urban functional

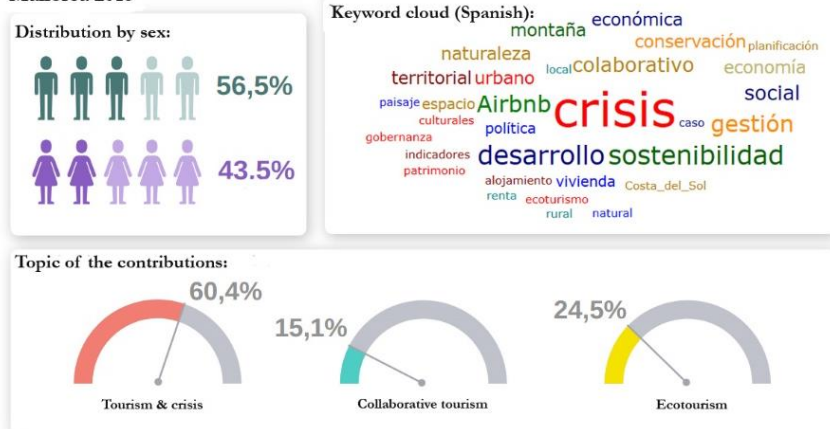
transformations, the increase in housing prices and the frictions between resident groups and the tourism sector constitute some of the eight contributions focused on the positive and negative aspects of the so-called “collaborative tourism” and analyse the pros and cons of commodifying the public space.

The third theme focused on analysing the introduction of nature conservation in tourism markets through the promotion of ecotourism and the green economy as alternatives in the crisis. The participants of the session included members of the academy, such as Dr. María García (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and Dr. Miquel Mir, of the research group of Biogeography, Geodynamics and Sedimentation of the Western Mediterranean (BIOGEOMED-UIB) and social agents specialised in the care of the territory, such as Macu Ferriz from the Mediterranean Wildlife Foundation. The growing commodification and privatisation of natural spaces, in which nature conservation is a complement and the ecological crisis caused by the demand for energy, water, territory and resources constituted some of the 16 contributions that reveal the relationship between protection and tourism, referring to the conflict of the scarcity of resources and public goods for the management of nature.

This symposium reinforced the internationalisation of the contributions with the participation of speakers from foreign universities and introduced transdisciplinarity, extending the scientific spectrum of the meeting of geographers with contributions from other disciplines equally interested in the tourism phenomenon. These results were reported in the publication edited by the Societat d’Història Natural de les Balears in a series of monographs, with the title “Turismo y crisis, turismo colaborativo y ecoturismo” (Tourism and crisis, collaborative tourism and ecotourism), in 2016.

Figure 3. Summary table of the 15th Symposium on tourism, crisis, nature and the collaborative economy, held in Palma 2106 Source: own elaboration

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#### 2.4.Theories, models and tourist destinations in times of change

Following the lines developed in the Working Group, the 16th Symposium, organised by the Universidad de León, focused the debate under the title “Theories, models and tourist destinations in times of change”. The opening conference, “*Approaching Tourism Destinations: Past, Present and Future*”, by Professor Chris Cooper (Leeds Beckett University) and the contributions made by professionals and academics from across Spain and other countries revealed the complexity of the studies on tourism, with a variety of topics and approaches and the need to carry out multidisciplinary studies. However, above all, they demonstrated the fundamental role of geography tourism in the research.

The proposal was based on three principal topics of debate. The first line, with six contributions, sought to respond to one of the determining themes of tourism and one which is currently controversial, namely mobility, contextualised by the paper “Nuevas teorías y prácticas sobre los desplazamientos turísticos” (New theories and practices on tourist displacements), by Dr. Javier Gutiérrez Puebla (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). In 2018, the increase in the mobility of the global population was an undeniable fact, as shown by all of the statistics of the different national and international bodies. However, the economic crisis gave rise to a social change, which, among many other aspects, also affected this inherent element of tourism. Before, speed and displacements were associated with the idea of progress and freedom. However, the economic conditions imposed by the crisis gave rise to new models of tourist displacements based on proximity movements, a slow pace and even vacations at home (*staycations*), even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, the use of ICTs and smart mobile devices provides tools for identifying the patterns of tourist displacements, opening fields of research so as to formulate new theories regarding the displacements made by tourists, as they may always be geolocalised.

In turn, Dr. Rubén C. Lois González (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela) opened the second line of debate: “Planificación y gestión territorial del turismo” (Planning and the territorial management of tourism). This theme, with the maximum contributions received (40 of 46), marked the principal debate, seeking to establish an overall view of the implementation and management of the different planning experiences that have been developed over the decades in different Spanish territories. From this starting point, the time perspective enabled the positive and negative aspects of different case studies to be highlighted, both in coastal and interior spaces, referring to different types of tourism. Furthermore, it addressed how the types of tourism plans developed in Spain have been instrumentalised in different ways, creating, over time, a wide range of sectoral planning instruments which have sought to order, invigorate and qualify the tourism activities. Furthermore, many other elements of analysis relating to tourism planning were presented in this line of research, such as the different theoretical approaches, methodological aspects, financial problems and effective implementation, policy strategies, the economic interests of the private sector, conflicts with other activities, the participation of local society, territorial rivalries or environmental impacts.

Finally, the organization of the symposium inserted an enormously important line of research due to its complexity, but also with little visibility in these types of events until now: “Tourism and gender”, with the paper titled “Turismo y género, la cuadratura del círculo”, (Tourism and gender, the squaring of the circle) by Dr. Gemma Cánoves

Valiente (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). In this case, the objective was to foster contributions of research related to the gender approach in the study of tourism, an area of analysis promoted by different organisations, such as the WTO or the United Nations, which periodically elaborate reports and documents to reinforce the autonomy of women through tourism. On the other hand, the enormous presence of female employment in tourism activities, the fragile conditions that prevent effective equality (wage gap, “glass ceilings”, “sticky floors”, etc.) and their territorial implications seem to warrant a profound analysis from a tourism geography perspective. Similarly, the social recognition and a greater respect for affective-sexual diversity and the interests of the tourism industry to segment the demand and offer preferential products and destinations for each type of target group, has generated new developments of LGTB tourism, particularly in America and Europe. The interest to promote LGTBQ+ tourism has reached the public bodies, which, within their advertising campaigns, have introduced specific messages, which could contribute to promoting the visibility of this group and tolerance among people with different sexual orientations. However, this debate topic did not receive any contributions from the research groups, showing that, despite the importance of this phenomenon in the tourism sector, it is an issue that has not been analysed in depth by Spanish academia and tourism geography. The result of the variety and complexity of the contributions received was the publication of the minutes under the title “De lugar geográfico a destino turístico: análisis, planificación y gestión de los procesos de cambio generados por el turismo” (From a geographical place to a tourist destination: analysis, planning and the management of the change processes generated by tourism), edited by the Universidad de León and the Spanish Geographical Association in 2018.

Figure 4. Summary table of the 16th Symposium on theories, models and tourist destinations in times of change held in León in 2018. Source: own elaboration



### 2.5. Tourism sustainability: *overtourism vs undertourism*

The symposium of October 2020 was conditioned by the pandemic situation on a global level. Based on the results of the previous symposium of 2018 and seeking to respond to the current tourism phenomenon, the 17th Symposium of the Tourism Group was finally held in Maó (Menorca), organised by the Universitat de les Illes Balears and with the collaboration of the Permanent Commission. of the AGE Group. Continuing with the objectives of internationalisation and multidisciplinary, it benefited from the collaboration of the Tourism Commission of the International Geographical Union, which converted it into the first symposium of the Group that could be considered as international (with contributions from places such as Chile, Mexico, Argentina, the Czech Republic, etc.) and was included in the programmes of activities of this commission. The COVID scenario of this year conditioned the organisation of the symposium, but did not affect the objectives sought, supported by the many contributions from the research groups that participated, with 49 papers and a total of 99 authors (Fig. 5), in a hybrid format (online-in person) for the first time, which enabled the participation of all of the people registered.

The principal objective of the symposium was to give centre stage to the territorial dimension of the tourism phenomenon, deepening the critical analysis carried out from a geographical perspective. With the title “Tourism sustainability: overtourism vs undertourism”, it was considered possible to highlight the permanent topic of interest in geography (tourism sustainability) at the same time as emphasising the duality of the phenomenon (overtourism and undertourism) and the realities of territorial imbalance. To do this, three approaches were taken for the contextualisation by academic experts on an international level. Dr. Marina Novelli (University of Brighton) and Dr. Claudio Milano (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) presented their reflection on the paradox of mobility in difficult times, where COVID-19 caused the shift from tourism saturation to sudden undertourism. Meanwhile, Dr. Ivan Murray (Universitat de les Illes Balears) examined the reality of planetary touristification and the dialectic between overtourism and undertourism, an uneven geographical development delimited by hypertouristified and infratouristified spaces. Finally, the reflection on the need, and enormous difficulty to materialise, strategies, instruments, or actions suitable for achieving the long-desired sustainable tourism was presented by Dr. Anna Torres (Universitat de Barcelona).

Up until the outbreak of the pandemic, the tourist destinations in Europe were experiencing a new tourism bubble. This was due to the fact that in some destinations, principally urban, the social conflicts arising from tourist saturation had led to reactions not only from neighbourhood associations, but also in the form of public policies to manage the contention of the growth of the tourism supply or even promote its degrowth. On the other hand, in other territorial contexts (interior and rural areas or impoverished countries), tourism is considered as another possible resilient alternative for development or subsistence, where it is essential to implement balanced and sustainable tourism development models. This context of territorial polarisation, which globalisation had exacerbated between urban and rural spaces, between coastal and interior areas or as a result of the spatial segregation arising from social class, ethnicity or gender, among others, marked the lines of debate through the different diagnoses and alternative proposals. Based on this approach, for the study of territorial polarisation, responses were sought to the different questions existing about the possibilities of

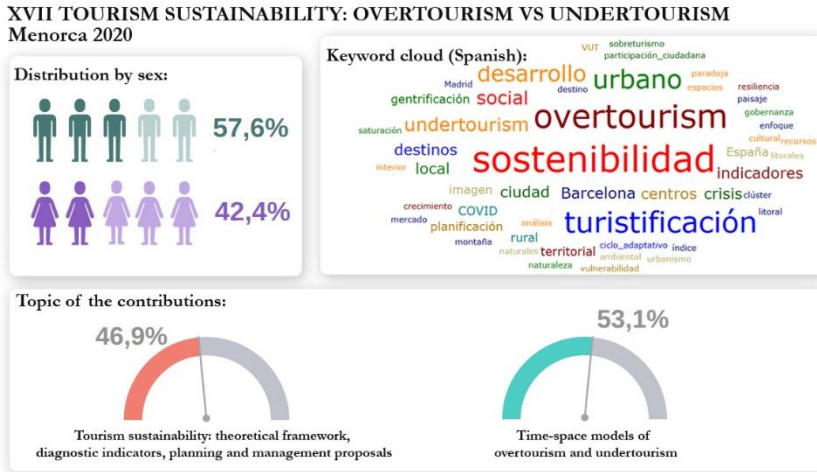
sustainable development in tourism. To do this, two principal lines of study focused on “Tourism sustainability: theoretical framework, diagnostic indicators, planning and management proposals, etc.” and on “Time-space models of *overtourism* and *undertourism*”. Therefore, thanks to almost a hundred authors who shared their research, it was possible to debate and clarify key issues related to the incidence of crises in tourism sustainability (Fig.5).

Within the first theme, topical issues were reflected, such as emptied rural Spain, coastal tourist destinations, territorial inequalities, territorial quality and landscape as a strategy for interior and nature tourism, tourist pressure in urban centres, urban planning as an instrument to order the tourism activity, theme parks, the evaluation of tourism sustainability, land custody, the consequences of over-saturation in socio-environmental aspects, public responses in scenarios of overtourism, megaprojects... but also individual studies related to water management and tourism growth, the evaluation of new digital instruments as an element to compare the organic image and the induced image in non-urban destinations (Fig. 5).

Several problems were addressed within the second theme: precariousness of labour, citizen participation as an essential element in the social dimension of the *Smart Destination*, smart rural tourism, the future of the sun and beach tourist city, gentrification and tourism processes, the cultural motivation of tourists, the tourist use of housing in the rural environment, charter companies in Spain, interior tourism, case study analysis that can be extrapolated to other places, such as the commercial gentrification of the public space with the terraces of bars and restaurants in historical quarters, LGTB tourism as a new source of tourism development, the relationship between the frequentation and evolution of the beach area, urban overtourism and demographic changes, new tourism dynamics in the “Camino de Santiago”, reflections on a living environment and tourist destination, tourism and inequality or the analysis of more global characteristics such as the study and evolution of changes in the use of coastal land in Spain.

All of these issues, which continue to be central in the debate today, were addressed in the publication “Sostenibilidad turística: *overtourism vs undertourism*” (Tourism Sustainability: overtourism vs undertourism) edited by the Societat d’Història Natural de les Balears en 2020. This publication refers, first, to the socio-territorial inequality and its structural connection with neoliberal capitalism; second, to the environmental and social risks derived from systemic vulnerability and from the tourism-real estate specialisation and, third, to the democratic restructuring opportunities through planning.

Figure 5. Summary table of the 17th Symposium on Tourism Sustainability: overtourism vs undertourism, held in Maó in 2020. Source: own elaboration



### 3. Conclusions

The evolution of the tourism phenomenon from the beginning of the twenty-first century until the pandemic in 2020 formed part of the acceleration and intensification processes of globalisation, of the contexts of the different crises occurring and of the trend scenario of the transformation of culture, work and leisure, within the framework of the sustainability paradigm. Within this scenario, tourism constitutes a factor shaping the new society and territorial model. As shown by the research over the last few years, the changes taking place in tourism demand and supply have led to the emergence of a new tourism scenario, with the incorporation of new places and products. Furthermore, the hegemony of the conventional model of traditional tourist destinations has been questioned.

The research conducted by geographers on these transformations has been carried out in Spain mainly in universities, where its presence has increased in collaboration with other disciplines such as tourism, humanities, anthropology or environmental sciences. A sign of this increase is the activity carried out by the Tourism Working Group of the AGE, considered to be one of the most ideal forums for sharing the advances in geographical research on tourism. This gives the symposia the capacity to “push” the state of the research, which, as we have seen, maintains a good line of work and volume of contributions. Therefore, it may be considered that the dynamism of the research groups in geography and tourism and the Working Group is continuously increasing.

Among the wide diversity and complexity of the issues addressed in recent years, pressing questions continue to arise in tourism geography research, such as the changes in the tourism-territory dialectic, the role played by territory in the tourism change processes, management in times of crisis, the roles of the tourism agents in new scenarios, among many others. Of these, it can be seen that public planning and



management continue to constitute a principal line of research, similarly to the frequent use of case studies as a way to approach the theoretical concepts of Spanish geography.

In parallel, although the study topics are sometimes conditioned to follow lines of finance and interest in accordance with tourism policy, the objective of responding from a geographical perspective to the social challenges has given rise to the emergence, although scarce, of critical studies. Of these, those focused on the effects that the tourism industry has caused over the last few decades in the territory are prominent (working conditions, overtourism-undertourism, touristification, gentrification, tourismophobia and inequality).

In this respect, the contributions to the Symposia of the Tourism Group reflect the efforts made by the research groups in terms of transdisciplinarity and internationalisation, which are visible in the chosen case studies, the language, the collaboration between authors, the origin of the people attending and the guest speakers.

However, there are some underdeveloped lines related to the transformation of a place in a tourist destination and to the process of change that it generates: spatial, social, economic, cultural, among others. The role of geography in the study of a social activity so closely related to the specific characteristics of the territory, such as tourism, is crucial. Therefore, it is highly interesting to analyse the tourism sector from a physical geography point of view, although such studies are still scarce. Also lacking is a greater development of key aspects for the sector, such as climate change, resource consumption, the management of the waste generated and those studies that do exist are still closely related to the natural space and its management. Similarly other lines to consider are: the study of mobility, the repercussions that the necessary infrastructures have on the territory, accessibility or the study of tourism from a gender perspective in all its complexity, the consumption of energy and materials, new economic models, democratic decision-making, the design of reliable indicators of the real socio-economic impact of tourism on local or regional levels, among others.

Tourism geography still faces important challenges, not only due to the transformation that the sector has experienced as a result of the different crises in which our societies have been immersed, but also due to its future projection as a discipline concerned with an appropriate analysis and planning of these transformations. Geographical research on tourism should go beyond mere descriptive local studies and offer the scientific community propositional research in which sustainability is always a key element, as well as providing more depth in the theoretical and methodological rationale. In this way, it would be interesting to promote the creation of inter-university research groups at an international level for the development and geographical analysis of tourism, which would increase the relevance of the discipline. At the same time, the Tourism Group could be an ideal means through which to reinforce the much desired transfer and dissemination of the research carried out, channelling collaborations and promoting new communication channels.

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Spanish contribution to 35th IGC. París 2022.  
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