

Presentation

This DAG monograph is a response to the growing importance of the tourism phenomenon in Barcelona. The city has become an international tourist centre of the first magnitude. This projection on the world stage is the fruit of two key elements, as the article contributed by Francesc López Palomeque points out. The first was the 1992 Olympic Games, which put Barcelona “on the map” and promoted it internationally as a Mediterranean city with a strong personality and a powerful cultural heritage. The second was the public-private collaboration to promote the city through the consortium called simply “Barcelona Tourism” (Turisme de Barcelona).

The main elements in the “touristification” process of Barcelona are addressed in this monograph, with analysis and questions about the city’s tourism model. The contributed articles offer reflections but at the same time reveal the urban and tourism-related debate underway in Barcelona and help to provide a response to questions about Barcelona’s tourism model. Taken together, these articles have given us some insights that we would summarize here. How can we find compatibility between residents’ everyday life and tourist demands? How can we find harmony between permanent residents and the temporary presence of tourists and other visitors? What strategies must be designed to expand this tourist traffic beyond the attractions of the city of Barcelona to all of Catalonia? Is there a danger of being smothered by success? How can the overconcentration of tourists in certain parts of the city be resolved? How should we share the wealth of tourism, making other parts of the city more visible, more permeable, more highly valued, in order to avoid massification and deterioration and not overload the city’s carrying capacity?

These questions and possible strategies are analysed in the 8 articles that comprise this monograph. In order of appearance, the article by Agustín Cocola and Saida Palou considers the promotion of tourism and the impact of urban space in Barcelona (“Tourism promotion and urban space in Barcelona.

Historic perspective and critical review, 1900-1936”), and lays out a historical perspective on tourism in the city, showing how the sector has acquired strategic value in the shaping of urban, urbanistic and monumental Barcelona. The beginnings of tourism in Barcelona can be found in the early 20th century in the context of major political, economic and sociocultural changes. The initial development of a Barcelona tourism model began in a framework of bourgeois hegemony; an ideology that placed aesthetic principles and cultural values as the vectors of the discourse, so that urban planning and the construction of grand monuments were prerequisites, and at the same time the results of this strategy. Following this historical sketch that helps us understand the basis for the initial tourist image of the city, we present the article by Francesc López Palomeque (“Barcelona, de ciudad con turismo a ciudad turística. Notas sobre un proceso complejo e inacabado”). The recent changes in the city’s tourism are discussed, explaining the dizzying growth that has come with the transition from a city with tourism to the tourist city Barcelona has become. López Palomeque affirms that Barcelona is a hot destination; a recurrent message in the communications media that appears in all settings, highlighting the city’s international projection. Obviously, this status was not achieved by accident, and tourism has a great deal to do with it. A priori, the role of tourism should not be surprising because Barcelona is now a tourist city and an urban destination of the first order on the international scale, the result of a long process of development of tourism activities. The relative novelty of it is the product of an intensification of the process over the past two decades (temporal perspective) and of the changes in the city itself (urban dynamics), which have shaped the dual reality the article points out: a destination of the first order and a tourist city. Finding harmony between the everyday life of Barcelona citizens and that of tourists is now a major challenge for a city that, although it continues to achieve new heights of popularity as a tourist destination, must be careful not to be killed by its success. The article by Juan Antonio Duro and David Rodríguez provides us with the data on that tourism growth. These authors analyse the evolution of Barcelona as a tourist municipality in recent years based on the available quantitative indicators on both the demand and supply side of the equation. In addition, they show that the expansion has occurred in both demand terms (in particular, overnights and average length of stay) and in the supply (beds and their quality and territorial distribution). They emphasize the progressive internationalization of the demand and the advances made toward diversifying the international markets, especially in North America, Russia and China. In this sense, they also point out that these advances and all the progress show warning signs about the sustainability of this growth, and that there is a need to demand appropriate public policy to ensure the sustainability of the Barcelona tourism model. The contribution from Inmaculada Diaz-Soria shows how various businesses are appearing that have identified tourism opportunities directed mainly at residents of Barcelona and of Catalonia. Her article analyses the offering of cultural routes that are targeted mainly at this audience and value the “unknown but accessible” attractions that have

been or could be exploited as tourist destinations. This is a very interesting strategy to reduce congestion in the classic tourist spaces and recognize the value of new spaces and new routes.

The work by Luis Alfonso Garay delves into an analysis of cruise tourism; a recent phenomenon that has made Barcelona the top European port for Mediterranean cruise ships and the fourth international port, surpassed only by Miami, Port Canaveral and Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale), all in Florida (USA). In 2014, Barcelona received 2.7 million cruise passengers (Hosteltur, 2014) and the prospects for 2015 are to maintain and even increase this number. The growth of this type of tourism in Barcelona in recent decades has had a series of impacts. For example, it has helped to modify some of the traditional models, especially in the business sector, with more or less controversial decisions such as opening commercial establishments on Sundays and holidays. Therefore, one of the criticisms of this product is that its development should rest on a sustainable base, with quality offerings—not only focused on immediate economic profit—and criteria for social and environmental responsibility that can be demonstrated and quantified. Cruise tourism is clearly an opportunity for Barcelona, but both the product and services must have a framework of quality and excellence. The internationalization of the city is also evident in the article by Aureli Lojo and Gemma Cànoves, which addresses the recent phenomenon of Chinese tourism in Barcelona. This out-bound tourism is notable for its continuous growth, the spending capacity of the tourists and their interest in the cultural heritage of the city. Although for now it is a small tourist flow, the municipal entity in charge of tourism and the communications media have taken note of their growing presence. The article shows, based on advertisements by Chinese tour operators and an analysis of the Chinese blogosphere, how the city of Barcelona is presented and perceived as a tourist destination.

Barcelona is also positioning itself as a city in which homosexual tourism is becoming well established. The article by Josep M. Prat Forga analyses this phenomenon and the assessment surveys completed by a sample of participants in the city's Circuit Festival, billed as “the biggest international gay and lesbian event”, compared with a sample of homosexual tourists who did not take part in that event. Significant differences between these two groups of tourists in the variables that influence their travel decisions have been found. The author concludes that affective elements of their visit constitute the most valued aspect for those who make the trip without the draw of a large homosexual event, while the entertainment component was very attractive to the group that attended the massive festival.

The article by Marta Dinarès and David Saurí shows us a crucial topic in the city of Barcelona: the water consumption patterns of hotels and their response to the 2007-2008 drought, and the social demand for water conservation. As the authors emphasize, water resource management is a limiting factor in hot and sunny tourist destinations such as the Mediterranean. The intensification and frequency of drought in the context of climate change rai-

ses doubts about the sustainability of the tourism sector. Does the hospitality sector respond to these questions, and if so, how? How does drought affect the adoption of water-saving practices and do the adaptive responses differ on the basis of hotel characteristics? Given these questions, the article analyses the annual water consumption by hotels in the city of Barcelona over a 10-year period, including four episodes of drought. The results show that drought leads to technical and behavioural changes, mainly in high-quality hotels. Drought decrees by the government seem to influence the adoption of water-saving measures, although the heterogeneity of the hotel sector is a factor that must be taken well into account in future analyses and in the design of sustainable policies on responsible consumption.

Finally, the monograph includes four reviews of recent tourism-related literature that address topics of broad current interest and the major problems in which tourism plays a role. The perspective taken in all three cases is cross-cutting.

In summary, this monograph on tourism in Barcelona stresses a fiercely current topic and has been developed with the objective of contributing to the debate, reflection and analysis and providing proposals for a city that has reached very high levels of popularity in the highly competitive global tourism market. Nonetheless, the identity of its people, the culture, heritage, history, cuisine, values and indeed the idiosyncrasy of the city are and will be what make it unique, unrepeatably and unequalled. Conserving, preserving and maintaining these differential features that cannot be globalized is the safest bet for sustainable continued growth: respecting the balance between tourists and residents of the city of Barcelona.

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